

Dietary Pacifism

Animals, Nonviolence, and the
Messianic Community

by

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The “Covenantal Relationships” section of chapter 3 (pp. 78-83) draws on an article co-written with Kris Hiuser (Kris Hiuser and Matthew Barton, “A Promise is a Promise: God’s Covenantal Relationship with Animals”, *Scottish Journal of Theology*, forthcoming). Hiuser contributed the research into scholarship on covenant in the Hebrew Bible. The candidate contributed an exploration of theological and ethical implications of God covenanting with nonhuman animals.

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Abstract

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This thesis uses relational theology, in conversation with the nonviolent communitarian ethics of Stanley Hauerwas, to construct a new theology of how humans relate to other animals. I argue that at least some other animals should be perceived as relational creatures of God; and that understanding our animal brothers and sisters in this way raises new questions for ethics and ecclesiology. The relationality we share with nonhuman animals – in individual relationships and the interwoven networks of relationship that make up creation – means that Christians can hope for relationships between humans and other animals to be sanctified by God's grace. If we have this hope, and accept that theology is ethics (and eschatology not solely future-oriented), there is a clear impetus for individual Christians and church communities to look with reflective and prayerful eyes at how we relate to other animals. This will include thinking seriously about how our dietary choices impact upon them.

I make two methodological shifts in the course of the thesis: from theology to ethics, and from there into ecclesiology and ethnography. These shifts are justified on the ground that theology *is* ethics: just as faith without works is dead (Jm. 2:17), so must theology be ethical. The use of ethnography and social-scientific methodology situates my discussion of church casuistry on animal and dietary ethics in the context of real, situated churches and church experiences. A theological ethic of diet which does not examine how churches think about eating, and the eating practices their members are formed in, would be incomplete.

After outlining my aims and methodology in chapter 1, in chapter 2 I critique theological models of 'stewardship' (popular for thinking about human-animal relationality). Chapter 3 provides a short systematic theology

of human-animal relationality which seeks to amend for stewardship's limitations. In chapters 4-5, I consider the dietary implications of chapters 2-3, arguing that vegetarianism (theologically understood as dietary pacifism) is a valid ethical practice for followers of Christ. Chapters 6-8 look at ethical dialogue and discernment in church communities, arguing – partly *via* conversation with ordinary Christian vegetarians – that there is a theological impetus on individual Christians and the church to engage seriously with all ethical topics, including diet. In chapter 9, I draw the thesis together with a relational framework which emphasises radical inclusivity – the call for the church to be a community of human animals, in and for the wider community of creation.

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1. God, Humans, and Other Animals¹

Introduction and Methodology

“And should I not be concerned about Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who do not know their right hand from their left, and also many animals?” (Jon. 4:11, NRSV²)

Animals (more accurately, *nonhuman* animals³) are important to God. As is so often the case in our compromised world, however, their importance to God is less often reflected in how they are viewed and related to by humans. This thesis employs a relational theological framework to explore how Christians are called to respond to nonhuman animals in creation. The ethical and ecclesiological implications of this will be considered, with a view to thinking about how (and what) the church should *eat*, as a community of human creatures in the wider community of creation. In short, in this thesis I develop a theological framework for Christian vegetarianism (called dietary pacifism), talking to Christian vegetarians in the process.

Why animals? Why food? For as long as there have been humans, we have coexisted with our fellow animals. This existence alongside nonhuman animals – who are also creatures of God, who also depend ultimately on God’s sustaining and amazing grace – has not been standard through history but has changed over time. The Hebrew Bible and the New Testament present us with images of human-animal relationality which are

¹ This chapter’s title is taken from the excellent anthology edited by David Clough and Celia Deane-Drummond, *Creaturely Theology: On God, Humans, and Other Animals* (London: SCM, 2009).

² All quotations from scripture, unless otherwise mentioned, are from the NRSV translation.

³ The relational theological framework employed in this thesis, wherein I argue (in chapter 3) that nonhuman animals should be understood as relational creatures of God, to and with whom humans are called to relate, means that “nonhuman animals” is more useful and descriptive language than (for example) “living creature”. This is so because “living creature” will include plants, which are non-relational creatures of God: humans are called to view them with reverence and work to sustain them, but not to relate to them in the way they are with nonhuman animals. I recognise that the boundary line between nonhuman animal and non-relational creature is a hazy one – are insects sentient? – but am not so much concerned to define this boundary line (a fruitless task in any case) as I am to articulate the theological-ethical argument that how humans relate to nonhuman animals is an aspect of our creaturely life which can, should, and will be transformed by grace.

neither monolithic nor consistent but which offer new wisdom and insight concerning our nonhuman fellows. Questions about other animals – about what they are, whether and how they matter to God, what our obligations to them are, and so on – might then be answered by directing our attention to scripture; as well as to tradition, reason, and experience. And questions about animals, in a world subject to humanity, will inevitably become tied up with questions about food – about what we can or should eat, and the impact of our food’s production on other humans, nonhuman animals, and the environment we share.

Food is important. At the biological level, it is *vital*ly important, as something necessary for the life of all animals; nonhuman as well as human. For Christians, creatures who are called to be disciples, food is also *theological*ly important. Take Psalm 104, which praises God for giving food and drink “to every wild animal” (Ps. 104:11 – Isaiah prophesies that the wild animals will honour God for this⁴), causing “grass to grow for the cattle” and bringing forth “food from the earth, and wine to gladden the human heart” (Ps. 104:14-15). Or take Jesus’ caution against worrying about what we will eat or drink, coming during the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 6:25-26. Jesus affirms that “life is more than food” – certainly true – but grounds this in the infinite and eternal providence of the Father. The example Jesus points to, of creatures of God who trust that their Creator will provide, is “the birds of the air” – they do not worry or store up their goods, because they know that through God they will have enough. Jesus affirms food’s biological importance while pointing to its theological importance, as a part of creation for which (like everything) we ultimately depend on God.

These bible passages, briefly cited, illustrate food’s theological significance, but they also emphasise a truth which lies at this thesis’ foundation: *nonhuman animals are creatures of God, are important to God, and their lives are bound up with the lives of God’s human creatures*. This much is easy to acknowledge, but its theological and ethical implications are less clear. Reflection on nonhuman animals and dietary ethics are rare enough in the Christian traditions, and also in contemporary theology; and the relative novelty of the field can give rise to unsystematic and non-reflective claims about animals and diet – particularly within the churches.

⁴ Isa. 43:20 – “The wild animals will honour me, the jackals and the ostriches; for I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert...”

Talking around the dinner table in my home town church, my explanation that I saw vegetarianism as part of my discipleship was answered with an (out of context) quote from Romans 14. “The weak eat only vegetables” (14:2), I was informed; but my conversation partner was not so ready and willing to accept the conclusion of that chapter, that “It is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that makes your brother or sister stumble” (14:21). Another popular proof-text among Christians keen to avoid reflection on diet, Acts 10:13 (“Get up, Peter. Kill and eat”), was employed without awareness of the distinction between declaring something ritually pure and declaring it morally unproblematic.⁵

Stanley Hauerwas, a major conversation partner in this thesis, is a proponent of the simple but powerful claim that theology *is* ethics;⁶ a claim that grounds both my attempt to treat the theological ethics of food seriously, and my call for situated church communities to do the same. What we believe about God should be mirrored in our lives; and conversely, how we act in the world conveys our beliefs to those we interact with. In accordance with this claim, this thesis aims to produce a theology of human-animal⁷ relationality which is *practical*. For this to be the case, I need to consider the relationality of human and nonhuman animals: this will involve thinking about the capacity of animals for relationship, their involvement in relational networks (which may or may not be trans-species and/or include humans), and the question of how they relate to God; as well as reflecting on what manner of relationships are proper for the humanity of the human and the animality of the animal (which may differ for different times and places and species). I am concerned to consider human-animal relationality through the lens of the dinner table, open to the possibility that the relationships underlying the everyday status of animal flesh and milk as products for human consumption might stand in need of God’s transformative power and grace. This can and does lead to the suggestion

⁵ These two passages, among others, will be explored in chapter 5 of this thesis.

⁶ Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), chapter 6.

⁷ N.B. Throughout this thesis, I use *human-nonhuman* and *human-animal* interchangeably. In both cases, I actually mean *human animal-nonhuman animal* – I alternate between the two more readable phrases to emphasise that humans are animals and both are part of creation. Unless stated otherwise, *human-nonhuman* never refers to a relationship between a human and a non-animal member of creation (such as a tree).

that the most appropriate Christian dinner table might be one without dead animals on it.⁸

Within Christian theology, ecclesiology and ethics there exist foci which, although not always deemed orthodox or relevant by the majority of Christians, remain present within minority representations of the tradition. Christians concerned to think about animals (as well as those concerned to think about *food*, including Christian vegetarians) have almost always formed a minority within their respective traditions. The reasons suggested for this relatively peripheral status range widely. Is it simply that some churches are wary of movements which appear to derive from methodologically non-Christian contexts – such as the animal welfare movement? Or is it as Michael Northcott says, that “secular modernity... disrupt[s] and corrode[s] harmonious human relations with nature”⁹ – has the church’s apparent aversion to dietary ethics been shaped by the world? Or is there more credence in the scripturally-grounded notion that the early Christian response to the triumph of grace over law¹⁰ rendered dietary regulation highly contentious?¹¹ It is not this chapter’s purpose to consider the historical reasons for the extra-traditional status of dietary ethics; but Andrew Linzey (a dialogue partner in chapter 2) claims that it is because animals “make a mess of anthropocentric philosophy and theology” that “they have been relegated to the periphery of moral thinking.”¹² I am in agreement that this is part of what is happening when Christians decline to reflect on animal and dietary matters; but it will only continue to be so if we continue to claim that there are aspects of our creaturely existence (such

⁸ Note that the dietary pacifist ethic advanced within this thesis *is* deliberate advocacy of an under-represented position, giving Christian vegetarians voice by systematising their experiences and locating their ethics within a theological framework, in order to encourage an open debate which is not currently present within most churches and church communities. This thesis is an effort to change the default position, which is currently (in the church as outside it) that factory-farmed meat is not a major ethical issue; and this effort is made by looking theologically at animals, at humans, and at how the church thinks and practices as a community of people attempting to live consistent with the Christian narrative (a narrative which, I argue, renders vegetarianism a legitimate practice of contemporary discipleship).

⁹ Michael Northcott, *The Environment and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 84.

¹⁰ Paul’s epistle to the Romans is key to understanding the sovereignty of grace over law. In chapter 5, I engage in particular with Rom. 14, arguing that this is an application of Paul’s theology of grace to a specifically dietary question.

¹¹ See for example Rom. 14; Mt. 15:11; Acts 10:13.

¹² Andrew Linzey, *Why Animal Suffering Matters: Philosophy, Theology, and Practical Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 37.

as how we relate to other animals) which need neither justification nor sanctification by grace. The first part of this thesis aims to dispel this notion.

None of this is to deny that there has been a great deal of work done in recent years in building up theological support for the value of animals; for their place in God's creation, and for revising human perceptions of (and responsibilities to) them. The work of Andrew Linzey, Michael Northcott, Richard Bauckham, Willis Jenkins, Christopher Southgate, David Clough, David Cunningham, Rachel Muers, Stephen Webb, Norman Wirzba, Carol Adams, John Berkman, and David Grumett has all contributed to the expanding field of theological reflection on nonhuman animals (and/or dietary ethics). All are engaged with in the course of this thesis – their work has been hugely important in bringing animal and dietary matters onto the theological stage, and highlighting areas in need of further reflection. Theological and ethical engagement with the language of rights, the environmental responsibility advanced by stewardship theologies, and liberation theology's concern for the other are the most prevalent motifs in animal and dietary theology at present: with the recent exception of David Clough,¹³ systematic theological reflection on nonhuman animals is thin on the ground.

One facet which has been relatively unexplored by so-called animal theologians – a neglect which is interesting, given its prominence in Trinitarian theology – is that of *relationality*, central to the constructive theological work done in chapters 2-3. If relationship is at the heart of divine and human life – and resultantly, central to the Incarnation and ministry of Jesus Christ – then how we understand ourselves to be in relationship with other animals (indeed, whether we believe them to be capable of relationship at all) is key to the question of our responsibilities to them. How, as relational creatures of God, called to respond to our Creator and be transformed by grace, should we view and respond to those other relational creatures of God, whose flourishing is coincident with ours and yet over whom we have been placed in a position of relative power? Building upon the theology of human-nonhuman relationality, chapters 4-5 explore the dietary implications of how we relate to nonhuman animals, before chapters 6-8 move in an ethnographic and ecclesiological direction.

¹³ See David L. Clough, *On Animals: Volume One: Systematic Theology* (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2012).

Here I dialogue with a number of ordinary¹⁴ Christian vegetarians to the end of unpacking where questions about animals and diet sit in the daily life of local church communities (which also serves the twinned purposes of testing the ordinary theological methodology employed in analysing the data gathered and testing the constructive work of the thesis as a whole). Chapter 9, being the thesis' conclusion, brings the theological, ethical, and ecclesiological work together into a conclusion which looks to answer the question: *how should the church live and eat as a community which attends seriously to the all-pervasiveness of sin in creation, in the hope of sanctification by grace and the ultimate hope of the kingdom?* I now move to provide a more thorough overview of this thesis' chapters and the progression of its argument, in the course of which the methodological moves taken are also outlined in more detail.

Thesis Overview

The first move taken in this thesis, in **chapter 2**, is taken to outline one thing this thesis is not. It is not a model of stewardship; stewardship being understood as a scripturally-based theological ethic which emphasises human responsibilities to creation, as an act of service and fealty to God.¹⁵ Although by this thesis' end an outline for 'redeemed stewardship' will have been constructed, I begin my constructive theological work with a relational critique of stewardship's classical formulations. I do this for two reasons – the first is that stewardship is the most common theological framework for thinking about how we relate to other animals;¹⁶ the second is that, within a relational reading, stewardship fails to challenge or even examine how humans perceive other animals.

¹⁴ The definition of "ordinary" I use here, and throughout this thesis, is derived from Jeff Astley, *Ordinary Theology: Looking, listening and learning in theology* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002). Broadly speaking, Astley means by "ordinary theology" the theology of those individuals without any formal academic theological education. See chapters 6-8 for further discussion along these lines.

¹⁵ The formulations of stewardship outlined by Willis Jenkins and Richard Bauckham are the primary sources used in this chapter. See Willis Jenkins, *Ecologies of Grace: Environmental Ethics and Christian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Richard Bauckham, *The Bible and Ecology: Rediscovering the Community of Creation* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010).

¹⁶ This is at least partly because animals are so often and so unreflectively subsumed into the category of 'environment'; something Daniel Miller addresses in *Animal Ethics and Theology: The Lens of the Good Samaritan* (London: Routledge, 2011).

Stewardship is not to be discounted out of hand: the explicit recognition of the commonality between humanity and the rest of creation, and resultant recognition that our dominion is not mastery but service, are to be valued. The dangers of stewardship models lie in two major problems identified in chapter 2. The first of these is that stewardship is problematically anthropocentric, recognising the significance of the wider created order (including nonhuman animals) only in as much as it provides the stage and material for humans to act as stewards. In this way, the particularity (which is to say, the *individuality*) of nonhuman animals is neglected. This is a theoretical obstacle to considering animals in their relationship to humanity: we cannot talk meaningfully about the relationships of an individual without first recognising their individuality.

Stewardship's second major problem is tied to its first: it is relationally monodirectional, inasmuch as the only relationships it affirms as significant are those between God and humans. Our relationship with God – which includes the acts of service bound up in stewardship – is not seen to shape and transform how we relate to other animals as it is with humans. I do not mean by this that human-animal relationality and human-human relationality are the *same*, but it is theologically dangerous to assume that human distinctiveness or superiority within creation means that other animals are not distinctive, nor capable of relationship, nor valuable. Too often, anthropomist worldviews are defended and justified by means of grave insults to others of God's creatures, including the denial of our shared mutuality with them. In considering criticisms of ecotheology alongside Andrew Linzey (primarily the complaint that it is arrogant about the capacity of humanity to manage or control the environment), I construct a critique of environmentalist stewardship.

Having concluded that stewardship is not the most appropriate model for thinking through how humans relate to other animals, I move in **chapter 3** to construct and outline a *theology of human-animal relationality*. This framework, intended to provide a way to theologically consider how we 'fit' alongside other animals, is not such easy prey to anthropomism (as stewardship is). This theology is constructed in a systematic manner: I consider creation, image, Trinity, Incarnation, sin, grace, covenant, and eschatology. The model constructed has no one doctrine as its cornerstone: rather, the doctrines of image, Trinity, and Incarnation (pertaining to God's relational nature, the creation of humans in God's

image, and God's cosmic, redemptive, and relational revelation in Christ) are central. Chapter 3 is a theological affirmation of the particularity and relationality of nonhuman animals: they are other to us, and they are other theologically as well as biologically, but we can speak of relating to them and we are called to recognise their particularity. The claim made is not that relationality itself is inherently good: many of our current farming practices are distinctly harmful forms of relationship with animal others, and relationships such as these, by denying the animality of the animal and our shared mutuality with them, are as a result destructive of the humanity of the human. My humanity – understood in light of creation, image, Trinity, Incarnation, sin, grace, covenant, and eschatology – is at stake in how I relate to other animals. How we relate to other animals can and should be transformed by grace, bringing us towards a fuller realisation of the (loving, relational, other-concerned) image of God.

Chapter 4 makes the first significant methodological shift of the thesis, moving from the theological work of chapters 2-3 into ethics. This shift is necessary to consider the *dietary* implications of chapter 3's theological outline: I do this in the first place through an analysis and application of the theology of Stanley Hauerwas, with a particular focus on the centrality of nonviolence to his model for discipleship. In other words – if other animals are relational beings, to whom we are called to respond in the light of the image of God, to what extent can the claims of Hauerwas and others about interhuman violence be extended to the interspecies violence humans perpetrate? My answer, given as a model and suggestion (as opposed to an imperative or commandment), is that human nonviolence towards nonhuman animals should be practiced as far as is possible. Indeed, it is suggested that for those of us with the freedom to eat how, when, and what we like, Hauerwas' pacifist theology might be expanded into a *dietary pacifism*.

In the course of this chapter, an overview of Hauerwas' work is provided, with particular attention to character formation and transformation, as well as nonviolence; to the lived example of Jesus of Nazareth; and to Hauerwas' critics. This overview of Hauerwas – including the problems and areas for expansion identified within his work – is brought into conversation with the relational theology of chapter 3. The dietary pacifist ethic which arises from this critical conversation is further nuanced through reflection on Hauerwas' treatment of abortion (a question where

the involved parties are markedly different in capacities, including that for relationship), as well as his and John Berkman's article concerning animal and dietary ethics. This article, "The Chief End of All Flesh", made valuable steps towards recognising shared mutuality with nonhuman animals, laying a heavy condition of necessity on meat-eating consistent with Hauerwas' truth-centred idealism. However, it leaves unquestioned the normative cultural practices of the writers' contexts (that is, the assumed necessity and normality of flesh-eating in North America); and a brief concluding note about sacrifice, which fails to attend to the theological truth that Christian sacrifice is *self-sacrifice*, detracts from the conclusion (sympathetic to dietary pacifism) the article had been leading up to. Through constructive and critical engagement with Hauerwas and his critics in chapter 4, then, I construct a dietary pacifist theological ethic.

In **chapter 5**, I nuance this dietary pacifist ethic, exploring its complexities in greater detail. A variety of questions are considered, all of which arise from attempting to put dietary pacifism into practice in different contexts and situations. In particular, questions about the relationship between idealism and realism are answered; including questions about whether there can be *degrees* of problematic animal-eating, or whether a certain diet can be 'purer' than another. Karl Barth's accusation that vegetarians are engaged in wanton anticipation, and Norman Wirzba's parallel criticism that the vegetarian view of creation is unsustainably romantic, are critiqued on the grounds that their arguments only work if dietary pacifism is an inflexible and deontological idealism (it isn't). David Clough's four-dimensional typology of pacifisms is employed in order to better conceptualise dietary pacifism and place it in relation to Hauerwasian nonviolence. Dietary pacifism is also considered alongside military pacifism, which has its own tensions between idealism and realism. A number of situated examples are viewed through the relational lens developed up to this point: among them are the questions of whether vegans should eat honey, and whether and when it is acceptable for Christians to engage in or support animal culls. Finally, Hebrew Bible rituals of animal sacrifice are contrasted with modern day practices of factory farming, in a relational critique of factory farming which also furthers chapter 4's discussion of sacrifice. In concluding chapter 5, I argue that "*dietary* pacifism is not about personal purity but the living out of novel relationships in creation."

Chapter 6 moves from ethics into ecclesiology, while maintaining the thesis' relational focus. Having outlined a theology of human-animal relationality, and built an ethic of dietary pacifism upon it, I ask: how do churches, at the local level, *talk about* animal and dietary ethics? This question opens up reflection on theological and ecclesiological claims about communal discernment in Christian churches. Here I draw again on the work of Stanley Hauerwas, setting up the exploration of why and how animal and dietary matters are so often a casuistical blind spot within church communities. As well as Hauerwas, the ecclesiologies of John Howard Yoder and Dietrich Bonhoeffer are brought into the conversation, with a particular view to their thinking on matters of communal casuistry: Yoder's nonviolent and communitarian theology influenced much of Hauerwas' work, and Bonhoeffer's pneumatological Christology is shown to underline Hauerwas' call for churches to value their heretics; those outlying members of the community whose personal theology in some way deviates from the majority. In churches where questions about animal and dietary ethics are not discussed (or are even avoided), it might be the case that Christian vegetarians become 'heretics'.

In chapter 6 I also think about *why* casuistical blind spots exist. Issues around sociocultural identity are explored, and it is suggested that pseudo-sanctification of sociocultural practices can happen when Christians accept uncritically that the way something is is 'the way it is done' without asking whether it is how *God* wants it done. Carol Adams' writing about the language of invisibility used on other animals – the way individual food cows are rendered invisible through use of the mass descriptor "beef", for example – is considered, and I argue that recognition of other animals as relational individuals wards against such soporific misdirection. Again, I emphasise the need for every facet of our lives – including our relationships – to be transformed by grace: if we affirm, counter to this, that there are elements of our creaturely existence which fall outside this, are we not proclaiming that there are facets of our lives which do not need redemption?

Proceeding from the ecclesiology of chapter 6, in **chapter 7** I outline the methodological considerations behind my conversations with Christian vegetarians (analysed in chapter 8). These conversations took the form of a short series of semi-structured qualitative interviews, focusing on the personal theology, ethics, and ecclesiology of my interlocutors in a way

which allowed them to define their faith-diet connection (and how this connection is received by their local church) in their own language. The interview work in chapters 7-8 allows me to test and develop theological ethic of dietary pacifism constructed over chapters 2-5 and builds upon the ecclesiological hypotheses of chapter 6. One major contribution this work makes to the thesis as a whole is the circumnavigation of a common pitfall within constructive theological, ethical, and/or ecclesiological work: this is the often-too-hasty move from abstract theory to proclamations on situated practice. At the same time, it allows me to engage with two recent and significant shifts in academic theology. The first of these involves the “ordinary theology” of Jeff Astley, who calls academic theologians to take seriously the theologizing of individual Christians without formal theological education. By attending to the ordinary theology of twelve Christian vegetarians, I am able to test in a particular and situated way Astley’s claims about the validity and rigour of ordinary theology; claims which resound positively with theological notion of the priesthood of all believers, as well as the thesis’ relational framework more broadly. This process of testing offers a way to address some of the problems which arise when a church ostracizes its heretics. The second of these is the ethnographic shift in theology and ethics; a shift which Astley might be deemed a part of, along with the contributors to Pete Ward’s *Perspectives on Ecclesiology and Ethnography*¹⁷ and Christian Scharen’s and Aana Marie Vigen’s *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics*.¹⁸

It will be noted that this thesis engages in two major methodological shifts; the first being that from theology to ethics, and the second being the move into ecclesiology and ethnography. The first shift is justified by Hauerwas’ claim that theology *is* ethics: just as faith without works is dead (Jm. 2:17), so must theology be ethical. I would suggest that ecclesiology is similarly symbiotic with both theology *and* ethics: to talk about the church without talking about God, or without thinking about how Christians are called to act, would produce an arid ecclesiology. Furthermore, when the focus is on questions around animal and dietary ethics, a theological ethic which does not extend into ecclesiology (i.e., which does not examine how churches think about eating, and the eating practices their members are

¹⁷ Pete Ward (ed), *Perspectives on Ecclesiology and Ethnography* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012).

¹⁸ See Christian Scharen and Aana Marie Vigen (eds), *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics* (London: Continuum, 2011).

formed in) leaves the job unfinished. Take for example David Clough's excellent first volume of *On Animals*, which deals with systematic theology. It is to be followed by a second volume dealing with ethics; it might be suggested that a third volume, dealing with ecclesiology, would allow the theological-ethical framework developed over two volumes to be situated in a church context, and in this way become praxis and resource the church.

In **chapter 8**, I engage with my Christian vegetarian conversation partners, looking at a number of issues raised both in the conversations themselves and through post-interview data analysis. In this way, my aim is to develop dietary pacifism; to consider in more detail the ecclesiological claims made about church casuistry; and to reflect upon the methodology behind doing constructive theology in conversation with ordinary theologians. In this way, the analytical and constructive work of this chapter necessarily functions as a test and comparison of both this thesis' scholarship and that of the ordinary Christian vegetarians with whom I spoke.

A number of relationships highlighted by the data analysis are explored. Reflection on the structure of individuals' dietary theologies – and how the different motifs therein are related – gives rise to further exploration of stewardship (a common motif in the conversations) and relationality (interhuman and interspecies). In considering the relationship between why one first became a vegetarian and how one justifies it *post facto*, I draw on Hauerwas' theology of character formation and transformation, and further emphasise the importance of the church being adequately resourced to discern about diet. The link between nonviolence and vegetarianism is emphasised by considering – in the light of chapters 4 and 5 – whether and how my interlocutors connected dietary pacifism with other pacifisms. And I further the ecclesiological exploration of chapter 6 by considering whether the personal ecclesiology of my conversation partners has been affected by their situated church experiences *vis* their vegetarianism. That some vegetarians, feeling ostracized by their local communities, have moved away from the church towards alternative communities of character – and the cultivation of pride which can occur when individuals are rendered heretics – are also discussed, and the need for churches to engage in genuine casuistry further emphasised.

In **chapter 9**, I draw together the theology, ethics, and ecclesiology of the thesis into a relational framework which emphasises *radical inclusivity*. This is the call for the church to live as a community of human animals in and for the wider community of creation; a community which includes non-Christian humans, and also nonhuman animals. I look at table fellowship, considering how our eating practices *are* our communal practices, and how we can spiritually bring animals to the table by not physically bringing them to the table. Chapter 9 also considers animal liturgies as a way of challenging non-reflective and anthropomomist worldviews, as well as being a way of bringing animal narratives into conversation with the church's own story. Finally, the thesis comes full circle, as the possibility of redeeming stewardship is raised: this 'redeemed stewardship' ties together human relationships with and responsibilities to God, other humans, other animals, and the environment. Redeemed stewardship is *relational* stewardship; and, therefore, it champions dietary pacifism as a practice charitable to all creation.

As we move now to chapter 2, and the relational critique of stewardship therein, it is worth keeping in mind the radically inclusive conclusion which this thesis moves towards. Remember, too, the question posed near the start of this chapter: *how should the church live and eat as a community which attends seriously and holistically to the all-pervasiveness of sin in creation, in the hope of sanctification by grace and the ultimate hope of the kingdom?* The conclusion which answers this question is well-suited to the thesis' own methodological structure, being theological and ethical, ecclesiological and embodied, and theoretical and practical. The conclusion, in short, is this: the church is "called to be a community of human animals, concerned with other humans and other animals, in and for the whole world because it is in and for God."

2. Stewardship and Relationality

Surveying Stewardship and Ecotheologies

The notion of human stewardship within creation – arising from the doctrine of human election to dominion in Genesis 1:26-28¹⁹ – is a recurrent and presently popular one in the fields of theology and ethics concerned with animals and the environment. The language of stewardship is in common use in not only academic but also ecclesial and ordinary discourse: indeed, it could be said to be the default descriptor for any ethic of care involving nonhuman animals.²⁰ Stewardship theology holds that humans, being special creatures, are entrusted to be *stewards* of God’s creation, responsibly managing the nonhuman creation as an act of faithfulness to God.²¹ This is tied to an understanding of God as King: much as household stewards would be responsible for overseeing the running of a house for a temporal master, humans are to oversee the running of creation for its Creator.²² In this way, stewardship is essentially a positive formulation, affirming our duties to nonhuman animals rather than our authority over them. Humans, created *imago Dei* and granted dominion, have a responsibility of stewardship to all creation, including (but not limited to) other animals. It is not surprising that the language of stewardship is popular; but is it theologically appropriate? In this chapter I will examine

¹⁹ Gen. 1:26-28 – “Then God said, ‘Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.’ So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.’”

²⁰ This becomes apparent if we look at where and how animals are mentioned in the Catechism of the Catholic Church and the Lambeth Conference documents. In the Catechism, animals are treated in four clauses (2415-8) under the heading “Respect for the integrity of creation” – nonhuman animals are grouped with “plants and inanimate beings” (2415) and stewardship is directly cited as legitimating “reasonable” use of animals for human ends. In Lambeth 1998 (Resolution I.8), human responsibilities to other animals are mentioned as a sub-clause of human “responsibility for caring for the earth.” The excessive anthropocentrism that leads to nonhuman animals being collapsed into ‘nature’ – in no way distinct from a tree or river – is well-served by stewardship theology.

²¹ See Willis Jenkins, *Ecologies of Grace: Environmental Ethics and Christian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

²² See Richard Bauckham, *The Bible and Ecology: Rediscovering the Community of Creation* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010).

some current models of stewardship, in the course of which I will highlight some potential problems that such models can raise for Christians concerned with nonhuman animals. In this way I intend to answer the question: do stewardship's inherent problems outweigh the way in which it recognises a duty to (although not a relationship with) the nonhuman creation?²³

The two primary problems with stewardship examined here are *anthropocentrism* and *monodirectionality*. Within theologies of stewardship, anthropocentrism is often caught up with the exclusivist claim that one or more capacities is not merely unique to humans, but sets them apart from the rest of creation in a normative way. This can be seen in the near-exclusive emphasis on *human* particularity, responsibility, and relationality within creation – nonhuman animals can be beneficiaries of human responsibility, but they are not recognised as relational individuals themselves and so how we relate to them, and our shared mutuality, are not treated seriously. This reduction of the animal can also be seen in stewardship models of ecotheology, with their focus on environmental sustainability: such models seem incapable of recognising other animals as individuals to whom humans might be responsible, as opposed to elements of a monolith which humans are called to manage. The rejection of animal relationality²⁴ is tied to the second 'problem with stewardship': the monodirectional picture of relationality such models are built upon, wherein responsible human action within creation is an act of responsibility to God only – and not, it is argued, to fellow animals.

From considering the problems associated with stewardship, I will move to reflect on the anthropocentrism and claims about human distinctiveness which can become caught up with such theologies; before

²³ How, exactly, this duty of care is understood is one of the problems associated with arguing from a generalised understanding of "stewardship". Does the responsibility to care mean only that humans are called to avoid unnecessary exploitation of other creatures; or that humans are to avoid exploiting other creatures under all circumstances; or that we have a duty to actively *manage* creation's resources (ensuring biodiversity, etc.)? These are just three ways one could conceptualise a duty of care, and each will create significantly different ethical methodologies at the point where theology becomes praxis.

²⁴ 'Animal relationality' refers to the ways, means, and meaning of nonhuman animals' relationships within creation. To abrogate animal relationality, then, is to deny – implicitly or explicitly – that nonhuman animals have relationships in any way which is theologically meaningful. Such an argument is not to be rejected out of hand, but when it is made on the grounds that animal relationality is not fully comprehensible to humans – and so therefore must not be theologically meaningful – an arrogantly exclusive claim is made about human importance within creation.

entering into a conversation with the work of animal theologian Andrew Linzey, whose account of human responsibility and *theos*-rights marries stewardship and anthropocentrism in a way intended to be sympathetic to nonhuman animals. In concluding the chapter, I propose that Linzey's model, although more tenable for theologians concerned to think about other animals, retains a monodirectional drawing of responsibility which might undermine claims about human-animal mutuality: therefore, I argue, a more developed account is needed.

Stewardship, Ecotheology, and Animal Particularity

It might be suggested that one reason for stewardship's predominance within theologies concerned with humanity's place in creation is the common criticism levelled at the Christian doctrine of dominion. This is the allegation that the notion of human dominion over creation has created and normalised, whether in itself or *via* corruption of the doctrine in practice, an abusive human attitude to nature.²⁵ By casting dominion in the language of service and responsibility, stewardship might in this way be seen as an answer to the critique of dominion-as-exploitation. This claim deserves to be taken seriously, if for no other reason than the historical prevalence of interpretations of dominion which read it as legitimating exploitation. I would argue, however, that this is not the whole picture – in fact, it does not need to be the picture at all.

Michael Northcott, whose environmentally-focused theology is explored in this chapter, fashions an argument in defence of the doctrine of dominion. He argues that the focus on personal salvation which grew out of the Reformation (in some contexts), an essentially self-centred approach to faith, gave rise to self-oriented understandings of the world – including an instrumentalist view and treatment of nature.²⁶ This moves the burden of blame from scripture to later interpreters, and is a valuable augmentation to any one-dimensional understanding of the causation behind anthropomist attitudes to the environment. Attention to the subsequent and broader Enlightenment privileging of human rationality would also

²⁵ See for example Lynn Townsend White, Jr., "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis", *Science* 155.3767 (1967), 1203-7.

²⁶ Northcott, *The Environment and Christian Ethics*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 220.

provide nuance in this regard.²⁷ Northcott's claim that, "Whenever secular modernity encounters traditional culture and religion, it tends to disrupt and corrode harmonious human relations with nature, and the religious sensibilities and rituals by which these relations were traditionally sustained,"²⁸ is a valid criticism of modernity, and a valuable warning about letting 'progress' override tradition, but in romanticizing the past Northcott neglects the reality pre-modern societies were not innocent of environmental exploitation: the deforestation of Europe, for example, was largely pre-modern.²⁹ That said, Northcott is not aiming here to attribute blame for environmental exploitation anywhere but scripture: rather, he aims to complexify the picture of humanity's distorted relationship with the environment, highlighting how anthropomorphism can distort theological accounts of creation.

Attempting to counter such distortions, Northcott's environmentally-conscious theology is concerned with the impact of human activity on the environment, understood either at the micro-level of local ecologies or the macro-level of creation-as-environment. This is valuable to Christian theology which desires to be praxis as well as theory, and which furthermore recognises the commonality of all God's creatures. It should be noted, however, that Northcott is *not* concerned with the particularity of individual animals. With specific attention to the ethical question of vegetarianism, for example, his focus is on how abstention from farming and eating nonhuman animals might impact on environmental variables and problems like climate change. This is as far as Northcott takes his stewardship – management of the Master's resources – and it remains unclear whether a stewardship model of ecotheology can ground concern for specific nonhuman animals.

²⁷ The legacy of Rene Descartes, who (in)famously proclaimed that nonhuman animals were automata – performing a logical fallacy based on the recognition of a profound and unbreachable epistemological distance between us and other creatures – should not be underestimated here. Clough argues that Descartes' mechanistic and dualistic depiction of nonhuman animals appealed to Christianity not least because it *fit in with the existing patterns of human-nonhuman relationality* (including a growing appreciation of human science's ability to dominate nature) and, furthermore, exculpated those who killed or otherwise abused animals. David Clough, *On Animals: Volume 1; Systematic Theology* (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2012), 138-40. Cf. Andrew Linzey, *Why Animal Suffering Matters: Philosophy, Theology, and Practical Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 45-9.

²⁸ Northcott, *The Environment and Christian Ethics*, 84.

²⁹ Norman F. Cantor, *The Civilization of the Middle Ages: A Completely Revised and Expanded Edition of Medieval History* (London: HarperPerennial, 1994), 564.

Northcott draws attention to the scriptural understanding of nature as a divine gift: Jeremiah³⁰ links ecological devastation with the abandonment of proper worship of YHWH, and Isaiah³¹ sees such devastation as “the consequence of the human rebellion against the created order and goodness of nature.”³² Returning to the book of Genesis,

The story of the exile from Eden... affirms that the created order contains within it a potentiality for goodness and harmony despite the occurrence of so much natural evil, pain and suffering, and that humans are not fundamentally in conflict with the created order, nor with one another or God. The story also offers its hearers or readers grounds for resisting humanly originated evil and domination, both in its oppressive effects on human societies, and its destructive effects on the non-human world.³³

Elsewhere, the Sabbath of the land in Leviticus 25:1-7 extends the concept of a rest day to the land itself, protecting nature from human over-indulgence. The fertility of the land is in this way portrayed as coming not through human manipulation but through God’s creative and sustaining love, to the extent that legislation is enacted insuring against the ill-effects of human enterprise. Humans take what God gives; but, just as the Lord’s Prayer teaches that we ought to pray only for our “daily bread” (Mt. 6:11), it might be that taking too much from creation undermines the creaturely effects of grace and providence, and can in this way be understood as an act of rebellion against God.³⁴ There is, in short, an order to the biosphere that humans have a duty to preserve, despite being a part of that biosphere themselves. Problems arise, however, when ecotheologians reach definite

³⁰ Jer. 5:23-25 – “But this people has a stubborn and rebellious heart; they have turned aside and gone away. They do not say in their hearts, ‘Let us fear the Lord our God, who gives the rain in its season, the autumn rain and the spring rain, and keeps for us the weeks appointed for the harvest.’ Your iniquities have turned these away, and your sins have deprived you of good.”

³¹ Isa. 5:8-10 – “Ah, you who join house to house, who add field to field, until there is room for no one but you, and you are left to live alone in the midst of the land! The Lord of hosts has sworn in my hearing: Surely many houses shall be desolate, large and beautiful houses, without inhabitant. For ten acres of vineyard shall yield but one bath, and a homer of seed shall yield a mere ephah.”

³² Northcott, *The Environment and Christian Ethics*, 170-1.

³³ Northcott, *The Environment and Christian Ethics*, 179.

³⁴ In this way, claiming too much of God’s bounty for oneself can be understood in the language of sin-as-pride, seen in Israel’s rejection of manna in the desert (Num. 11), and decried by Augustine in his writings against Pelagius. See Alistair McFadyen, *Bound to Sin: Abuse, Holocaust and the Christian Doctrine of Sin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 185.

conclusions about the shape of those duties (often involving ecosystem and/or biodiversity maintenance).³⁵ Where, to take just one example, do we draw the line between efficient stewardship and technocratic intervention; even perversion? The most troubling confusion with regards to animals in particular is the respective weights placed on biodiversity and ecosystem maintenance in relation to the value of the life of the individual animal: the duty human stewards have towards their Creator can too easily become conceptualised as maintaining ecological balance.

The emphasis on stewardship-as-environmental-management is a point at which Andrew Linzey has criticised ecotheology; particularly in its iterations which equate *is* with *ought* when it comes to observing nature, and so argue that the presence of predation among nonhuman animals means that eating other animals is morally unproblematic for humans.³⁶ Linzey's criticism of environmental approaches to theological ethics – which share his understanding of humans as stewards but are concerned with the whole environment rather than individual animals – is not that they are anthropocentric, but that they are unrealistic in their portrayal of what human creatures (limited, sinful animals) are capable of. Although there are loci where we can identify human practices which definitely harm the environment – among the most potent of which is cattle farming³⁷ – Linzey sees the majority of environmental concerns, such as ecosystem management and maintenance of biodiversity, as outside the realm of

³⁵ See for example the process theology of Sallie McFague, wherein the individuality of both human and nonhuman animals is challenged by the conception of creation as the body of God. McFague's is a relational theology which subsumes particularity into relationality, while apparently subverting even God's own body to human control – to leave part of creation free of human control is deemed a sinfully anti-relational act. Sallie McFague, *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), viii, 44-55; see also the ecotheology of Richard Cartwright Austin – *Beauty of the Lord: Awakening the Senses* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox, 1988).

³⁶ Andrew Linzey, "So Near and Yet So Far: Animal Theology and Ecological Theology", in Roger S. Gottlieb (ed), *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Ecology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 348-61 at 352. Chris Southgate himself argues this: see Chris Southgate, "Protological and Eschatological Vegetarianism", in Rachel Muers and David Grumett (ed), *Eating and Believing: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Vegetarianism and Theology* (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2008), 247-65 at 249. Chapter 3 furthers Linzey's criticism of ecotheology in the course of reflecting on the tensions present in the theological understandings of creation and nature.

³⁷ See for example Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, "Livestock's Long Shadow – Environmental issues and options" (2006). This UN report includes, to select just two statistics from the wealth of data therein, the facts that one acre of land used to farm cattle will produce 20lb protein, compared to 261lb if used to farm rice; and that 1921l water is needed to produce 1kg rice, compared to 100 000l needed to produce 1kg beef.

human competence to secure.³⁸ Particularly critical of instances where ecosystem management is seen to legitimate the culling of a specific species, Linzey points out that regardless of whether we believe ourselves to be acting in the interest of the whole environment, we manifestly do not know what the interests of the whole actually are; and neither are we capable of understanding the long-term impact of our actions.³⁹ To *de facto* value the preservation of species diversity over individual animals despite these realities, then, is not simply hubristic but is a utilitarian denial of animal particularity: “Conservationists see species, but they fail to see *individual* animals that deserve our protection.”⁴⁰

It would appear, then, that the most gracious stance stewardship theologies can take towards nonhuman animals is to attend to them as *species*; valued for their environmental contribution but not as individuals with whom humans are called to relationship. In the words of Richard Bauckham, “Stewardship puts us in authority over, but not in community alongside and with other creatures.”⁴¹ For Jenkins, “deputyship, even if humble and accountable, still separates humanity from the rest of creation... Moreover it justifies interventionist, controlling dominion by appealing to a picture of God as a distant monarch.”⁴² Although it may be debatable as to whether stewardship accounts necessarily justify interventionist and controlling dominion by humans, their inherent anthropocentrism and monodirectional image of human responsibility – coupled with Christendom’s historical record in this regard – suggest this is not an unfair criticism for Jenkins to raise. Stewardship implies monodirectional responsibility to God, and we are to care for creation because God does. There is no impetus towards the extension of our responsibility-to-God into our creaturely relationships; no seeking for the transformation of ourselves, or of the relational networks within which we live and move. Further still, God is distanced from God’s own creation, by a model which transmits responsibility from God to humans and from there onto creation.

³⁸ Linzey, “So Near and Yet So Far”, 356.

³⁹ Indeed, it could be argued that the majority of environmental damage – ozone degradation, climate change, and so on – comes about, at the level of root cause, as a result of our inability to accurately anticipate long-term consequences.

⁴⁰ Linzey, *Why Animal Suffering Matters*, 68.

⁴¹ Bauckham, *The Bible and Ecology*, 10-11.

⁴² Jenkins, *Ecologies of Grace*, 80.

To view the words of Augustine through a lens that admits more than the human to be our neighbour; “Whoever thinks that he understands the divine Scriptures or any part of them so that it does not build the double love of God and of our neighbour does not understand it at all.”⁴³ Note the language used here: Augustine is not talking of love for God, as a result of which we seek to care for our neighbour, but of the love of God which human creatures can seek to live out in their relationships within creation. Stewardship can blunt this double love, and accompanying multidirectional responsibility, in the case of human-animal relationships. When we talk of Christian discipleship as the call to love God and our fellow humans, there is a clear relationship between these responsibilities: without the work of God’s grace, we could not escape the depths of sin which disorder our willing,⁴⁴ and so we could not truly love other humans. When talk turns to the nonhuman creation, however – animals and inanimate creatures – stewardship models propose that we care for creation not because we are sanctified by grace and so propelled towards love of the nonhuman, but because our love of God means we cannot refuse the duty of care for God’s other creatures (who we are not called to love themselves). Multidirectional responsibility is conspicuously absent, as is any recognition of shared mutuality: stewardship as traditionally formulated divorces human creatures from creation, denying the possibility of theologically significant relationships outside the interhuman.

Christopher Southgate offers a model of stewardship which draws more from New Testament ethics than from the environmental concerns of the Hebrew Bible. Stressing God’s concern for the entirety of creation,⁴⁵ Southgate outlines a theological ethic of “other-regard” drawn from the Pauline corpus: this is the imperative to do good *beyond* the boundaries of one’s community, involving potentially costly self-giving and a particular concern for the poor.⁴⁶ Note that the poor here are not just those enduring fiscal difficulties but those suffering from illness or deprivation, physical or mental, and those whose future flourishing is threatened or negated. It is

⁴³ Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine* (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1958), 30.

⁴⁴ McFadyen, *Bound to Sin*, 108-9, 127-33, 185-90.

⁴⁵ Gen. 1:31 – “God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.” See also Ps. 24:1 – “The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it.”

⁴⁶ Christopher Southgate, “The New Days of Noah? Assisted Migration as an Ethical Imperative in an Era of Climate Change”, in David Clough and Celia Deane-Drummond (ed), *Creaturely Theology: On God, Humans, and Other Animals* (London: SCM, 2009), 249-65 at 257-258.

this last category which most interests environmental or eco-theologies: both the animal creation and creation-as-environment might be said to have their future potential severely jeopardised by abusive and unreflective human practices. Southgate's other-regarding model of stewardship is a fundamentally relational one, being interested not in macro-level management but in the needs of others: if nonhuman animals were recognised as relational individuals under such a model (which they are not under Southgate's own formulation), stewardship's problems of anthropocentrism and monodirectional responsibility could be mediated.

Jürgen Moltmann, presenting a vision of stewardship as vocation and mediation, maintains multidirectional responsibility and human creatureliness by using the language of calling and priesthood:

If human beings stand before God on behalf of creation, and before creation on behalf of God, and if this is their priestly calling, then in a Christian doctrine of creation human beings must neither disappear into the community of creation, nor must they be detached from that community. Human beings are at once *imago mundi* and *imago Dei*. In this double role they stand before the sabbath of creation in terms of time. They prepare the feast of creation.⁴⁷

Despite recognising human creatureliness and the real possibility of relationship with other animals, however, the notion of humans as priests for creation remains problematic. Like more conventional understandings of stewardship, it claims too much for human capacities within creation, as well as isolating the nonhuman creation from God by means of a procedural hierarchy. Even to say simply that humans articulate the praise of nonhuman animals is to arrogantly claim too much for ourselves, for our understanding of how God relates to God's other creatures (and they to God), and for human distinctiveness within creation. How do humans articulate the praise of nonhuman animals? Is their praise taken up into ours? This would seem to claim more for human speech than it deserves; whereas, as Barth astutely recognised, "The human significance of speech, of the human mouth and human ear, depends absolutely upon the fact that

⁴⁷ Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: An Ecological Doctrine of Creation* (London: SCM Press, 1985), 190.

man and his fellow speak to one another and listen to one another.”⁴⁸ Does God, Creator of all animals, really rely on human communication to understand when the wild animals honour God? The prophet Isaiah does not believe so.⁴⁹ Such an understanding of humanity as ‘standing between God and creation’ denies the possibility of meaningful relationship between God and God’s nonhuman animal creatures, who are seen as requiring the human animal to perform for them what scripture attests they are capable of doing themselves.⁵⁰

If the church is to grow in its understanding of what Christians are called to be in the world, closer attention needs to be paid to the dynamics of human-nonhuman relationality; of how human and animal flourishing within creation are bound up together, and what types of relationship are therefore most proper for the humanity of the human and the animality of the animal. Stewardship as traditionally conceptualised does not provide an adequate base from which to begin a theological exploration along these lines. In affirming a responsibility to the nonhuman creation, stewardship models can be a valuable corrective to harmfully anthropocentric theologies which place the human creature as the sole criterion of value within creation. As has been noted, however, understandings of dominion as stewardship can serve to undermine the particularity and relationality of nonhuman animals, depicting human responsibility as monodirectional.

Part of the reason why this can be the case lies in theological anthropology – namely, those elements of theological anthropology concerned to articulate human distinctiveness within creation. When arguments are made along these lines, the doctrines of dominion and

⁴⁸ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* III/2 (London and New York: T&T Clark, 1958), 259. Additionally, there is growing acceptance within animal sciences that the designation of “speech” as unique to human animals is not only unhelpfully reductive but simply inaccurate. See for example Philip Liebermann, *The Speech of Primates* (The Hague: Mouton, 1972); Eugene Linden, *Apes, Men and Language* (New York, NY: Penguin, 1981); Michael Dobrovsky, “Animal Communication,” in William O’Grady et al, *Contemporary Linguistics: An Introduction* (New York, NY: Bedford-St Martin’s, 2005), 625–63.

⁴⁹ Isa. 43:20.

⁵⁰ Commenting on Richard Bauckham, David Horrell and Dominic Coad note that, “in explicit rejection of the notion that humanity fulfils a priestly role in mediating creation’s praise to God, Bauckham suggests that ‘it is much more obvious that other creatures can help us to worship God than that we can help other creatures to do so’. They do this ‘primarily by their otherness that draws us out of our self-absorption into a world that exists not for us but for God’s glory’. Indeed, a pressing need, with obvious ecological significance, is ‘to allow creation’s praise by letting it be.’” David G. Horrell and Dominic Coad, “‘The stones would cry out’ (Luke 19:40): a Lukan contribution to a hermeneutics of creation’s praise”, *Scottish Journal of Theology* 64.1 (2011), 29–44 at 30; commenting on Richard Bauckham, ‘Joining Creation’s Praise of God’, *Ecotheology* 7 (2002), 45–59 at 51–2.

human creation *imago Dei* – central to stewardship theology – are used to make the case for human superiority over other creatures; and so the building blocks of stewardship theology come to subvert claims about animal value and relationality. In turning to think more closely about how human distinctiveness within creation is described and defended, I aim to identify where stewardship is (and where it does not need to be) problematically anthropocentric.

Theological Anthropology and Human Distinctiveness

The concerns raised thus far, over monodirectional responsibility and the denial of animal particularity, illustrate the dangers inherent to theologies of stewardship; but also, more broadly, to certain anthropocentric theological formulations. Anthropocentrism is, to an extent, unavoidable. Being human creatures who struggle to understand the inner workings of our fellow humans, let alone those of other species of animal, it is to be expected that the theologies we write are human-centred (and self-centred!) to a degree. There is a distinction to be made, however, between anthropocentrism which is primarily concerned with human responsibility, and anthropocentrism which claims exclusivity for human responsibility and relationality. Anthropomonism, being an ontological claim that humans are the sole criterion of value in creation, is but the most extreme outgrowth of this latter form of anthropocentrism. Models of stewardship, in exhorting concern for the nonhuman creation, are not easily described as anthropomonist; but they are perhaps too close to it for comfort. By emphasising human responsibility to God, and depicting the duty of stewardship as merely a transaction between human and divine, the nonhuman is conceptualised as a ‘second-rate’ creation. The particularity and capacity for relationship of nonhuman animals are therefore neglected, with the end result that appropriate reflection on our relationships with and responsibilities to them is undermined.

It is unfortunate that questions surrounding anthropocentrism within theology and ethics have been (historically and presently) obfuscated by what is commonly read as one of the most significant tasks of theological anthropology: this is the of articulating humanity’s distinctiveness within

creation.⁵¹ I will first consider theological discussions concerning human distinctiveness, and their impact upon understandings of human-animal relationality: David Clough and David Cunningham are instructive conversation partners to this end. From that base, I will engage with the work of Andrew Linzey, whose account of human responsibility to other animals – rooted in theological anthropology and a reading of stewardship – offers a corrective to the detrimental impact of exclusivist anthropocentrism on animal theology.

Neil Messer has written that “A theologically satisfactory account of proper human conduct in respect of non-human animals will have to be teleological in character.”⁵² That is, our understanding of how we ought to relate to the animal creation should be shaped by a proper understanding of human and animal *ends*; what we are here for. Messer writes that Aquinas’ threefold hierarchy of natural ends is the model most commonly used today, whether explicitly recognised or not: this view separates the created order into those that just exist (e.g. plants), those that procreate and raise offspring (e.g. animals), and those that live in ordered rational societies and know God (i.e., humans). The imperfect are intended to serve the perfect, and so, broadly speaking, we kill plants for animals and kill animals for humans.⁵³ As will be explored in more detail in chapter 3’s discussion of the Incarnation, such a hierarchical account of creation raises questions about God’s being for God’s creatures: if the ‘lower’ beings in this feudal categorisation are to be subordinated to the ‘higher’, even to the extent that the interests of the lower are collapsed into those of the higher, what does this suggest for what Christians claim about God – that God is for us, and we are for God, and so are called to exist in relationship? If human creatures are afforded a unique status within creation, such that the God-human relationship is wholly separate to the relationships between God and God’s other creatures, then the problems a hierarchical reading of creation raise will be minimised: that is, if humans are understood to be at the top of the created order but also separate from it, then the notion that

⁵¹ The conversation concerning human distinctiveness will be continued in chapter 3, wherein I formulate a theological account of human-nonhuman relationality. The focus there is on the doctrine of human creation *imago Dei*, and how it has been (and can be) understood: the focus here is on the problems anthropocentric theology can raise for understandings of the nonhuman, as well as theological anthropologies which run counter to this in presenting accounts of human responsibility within and for creation.

⁵² Neil Messer, “Humans, Animals, Evolution and Ends”, in *Creaturely Theology*, 211-27 at 213.

⁵³ Messer, “Humans, Animals, Evolution and Ends”, 213-4.

the lower is to be subordinated to the higher has no normative influence on understandings of how humans relate to the divine. With that being noted, however, it must also be highlighted that even a brief survey of creation, sin, grace, covenant, Incarnation and reconciliation – such as that performed in chapter 3 – suggests that such an exclusive status for humanity would have to be the product of an unrealistic and non-theological anthropology.

In his systematic theology on animals, *On Animals*, David Clough puts forward a critique of theological accounts of human distinctiveness that do as much to denigrate the nonhuman creation as they do to delineate the human. Aiming particular criticism at ‘Chains of Being’ such as Aquinas’ hierarchical account of creation,⁵⁴ and noting the considerable difference between the Platonic underpinnings of such an account and the presentation within scripture of human-animal commonality,⁵⁵ Clough moves from a survey of key voices in the tradition – including Philo, Origen, Celsus, Calvin, and early modern readings of “dominion” – to the argument that

It is not difficult to find Christian theologians stating that human beings are God’s sole or primary purpose in creation. It is harder, however, to find good theological argument in defence of this proposition... At every point, the central Christian concern to preach the good news of God’s love for human beings seems to be unnecessarily allied with contemporary philosophical and social pressures, emphasising anthropocentric views of the universe. The weight of theological opinion that human beings are God’s aim in creation, therefore, is not matched by a similar weight of theological argument.⁵⁶

In light of Clough’s indictment of accounts of human distinctiveness which owe more to “philosophical and social pressures” than to scripture, tradition, and the work of theology, it is instructive to turn to David

⁵⁴ Clough, *On Animals*, 57-60. Celia Deane-Drummond offers an alternative interpretation of schemas such as the Great Chain of Being, arguing that “Once understood in the context of evolutionary categories, the Chain of Being... affirms the continuity of human life with all life forms: we are an integral part of the whole complex chain of creation.” Celia Deane-Drummond, *The Ethics of Nature* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 77.

⁵⁵ Clough, *On Animals*, 27-43. See for example Gen. 2:7,19, 3:1; Num. 22:23-35; Ps. 22:6, 42:1, 102:6-7, 104.

⁵⁶ Clough, *On Animals*, 15.

Cunningham. Cunningham has criticised – in the course of a deconstruction of substantialist understandings of human creation *imago Dei*⁵⁷ – theological acceptance of common cultural presumptions about human superiority to all other animals.⁵⁸ These are typically rooted in a given capacity or function, from ‘sentience’ to ‘tool use’ to ‘awareness of mortality’, which is identified in order to draw an absolute and categorical line between ‘humans’ and ‘other animals’ – an approach which Slavoj Žižek, drawing on the work of Jacques Derrida, criticizes as unhelpfully (and unrealistically) reductive.⁵⁹ Alisdair MacIntyre agrees:

Theories about what it is that distinguishes members of our species from other animal species... may seem to provide grounds for the belief that our rationality as thinking beings is somehow independent of our animality. We become in consequence forgetful of our bodies and of how our thinking is the thinking of one species of animal.⁶⁰

Presenting an alternative model of how best to understand our relation to creation, Cunningham points to Genesis 1 as a reminder that a sharp distinction between humans and other animals is only one way to image the diversity of creation: after all, he argues, humans were not gifted a unique day for their creation but were formed at the same time as all other land animals;⁶¹ to which it might be added that humans were formed from the same material,⁶² and given the same breath.⁶³

Cunningham is equally sceptical about what human creation *imago Dei* means for our place in creation, pointing out that in Genesis 1:26,

⁵⁷ Set apart from the relational understanding of the divine image, the substantialist reading focuses on the *imago Dei* as an ontic reality in human creatures as they are now. Most commonly here God’s image is identified in the capacities of reason and volition: if determined to have neither of these, nonhuman animals are infinitely apart from humans, who bear the image of God.

⁵⁸ David S. Cunningham, “The Way of All Flesh: Rethinking the *Imago Dei*”, in *Creaturely Theology*, 100-17 at 101-2.

⁵⁹ Slavoj Žižek, “The Animal Gaze of the Other”, in Slavoj Žižek and Boris Gunjević, *God in Pain: Inversions of the Apocalypse* (New York, NY: Seven Stories, 2012), 221-40 at 228-9.

⁶⁰ Alisdair MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues* (London: Duckworth, 1999), 5.

⁶¹ Cunningham, “The Way of All Flesh”, 102-5.

⁶² Gen. 2:7,19.

⁶³ Gen. 1:30. Note that although humans and other animals here receive the breath of life – *nephesh hayyah* - numerous translators from the KJV to the NRSV have obscured this reality of the scriptural witness in subtle and not-so-subtle ways, rendering *nephesh hayyah* as “living soul” or “living being” with regards to humans and “living creature” with regards to nonhuman animals. See Clough, *On Animals*, 31-2.

imago Dei is not explicitly denied to the animals, and that image-language itself is relatively rare in the Hebrew Bible. When present in the New Testament, it typically refers not to humankind in general but Christ in particular.⁶⁴ perhaps, then, the distinction is between God and all God's creatures?⁶⁵ Furthermore, Cunningham argues, the language of image is not the language of fixed designation: do we define 'image' in terms of physical representation, character, attitude, manner, and so on? Who judges, and how exact can any subjective judge be? In chapter 3, I will explore in more detail the distinction between substantialist accounts of the *imago Dei* (which claim the *imago Dei* is substantially present in the human creature) and relational accounts (which understand humans as called to live in the image of a dynamically relational God). At present, it suffices to note, along with Cunningham, that when our attention turns to the *imago Dei*, our limited understanding of God means that the archetype for what is imaged is not available for comparison.⁶⁶ Scripture witnesses that humans are created in God's image; but the form, content, and measure of this remains undefined.

Avoiding the language of image, and the potentially anthropomomist implications thereof, Cunningham suggests that we instead talk about *flesh*. The language of flesh appears more frequently in the Bible than that of image, and when it does God is frequently described as being in relationship with "all flesh".⁶⁷ The language of flesh communicates what unites humans with other animals *as well as* what separates them;⁶⁸ and, lest we forget, flesh is what Christ shares in the Incarnation with all flesh,⁶⁹ all of which suffers and will be redeemed come the kingdom. Raising serious questions about the premise that human creation *imago Dei* constitutes our ontological and relational divorce from other animals, Cunningham concludes that we should be reflexively aware of our

⁶⁴ Col. 1:15 – "He [Christ] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation."

⁶⁵ Colin Gunton makes a similar observation in his trinitarian account of creation: "The fundamental division in being is now between creator and created: God and the world he has made, continues to uphold and promises to redeem. The creation is homogenous in the sense that everything has the same ontological status before God, as the object of his creating will and love. All is 'very good' because he created it, mind and matter alike." Colin Gunton, *The Triune Creator: A Historical and Systematic Study* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 72.

⁶⁶ Cunningham, "The Way of All Flesh", 112.

⁶⁷ See for example Job 34:14-15.

⁶⁸ 1 Cor. 15:39 – "Not all flesh is alike, but there is one flesh for human beings, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish."

⁶⁹ Cunningham, "The Way of All Flesh", 115.

anthropomorphising tendencies with regards to God; and resultantly sceptical of any anthropocentric worldview.

As humans, we have a responsibility to the rest of creation rooted in our relationship with God. Genuine relationship exists in both directions – with God and with our fellow creatures – and so it is appropriate to talk of God and God’s creatures cohabiting a network of relationality, within which humans have a special role which nonetheless does not separate them from their fellows. And if, implicated in and constrained by the corrupted relational networks which constitute this fallen creation,⁷⁰ we will never achieve perfection in our creaturely relationships, we can recognise that our very fallenness renders our relationship with other animals more like that of one human to another than of God to humankind. I turn now to the theology of Andrew Linzey, whose theology contains a similar understanding of human distinctiveness in creation, arguing as he does that humans are not completely apart from their fellow animals, but are instead called to be the “servant species”.

Andrew Linzey: a Different Kind of Stewardship?

Although exhibiting a primary concern with the human creature, and its responsibilities within God’s creation, the work of animal theologian Andrew Linzey presents a model which differs from more conventional theologies of stewardship. Linzey reads Genesis 1 as indicating the common creation of humans and other animals, highlighting how the vegetarian diet of Genesis 1:29 precedes the dominion granted in Genesis 2:15: our dominion, he argues, does not justify abuse and exploitation of the animal creation. “The

⁷⁰ Alistair McFadyen articulates a thorough relational account of personhood and sin, wherein the relationality of humanity is understood to be transformed by responding in worship to the dynamic relationality of the triune God. The necessity of this transformation is seen in our inextricable involvement in corrupted networks of relationality in creation, which shape and are shaped by the pathological corruption in ourselves and in created relationships at the macro-level. Under this understanding, the modern notion of freedom-as-autonomous-choice is demonstrated as illusory and harmful to efforts for right relationship; efforts which, resultantly, require the individual to will as God wills in an eschatologically-oriented and worshipful process of attending to others in their particularity and relationality. This relational understanding of personhood and sin underlies the discussion of grace sanctifying relationality in chapter 3. See Alistair I. McFadyen, *The Call to Personhood: A Christian Theory of the Individual in Social Relationships* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990)); and McFadyen, *Bound to Sin*. See also Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983): the illusory nature of moral autonomy is a key element of Hauerwas’ theological framework.

characteristic thrust of scripture certainly distinguishes between animals and humans but it does so in such a way that the commonality of both is also stressed in relation to creation as a whole.”⁷¹ Adhering to the traditional assumption of human uniqueness among the animal creation – and in this way diverging from (for example) Clough, who is cautious about any model which distinguishes in a binary fashion between “humans” and “animals”⁷² – Linzey argues that the position of authority into which humans were elected is a position of responsibility. Called to live as Christ in the world, humans created in God’s image are to play the role of the servant species; making sacrifices if necessary (even if all that is sacrificed is the satisfaction of base appetites) for those species lower in the created order.⁷³ “Lordship – from a Christological perspective – is inextricably related to service.”⁷⁴ Christ’s sacrifice, Linzey argues, did not abolish the need for animal sacrifice⁷⁵ but inverted it, being the willing and loving sacrifice of the ‘higher’ for the ‘lower’. Our relation to other animals, supposed to be modelled on this sacrifice, has gone astray: “The unique moral capacities of humans demand of them a loving and costly relationship with the natural world.”⁷⁶

Tied into Linzey’s take on stewardship is his model of “*theos-rights*,”⁷⁷ a theological reconception of the rights-language more commonly associated with animal rights philosophers such as Peter Singer⁷⁸ and Tom

⁷¹ Andrew Linzey, *Animal Theology*, 34-5.

⁷² “We treat ‘human’ and ‘non-human’ as parallel categories, instead of recognising that ‘human’ names one species of animal and ‘non-human’ names about 1,250,000 species... There is no obvious species-neutral reason [why] the human/non-human boundary should be considered of greater magnitude to most other species boundaries.” Clough, *On Animals*, 74.

⁷³ Linzey, *Animal Theology*, 72.

⁷⁴ Linzey, *Why Animal Suffering Matters*, 15.

⁷⁵ The Hebrew Bible practice of animal sacrifice will be explored further in chapters 4-5, in contrast with the modern mass industrialised practice of factory farming and my theological-ethical framework of dietary pacifism.

⁷⁶ Linzey, *Animal Theology*, 105-6.

⁷⁷ Linzey, *Animal Theology*, 19-25.

⁷⁸ See for example Peter Singer (ed), *In Defence of Animals* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985). Singer’s philosophical model favours the language of ‘animal liberation’ over rights, and should in any case be divested from Regan’s more anthropocentric ‘rights’ model: Singer’s can be categorised as a form of preference utilitarianism, wherein the preferences of all creatures capable of having preferences (including, then, the majority of animals which humans have conscious dealings with) are to be considered. Singer’s utilitarianism is objectionable to Christian theology in the same way that most utilitarian theories of ethics are: in advocating a methodology of attaining maximum efficacy in meeting preferences, or ensuring happiness, the particularity and relationality of individuals (human or nonhuman) are subsumed into the rubric of the “greatest good for the greatest number.” As I argue in chapter 3, Christians are called – as servants of the triune God, who freely

Regan.⁷⁹ Linzey proposes that creation exists for God, and God is for creation: all creatures are therefore blessed in relation to the Creator, and if this is so then humans – created in God’s image – cannot do other than live for creation, *imitatio Dei*. Humans must do what other creatures cannot: we must “honour, respect and rejoice in [other creatures]... If God is for them, we cannot be against them.”⁸⁰

Animals have God-given rights. But it is vital to grasp the theological logic underpinning this position: Animals are God’s creatures, they have intrinsic value not just as collectivities but as individuals. The Spirit is the source of their life and some creatures are endowed with God-given capacities for intelligence and sentience. Humans are made in God’s image, and we are given power over animals, which, Christologically-interpreted, is the power of God to care for them as God himself cares. In speaking of their “rights” we conceptualise what we owe to them objectively as a matter of justice because they are God’s creatures.⁸¹

Put simply, all animals have a right to be valued as God values them. Linzey does well to avoid many of the theological dangers associated with the adoption of the secular-liberal language of “rights”,⁸² but the problem

created, became flesh for, and will redeem all creatures – to live for the other in a way which recognises and rejoices in their particularity. Christian ethicists (which is to say, all Christians), should be sufficiently wary of sin’s perpetual presence in creation to be highly sceptical of any deontological maxim such as that upon which utilitarianism hangs: Christian ethics is teleological, focused toward the penultimate end of serving God in the world and the ultimate end of the kingdom.

⁷⁹ See for example Tom Regan, *The Case for Animal Rights* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2004). Chapter 1 of Linzey’s *Why Animal Suffering Matters* offers a good example of Linzey’s placement of rights language in a theological framework, and therefore of the debt he owes to Regan.

⁸⁰ Linzey, *Animal Theology*, 24-5.

⁸¹ Andrew Linzey, “The Divine Worth of Other Creatures: A Response to Reviews of *Animal Theology*”, *Review & Expositor* 102.1 (2005), 121.

⁸² In the work of postliberal theologians, such as Stanley Hauerwas (whose work is engaged with closely in chapter 4) and John Milbank, the secular-liberal language of ‘rights’ – and the worldview they are seen to grow out of – are deemed inimical to good theology. For Hauerwas, the language of rights stresses the individualism (the collapse of relationality into particularity) of secular liberalism, wherein people “no longer trust their lives to the hands of those they live with” and so self-defensive legal measures take precedence over genuine relationality and community. Stanley Hauerwas and John Berkman, “The Chief End of All Flesh”, *Theology Today* 49.2 (1992), 196-208 at 200.

Of particular concern for theologians interested in nonhuman animals (and the whole of creation) is the reality that rights-language is a product of the Cartesian worldview wherein rationality is logically a prerequisite of rights. Therefore, those with limited or ‘deficient’ rationality – foetuses, babies, those suffering from mental illness or learning disabilities, and indeed animals – can receive rights only insofar as they reflect the interest of ‘fully rational’ human beings. Another potential pitfall is that rights-

remains that rights-language itself does no more to call humans to relate to other animals than do the traditional formulations of stewardship upon which Linzey builds. Animals' rights are grounded as *our* duty to *them* as an act of fealty to *God* – “what we owe them objectively as a matter of justice because they are God’s creatures” – and in this way the language of *theos*-rights continues to distance humans from the nonhuman creation. Animals have rights because God says so: concerns remain, despite Linzey’s claim that animals have value as intrinsic individuals, that their particularity – and therefore the potential for transformed relationship with them⁸³ – is in this way undermined.

Stephen Webb has been critical of what he perceives as a theological accommodation of the ‘animal rights’ movement. Webb suggests that if all creatures have the intrinsic right to be valued as God values them, then one of two things is true: either God values animals differently and therefore has favourites (meaning that this is the model humans should adopt in their relations with the animal creation), or humans are incapable of living up to God’s love.⁸⁴ For example, I cannot value an ant or a rat or even a dog as much as I value my mother; and if I met someone that could, my reaction would more likely be one of consternation than admiration. This should not be surprising:⁸⁵ born imperfect and inextricably bound in the distorted relational networks which testify to sin’s perpetual presence in creation, we are incapable of living up to God’s love through our own willing. More simply, we cannot love as God loves (just as we can’t know as God knows) because we are not God. Therefore, Webb argues, if neither of the two possibilities he has raised are acceptable, then the language of *theos*-rights may not be the best way for Christians to promote animal welfare.

language essentially seeks to argue from *similarity* (animals are similar to us in these ways, and therefore we should care for them); a position which is again theologically problematic if we are to take seriously the wondrous diversity of God’s creation, all of which God is responsible for and all of which God declared good.

⁸³ This is so because if we do not recognise the particularity of another’s individuality, we cannot accurately perceive our relationship with them; which is to say that, without recognising the particularity of the other, the only way we can understand our relationship with them is by collapsing them into the relationship. In this way, the individuality of the other is compromised as their only meaning becomes their relationship to us. This is why, if we do not accept that animals are particular and relational individuals, we can have “pets” but never have “companion animals”.

⁸⁴ Stephen H. Webb, *On God and Dogs: A Christian Theology of Compassion for Animals* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 40.

⁸⁵ Chapter 3 explores in more detail what it actually means, theologically, for something to be “natural”, in the context of a discussion of sin and grace within creation.

I disagree with Webb that the human inability to value others as God values them is sufficient reason to abandon the talk of rights altogether. When we say the Lord's Prayer, we ask God to forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Do we claim, in so doing, to be able to forgive as God forgives? The answer is clearly (one would hope) in the negative. Should the Lord's Prayer then be abandoned as an unworkable model of Christian living? Regardless of whether we can reach the ideals we draw from scripture, tradition, prayer, and worship (which, as fallible beings, we cannot), the ideal is what we are called as disciples of Christ to strive towards. The necessity of faith, worship, the formation of character in community, and – above all – justification and sanctification through grace, lay clear the intimate relationship between our sinfulness and our calling to be perfect as our Creator is perfect.⁸⁶

This is not to say that there is no better way to conceive of human-animal relationality within creation: indeed, where Webb accuses Linzey of going too far, I would suggest that the continued under-emphasis on animal particularity means Linzey has not gone far enough. Webb proceeds to argue that, for theology, any talk of abstract "rights" must be "preceded by and grounded in acts of charity,"⁸⁷ which are themselves rooted in an understanding of grace and the proper human response to it. "We strive for excellence of practice, knowing that we can never earn the excellence of grace."⁸⁸ Theological accounts of human-nonhuman relationality like those advanced by Linzey, Cunningham, and Webb emphasise human distinctiveness and dominion as necessarily leading to human responsibility for creation; a responsibility which involves our being the servant species, and so living out "good Christian stewardship for all of God's Creation."⁸⁹ To use Webb's language, this is indeed a charitable reading of human dominion within creation; if, that is, one has already accepted that human creation *imago Dei* and election to dominion creates in every way a clear and absolute line between human and nonhuman animals. Our shared mutuality, and the ways in which our flourishing connects to and depends upon theirs, find little room in such an argument.

⁸⁶ Mt. 5:48.

⁸⁷ Webb, *On God and Dogs*, 43.

⁸⁸ Serene Jones, "Graced Practices: Excellence and Freedom in the Christian Life", in Miroslav Volf and Dorothy Bass, eds, *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B Eerdmans, 2002), 70.

⁸⁹ Christian Vegetarian Association UK website, online at <http://www.christianvegetarian.co.uk/> [accessed 15 March 2013].

Linzey's emphasis on *theos*-rights, rooted in the language of 'higher' and 'lower' creatures, can in this way be understood as a Christological reading of human stewardship. We see, at the Cross, that God's attitude to the whole creation is generosity: he gives humans the strength to resist evil by becoming human. Christ's sacrifice was that of the higher being for the lower,⁹⁰ and this must be the paradigm for human dominion as outlined in Genesis 1:26.⁹¹ Human creatures are totally dependent upon and helpless before God, and yet God's grace justifies and sanctifies us: this is the very nature and etymology of grace, coming as it does as a gift which cannot be earned. Following this pattern, seeking to fulfil our creation and election *imago Dei*, humans are called to be present for creation as Christ is – here dominion entails service, responsibility, and stewardship rather than domination. Furthermore, for Linzey, God's nature as creator and sustainer of all means that God cannot only enter into *human* suffering. The crucifixion – and the resurrection, and what it inaugurates – was and is for all creation: where there is suffering, God suffers too. And as creatures made *imago Dei*, "the uniqueness of humanity consists in its ability to become the servant species."⁹²

Linzey's animal theology, itself anthropocentric, supplements the conclusion that anthropomist theologies are to be rejected. Whether it is sufficient to stop at this point, as Linzey does – and so leave unquestioned the implicit hierarchy of creation, wherein human responsibility is not a call to genuine relationship with other animals but an act of responsibility to God – is another question entirely; and one I hope to answer. *Contra* the ecotheologians, Linzey's understanding of stewardship is one which recognises that nature is creation fallen, that humans cannot restore creation, and which therefore aims to care as God cares for creation's creatures at an individual and relational level.⁹³ Whether or not we accept Linzey's depiction of stewardship – which retains the image of humans as representative of God in creation⁹⁴ – the serious concerns he raises about

⁹⁰ Linzey, *Animal Theology*, 30-3.

⁹¹ Gen. 1:26 – "Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.'"

⁹² Linzey, *Animal Theology*, 50-7.

⁹³ Linzey, "So Near and Yet So Far", 356.

⁹⁴ This is in agreement with the declaration of the Lambeth Conference (1998) that "human beings... are living bridges between heaven and earth." Lambeth Conference Resolutions 1998, Resolution I.8.a, online at

ecotheologies are worth remembering. Linzey does not make exclusivist claims about human particularity or relationality, but the inherent monodirectionality of stewardship theology leaves the difficulty of talking meaningfully about animal relationality intact.

Conclusion

To consider how best to move forwards from the stewardship theologies examined in this chapter towards a relational account of the human place in creation, it is worth returning to Neil Messer; namely, to the four “diagnostic questions” he poses for responsible theological anthropology. What attitude does our action manifest towards the material world? Is the course of action an attempt to conform to the *imago Dei* or to become *sicut Deus* (like God)? What attitude does our action manifest towards past human failures? Is our proposed action good news for the marginalised?⁹⁵ Self-awareness and reflexivity are paramount to a theology of human-animal relationality; and at the heart of this self-awareness is the knowledge that we are not and cannot be *sicut Deus*. I would add to this: not only are human creatures not *sicut Deus*, but neither are we a bridge between heaven and earth,⁹⁶ and nor are we the tenant-managers of God’s creation. We were created in God’s image and are called to respond to our Creator, but if we are to avoid lapsing into a kind of speciesist isolationism, we need to acknowledge that “theologically the human/non-human difference is vocational.”⁹⁷ Any theology which advocates isolationism – be that of church from world,⁹⁸ or of human from nonhuman – is a direct abrogation of the Lordship of God, who created, affirmed, and will redeem all creation. Renaissance philosopher Michel de Montaigne rails against what he sees as this very human arrogance:

Man is the most blighted and frail of all creatures and, moreover, the most given to pride. This creature knows and sees that he is lodged down here, among the mire and shit of the world, bound and nailed

<<http://www.lambethconference.org/resolutions/1998/1998-1-8.cfm>> [accessed 30 November 2012].

⁹⁵ Messer, “Humans, Animals, Evolution and Ends”, 218-220.

⁹⁶ Lambeth Conference Resolutions 1998, Resolution I.8.a.

⁹⁷ Clough, *On Animals*, 76.

⁹⁸ Accounts of the relationship of church to world, and the implications of this for human-nonhuman relationality and ecclesiological approaches to dietary ethics, will be explored in more detail in chapter 4 and this thesis’ second part.

to the deadest, most stagnant part of the universe, in the lowest storey of the building, the farthest from the vault of heaven; his characteristics place him in the third and lowest category of animate creatures, yet, in thought, he sets himself above the circle of the Moon, bringing the very heavens under his feet. The vanity of this same thought makes him equal himself to God; attribute to himself God's mode of being; pick himself out and set himself apart from the mass of other creatures; and (although they are his fellows and his brothers) carve out for them such helpings of force or faculties as he thinks fit... *We are so much more jealous of our own interests than of those of our Creator that not one of us is more shocked when he sees himself made equal to God than reduced to the ranks of the other animals [emphasis mine].* We must trample down this stupid vanity, violently and boldly shaking the absurd foundations on which we base such false opinions. So long as Man thinks he has means and powers deriving from himself he will never acknowledge what he owes to his Master.⁹⁹

It is a recurrent problem in exclusively anthropocentric theology that the human creature is cast as unique, not only in its relationship with God, but also in its capacity for relationship among other creatures. In chapter 3, I outline a theology of human-animal relationality which maintains human uniqueness in our power and responsibility within creation, while at the same time recognising the profound commonality between humans and other animals. Such an account is sympathetic to Clough's claim that

To conceive of our place as separate to that of all other animals... risks ignoring key aspects of what it means to be human that intersect with what it means to be animal. It is therefore important to recognise that humans dwell in the place of animals before God, though they occupy a distinctive territory within it.¹⁰⁰

Mindful of this, I intend to move away from traditional formulations of stewardship by emphasising that our response to God requires not only attention to the dynamics of inter-human relationality (striving to will as God wills in our inter-human relationships) but also of human-animal

⁹⁹ Michel de Montaigne, "An apology for Raymond Sebond", in Michel de Montaigne, trans. M. A. Screech, *The Essays of Michel de Montaigne* (London: Penguin, 1991), 505, 545-6.

¹⁰⁰ Clough, *On Animals*, 44.

relationality. In this way, I affirm the particularity and relationality of individual nonhuman animals; the necessary foundation for then moving (in chapters 4-5) to consider what kinds of relationship are proper for the humanity of the human and the animality of the animal. Our responsibility is not to God and other humans at a relational level, and then – derived from our responsibility to God – to the environment at an administrative level. Our responsibility is to God, at the level of worship, and from there to all creatures, in both their particularity (in so far as we can understand it) and their involvement in the wider networks of relationship which constitute creation.

According to Webb, “A theology of animals must be dialogical, both committed and open... rooted in an experience of grace.”¹⁰¹ Reflecting on the myriad ways in which our relationship to the nonhuman animal creation is distorted and corrupt, Norman Wirzba notes how far we are today from being rooted in such an experience.

The brokenness of creation and the degradation of its food webs demonstrate that we have hardly begun to understand what real intimacy is and what it requires. The disrespect and the violence with which we treat the world’s human and nonhuman eaters shows that for many of us the grace of intimacy is hardly yet a taste.¹⁰²

The grace of God and the grace of intimacy are a direct assault on the kind of anthropomorphism Montaigne takes to task in the above excerpt – the absurd notion that because we were made in God’s image we are, ourselves, mini-Gods, and the rest of creation is therefore infinitely below us. To experience grace is to know that what we have, *all* we have, is gift;¹⁰³ and furthermore that we are infinitely closer to our fellow animals than we are to our mutual Creator. In the words of Barth, “Those who handle life as a divine loan will above all treat it with respect.”¹⁰⁴ It would appear, then, that any effort to construct a theological account of human-animal relationality requires a deeper and more holistically *relational* anthropology than is present in the stewardship theologies examined thus far. What it means to be human – created *imago Dei*, trapped in the depths

¹⁰¹ Webb, *On God and Dogs*, 40-3.

¹⁰² Norman Wirzba, *Food and Faith: A Theology of Eating* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 233.

¹⁰³ Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 27.

¹⁰⁴ Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, III/4, 338.

of sin, freed by grace, called to relationship, called to be perfect, promised reconciliation and redemption – will therefore underpin what it means to be human in relationship with nonhuman animals. On the theological framework of these opening chapters, I aim to build an ethic of dietary pacifism: if I were to construct this ethic without considering theologically what it means for humans and animals to be in relationship, I would risk maintaining the monodirectional understandings of human relationality within creation that I hope to subvert. If this were so, I could not claim to have satisfactorily answered Messer's third diagnostic question: that is, what attitude does the theological work done here take towards past failures? As it is, I hope to find positive answers to all four of Messer's questions; and it is through systematic theological reflection on human relationality that I hope to discern those answers.

3. God's Relational Creatures

A Theology of Human-Animal Relationality

In chapter 2, I surveyed a number of theological models of stewardship, concluding that despite their value for challenging harmfully anthropocentric anthropologies, they retain a number of problems for Christians concerned to think about how they relate to nonhuman animals. Key among these was the complaint that, by emphasising human action within creation as an act of responsibility to God alone, stewardship theology renders itself “purely vertical”;¹⁰⁵ undermining efforts to recognise our responsibilities to, and shared mutuality with, other animals. In this chapter I take a step towards remedying this, constructing a relational theology concerned with human relationships with both humans and other animals. The ultimate claim I seek to make is that Christians are called to live and will as *God lives and wills* in relation with other animals (as well as with humans, and with the wider environment); and that this will require attention to the particularity of the animal other, including the things we share with other animals and the things that differentiate us. From there, and in conversation with pacifist theologian Stanley Hauerwas, I will outline the dietary implications of this theology; for Christians as individuals, and for churches as communities. In this chapter, in conversation with Stanley Grenz, G. C. Berkouwer, Al McFadyen, and David Clough, among others, I engage with doctrines of human creation *imago Dei*, the Trinity, Incarnation, sin, covenant, and eschatology.

The construction of a theological account of human-animal relationality begins with the doctrine of creation; specifically, of human creation *imago Dei*. This follows and expands the discussion in chapter 2 about theological articulations of human distinctiveness, and how these articulations affect notions about the particularity and relationality of nonhuman animals. From here, the relational interpretation of human creation *imago Dei* – the notion humans are called to live *for* others in relationship – will be outlined and defended. This defence will involve consideration of the doctrine of the Trinity, whose divine interrelationship

¹⁰⁵ Richard Bauckham, *Living With Other Creatures: Green Exegesis and Theology* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2011), 3.

underpins relational theology. Upon these foundations, other doctrines – Incarnation, sin, covenant, and eschatology – will be explored. It is not my aim here to construct anything like a systematic theology of animals¹⁰⁶ or of relationality:¹⁰⁷ there are already excellent works along these lines, and in any case I lack adequate space in this chapter to do so. Rather, my intention is to draw out and reflect upon theological understandings of human-animal relationality. Questions about what the Incarnation means for human relationality, whether or not nonhuman animals are capable of sin, what God’s covenantal activity with other animals means for our relationships with them, and how human-animal relationality might be transformed come the *eschaton* all serve this end. More than this, they furnish the central argument of this chapter – that the human calling to will as God wills in a fallen world is not limited in scope to interactions within the relational networks that constitute human society alone.

In God’s Image: the *imago Dei* and Human-Animal Relationality

As mentioned in the previous chapter, human creation *imago Dei* – particularly, the substantialist interpretation of what God’s image involves – has long been equated with human distinctiveness within creation. Taken to an extreme, the central place given to human creation *imago Dei*¹⁰⁸ in the creation narratives can overshadow the significance of God’s creative act itself – in other words, our being created in God’s image can come to obscure the significance of our being creatures. This is largely due to the older, substantialist understanding of human creation *imago Dei*,¹⁰⁹ wherein the image is perceived as something essential to the human creature: opposite to the relational understanding of the divine image, the substantialist reading focuses on the *imago Dei* as an ontic reality in human creatures as they are now.¹¹⁰ God’s image is most commonly identified in

¹⁰⁶ See David Clough, *On Animals: Volume 1; Systematic Theology* (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2012).

¹⁰⁷ See Alistair I. McFadyen, *The Call to Personhood: A Christian Theory of the Individual in Social Relationships* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

¹⁰⁸ Gen. 1:26-27.

¹⁰⁹ See the discussion with David Cunningham in chapter 2 for more about the substantialist understanding of human creation *imago Dei*.

¹¹⁰ G. C. Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B Eerdmans, 1962), 40.

the 'superior' capacities of reason and volition:¹¹¹ if deemed to have neither of these,¹¹² nonhuman animals are infinitely distant from humans, whose creation *imago Dei* lifts them above and separates from their fellow creatures. In the *City of God*, Augustine diagnosed humanity as halfway between animals and angels, on the grounds of our reason:

Man is a kind of mean between beasts and angels. The beast is an irrational and mortal animal, the angel is a rational and immortal one, and man is between them, lower than the angels but higher than the beasts: a rational and mortal animal, having mortality in common with the beasts and reason in common with the angels.¹¹³

Commenting on the substantialist *imago Dei*, and the way it separates humanity from creation, David Cunningham calls it "the most significant *theological* justification for claiming a significant distinction between human beings and other creatures."¹¹⁴ As discussed in chapter 2, however, Cunningham rejects the substantialist interpretation on scriptural, theological, and philosophical grounds. Interestingly, he does not engage with the substantialist tendency to equate God's image with what is typically considered to separate humans from all other animals. As was the case for Augustine, this has often been described as our advanced rationality: understood in this way, the model of *imago Dei* can become a tool to support anthropocentric (even anthropomomist) worldviews.¹¹⁵ William Greenway has noted that

¹¹¹ "For Aquinas, only intellectual nature is free; humans cause their own behaviour, while animals, representing pure passion, lack self-control" (Stephen Webb, *On God and Dogs: A Christian Theology of Compassion for Animals* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 33). It is worth noting that although this claim has remained popular, the level of sophistication and scientific support behind it has changed little since Aquinas' time. See also Stanley J. Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 142-3.

¹¹² The discussion of animal responsibility and relationality within this chapter aims to cast serious doubt on biological claims for human distinctiveness such as these.

¹¹³ Augustine, *City of God*, 9.15. Available online at <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1201.htm> [accessed 15 March 2013].

¹¹⁴ David S. Cunningham, "The Way of All Flesh: Rethinking the *Imago Dei*", in Celia Deane-Drummond and David Clough, ed., *Creaturely Theology: On God, Humans and Other Animals* (London: SCM Press, 2009), 100-117 at 106.

¹¹⁵ Andrew Linzey roots this idolisation of rationality in the shift towards scholastic theology: in drawing the shift from Francis of Assisi's "emphasis on a wider kinship between all creatures" to the scholastics' privileging of specifically and exclusively human rationality, he sees this shift as the reason why "Despite the lip service paid to the notion of the incarnation, Christian spirituality has historically been less and less concerned with embodied existence, either human or animal, and much more with its renunciation." Andrew Linzey, *Animal Rites: Liturgies of Animal Care* (London: SCM, 1999), 7-9.

We are tempted to turn the unmerited gift of our creation in the image of God into a claim of greatness, into a reason not to love those who are not our equals. We often resemble the man in the parable of the unmerciful servant, who owed a king a great debt, was forgiven it, and then did not extend the same grace to those beneath him.¹¹⁶

As the reference to the parable of the ungrateful servant suggests, one possible criticism of the substantialist understanding of the *imago Dei* is that it appears dangerously hubristic, claiming understanding of God's nature¹¹⁷ and elevating human creatures closer to their Creator than is scripturally warranted.¹¹⁸ G. C. Berkouwer noted, and criticised, this when he wrote that

It is regrettable that the valid emphasis in the dogma of the image of God in the wider sense [that is, what makes humans distinctively human] has often taken on the form of an analysis of the ontic structure of man, e.g., as defined by person, reason and freedom. For it is undeniable that Scripture does not support such an interpretation. Scripture is concerned with man in his relation to God, in which he can never be seen as man-in-himself, and surely not with man's "essence" described as self or person.¹¹⁹

The impetus to live transformed lives, arising from humble thanksgiving, is endangered by any reading of the *imago Dei* which seeks to locate the divine image as something innate to the human creature, and not a state of being from which humanity has fallen. In the conclusion to chapter 2, Michel de Montaigne was quoted, lamenting the self-centred hubris of substantialist accounts of the human, and arguing that "So long as Man thinks he has means and powers deriving from himself he will never acknowledge what he owes to his Master."¹²⁰ These powers deriving from oneself are those allegedly unique human faculties which substantialist interpretations attribute to the *imago Dei* – although gifted to humanity by

¹¹⁶ William Greenway, "Animals and the Love of God," *The Christian Century* 117.19 (2000), 680-1 at 681.

¹¹⁷ Karen Kilby, "Aquinas, the Trinity and the Limits of Understanding", *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 7 (2005), 414-27.

¹¹⁸ Berkouwer, *Man*, 50-1.

¹¹⁹ Berkouwer, *Man*, 59-60.

¹²⁰ Michel de Montaigne, trans. M. A. Screech, *The Essays of Michel de Montaigne* (London: Penguin, 1991), 546.

God in creation, our rationality (for example) is now fundamental to human beings and not dependent on our relationship with our Creator. If the image of God is thought to be innate to us, there is a risk that our debt to the God whose image we bear will not be adequately acknowledged, and right response to the Creator not given. *Pace* Augustine, I believe we can say with reasonable confidence that at least some nonhuman animals have rationality and agency of a kind; and therefore might be spoken of as relational and responsible beings.

This is not a maverick claim, separate from the scriptural witness. The prophets and psalmists tell us of the nonhuman creation honouring YHWH: in Deutero-Isaiah, God proclaims that “the wild animals will honour me” in response to his providing “water in the wilderness, streams in the desert.”¹²¹ In response to God’s restoration of God’s chosen people, making the uninhabitable places once again inhabitable, the wild animals honour their Lord.¹²² It is this very *response*, the performance of different behaviour in response to different external stimulus (praising God in response to water in the wilderness), that suggests both rationality and relationality. Or take the book of Job: when God answers Job’s questioning with the recitation of a list of animals outside Job’s control, animals with lives of their own who look only to God and not humans for sustenance – animals such as the horse who “laughs at fear, and is not dismayed”¹²³ – Job is reminded of his place.¹²⁴ This place is simultaneously that of a creature worthy of God’s response, and of only one creature among many¹²⁵ who look to their Creator and exercise responsibility of a kind.¹²⁶

¹²¹ Isa. 43:20.

¹²² John Goldingay and David Payne, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Isaiah 40-55*, v. 1 (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 298-300.

¹²³ Job 39:22. Writing on the subject of anthropomorphism in passages such as these, Richard Bauckham argues that the writers here “do not indulge in undisciplined projection of human thoughts and emotions onto animals, but stay close to the animal’s observed behaviour, attributing only emotions quite plausibly expressed by this behaviour. They respect the mystery of other beings, while treating them as subjects with awareness and feelings akin to some of our own.” *The Bible and Ecology: Rediscovering the Community of Creation* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010), 53. Cf. fn. 33.

¹²⁴ David H. Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence: A Theological Anthropology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 305.

¹²⁵ Commenting on God’s animal-filled rebuke of Job, Wirzba writes that the key point is the revelation that “Creation exists for our health and nature, but it is not made for our exclusive enjoyment.” Norman Wirzba, “Eating in ignorance: Do we know where our food comes from?” *Christian Century* May 30 (2012), 24-7 at 27. Bauckham notes that “To say that humans are the crown of creation is not the same as saying that the rest of creation exists solely for them.” Bauckham, *Living With Other Creatures*, 5.

¹²⁶ In the course of a theological evaluation of how nonhuman animals are utilized to define human identity, Rachel Muers highlights the idea that Behemoth is not one single

Even in the act of creation, when God made humans in God's image, we hear that both humans and other animals receive the breath of life – *nephesh hayyah*. This is the witness of scripture, even if numerous translations, from the KJV to the NRSV, have obscured this reality in subtle and not-so-subtle ways, often rendering *nephesh hayyah* as “living soul” or “living being” with regards to humans and “living creature” with regards to nonhuman animals.¹²⁷ Such translations form part of the exegetical process Clough describes as a preference “for the coherence of a particular thought-world over attending properly to the lives of other animals,”¹²⁸ consistent with neither the scriptural witness nor (as discussed below) modern ethology.

The book of Jonah is rich in witness to the complexity of God's nonhuman animals. A human creature is elected by God to a distinct task within creation, and initially and repeatedly refuses to undertake it. But nonhuman animals have their part to play in Jonah's prophetic calling; from the whale who intervenes in the ocean crossing, to the pack animals of Nineveh whom YHWH expresses explicit care for. God cares for God's creatures, who are shown to exert agency and even bear responsibility of a kind; and this demonstration of God's love for all animals is reminiscent of the instruction to Noah to ensure the survival of more than the merely human.¹²⁹ In contrast, Jonah does not even consider the fate of Nineveh's nonhuman animals.¹³⁰ Jonah is emblematic of humanity within creation: powerful, elected to live in God's image and so live in relationship; but reluctant to take up the responsibilities of that election, and keen to reduce

revered creature (such as a hippopotamus), but The Beast, one symbolic creature representing all human animals. God calls Job to look and learn from Behemoth (40:15) – Job and Behemoth are both created by God, depend on God, will be redeemed by God, and this common origin and end means they are not wholly other to one another. Perhaps part of the problem with Job's friends, when they respond critically to being compared to other animals (see 12:7 and 18:3), is that they are unwilling to acknowledge their creatureliness. Rachel Muers, “The Animals We Write On: Encountering Animals in Texts”, in *Creaturely Theology*, 138-50 at 144-5.

¹²⁷ Clough, *On Animals*, 31-2. The writer of Ecclesiastes seems to understand the significance of this in a way more anthropocentric translators have not: “For the fate of humans and the fate of animals is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath, and humans have no advantage over the animals; for all is vanity. All go to one place; all are from the dust, and all turn to dust again. Who knows whether the human spirit goes upwards and the spirit of animals goes downwards to the earth?” (Ecc. 3:19-21)

¹²⁸ Clough, *On Animals*, 147-8.

¹²⁹ See Gen. 6-8.

¹³⁰ Jon. 4:11 – “And should I not be concerned about Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who do not know their right hand from their left, and also many animals?” Cf. Deut. 7:13-14.

the scope of his moral concern when possible. The same cannot be said for the king of Nineveh, who not only hears the judgement of YHWH and responds to it in the affirmative, but involves the animals of his city in the rituals of lament and confession. “Human beings and animals shall be covered with sackcloth,” he decrees, “and they shall cry mightily to God” (Jon. 3:7). The responsibility of nonhuman animals to their Creator, and the commonality and relationality they share with us, are affirmed in the king’s order of repentance.

The field of cognitive ethology provides numerous data augmenting the scriptural witness. From his studies of wolves at play, Marc Bekoff has concluded that, “It’s not unusual to see known mating behaviours intermixed in highly variable kaleidoscopic sequences along with actions that are used during fighting, looking for prey, and avoiding becoming someone else’s dinner.”¹³¹ In play, as in other activities, myriad gestures and forms are reused and thus transfigured through these variations of combinations, suggesting real interaction and real *reaction*. Play is spontaneous, reactive, and educative; it rewires the brain and hones cognitive skills;¹³² fair play is encouraged and cheaters excluded;¹³³ the ‘bow’ used by individual wolves to initiate play is reused as an apology if one bites too hard;¹³⁴ larger and stronger individuals use self-handicapping and role-reversal to ensure everyone involved can play safely.¹³⁵ Examples from other species abound: inequity aversion in capuchin monkeys;¹³⁶ magpie funerals;¹³⁷ an elephant matriarch slowing down the herd so a crippled younger elephant could keep up¹³⁸ – in all these cases individual animals of some species respond to other individual animals both internal

¹³¹ Marc Bekoff, *Animals Matter: A Biologist Explains Why We Should Treat Animals with Compassion and Respect* (Boston, MA: Shambhala Publications, 2007), 94.

¹³² Marc Bekoff and Jessica Pierce, “Wild Justice: Honour and Fairness among Beasts at Play”, *American Journal of Play* 1:4 (2009), 451-75 at 459.

¹³³ Bekoff and Pierce, “Wild Justice”, 460-2.

¹³⁴ Bekoff and Pierce, “Wild Justice”, 465.

¹³⁵ Bekoff and Pierce, “Wild Justice”, 463.

¹³⁶ Bekoff and Pierce, “Wild Justice”, 466.

¹³⁷ Marc Bekoff, “Animal emotions, wild justice and why they matter: Grieving magpies, a pissy baboon, and empathic elephants”, *Emotion, Space and Society* xxx (2009), 1-4 at 1.

¹³⁸ Bekoff, “Animal emotions”, 2. See also Marc Bekoff, *Minding Animals: Awareness, Emotions, and Heart* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); David DeGrazia, *Taking Animals Seriously: Mental Life and Moral Status* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). Commenting on animal sentience and potential to experience suffering, DeGrazia notes that “the available evidence suggests that most or all vertebrates, and perhaps some invertebrates, can suffer.” DeGrazia, *Taking Animals Seriously*, 123.

and external to their family units in ways suggesting agency and degrees of accountability.¹³⁹

Having examined similar data about animal capacities and agency, Clough argues that “What we now know about non-human capacities makes clear that we have much more in common with other animals than we previously thought... [These] new areas of knowledge constitute a remarkable scientific illustration of the theological affirmation of the commonality of living things.”¹⁴⁰ Later in the same book, Clough goes on to defend himself against the claim that he is denying that “humans possess – like all other animals – a unique and distinctive combination of capacities and attributes that make us what we are.”¹⁴¹ He is, however, denying – and I would join him in this denial – that the human animal is totally separate from all other creatures: “humans dwell in the place of animals before God, though they occupy a distinctive territory within it,”¹⁴² as do all animals.

My argument here is not that there are no differences between human beings and other animals... My objection is to the routine and thoughtless, theological or philosophical, drawing up of a list of attributes supposedly possessed by all human beings, and excluding all non-human beings. In the first place, many of the entries on such lists are inaccurate: the more we understand about the lives of other creatures the more obvious it becomes that intelligence, rationality, self-consciousness, relationality, morality, culture, and so on, and so on, define at best a spectrum of ability on which different creatures can be placed at different points. To believe ourselves to be the unique possessors of such attributes misleads us, both by underestimating the capabilities of the creatures erroneously denied possession of these attributes and by inaccurately characterising the particularity of the human.¹⁴³

¹³⁹ Responding to charges of anthropomorphism in attributing prosocial and affiliative life to animals, Bekoff both accepts and absolutely rejects such an allegation. By definition, our language in relation to anything is anthropomorphic, because as individual human creatures we see “through a glass darkly” (NRSV, 1 Cor. 13:12) and are unable to know the inner life of any other individual creature. However, to move from this to the claim that, because our language is and always will be inadequate, other animals categorically do not possess what we describe in our language is to curiously invert the situation, by once again placing absolute power in the symbols that human words are.

¹⁴⁰ Clough, *On Animals*, 30.

¹⁴¹ Clough, *On Animals*, 44.

¹⁴² Clough, *On Animals*, 44.

¹⁴³ Clough, *On Animals*, 71.

In short, humans are distinct creatures of God; as are cows, crows, snakes, wasps. Our distinctiveness might be argued to lie in our creation *imago Dei*, or our election to dominion, reception of revelation, or even freedom to respond to grace (constrained by temporality and sin as that freedom may be). Wherever it lies, however, our distinctiveness is not uniqueness *apart from* other animals: it is uniqueness *among* animals, and to make more of it than is warranted – to claim that it separates humanity from creation – is to arrogantly overstate our status as creatures of God. As Clough argues elsewhere,

Christians have no reason for insecurity about the place of human beings in God's good purposes, and no need to establish their identity at the cost of diminishing the importance of others of God's creatures. We stand in need of a theological account... not only to do justice to the particularity of the other creatures God made alongside human beings, but to rescue theological anthropology from implausibility and incoherence as well.¹⁴⁴

The construction of a theology of human-animal relationality is a task which neither affirms nor denies human distinctiveness within creation. Rather, it affirms that human distinctiveness cannot be affirmed by denying either the particularity of other animals or the relationality we share with them. Just as stewardship does not need to be defined in monodirectional terms, neither does human distinctiveness need to be defined by denying the presence of certain capacities in other animals. This is particularly so when said capacities (e.g. rationality) are empirically observable in at least some parts of the animal creation. Human creation *imago Dei* is not a doctrine which requires the depiction of nonhuman animals as irrational or non-relational. Having established this, we turn now to consider more closely the doctrine of the Trinity: through reflecting on the dynamic relationality of the triune God, the implications of recognising animal relationality are further unpacked and explored.

¹⁴⁴ David Clough, "Angels, Beasts, Machines and Men: Configuring the Human and Nonhuman in Judeo-Christian Tradition", in Rachel Muers and David Grumett (ed), *Eating and Believing: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Vegetarianism and Theology* (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2008), 60-72 at 68-9.

The *imago Trinitas* and the Dynamic Relationality of God

Having established the insufficiency of the substantialist account of the *imago Dei*, and having held up the relational interpretation as a valuable alternative, it will be instructive to look more closely at the interrelationship of the triune God, in whose image humanity was created. Our relationship with God – that between Creator and creature, affirmed by Barth and Brunner as the root and shaper of human relationality¹⁴⁵ – needs to be understood in the context of the relationship of the Trinitarian persons. Father, Son, and Spirit are unique and distinct; and yet mutually perichoretic.¹⁴⁶ Although unique and distinct, the Trinitarian persons are intimately involved with one another, their mutual interpenetration co-existing with their separateness in a dialectical and mysterious communion which Christians, individually and corporately, are called to imitate.

Alistair McFadyen has written elegantly on human relationality in God's image, presenting a model for understanding the triune God as a community of individuals-in-relationship. In this model, the Trinity is "a unique community of Persons in which Person and relation are interdependent moments in a process of mutuality."¹⁴⁷ Each person of the Trinity is distinct and particular, but this particularity does not undermine mutuality and is no bar to relationship: indeed, the terms of personal identity within the Trinity are also relational terms.

Father, for instance, denotes both a specific individual and the form of relation existing between Him and the other Persons... The Father, Son and Spirit are neither simply modes of relation nor absolutely discrete and independent individuals, but Persons in relation and Persons only through relation... The three divine Persons are united by sharing uniquely in a common nature. By sharing in this common nature they are all equally divine; by doing so in an asymmetrical manner, each is uniquely divine.¹⁴⁸

In all theological anthropology, our understanding of God grounds our understanding of what it means to be human. Arguing in *The Call to Personhood* that "personal identity and individuality are never asocial nor

¹⁴⁵ Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self*, 142-3.

¹⁴⁶ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* III/1 (London and New York: T&T Clark, 1958), 182-9.

¹⁴⁷ Alistair I. McFadyen, *The Call to Personhood: A Christian Theory of the Individual in Social Relationships* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 29.

¹⁴⁸ McFadyen, *The Call to Personhood*, 29.

prosocial, but arise out of one's relation and community with others,"¹⁴⁹ McFadyen applies his theology of the Trinity in this way; going on to clarify that living for others does not, and should not, involve the collapse of one's individuality into one's relationships.

This discreteness and independence, however, must not be understood as a reservation from genuine and as complete self-presence as is possible and appropriate; it is not a reservation of their being but the designation of the difference and individuality of the partners.¹⁵⁰

Indeed, McFadyen is concerned by historical (and current) manipulations of the human calling to live for others, by individuals and systems which exploit others' self-negation. Patriarchal cultures, where women are expected to bear suffering and hardship as their particular calling;¹⁵¹ and the excessive focus on the other (as object for either service or exploitation) which can become a coping mechanism for victims of abuse,¹⁵² are examples of this. McFadyen understands such harmfully corrupt relationships – which draw parallels with factory farming,¹⁵³ ignoring the particular needs of the oppressed other and the mutuality shared with them – as manifestations of our present condition of original and perpetual sin.¹⁵⁴ To serve the other, but to do so without either collapsing them into ourselves (i.e., viewing our relationship with the other through a lens of selfish concern) or ourselves into them (i.e., denying our own particularity in order to accommodate them),¹⁵⁵ is the relational end to which the human creature is called and exhorted by grace. It is this relational ideal – to be in relation in such a way that both differences and similarities are recognised, and the flourishing of all parties is the intended end – to which Christians are called with respect to nonhuman, as well as human, animals. The dynamic relationality of God, in which humans hope, pray, live, and worship, is the image through which humans are to understand their own relationality and that of their animal brothers and sisters; and it is in the life

¹⁴⁹ McFadyen, *The Call to Personhood*, 29.

¹⁵⁰ McFadyen, *The Call to Personhood*, 126.

¹⁵¹ Alistair McFadyen, *Bound to Sin: Abuse, Holocaust and the Christian Doctrine of Sin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 159-63.

¹⁵² McFadyen, *Bound to Sin*, chapter 4.

¹⁵³ This treatment of factory farming, as a corruption of right and proper human-animal relationships, is taken up further in chapter 5.

¹⁵⁴ McFadyen, *Bound to Sin*, 135.

¹⁵⁵ McFadyen, *Bound to Sin*, 217, 236-7.

of the church, the body of Christ, that humans learn what it is to love God and love their fellows.

The dynamics of God are oriented towards all of humanity, the universal human community. Just as the dynamics of God in salvation and creation are unrestricted, unbounded and universally extensive, so the responsibility and commitment of human beings energised by these dynamics is similarly unrestricted: a universal solidarity in the dynamics of creation and salvation, and therefore also of sin.¹⁵⁶

The relational understanding of the Trinity is not exempt from criticism: Karen Kilby extends the criticism previously levelled at the substantialist *imago Dei* – that it claims for humans too deep an understanding of God's nature – to readings of the Trinity which place, for her, too great an emphasis on the relationships of the Divine Persons.¹⁵⁷ In response to this criticism, Matthew Levering points to John 14-15,¹⁵⁸ arguing that Jesus' explanation of the Son's relationship to the Father roots a human understanding of the Trinity – however limited such will inevitably be – in the practice of love-in-relationship.¹⁵⁹ Such a view is supported by Jürgen Moltmann, who comments on creation that

In the free, overflowing rapture of his love the eternal God goes out of himself and makes a creation, a reality, which is there as he is there, and is yet different from himself. Through the Son, God creates, reconciles and redeems his creation. In the power of the Spirit, God is himself present in his creation – present in his reconciliation and his redemption of that creation.¹⁶⁰

The Trinity is perichoretic; not only in its internal relationships, but in its external relationships within creation. God freely chose to create, including in creation creatures with whom God could genuinely be in relationship; humans, unique among creatures in that we can choose whether or not to

¹⁵⁶ McFadyen, *Bound to Sin*, 239.

¹⁵⁷ Kilby, "Aquinas, the Trinity and the Limits and Understanding," 427.

¹⁵⁸ Jn. 14:10-11 – "Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me."

¹⁵⁹ Matthew Levering, "Friendship and Trinitarian Theology: Response to Karen Kilby," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 9.1 (2007), 39-54 at 44.

¹⁶⁰ Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: An Ecological Doctrine of Creation* (London: SCM Press, 1985), 15-16.

respond to our Creator. What the Father created, the Son redeems, through his salvific and history-shattering act; and what the Son redeems, the Spirit brings towards ultimate reconciliation. Looking both forwards and backwards in time, and looking at the ongoing transformation worked by grace in and with and for the world, a call to live *imago Trinitas* thus understood is a call to live out right relationships, with a view to how things were and how they will be. In the words of Norman Wirzba, “While the Trinity does not yield a specific plan of action, it does give the contours of a vision for what relations between creatures ought to be.”¹⁶¹

It is important to note that even if the primary orientation of the divine relationality is towards human creatures – as McFadyen argues – this does not preclude God’s being in relationship with nonhuman creatures, and neither does it preclude the possibility of relationality between humans and other animals. This is a parallel to the reality that God’s orientation towards the church – God’s people in the world – neither precludes God’s striving for relationship with those humans outside the church, nor the possibility of genuine relationship between Christians and non-Christians. It is not only humans who exist within, impact upon, and are shaped by distorted networks of relationality; and it is not only in inter-human relational networks that Christians are called to live for the other.

Through communal worship of the triune God, and ultimately through God’s grace and Spirit, humans learn and are formed into patterns of relationality which set them outside the distorted and self-oriented networks which constitute the world: but it is in all creation that we are called to live out the implications of this sanctification. We are called to will, not as the world shapes us to will, but as God wills; and at the heart of the divine will is the dynamic relationality where three are one in relationship, but are yet particular. In the words of Gilbert Meilaender, “Our task is nothing less than this: to achieve within human life the love that is a dim reflection of the life of God.”¹⁶² If living *imago Dei* is understood as a relational calling, a move to relate to God as we are supposed to and not as we, marred by sin, actually do,¹⁶³ it is to be expected that an affirmative response to God’s offer of grace should transform not only our relationship

¹⁶¹ Norman Wirzba, *Food and Faith: A Theology of Eating* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 9.

¹⁶² Gilbert Meilaender, *Faith and Faithfulness: Basic Themes in Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), 48.

¹⁶³ Barth, *CD III/2*, 182. See also Wirzba, *Food and Faith*, 9-10.

with our Creator but our relationships and responsibilities within creation.¹⁶⁴ We image God in life in community; and we also image God by living out transformed relationships elsewhere.

Writing on the relational understanding of God's image with respect to nonhuman animals, Daniel Miller proposes that, "We choose to answer or reject the divine call or the call of creaturely neighbours. This 'call' and 'answer', to use Brunner's terminology, is what makes humans responsible... [C]reation in the *imago Dei* distinguishes us from other animals, but it does not truly separate us from them."¹⁶⁵ Miller argues that the freedom to respond (or not) to God is the marker of human distinctiveness; but that nonhuman animals also respond to God, albeit passively. As Barth says, "As man thanks God and is man in so doing, he does no more and no less than all other creatures do with their life."¹⁶⁶ Taking this claim further than Barth might have done, Miller argues that in responding to God, however passively (i.e., having no freedom to not respond),¹⁶⁷ nonhuman animals become worthy of Christian moral attention.¹⁶⁸

What is problematic about Miller's account is that, despite attempting to bring nonhuman animals into the sphere of Christian moral concern, it leaves intra-species relationality, and the assumption that animals are not intrinsically valuable, untouched. By moving from the claim that animals are passively in response to God to the argument that this means they can only be passively responsible even to others of their own species – by directly linking the choice to respond to the "divine call" and that to respond to the "call of creaturely neighbours"¹⁶⁹ – Miller in fact begins to move back towards the substantialist understanding of the *imago Dei*. If nonhuman animals are only passively responsible, even within their own families, what rationality do they have? To claim that animals cannot be actively responsible in any sense is to claim that they are irrational and without agency, and to cast 'active responsibility' as a uniquely human faculty which absolutely separates us from our fellow creatures.

¹⁶⁴ Barth, *CD III/2*, 273-4.

¹⁶⁵ Daniel K. Miller, "Responsible Relationship: *Imago Dei* and the Moral Distinction between Humans and Other Animals", *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 13.3 (2011), 323-39 at 339.

¹⁶⁶ Barth, *CD III/2*, 172.

¹⁶⁷ Miller, "Responsible Relationship", 335.

¹⁶⁸ Miller, "Responsible Relationship", 338.

¹⁶⁹ Miller, "Responsible Relationship", 339.

We have considered, in conversation with McFadyen, that human relationality is most readily formed into God's image within a human community striving to live for God¹⁷⁰ – and that, therefore, we better understand who we are through relationships with our fellow humans than through our interactions with other animals. It does not follow from this that there is nothing to be learned from human-animal relationships; and neither does it follow that, because nonhuman animals do not choose to respond to God, they do not exercise responsibility of a kind in other creaturely relationships. To make such a claim would be analogous to the argument that humans are incapable of being responsible agents in their human relationships without being in relationship with God. For sure, our relationality will be impoverished – and hostage to the perpetuity of sin – if we do not seek to discern God's will, but this does not mean that non-Christians in every time and place are incapable of agency or relationality. Neither are nonhuman animals – who praise God in their very being – incapable of relationality of a kind within creation. Any understanding of the *imago Dei* which leads to a more exclusive conclusion than this retains at least some substantialist element.

It has been a concern that attributing agency and relationality to nonhuman animals might endanger humanity's distinctiveness within creation. Barth laid great theological weight on this distinctiveness when he wrote that “the being of man is plainly separated and distinguished from all others,”¹⁷¹ a statement to be understood in light of his claim elsewhere that “We venture a bold conclusion by analogy if we understand animally vegetative... life as life in the same sense as human.”¹⁷² Barth's foundational theology of “covenant before creation” does give statements such as these nuance: Barth's claim is not that humans are distinct from all other animals in our biological nature, but through the grace of God – a claim I would not disagree with. Given this emphasis, however, it is regrettable that Barth would not leave the door open to the theological exploration of animal relationality, in light of God's covenantal activity with nonhuman animals (about which more will be said below).

¹⁷⁰ This communitarian understanding of character formation underpins the work of Stanley Hauerwas, who will be conversed with in more detail in chapter 4: see for example Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983); and Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981).

¹⁷¹ Barth, *CD III/2*, 78.

¹⁷² Barth, *CD III/4*, 348.

Contra those whose primary concern is to defend human distinctiveness, I propose that recognition of animal relationality is coherent with the relational understanding of the *imago Dei*, in a way which does not endanger but better defines humanity's place within creation. This is so precisely because our likeness to God is fundamentally relational: we are called to live out relationships which are proper for our humanity and the humanity of our fellows, to achieve as best we can in our relational networks the mutual flourishing and interdependence which is characteristic of the Triune God. In relationship with other animals – over whom we have relative worldly power – the call is much the same, being towards relationships which are proper for the humanity of the human and the animality of the animal, rejoicing in our shared mutuality as creatures of God. My humanity is at stake in how I relate to other animals, because I am called to love and relate as God does: if I allow my power over them to excuse treating them destructively and without love, I elect to remain in sin and so turn down the hand of grace.

A thankful response to God's offer of grace can transform our relationality, so that we move from seeing others as objects for use or experience – as an 'It' – to seeing them as a 'Thou'; a seeing informed by our relationship to God, the ultimate and eternal Thou.¹⁷³ When we stand in relationship with Christ,¹⁷⁴ hoping and striving for the sanctification of our worldly relationships in an effort to love as God loves,¹⁷⁵ we are living in the image of God; and just as our inter-human relationships are caught up in our response to divine grace, so it is with how we relate to God's other relational creatures. In turning next to the person of Jesus Christ, and so examining the Incarnation whereby we see the truly substantial image of God in creation, I intend to explore further what sanctification might mean for human-animal relationships. What, in light of the Incarnation, does it mean to be in relationship?

“The Word became flesh” (Jn. 1:14)

The significance of the Incarnation for any effort to construct a theology of human-nonhuman relationality can be posed in a question. If humans are

¹⁷³ See Martin Buber, *I and Thou* (Eastford, CT: Martino, 2010).

¹⁷⁴ Barth, *CD* III/2, 182.

¹⁷⁵ Mt. 5:48 – “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

created in God's image and called to relationship by God's grace, what is the significance of God becoming human (as opposed to a turtle, say, or a bear)? That is, is God becoming *human* more significant than God becoming a *creature*? In chapter 2, I considered Cunningham's move away from the language of image to the language of flesh; language which is at once more applicable to embodied creatures, and which furthermore is scripturally abundant.¹⁷⁶ Even in Genesis, 'flesh' is referred to more frequently than 'image';¹⁷⁷ and when God is spoken of in relation to flesh, he is spoken of in relation to *all* flesh. As Paul writes, "there is one flesh for human beings, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish" (1 Cor. 15:39) – that is, there are discontinuities between God's animal creatures, but through recognition of those differences the underlying commonality is emphasised. Humans are like other animals in some ways, and not in others; but as God's covenanting with humans and other animals suggests, both are infinitely closer to each other than either is to the Creator upon whom both depend. As David Kelsey puts it,

Creatures are even more radically 'other' to the Creator than the triune persons are 'other' to one another. This is a difference in type of 'otherness,' not a difference in degree of 'otherness': creatures are not divine, not God; the three persons are divine, are God.¹⁷⁸

Kelsey's remark here does not specifically refer to the distance between humans and animals as much as that between one creature and any other creature: whatever our creaturely differences, though, they pale in comparison to the difference of all creatures from our mutual Creator. In this vein, Cunningham continues to use the language of flesh in turning to consider the Incarnation: for him, the central stress is on "the Word [that] became flesh and lived among us" (Jn. 1:14).¹⁷⁹ "Revealed in flesh, vindicated in spirit" (1 Tim. 3:16), Christ's becoming human was certainly for the sake of humanity; but this does not mean it was not also for all flesh. In becoming flesh, God's perfect Word could not do other than identify with all flesh. This is not in any way a claim against human distinctiveness: rather, it is the claim that human distinctiveness is not necessarily and inevitably a difference-that-makes-a-difference, any more than feline or canine distinctiveness (say) make a difference. Jesus' humanity and his

¹⁷⁶ Cunningham, "The Way of All Flesh", 114.

¹⁷⁷ For example, see Gen. 6:13-19; 7:15-21; 8:17; 9:8-17.

¹⁷⁸ Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence*, 167.

¹⁷⁹ See also Eph. 2:14, 1 Tim. 3:16, 1 Jn. 4:2.

creaturely flesh are not mutually incompatible truths, as Peter Scott recognises when he writes that

Jesus' humanity participates in the shared life of God and is the 'place' from where he participates in God's redeeming work in the world of God. Moreover, by way of this humanity, which is constitutional for God, this Jesus is constitutive of the history of all creatures, human and non-human... The human reality of Jesus is secure both as an identity of God and as the constitutive ground of the participation of creatures in God's creating and redeeming. Creatures thereby are already placed in the humanity of this Christ and are directed towards the eschatological renewal of creaturely participation.¹⁸⁰

The Incarnation, as the transhistorical ground of the man Jesus' participation in redemption, cannot be reduced to the specific Incarnation into human flesh, but is into *flesh*. In the words of Andrew Linzey, "The flesh assumed in the incarnation is not some hermetically sealed, tightly differentiated human flesh; it is the same organic flesh and blood which we share with other mammalian creatures. There is no human embodiment totally unsimilar to the flesh of other sentient creatures."¹⁸¹ Pointing to Colossians 1:13-20, Ephesians 1:9-10, and Romans 8:21, Clough agrees with such a proposal when he writes that "the incarnation is cosmic in scope, rather than merely human."¹⁸² Regarding the Incarnation's particularity, Clough notes that Jesus' gender, ethnicity, religion, and geographical location are not taken to be normative in determining the significance of God's action in Christ: in fact, as Paul told the Galatians, in Christ "there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female" (Gal. 3:28). It is incongruous, therefore, to suppose that Jesus' species is in itself determinative for the Incarnation's significance.

If we judge it illegitimate to discriminate between Jews and Gentiles or women and men on the basis of the kind of creature in whom God became incarnate, it seems that we should also consider it

¹⁸⁰ Peter Manley Scott, "Slouching Towards Jerusalem? An Anti-human theology of Rough Beasts and other Animals", in *Creaturely Theology*, 171-89 at 184-5.

¹⁸¹ Linzey, *Animal Rites*, 5.

¹⁸² David Clough, "Interpreting Human Life by Looking the Other Way: Bonhoeffer on Human Beings and Other Animals", in Ralf Wüstenberg, Stefan Heuser and Esther Hornung, eds, *Bonhoeffer and the Biosciences: An Initial Exploration* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2010), 51-74 at 60.

illegitimate to discriminate between humans and other animals on this basis. Theological positions employing the doctrine of the incarnation to create a boundary between humans and other animals are misreading the particularity of the creature we know as Jesus of Nazareth.¹⁸³

Or, in the words of Howard Snyder and Joel Scandrett: “Paul begins with the fact of individual and corporate personal salvation through Christ. But he places personal salvation within a picture of cosmic transformation. The redemption of persons is thus the *centre* of God’s plan, but not *the circumference* of that plan.”¹⁸⁴

Although the creedal statement that God became human is accurate, to present the Incarnation solely in this way risks misleading by understating its cosmic significance; much as stating that God became male, or Jewish, would be accurate but run the same risk. Indeed, one could argue that any level of particularity less than the singular – such as “God became a Jewish man known to his associates as Jesus of Nazareth” – opens the door to exclusionary readings of the Incarnation’s significance. Clough considers John’s claim that “the Word became flesh” in light of the linkage between the Greek *sarx* and the Hebrew *basar*, used frequently in the Hebrew Bible with reference to all living creatures.¹⁸⁵ “The fundamental New Testament assertion concerning the incarnation, therefore, is not that God became a member of the species *Homo sapiens*, but that God took on flesh, the stuff of living creatures.”¹⁸⁶ And the Incarnation of God into flesh is not a spatiotemporally limited event, inaugurating and looking both backwards towards creation and forwards to the *eschaton*: in the Pauline hymn of creation in Colossians 1, Jesus is recognised as firstborn of creation, in whom all things were created, who holds all things together and in whom all things will be reconciled to God.¹⁸⁷

If we are to accept that the significance of the Incarnation was primarily God’s becoming creature, and that the Incarnation is therefore

¹⁸³ Clough, *On Animals*, 83-4.

¹⁸⁴ Howard A. Snyder and Joel Scandrett, *Salvation Means Creation Healed: The Ecology of Sin and Grace; Overcoming the Divorce between Earth and Heaven* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2011), 99.

¹⁸⁵ See for example Gen. 6:13; Job 34:15; Jer. 32:27. Cf. Jn. 17:2.

¹⁸⁶ Clough, *On Animals*, 85. See also Cunningham, “The Way of All Flesh”.

¹⁸⁷ Clough, *On Animals*, 86-8. See for example Eph. 1:9-10,22; Heb. 1:2-3; 1 Cor. 8:6; Jn. 1:2; Rev. 3:14. See also Jürgen Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ: Christology in Messianic Dimensions* (London: SCM Press, 1990).

cosmic in its scope, does that leave us able to say anything about God's becoming human? McFadyen's reflection on the Incarnation is helpful here. For human creatures, God's relationality in and for creation is seen most closely in the Incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Incarnate into flesh, crucified at the hands of individuals operating in corrupted relational networks, the resurrection that followed was "not a reconstitution of initial conditions in relation either to Jesus or to God's relationship with humanity, [and] neither did it involve an escapist fantasy about the incapacity of particular, concrete events and relationships to effect serious damage."¹⁸⁸ The killing of Jesus and total collapse of humanity into sin are taken seriously, but met with a radical response which "works through reality and, instead of restoring original conditions, pours out the possibility of and energises a more abundant life than was possible hitherto."¹⁸⁹ This is the victory over sin God won for creation; not by erasing Christ's crucifixion but by allowing his cross to stand and working through it in the resurrection.¹⁹⁰ Christ's victory is not only a meta-victory over sin in the sense that it reaches out to transform our corrupted and distorted relational networks, but also in his triumph over the arrogant willing in every human creature, which feeds and is fed by the corruption of these networks. In the words of Stephen Webb,

The basic point of Christian theology is that the cross does not take away but instead reveals our sin, so that repentance, not celebration, is the only possible response. The cross says no to our amazing and infinite capacity to make violence meaningful. The implication for animals is enormous.¹⁹¹

Although human creatures are unique in having been created *imago Dei* and called to respond to grace, we should not think that those relational networks which constitute creation and which God is interested in are limited to those made up of inter-human relationships. This much is recognised by Jürgen Moltmann, when he writes of the triune God's presence in and for creation:

¹⁸⁸ McFadyen, *Bound to Sin*, 210.

¹⁸⁹ McFadyen, *Bound to Sin*, 210.

¹⁹⁰ McFadyen, *Bound to Sin*, 211.

¹⁹¹ Stephen H. Webb, *On God and Dogs: A Christian Theology of Compassion for Animals* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 154.

If the Creator is himself present in his creation by virtue of the Spirit, then his relationship to creation must be viewed as an intricate web of unilateral, reciprocal and many-sided relationships... relationships of *mutuality* which describe a cosmic community of living between God the Spirit and all his created beings.¹⁹²

If we are to say, then, that the Incarnation reveals God's intimate relationship with creation, and in so doing inaugurates and foreshadows the reconciliation of all things – and if it is through Christ, therefore, that human creatures can begin to understand the dynamic relationality of the triune God¹⁹³ – we cannot neglect to attend to the possibility that relational networks involving nonhuman animals and the creaturely networks of the environment are taken up in this radically new relationality as well. If the Incarnation is for all creation, and nonhuman animals exist within relational networks which overlap and interrelate with the relational networks of humanity, we are unable to conclude that the sanctification wrought by grace should be limited in its impact to inter-human relationships. Christians are called, in responding to the story of God and God's people through history, to live for the *eschaton*, counter to the culture of the world¹⁹⁴ (which distorts relationality by idolising individuality); rejoicing in God's love for creation, understood as including but not being limited to the human creation.

To return to Scott, the cosmic incarnation of God into flesh is “constitutive of the history of all creatures” and the “constitutive ground of the participation of creatures in God's creating and redeeming.” The Incarnation works looking backwards as well as forwards: backwards, to human creation *imago Dei* and the transformation of relationality that comes through grace; and forwards, towards the *eschaton* and the formation of peaceable community and relationship there. Scott maintains

¹⁹² Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 14.

¹⁹³ The significance of the Incarnation for human relationality cannot be limited to the systematic doctrine of the Incarnation in relation to the doctrines of God, creation, and redemption: the incarnate life of Jesus is revelatory by way of being the paradigm for perfected human relationality within creation. Further discussion on Jesus' life and ministry will be conducted in chapter 4, in conversation with Stanley Hauerwas (who himself places great theological-ethical weight on the life of Jesus).

¹⁹⁴ For further discussion on church as counter-culture, see for example Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 105-6; Matt Jenson, *The Gravity of Sin: Augustine, Luther and Barth on Homo Incurvatus In Se* (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 190; John H. Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus: Vicit Agnus Noster* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1972), 37, 250.

this dialectical construction when he writes that Jesus' humanity is both an "identity of God" and the place where creatures are "placed in the humanity of this Christ." The Incarnation of God into human flesh is an act of radical solidarity with all creation; human, nonhuman, and nonanimal. If we recognise this, the ultimate reconciliation¹⁹⁵ we pray for is not limited to human animals: indeed, it will extend beyond the animal creation to include environmental considerations. In talking of the new and transformed relationships the Incarnation inaugurates, however, our focus cannot but fall on God's relational creatures – human and (some) nonhuman animals. Christ, God Incarnate for all flesh,¹⁹⁶ calls us to respond to our fellow animals as we strive to imitate and so internalise¹⁹⁷ the divine relationality which Christ revealed; looking, praying, and acting in anticipation of the kingdom to come.

Thus far, we have established that human and nonhuman animals can be considered relational creatures, albeit in different ways.¹⁹⁸ Created in God's image and called to live out transformed relationships in creation,

¹⁹⁵ Eph. 2:17-19 – "So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God." Recognising the Incarnation as that of God into flesh includes the hope that humans and other animals will no longer be aliens to one another; that all responsible creatures might be members of the household of God (see also Isa. 11:6-9).

¹⁹⁶ Nancy Eiesland wrote of Christ crucified as "the disabled God who embodied both impaired hands and feet and pierced sides and the *imago Dei*" (Nancy L. Eiesland, *The Disabled God: Toward a Liberatory Theology of Disability* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994), 99). As well as challenging substantialist understandings of the *imago Dei*, which face the danger of equating divine nature with socionormative standards of health (as well as, potentially, of gender, ethnicity, and species), Eiesland here establishes a theological precedent for an understanding of the Incarnation not limited by the contours of Jesus' human body. That is, she recognises that the significance of the Incarnation lies in the Word being made flesh, not in Jesus' physical ability: neither does it lie in his gender or ethnicity, or (I would add) his species.

¹⁹⁷ The notion of imitating in order to internalise is another way of communicating McFadyen's emphasis, *via* Augustine, on conforming the sinful will to God. See McFadyen, *Bound to Sin*, chapter 8. See also Hauerwas' theological and virtue-centred focus on the formation of character in community, e.g. Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*; Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*.

¹⁹⁸ It should be noted that I do not wish to here to draw a new set of clear categorisations, wherein humans are relational in one specific sense, lions in another, ducks in another, and so on. Rather I simply note here that humans are relational and responsible in a manner different from other animals; but also that, within the human creation, humans are frequently relational and responsible in ways which differ between human communities. One need only observe the multitude of social and cultural differences worldwide to recognise this much: caught in distorted relational networks which bear the perpetuity of sin, we are free only where and when we are free *for* others, so conforming our will to God's. To make any categorical or taxonomical statements about what the 'willing' of one species looks like is, therefore, to present too simplistic and monolithic a picture of relationality within creation.

the recognition that some other animals are relational individuals, and that God became Incarnate for all creation, lead us towards the claim that human-animal relationships can be taken up and transformed by grace, so that we might look to their flourishing as we look to our own. In the next section, I move to reflect on the impact of sin on human-animal relationships: in considering the question of whether animals can be thought of as culpable sinners, I begin to draw a picture of the relationality of nonhuman animals in particular.

Animal Sin

It is worth stating, as I begin to think through animal relationality in more detail, that I am not concerned to define exactly where relationality and responsibility begin and end within a taxonomy of creation. Primates? Mammals? Birds? Fish? Insects? Sponges? Bacteria? The basic and significant point is that at least some animals can be thought of as relational agents;¹⁹⁹ and that included among these are most (if not all) of those nonhuman animals who humans most commonly relate to, be these relationships positive (e.g. petkeeping) or destructive (e.g. factory farming). Neither am I interested to say that all animals, as individuals or as species, are moral exemplars. Some animals are (if judged by human standards) nice and some are distinctly unpleasant, but all perform according to their natural and agential animal responsibility. The same can be said, as individuals or as species, about humans – but, created *imago Dei*, we receive the offer and responsibility of grace, so that we might learn to relate to others as God relates to us. Created for a gracious covenant which we did not and do not deserve,²⁰⁰ human creatures are called to say ‘Yes’ to God by accepting grace. Through responding, in joyful worship, to the “dynamic relationality” of the triune God,²⁰¹ we begin to learn what it means to respond ex-centrally in our dealings with our fellow humans;²⁰² and from here, as has been argued already, we are freed to extend our new understanding of proper relationship as mutual flourishing outwards, into the animal creation.

¹⁹⁹ David Clough expresses related concerns about treating ‘nonhuman animals’ as a monolith, parallel to ‘humans’. Clough, *On Animals*, 74.

²⁰⁰ Barth, *CD III/1*, 219.

²⁰¹ McFadyen, *Bound to Sin*, 216-26, 249. See also McFadyen, *The Call to Personhood*, 27-31, 126.

²⁰² McFadyen, *Bound to Sin*, 210-1; see also Barth, *CD III/2*, 182.

Our call to respond to God does not preclude responsibility of a different kind in some nonhuman animals, and neither does it preclude relationality being something we share with our animal fellows. This does not, however, mean that what we call right relationship within human communities is the same as right relationship with or among other animals. For this reason, reflection on the doctrine of sin is necessary for the construction of a theology of human-animal relationality; and not only because the relational understanding of sin articulated by McFadyen and others highlights the extent to which human willing is distorted by the corrupted relational networks of the world. It is also the case, with respect to animal relationality, that relational accounts of sin enable deeper reflection on the ways in which nonhuman willing, relationality, and responsibility are similar to – and different from – our own.

In his account of human personhood, McFadyen contrasts the relationality of God with the atomised individualism of modern liberal secularism. For him, “It is... freedom conceived of as consisting in separation that makes it so difficult generally to speak of God and world together, without appearing to compromise the integrity of one or the other.”²⁰³ Contrary to this, Christian doctrine presents sin “not as a phenomenon of our freedom, an object of choice, but as an unavoidable reality conditioning and shaping freedom”²⁰⁴ which we are nonetheless accountable for. The distortions in human willing, which we call sin, are taken up into the interlinked networks of relationality which we call human society, and more broadly the world, so that “Situation permeates will in a way and to an extent which makes it descriptively inadequate to name personal pathology... without at the same time naming the overarching pathological dynamics in which the person is incorporated and incorporates herself through her own willing.”²⁰⁵ As human sociality is fundamental to what it is to be human, being intrinsically related to one another and to God,²⁰⁶ sin is therefore understood as the perversion of this sociality;²⁰⁷

²⁰³ McFadyen, *Bound to Sin*, 108-9.

²⁰⁴ McFadyen, *Bound to Sin*, 108-9.

²⁰⁵ McFadyen, *Bound to Sin*, 127.

²⁰⁶ McFadyen, *The Call to Personhood*, 18.

²⁰⁷ Slavoj Žižek writes, of Enlightenment philosopher Immanuel Kant, that he “emphasized that the human animal needs disciplinary pressure in order to tame an uncanny ‘unruliness’ which seems to be inherent to human nature – a wild, unconstrained propensity to insist stubbornly on one’s own will, cost what it may.” Žižek, “The Animal Gaze of the Other,” in Slavoj Žižek and Boris Gunjević, *God in Pain: Inversions of the Apocalypse* (New York, NY: Seven Stories, 2012), 221-40 at 232. Unlike Kant, however, I do

causing and perpetuated by the same over-confidence in the will's ability to discern the good which Augustine saw in Pelagius.²⁰⁸

At the root of the doctrine of original sin is the recognition that we do not begin life with a clean slate and then make a series of deliberate choices that result in our being awarded good or bad marks... By the time we are able to exercise what we think of as free choices, we are already deeply compromised by our pre-rational desires and actions, our complicity in social and historic acts of injustice and the many ways in which our lives are shaped by networks of relationship that frequently exhibit pride, selfishness and greed, together with any number of other sinful tendencies. In relation to any particular act, therefore, it is impossible to trace the extent to which it is free and deliberate and the extent to which it is forced or unwilling.²⁰⁹

If we choose to follow the concupiscent desire to will not as God wills but as we will,²¹⁰ we are drawn into willing not in accordance with our pseudo-objective 'conscience' but with the distorted relational networks in which we live. Resultantly, we neglect God's call for us to respond to God, and in so doing be formed by grace to respond to our fellows, both as individuals and as constituent members of the relational networks in which they move. This involves attending to their particularity and context,²¹¹ not forgetting our own particularity in the process, but not defining ourselves over-against the other either.²¹² We have already discussed the human calling to extend our relationality, sanctified by the grace of the triune God, outwards into the animal creation; an extension that involves attending to other animals as relational individuals. Having recognised this, we need to think in more detail about the relationality of nonhuman animals.²¹³ as they are, like us,

not believe that mere discipline can correct this selfish propensity which Christians call sin: it is true that the discipline which comes through being formed into a narrative community, formed to see the world anew, is part of this process of correction and transformation; but only through and in tandem with the work of grace and Spirit.

²⁰⁸ Augustine, *City of God*, 22.30.

²⁰⁹ Clough, *On Animals*, 117.

²¹⁰ McFadyen, *Bound to Sin*, 191.

²¹¹ McFadyen, *The Call to Personhood*, 29.

²¹² McFadyen, *Bound to Sin*, 207, 236-7.

²¹³ It should be restated that I am not proposing a collapse of the diversity of the animal creation into the binary categories of 'human animal' and 'nonhuman animal'. I am simply proposing at this juncture to consider what might be surmised about the relationality of nonhuman animals *in general* from a relational account of sin.

imperfect creatures in a fallen creation, reflection on the doctrine of perpetual sin²¹⁴ will be instructive in this regard.

In *On Animals*, Clough looks at the question of whether nonhuman animals can be spoken of as sinful. He does so *via* an account by the primatologist Jane Goodall of intra-species cannibalism performed by chimpanzees; an account which includes explicit community disapproval of the cannibalistic acts, and the transmission of cannibalistic habits from parent to child.

Passion attacked Gilka, Pom helped for a bit, and then while Passion continued, Pom seized the baby, went off with him, and – just as Passion did before – deliberately killed him, biting into his forehead. Then the cannibalistic family fed on his remains for 5 hours, Passion taking charge of the body, Pom and Prof begging... Sparrow... came alone, picked up a bit of meat, after staring and staring, sniffed it, flung it down and vigorously wiped her fingers on the tree trunk. Her daughter, Sandi, did the same.²¹⁵

Can such incidents – and related ones, such as the practice within some species of males killing the young of potential mates – be understood as ‘natural’²¹⁶ in the purely evolutionary (i.e., amoral) sense? Clough disagrees: “This position seems very implausible in that it excludes from moral censure actions done for selfish reasons by non-human animals, when actions done from this motivation by humans are most of what concerns ethics in the normal run of things.”²¹⁷

The biblical view, evident in Genesis 9 and other texts such as Job 38-41 and Psalm 104, is that each creature has been given its place within God’s creation and the Genesis 9 covenant is an expression of a divine expectation that creatures will live within the boundaries God has established for them. While non-human infanticide is not

²¹⁴ The term ‘perpetual sin’ may be preferable to ‘original sin’, if we are to continue with McFadyen’s description of the omnipresence and omnipotence of sin in the relational networks of creation, which shape and are shaped by human acts of rebellious willing.

²¹⁵ Jane Goodall, *Beyond Innocence: An Autobiography in Letters: The Later Years*, ed. Dale Peterson (Boston, MA and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2001), 207. Cited in Clough, *On Animals*, 113.

²¹⁶ In chapter 4, the *theological* meaning of ‘nature’ will be considered, in the course of extrapolating the dietary implications of this chapter’s relational theology. In short: what do we mean when we say ‘natural’? Do we mean the same thing when we use the phrase for inter-human relationality as we do when we apply it to human-animal relationality?

²¹⁷ Clough, *On Animals*, 115.

prohibited in the Genesis 9 covenant, we could extend the metaphor of covenant to propose that infanticide as practised by Passion and her family is outside the boundaries of creaturely flourishing envisaged in the commands to be fruitful and multiply (Gen. 1:22, 8:17).²¹⁸

Clough's excellent treatment of sin with respect to nonhuman animals is consistent with McFadyen's relational account of sin. Human and nonhuman animals do not only share a capacity for relationship: we also share the ways in which we inhabit wider relational networks, which shape our character and which we in turn impact upon. In this chapter, we have heard of the horse who "laughs at fear, and is not dismayed" (Job 39:22); of wolves learning and using symbolic gestures in a reactive and interactive fashion; of crows who craft tools, and elephants who teach the younger members of their community. In accounts like these, we witness other animals displaying agency, communication, and relationality and responsibility within specific relational networks (such as in the familial herd of pachyderms). Within such networks, knowledge, skills, values, and beliefs are learned and transmitted: in the wolf packs he observes, Bekoff observes at least the first three of these; and in the elephant herds, local knowledge and foraging skills are passed from older to younger. It does not seem unreasonable, in light of this, to imagine that not only positive but also negative and harmful values and ways of living can be passed on in specific contexts; and if we follow such an analysis, it would appear that this is precisely what is happening when Passion the chimpanzee inducts her children into a practice their fellows find reprehensible.

If, like humans, nonhuman animals can be spoken of as living in and being shaped by relational networks, is it appropriate to talk of them as being *sinful* in a way they bear responsibility for? Clough writes:

We might judge the ability of chimpanzees to make considered choices about their actions to be closer to the capacity of a human child than a human adult, but we do not believe that children go from automata to responsible subjects at a particular age and so

²¹⁸ Clough, *On Animals*, 116.

this judgement of degree is not a reason for considering chimpanzees outside the boundary of sinful action.²¹⁹

Nonhuman animals exhibit intra-species responsibility in a variety of ways, from teaching the young of their species to disapproving of or shunning the dangerous members of the community. Although the theology of human-animal relationality constructed thus far suggests that the corruption of animal relational networks can only be understood through the language of sin, the question of the *extent* to which we can talk of animals as being directly responsible for sin is more complicated. Lacking even the constrained and distorted freedom to choose grace possessed by human creatures (although praising God in their very being) they might be deemed less culpable for improper and destructive relationships within creation as it is now. They remain corrupted within the world, limited in their potential to transcend the distorted relational networks they inhabit; and although humanity may be spoken of as having greater potential to live transformed lives this side of the *eschaton*, the limitation and constriction of our animal fellows is something we cannot fail to see mirrored in our own lives.

Is Passion the cannibal chimp responsible to God for her actions? This is a question to which the limits of a human answer must be the disavowal of certainty. If, as Barth writes, all sin is the rejection of grace,²²⁰ and if we are to diverge from Barth in affirming animal responsibility and relationality, it would seem that we are bound to return to him in affirming that – in their fallen state – animals can indeed be spoken of as *de facto* ‘rejecting’ grace. Such a view runs counter to that of some other animal theologians, perhaps most notably Andrew Linzey, who writes in *Why Animal Suffering Matters* that “Animals are morally innocent”²²¹ – a claim which hinges on his own minimization of animal particularity (discussed in chapter 2). Indeed, elsewhere in the same text Linzey claims commonality between animals and infant humans on the grounds that “Animals and infants constitute paradigmatic cases of innocence and vulnerability.”²²² Vulnerability, to be sure; but animals and infants also share a commonality in that they are prone to being romanticized as ‘innocent’. By biological *and* theological standards, the actions of cannibal chimps are difficult to defend

²¹⁹ Clough, *On Animals*, 118.

²²⁰ Barth, *CD IV/2*, 415-16.

²²¹ Andrew Linzey, *Why Animal Suffering Matters: Philosophy, Theology, and Practical Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 35.

²²² Linzey, *Why Animal Suffering Matters*, 167.

as innocent. Newborn humans, at least, do not have the physical capacity – let alone the mental – to sin by commission, but even if it is most proper to talk of sin with reference to adult humans, we cannot lose sight of the reality that all creation is fallen.

However we might perceive and understand the actions of other animals, it is beyond our knowledge to say how God judges the animal creation. Additionally, as has been touched on in conversation with McFadyen, the extent to which we can say humans are free is limited by the distortions wrought by sin – the distortions which impact upon us, and which we in turn perpetuate, in the relational networks in which we live and move, and from which we are ultimately dependent upon grace to liberate us. If we recognise that nonhuman animals are involved in relational networks – and if we accept that human and nonhuman relational networks overlap in places – we are led to acknowledge our shared mutuality, seen here not only in a shared capacity for relationship but in the common deformation of our wills by sin’s distortion of the relational networks which we cohabit.

In God’s relationship with creation – with human creatures who are called to respond to grace and so conform their will to God’s,²²³ and with the nonhuman creatures who praise God in their very being – the relationships are multidirectional. The same is true of humanity’s relationships within creation: as *imago Dei*, we are called to attend to the other with respect for their particularity and our shared mutuality.²²⁴ Grace allows us to simultaneously recognise our animality and our humanity: we are not separate from the animal creation, but we stand in a position of relative power and understanding that means the responsibility for proper human-animal relationships lies more heavily on us than on them. Just as Barth wrote that sin is the human refusal of grace,²²⁵ we can say that it is sinful for humans to follow only their animal nature when offered the guidance and transformation of the divine command.

The prophetic lament that “The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master’s crib; but Israel does not know, my people do not understand” (Isa. 1:3) illustrates well the different standards to which humans and other

²²³ McFadyen, *Bound to Sin*, 108-9, 185-6; Barth, *CD II/2*, 535, 553-75.

²²⁴ McFadyen, *The Call to Personhood*, 126.

²²⁵ Barth, *CD III/2*, 32.

animals are held with respect to grace.²²⁶ If our relationship with the animal creation is primarily determined by exploitation and corruption, it is difficult to claim that we rejoice in their particularity and animality as God rejoices in ours. The mechanised and impersonal nature of factory farming (considered in more detail in chapter 5) is surely one of the clearest examples of human sin in relation to the nonhuman creation: collapsing individual animals, even entire species, into their relationship to humanity – as food and clothing – is a wholesale denial of our shared mutuality with them, and a refusal to be concerned for their flourishing as animal creatures of God, in a manner wholly congruent with McFadyen’s description of sin.²²⁷

If we are to say, with McFadyen, that it is in the depths of sin in creation – where the ex-centric and loving relationships God intends for us are most distorted – that God’s grace and active willing in the Spirit are most concentrated,²²⁸ we cannot neglect the possibility that the relational networks involving nonhuman animals and the creaturely networks of the environment are willed to be healed by God as well. Therefore we cannot fail to consider that our own sinful incurvature, the privileging of our appetites and those cultivated by our culture over God’s will, perpetuates the affliction of the animal creation. As Hosea told the people of Israel, “There is no faithfulness or loyalty, and no knowledge of God in the land... Therefore the land mourns, and all who live in it languish, together with the wild animals and the birds of the air, even the fish of the sea are perishing” (Hos. 4:1-3). Sin’s impact on creation is cosmic.

Snyder and Scandrett put forward a relational “ecology of sin,” wherein human alienation from God induces alienation from oneself, which causes alienation from other humans, which gives rise to alienation from

²²⁶ This is something Berkouwer also picked up on, primarily to warn against the arrogance of claiming too much for humanity in any substantialist reading of the divine image.

“Isaiah is not unaware of the difference between man and beast – the point lies precisely in the difference – he views man not in his isolated ‘ontic structure’ but in his guilt, and this gives Isaiah’s comparison its accusing power. This is a serious warning against any treatment of the ontic aspect of the image in isolation, and a warning also against any over-evaluation of that aspect.” (Berkouwer, *Man*, 50-1).

²²⁷ In chapter 4, factory farming will be considered in conversation with the Hebrew Bible practice of animal sacrifice, which – even though abrogated by Christ’s cosmic sacrifice – is more attentive to the particularity and relationality of the animal other than its mass-commercialised modern equivalent.

²²⁸ McFadyen, *Bound to Sin*, 210-1.

and within nature.²²⁹ This is a useful model for displaying the ways in which sin works – by distancing one from God – to distance one from proper creaturely relationships as well. It remains problematic, however, in its maintenance of the troubling binary between ‘human’ and ‘nature’ noted elsewhere. This model contributes to human alienation from nature, leading individual humans to see themselves as external to nature, and so ignore their commonalities with the nonhuman creation as a result. Even if one is unsure about the lengths to which I go in this chapter, it should appear strange – when discussing something as fundamentally relational as sin – to collapse all the nonhuman creation into one ‘circle’. It is quite possible to debate the extent to which a dog is relational; but to portray the dog as being no more or less relational than a tree or mountain is reductive in the extreme. If we add one more relational category to Snyder and Scandrett’s model – alienation between humans and other relational animals – we can take advantage of another of their insights. This is the insight that the ecology of sin is an interrelated one.²³⁰ Our alienation from God, from ourselves, from other humans, from other relational creatures, and from nature do not proceed one into the other in a linear sense: whenever one category of relationality is distorted by sin, our whole relational person suffers. Sin’s systemic and perpetual presence in our relational networks makes it impossible for one to be healed in isolation from one’s fellows – as McFadyen writes, if one sins we are all responsible²³¹ – but with God’s grace we can make a start, and “be part of a healing community and family, and part of healing causes and currents on earth.”²³²

Grace, God’s pouring out of love-in-relationship, is most drawn to the most pathological networks of relationship in creation; and it is here that God is most active in God’s transformative relationship with humanity. Christians are called in responding to grace, through worship, to rejoice in creation as they rejoice in their Creator, striving to live for the world and so attending with love to individual animals (human and nonhuman) in the image of how God attends to us. Note that no value claim is made here: I am not arguing, for example, that acting responsibly towards a cow (whatever that might involve) is an exercise of sanctified relationality in the same way that acting responsibly towards a human is. What I am arguing is

²²⁹ Snyder and Scandrett, *Salvation Means Creation Healed*, 68.

²³⁰ Snyder and Scandrett, *Salvation Means Creation Healed*, 75.

²³¹ McFadyen, *Bound to Sin*, 248.

²³² Snyder and Scandrett, *Salvation Means Creation Healed*, 78.

that to recognise responsibility to a cow, to be concerned for her particular flourishing as a cow, is to act appropriately as a Christian disciple who rejoices in other individuals and hopes for sanctification by grace. This is the case whether or not we recognise that the cow acknowledges relationship with us. Just as Christians are called to act towards those humans who are incapable of relationship (such as coma patients), are severely hampered in relational terms (such as those with severe learning disabilities), or disavow responsible relationship (such as one's enemies), the relationality that is transformed by living and worshipping in the body of Christ and the image of God can be extended to nonhuman animals.

The statement in Proverbs 12:10, that “The righteous know the needs of their animals, but the mercy of the wicked is cruel,” offers another insight into human-animal relationality. Richard Bauckham draws a compelling parallel between Proverbs and Exodus 23:9, wherein the Israelites are reminded that they should “know the heart of an alien” because they themselves were aliens in Egypt. What the NRSV translates as ‘needs’ with respect to animals is actually the same word (*nepesh*) translated as ‘heart’ with respect to human aliens.²³³ This anthropocentric translation, parallel to that already discussed in this chapter in relation to Genesis 1-2, obscures the significance of the proverb. This significance lies not in a claim that the righteous person should know what it is like to be a nonhuman animal; just as the Exodus verse does not constitute a claim that Israelites should know the inner self of Gentiles. Neither is it simply an empathic command to be attentive to the feelings of animals; although it is certainly also this, an act of responsibility wholly other to the fake “mercy of the wicked” witnessed too often in the modern flesh-food industry, where animals are fed and treated with antibiotics not as an act of responsibility but in a purely economic effort to maximise the profit deriving from their planned slaughter and evisceration. Read in tandem with Exodus 23:9, Proverbs 12:10 confronts the reader with a challenging reminder of the extent of relationality within creation: as the Israelites knew what it was to be an alien because they were themselves aliens at a time, so does the human reader of Proverbs know what it is to be an animal because they are themselves an animal. When Laban fed and watered the camels of Abraham’s servant, even before food was offered to the man (Gen. 24:31-33), or in the proscription against muzzling the threshing ox (Deut. 24:4),

²³³ Bauckham, *The Bible and Ecology*, 138-140.

one can see this in practice. As the psalmist tells us that “everything that breathes praise the Lord” (Ps. 150:6), human and nonhuman animals alike are called to joyfully recognise their Creator as fellows within creation.

A genuinely relational act, in light of what has been argued thus far, is one which is in the first place attentive to one’s relationship with God (and so gives thanks for grace), and in the second place attentive to both the particularity and relationality of the other (and so treats them as a relational individual, with loving concern shaped by the unmerited grace which is extended to us). That humans, and our relational networks, are distorted by sin is a fundamental theological truth: whether nonhuman animals can be spoken of as *committing* sin is a more contentious question, but if we are to say that some animals are relational creatures, awaiting redemption in a fallen world, it follows that (in line with Clough) it would be a step too far to claim that animal sin is ontologically impossible. Having made the case for recognising animal particularity and relationality, arguing that human-animal relationships can be sanctified by grace as can inter-human relationships, I move to examine God’s covenantal action in relationship with human and nonhuman animals; and the scriptural, foundational, and precedential examples of human-animal relationality within creation it provides.

Covenantal Relationships²³⁴

In the covenants of Genesis 9 and Hosea 2, God explicitly enters into relationship with both human and nonhuman animals. Genesis 9²³⁵ marks

²³⁴ An extended form of this discussion will be published as Kris Hiuser and Matthew Barton, “A Promise is a Promise: God’s Covenantal Relationship with Animals”, *Scottish Journal of Theology*, forthcoming.

²³⁵ Though Genesis 9 is the first case of God covenanting with humans and nonhumans, it should also be noted that it is the occasion where God first allows humans to eat their fellow sentient creatures. The paradisiacal relation between humans and animals found in Genesis 1-2 has been tarnished: as far back as Tertullian (“On Fasting”, online at <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0408.htm> [accessed 15 March 2013], chapter 4), the allowance for human consumption of animal flesh was seen as being due to human weakness. While humans are allowed to eat animal flesh (9:3), immediately following this is a commandment not to eat the lifeblood (9:4), for the life of the creature belongs solely to God (Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1979), 128). Given that this is an allowance due to human sin, and noting the warning about consuming the lifeblood, it may be more reasonable to view the covenant as *limiting* the extent to which this allowance would enable human use of animals, rather than viewing the allowance as determinative for the nature of the covenant. See Greenway (“Animals and the Love of God”, *The Christian Century*, 117.19, (2000) 680) and Ernest L. Fortin (“The

the first time God enacts a covenant with God's creatures.²³⁶ Bill Arnold makes the point that "'Covenant' occurs seven times in ten verses (9:8-17), and the very density of the term itself makes the point: God's covenant with Noah is central to the post-diluvian world order."²³⁷ Kent Hughes notes three themes of the Noahic covenant which are useful in describing it in more detail; it can be understood as universal (involving all creation), unilateral (dependent entirely on God), and unconditional (there will never be another flood).²³⁸ The universality of the covenant – which Arnold limits, describing it as God's covenant with Noah – is seen in that it involves humans, other animals, and all generations of all creatures.²³⁹ That this covenant goes beyond the merely human is highlighted by the repetitive focus on "every living creature", "all living creatures" and "all life", with these repetitions making clear the extent of the covenant.²⁴⁰ The view that the covenant is unilateral is shared by many biblical commentators,²⁴¹ and Clare Amos notes that this is highlighted by the fact that "throughout 9:1-17 Noah remains completely mute, accentuating the one-sided obligation which God is placing himself under."²⁴² We might remember at this point Job's ultimate muteness in the face of YHWH as his Creator lists his co-creatures and their independence from humanity: here, too, divine-animal relationality is communicated in God's covenantal action, in the face of which Noah is rightly acquiescent. That the Noahic covenant is unconditional is seen in the thrice-repeated phrase "never again",²⁴³ as well

Bible Made Me Do It", *The Review of Politics*, 57.2 (2009), 200). For further discussion of Hebrew Bible animal sacrifice, see chapter 5.

²³⁶ Clare Amos, *The Book of Genesis* (Peterborough: Epworth Press, 2004), 67; Donald Gowan, *Genesis 1-11* (Edinburgh: Handsel Press, 1988), 104; Derek Kidner, *Genesis* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1967), 101. While Genesis 6:18 is the first mention of a covenant between God and Noah, it is only in Genesis 9 that this covenant is fulfilled and made by God (as well as being extended beyond Noah and his descendants).

²³⁷ Bill Arnold, *Genesis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 110.

²³⁸ Kent Hughes, *Genesis: Beginning and Blessing Vol. 1* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2004), 147. These same three points are also noted by James Barr, "Reflections on the Covenant with Noah", in A.D. H. Mayes and R. B. Salters, eds, *Covenant as Context: Essays in Honour of E. W. Nicholson* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 11-22.

²³⁹ Gen. 9:9, 12. Gowan, *Genesis 1-11*, 104.

²⁴⁰ Claus Westermann, trans. John. J. Scullion, *Genesis 1-11* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 474; Gowan, *Genesis 1-11*, 104.

²⁴¹ Amos, *The Book of Genesis*, 55; Gowan, *Genesis. 1-11*, 104; Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 471; Barr, "Reflections on the Covenant with Noah", 11-14; David Van Drunen, "A Covenantal Conception of Natural Law Drawn from Genesis 9", *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 30.2 (2010), 131-49.

²⁴² Amos, *The Book of Genesis*, 55.

²⁴³ Gen. 9:11, 15.

as the explicit mention of it being an “everlasting covenant”.²⁴⁴ This covenant extends to all God’s creatures, is dependent on God alone, and is unbreakable: in the words of Patrick Miller, it “restores and secures the creation for the benefit of the creatures, animal and human.”²⁴⁵

The covenant of Hosea 2 continues this acknowledgment and extension of relationality to nonhuman animals. Here the term “covenant” occurs only once, but God states “I will make for you a covenant on that day with the wild animals, the birds of the air, and the creeping things of the ground.”²⁴⁶ The goal of the covenant – understood as part of the greater goal of restoration communicated in Hosea 2, and coming on the back of some animals serving God *against* humanity²⁴⁷ – incorporates some of the same ideas as the Noahic covenant, including “freedom from harm from animals, and freedom from harm of humans.”²⁴⁸ Robert Murray suggests that Hosea’s writer “saw the covenant as that of cosmic renewal and peace rather than any other model.”²⁴⁹ This cosmic peace involves (at the very least) a covenant involving God and both human and nonhuman animals. In Hosea 2, unlike Genesis 9, it should be noted that there is no explicit mention of God even covenanting with humans; only *for* humans, *with* nonhuman animals.²⁵⁰ Given that a covenant involves a relatively clear demarcation of relationship – and as such can be termed a relational network of its own, within which God’s creatures live and serve their Creator – what does God’s covenantal activity with nonhuman animals mean for human-animal relationality?

One specific element of what it means to covenant has been highlighted by James Scott: “Generally speaking, the term, “covenant” indicates a special relationship that is based upon commitment, in which obligations and promises are included, and which contains both qualities of

²⁴⁴ Gen. 9:16. The eternal nature of this covenant is noted by Gowan, *Genesis. 1-11*, 105; Walter Vogels, *God’s Universal Covenant* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1986), 29; and Robert Murray, *The Cosmic Covenant* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1992), 34, 37, 102.

²⁴⁵ Patrick Miller, *Israelite Religion and Biblical Theology* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 486.

²⁴⁶ Hos. 2:18.

²⁴⁷ Hos. 2:12. Compare this inference of nonhuman animals serving God in their relationships with humanity to the service of the whale in Jon. 1:17-2:10 (and also of the bush in 4:6!)

²⁴⁸ Douglas Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah* (Waco: Word Books, 1987), 58.

²⁴⁹ Murray, *The Cosmic Covenant*, 36

²⁵⁰ Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 58; James Mays, *Hosea: A Commentary* (London: SCM Press, 1969), 49.

dependability and permanence.”²⁵¹ That a crucial idea of what it means to be in covenant is to be in relation is a point which has been noted by a number of biblical scholars and theologians: others, such as Bruce Waltke and W.J. Dumbrell, suggest instead that a covenant confirms a pre-existing relationship.²⁵² With regards to the covenant found in Genesis 9, the pre-existing relationship is found in Genesis 1, through God’s act of creation and blessing²⁵³ – a creation and affirmation which was not limited to humans. Reflecting on the cosmic nature of God’s covenantal action, Murray states that “though creation was not expressed in explicitly covenantal terms..., already there was [an] emphas[i]s on the relationship of humankind to God and to the animal orders.”²⁵⁴ In the case of Genesis 9, the only *active* partner is God. Yet the *passive* nature of being a covenantal partner with God suggests not only relation between God and creation, but also relation between all the passive members; between human and nonhuman animals. Scott notes that in translating *bĕrît* as “covenant”, we have lost something of the original meaning, which would have been an emphasis on a binding relationship.²⁵⁵ Peter Golding likewise notes that the emphasis on a “bond” is inherently relational, and suggests that even in Gen. 9 and Hos. 2 where the parties involved include animals, “it is still a ‘bond’ that is being established with them.”²⁵⁶

In addition to this more general understanding of covenant as relational, Frank Cross has proposed an idea of covenant which is rooted in kinship, arising from his recognition that “the social organization of West Semitic tribal groups was grounded in kinship. Kinship relations defined the rights and obligations, the duties, status, and privileges of tribal members, and kinship terminology provided the only language for expressing legal, political, and religious institutions.”²⁵⁷ Part of what kinship meant was upholding the welfare of one’s fellow kinsman, and redeeming them in

²⁵¹ James Scott, *The Meaning of the Concept of the Covenant in the Holy Scriptures* (Thesis, Greenwich School of Theology, 1998), 13.

²⁵² Bruce Waltke, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 146; William J. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation: A Theology of the Old Testament Covenants* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2002), 18-19.

²⁵³ Peter Golding, *The Idea and Development of the Covenant in the Bible* (Thesis, Greenwich School of Theology, 1991), 24; Waltke, *Genesis*, 146; Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 26.

²⁵⁴ Murray, *The Cosmic Covenant*, 33.

²⁵⁵ Scott, *The Meaning of the Concept of the Covenant in the Holy Scriptures*, 12.

²⁵⁶ Golding, *The Idea and Development of the Covenant in the Bible*, 19.

²⁵⁷ Frank Moore Cross, *From Epic to Canon: History and Literature in Ancient Israel* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 3.

times of need, as well as being loving, just and generous to them.²⁵⁸ Amos, discussing Cross' work, suggests that in covenanting with both human and nonhuman animals, God was, "in effect, 'adopting' the other party as kin, and agreeing to accept the mutual obligations inherent in kinship."²⁵⁹ Through covenanting, God became (using Cross's term) the Divine Kinsman.²⁶⁰ Cross is not alone in his presentation of covenant as closely related to familial ties. D. J. McCarthy states "there is no doubt that covenants, even treaties, were thought of as establishing a kind of quasi-familial unity. In the technical vocabulary of these documents a superior partner was called 'father', his inferior 'son', and equal partners were 'brothers'."²⁶¹ Though this is stronger language than other relational discussions of covenant, the idea is the same: by God's self-chosen action, God covenants not only with humans, but with all God's creatures.

If we understand covenant as inherently relational, it is only rational to suggest that in covenanting with a group, the members of that group are valued and cared for. Various theologians have commented on the care that God has for creation, as seen through God's covenantal action in relation to it. Claus Westermann suggests this is an "unconditional approval" by God towards creation;²⁶² Wolfhart Pannenberg suggests that God both preserves and cares for each individual creature,²⁶³ and David Fergusson notes that in the covenant of Genesis 9 "God offers care to all creatures".²⁶⁴ The relational significance of God's covenanting with nonhuman animals²⁶⁵ is further emphasized by the Anglican Church's 1998 Lambeth Conference, which recognized the relationship between all creatures based on God's covenantal action.²⁶⁶

²⁵⁸ Cross, *From Epic to Canon*, 4-5.

²⁵⁹ Amos, *The Book of Genesis*, 68.

²⁶⁰ Cross, *From Epic to Canon*, 7.

²⁶¹ D. J. McCarthy, *Old Testament Covenant: A Survey of Current Opinions* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1972), 33.

²⁶² Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 473.

²⁶³ Wolfhart Pannenberg, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *Systematic Theology Vol. 2* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 35.

²⁶⁴ David Fergusson, *The Cosmos and the Creator* (Bristol: Arrowsmiths, 1998), 69.

²⁶⁵ The idea that God values animals and recognizes their worth on a relational (perhaps even individual) level is supported by the abundant scriptural witness to animals (both wild and domestic) praising (Isa. 43:20) and crying out (Joel 1:20) to God; and also the call in Proverbs for the righteous person to know the needs of their animal (Prov. 12:10).

²⁶⁶ Lambeth Conference Resolutions 1998, Resolution I.8.a, online at: <http://www.lambethconference.org/resolutions/1998/1998-1-8.cfm> [accessed 30 November 2012].

The covenant is not a cause of God's love: it follows naturally from it. As discussed above, engaging in covenant suggests a pre-existing relationship. But what does God's relation to the nonhuman have to do with humans? Do God's promises to the nonhuman involve the human in some way; and if so, how? In the case of the Noahic covenant, humans are passive members alongside nonhuman animals and creation as a whole; a situation which puts human and animal in relationship together. For Murray, this raises a question: "[If] God is seen as promising to care for both orders of creatures; and if both are God's covenant-partners, how can they not be in some sense covenantally bound to one another?"²⁶⁷ Jürgen Moltmann puts an ethical spin on this, suggesting that this covenantal relationship is so strong that violence against members of God's covenant (including animals) is an injury against God.²⁶⁸ Through covenanting with humans and animals, God binds them into a covenantal (and therefore relational) community. Beyond this shared community, the very fact that God's covenantal action towards animals indicates God's care for them has implications for how we understand and view our animal fellows. Rather than viewing other animals as mere resources, material for our use, the fact that God covenants with these creatures – and draws us into covenant with them – is grounds for the call which has been considered in this chapter. This is the call towards sanctified relationships with the nonhuman animal creation – proper for the humanity of the human and the animality of the animal – in the spirit of grace in which God covenants with God's creation. God's covenantal action anticipates and exhorts the "cosmic peace" which Murray notes. It is the ultimate fulfilment of this cosmic peace – the eschatological reconciliation of all things – to which we now turn, reflecting on visions of the peaceable kingdom with human-animal relationality in mind.

Animal Relationality in Creation and *Eschaton*

In this chapter, I have developed a theological account of human-animal relationality through considering the nature of God, humanity, creation, covenant, Incarnation, and sin. One question which remains unanswered is that concerning how animal relationality fits into eschatology. In considering

²⁶⁷ Murray, *The Cosmic Covenant*, 102.

²⁶⁸ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation* (London: SCM Press, 1999), 133-4.

the implications of sin for animal relationality, it was suggested that nonhuman animals can be thought of as existing in and being shaped by distorted relational networks in a manner analogous to how sin works in human lives. If the groaning animal creation is to be taken up, redeemed, and reconciled by its Creator – and so exist in perfected networks of relationality come the kingdom – what, then, will eschatological animal relationality look like?

In considering the place and relationship of humans and other animals in creation, we must remember that the world as we understand it is imperfect, but that through God this will be transformed at the end of history. We are not to become focused on the things of the world at the expense of the kingdom:²⁶⁹ this holds true across the breadth of theology. And neither, as argued above, must we imagine that the reconciliation Christ has painfully laid the groundwork for is for humans only. Jürgen Moltmann asserted this much when he wrote that

Jesus' proclamation of the imminent kingdom of God was a proleptically eschatological proclamation, and was as such aligned towards future endorsement. What the disciples proclaimed as his 'resurrection from the dead' embodied the eschatological endorsement of his anticipation of the kingdom of God, because the resurrection of the dead was the symbol under which the end of history was imagined.²⁷⁰

The resurrection of Christ is not simply a triumph over fleshly death; it is the gifting of hope for all creation, which currently groans in bondage.²⁷¹ All creatures captive to death receive eschatological promise: considered with critical attention to nonhuman animals, and with an eye to Isaiah's proclamation of the peaceable kingdom,²⁷² a practice of praying and living with the relationships and responsibilities of the *eschaton* in our hearts is one potential faithful response to this promise.

Similar to Moltmann, Miroslav Volf speaks of "the reconciliation of *all things* (Col. 1:15-20) – reconciliation between human beings and God, reconciliation among human beings themselves, internal reconciliation

²⁶⁹ 1 Jn. 2:15 – "Do not love the world or the things in the world. The love of the Father is not in those who love the world."

²⁷⁰ Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ*, p. 253.

²⁷¹ Rom. 8:18-25.

²⁷² Isa. 11:6-9.

within human beings, and reconciliation of human beings and the nonhuman environment.”²⁷³ Bauckham agrees that “Reconciliation with God and reconciliation with the rest of God’s creation are not alternatives but natural partners.”²⁷⁴ The blood of the cross reconciles all things together, including the wild animals who “cry out” to God:²⁷⁵ this scandalous subversion of the natural order as we know it is mirrored in Isaiah’s presentation of the peaceable kingdom, as well as the life and death of Jesus Christ. In the words of Snyder and Scandrett, “Salvation means creation healed, and that is shocking and stupendous news. The good news of Jesus is even better than we thought.”²⁷⁶

Isaiah’s is “an eschatological peace that renews the peace of the beginning, where humans and animals do not depend on one another’s destruction for their own survival.”²⁷⁷ It is the end of violence, exploitation, and death, even to the extent of subverting the natural order; although it should also be noted that those humans and animals depicted in the kingdom are embodied, fleshly creatures. As children play with asps and adders,²⁷⁸ we see peaceable relationship where in the world as we know it we would expect mortal fear. But this is not the reduction of creation to a blank state, a completely fresh start; it is the creation of new responsibility and relationship in the kingdom, in the direction of which the Incarnation points us. Neil Messer says as much, in talking of the peaceable kingdom, when he writes that “If we wish to take seriously the Isaianic promise of a coming age in which lions live at peace with cattle, we shall also have to acknowledge that it is quite beyond our power to imagine what such an age will look like, much less to bring it in or to ‘approximate’ it.”²⁷⁹ This humble admission of the limitations of our eschatological knowledge is reminiscent

²⁷³ Miroslav Volf, “Enter into Joy! Sin, Death, and the Life of the World to Come”, in John Polkinghorne and Michael Welker (ed), *The End of the World and the Ends of God: Science and Theology on Eschatology*, (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2000), 275.

²⁷⁴ Bauckham, *The Bible and Ecology*, 178.

²⁷⁵ Joel 1:20 – “Even the wild animals cry to you because the watercourses are dried up, and fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness.”

²⁷⁶ Snyder and Scandrett, *Salvation Means Creation Healed*, xi.

²⁷⁷ Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 87.

²⁷⁸ Isa. 11:8 – “The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder’s den.”

²⁷⁹ Neil Messer, “Humans, Animals, Evolution and Ends”, in *Creaturely Theology*, 211-27 at 224.

of Barth's majestic rumination on what Clough calls "the shape of redeemed living".²⁸⁰

Let us be honest: we do not know what we are saying when we speak of Jesus Christ's coming again in judgement, and of the resurrection of the dead, of eternal life and eternal death. That with all these there will be bound up a piercing revelation – a seeing, compared to which all our present vision will have been blindness – is too often testified in Scripture for us to feel we ought to prepare ourselves for it. For we do not know what will be revealed when the last covering is removed from our eyes, from all eyes: how we shall behold one another and what we shall be to one another – men of today and men of past centuries and millennia, ancestors and descendants, husbands and wives, wise and foolish, oppressors and oppressed, traitors and betrayed, murderers and murdered, East and West, Germans and others, Christians, Jews, and heathen, orthodox and heretics, Catholics and Protestants, Lutherans and Reformed...²⁸¹

And, I might add, humans and other animals! Indeed, Barth does mention that "We also do not know what Nature... will be for us then,"²⁸² but, having performed the regrettably reductive act of collapsing 'animals' into 'Nature', he does not see the potential for human-animal relationality come the *eschaton*.

The caution exhibited by Barth and Messer when it comes to eschatological pontification is well-noted, but I would not want to go so far as to conclude that our limited and flawed faculties mean we should attempt to say nothing at all about life in the kingdom; any more than I would want to draw that same conclusion in relation to the doctrine of God (or creation, or sin, or indeed any element of systematic theology wherein we do not truly understand that of which we speak). Isaiah's vision of the peaceable kingdom is, after all, an imagining of what the age to come will look like,²⁸³ and it is consistent with this chapter's theology. The peaceable relationships between wolves and lambs, and leopards and kids, surely

²⁸⁰ Clough, *On Animals*, chapter 7.

²⁸¹ Karl Barth, *God Here and Now* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 45-6.

²⁸² Barth, *God Here and Now*, 46.

²⁸³ For other possible images of redeemed nonhuman animal life, see Gen. 2, 7-9; Ps. 65-6, 98, 145, 148; Isa. 65:17-26; Dan. 1:12-15; Rom. 8:19-23; Eph. 1:10; Col. 1:15-20; Rev. 4:6-11, 5:11-14, 21:1-2.

look strange to us; but so did the life of Jesus Christ, wherein infinite power became boundless self-emptying and the strictures of law became the freedom of love. The end to hostilities between the peoples of Isaiah's time in Isaiah 11:10-15, following on from the transformation of animal relationality in verses 6-9, suggests that for the prophet an end to inter-human conflict seemed no more or less likely than a cessation of violence between bear and cow.

A productive comparison might be made between the Isaianic vision of the peaceable kingdom and early Christian hagiographies. In particular, Helen Waddell's excellent collection *Beasts and Saints* collates numerous tales of the saints and their relationships with nonhuman animals.²⁸⁴ From St Macarius' charitable education of the hyena – who gives up her flesh-eating ways upon his instruction²⁸⁵ – to the abbot Gerasimus, who befriends and is served by a lion until his death,²⁸⁶ we see in these stories lives lived in the hope and anticipation of the kingdom. Of course, the transformed responsibility and relationality witnessed to in the lives of Macarius' hyena and Gerasimus' lion is impossible to attain in creation as we know it.²⁸⁷ but so too, it should then be added, is the life of the saint – this is the miracle of grace and the hope of the kingdom.²⁸⁸

What, though, does the reconciliation and redemption of nonhuman animals mean for human-animal relationships, in both the fallen world and the renewed creation to come? Christopher Southgate rejects 'protological' vegetarianism on the grounds that it claims too much for human capabilities in hoping and working towards a return to Eden.²⁸⁹ In the same essay, he takes a similarly critical approach to what he terms "eschatological vegetarianism"; this being a future-oriented dietary model which he also

²⁸⁴ Helen Waddell, *Beasts and Saints* (London: Constable and Company, 1934).

²⁸⁵ Waddell, *Beasts and Saints*, 13-16.

²⁸⁶ Waddell, *Beasts and Saints*, 25-9.

²⁸⁷ Although impossible to attain fully through our own power, striving towards perfected living practices – even in the knowledge that we will fall short, and remain dependent upon God's grace – is an act of discipleship. This understanding of *compromised idealism* will be unpacked further in chapter 5.

²⁸⁸ Jeffrey Stout (whose critique of Stanley Hauerwas will be engaged with in chapter 4) rejects the use of hagiographies within Christian pedagogy on the grounds that they present unrealistically idealistic pictures which fall outside genuine human understanding and experience (Jeffrey Stout, *Democracy and Tradition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 161). This criticism will be engaged with in more detail in chapter 9: for now, it should suffice to note that unrealistic idealism is precisely what grace and the Incarnation call humans towards.

²⁸⁹ Christopher Southgate, "Protological and Eschatological Vegetarianism", in *Eating and Believing*, 247-65 at 248-9.

rejects for articulating a supposedly hubristic account of human capabilities.²⁹⁰ I am not sure, however, that eschatologically-focused models for Christian living need to be categorised as solely future-oriented, and therefore juxtaposed against transcendent models wherein Christians act in service to God in the present, regardless of the efficacy or long-term impact of their actions.²⁹¹ This is a view shared by Clough:

A vision of what the reconciliation and redemption of all things by God in Christ through the Spirit might mean for relationships between humans and other animals will cause Christians to be motivated to act in whatever ways they can to witness to redeemed patterns of creaturely relations... The doctrine of redemption is not reducible to a set of beliefs about some future state, but is an understanding of what God is doing in the world and of how God intended and intends creaturely relations to be ordered.²⁹²

Living a life of service oriented to the future reconciliation of all things does not have to equate to belief in one's ability – or the ability of one's tradition – to bring about that future peaceableness oneself. Indeed, the ultimate reconciliation has already been inaugurated in the Incarnation: we await, in a world marred by sin and constrained by temporality, that which has already happened at the end of time. We are not (at least, not yet) to live with hyenas as St Macarius did; but we are to recognise their impending reconciliation to us and ours to them, and so consider our relationships with them with an eye to the redemption of our intertwined relationalities that will come with the kingdom.

Southgate raises a valuable issue at this point: even if one accepts the eschatological promise of the leopard lying with the kid, he suggests, it is very difficult to see how the leopard remains a leopard if its fundamental nature has been so transformed as to no longer desire the flesh of the goat.²⁹³ Although the issue of identity-continuity either side of the *eschaton* is a valuable one to explore, I stand alongside Clough in finding Southgate's response unsatisfying. Clough compares Southgate's "acceptance of predation as God's original creative intent" to the

²⁹⁰ See also Kathryn Tanner, "Eschatology and Ethics" in *The Oxford Handbook to Theological Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 52.

²⁹¹ Tanner, "Eschatology and Ethics", 54.

²⁹² Clough, *On Animals*, 171.

²⁹³ Christopher Southgate, *The Groaning of Creation: God, Evolution, and the Problem of Evil* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 86.

ecotheologies which Andrew Linzey criticises as privileging the flourishing of the whole over the life of individual creatures.²⁹⁴ This similarity lies in a denial of the particularity and relationality of animal others; a collapse of individual animals into the morally uninteresting monolith of *nature* (contrasted with *humanity*, the only creatures to stand outside nature).

The idea that our inability to imagine how redeemed animals might relate to each other means that predation is a *necessary* element of creation brings to mind Hauerwas' claim that just-war theologies quiet the impetus for moral alternatives to warfare,²⁹⁵ leading in the end to the acceptance of the way things are as 'necessary', and the move from thinking about how to witness *against* them to thinking about how best to live *within* them.²⁹⁶ Eschatological accounts of relationality further undermine Southgate's notion that predation is natural-and-therefore-neutral: if God is not able to redeem and reform lives fundamentally marked by predation and exploitation, then the possibility of peace between humans seems no more likely than any alteration of animal relationality. Clough highlights the historic (and contemporary) celebration of human warriors, whose role in demarcating and defending territory and resources is surely 'natural' if understood in an evolutionary sense, and proposes that within Southgate's argument for the ontological necessity of predation such fighters would continue to kill their enemies (albeit, perhaps, with an absence of suffering) come the *eschaton*.

Instead, it is a Christian expectation that such human lives require transformation in order to fit them for life under the reign of God, just as the lives of non-warriors will need to be purged of their manifold vices. The transformation required to fit human beings for life in the new creation is hard to imagine while still preserving human identity, if the human life I know best is anything to go by. Yet biblical and later Christian traditions encourage us to entertain the audacious hope that even creatures like us could find a place in the peaceable

²⁹⁴ Clough, *On Animals*, 159.

²⁹⁵ Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 124.

²⁹⁶ Stephen Webb's recent work on capitalism seems to fall victim, at times, to this kind of uncritical acceptance of worldly realities, which Christians are thus supposed to relate to (or 'deal with') rather than imagine they can stand against, or change. In a recent debate with William Cavanaugh, Webb argues that "It is crucially important for all Christians to think deeply about how free markets, limited government, and Christian faith fit so closely together" (Stephen Webb, "A Response to William T. Cavanaugh's "Out to Lunch"," *The Other Journal* 19 (2011) 20-24 at 24). Note that Christians are here urged to think about *how* free market capitalism and Christianity fit together; not *whether* they do.

kingdom... A Christian vision of redeemed creaturely life must be one in which predation is no longer a possibility for human or non-human creatures... *If we can envision redeemed human creatures thriving in ways very different from our current patterns of life, we can envision similar redeemed non-human creaturely thriving.* [emphasis mine]²⁹⁷

The ontological and teleological ambiguity surrounding theological definitions of 'nature' will be taken up further in chapter 4: for now, it should suffice to note that peace between human creatures, between humans and other animals, and between nonhuman animals are equally unrealistic and unattainable in the world as we know it.²⁹⁸ Human creatures are blessed in that we can choose God, and so conform our concupiscent will to better align with God's own; but as imperfect creatures who are deeply enmeshed within distorted relational networks we are unable and unwilling to do so fully. In this way, we will remain unperfected until the kingdom comes; as will brother leopard and sister hyena.

Reflecting on watching his cat watching birds (aware that in nature as we know it, Mitsy's birdwatching includes the desire to kill and eat, regardless of her proficiency to achieve this), Clough suggests that in the transformation wrought by God at the end of history

there could be a perfect existence that consisted in the contemplation or even befriending of birds, without having to rely on killing them to survive, and it does not seem implausible to me that [Mitsy's] lounging bigger relatives could also enjoy an existence in which they were freed from the burdens of having to kill to assure their continued existence.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁷ Clough, *On Animals*, 159-60.

²⁹⁸ In opposition to Willis Jenkins (*Ecologies of Grace: Environmental Ethics and Christian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 120, 144), Clough separates the *practices* of animals (human and nonhuman) from their *being*, so that a change of practice for a lion (for example, from eating flesh to eating straw) is not equivalent to the removal of lion-ness from that lion. Clough offers a human parallel: in Rev. 7, we see the Christian martyrs, who come the kingdom can no longer "depend for their identity on the continued existence of their enemies... The life-practices of the martyrs are transformed in the new creation – instead of suffering as a result of their witness to God, they live lives of blissful praise – yet they have not become a different species, but remain identifiable with the persons that they were. There seems no reason why the being of lions cannot also survive such a change of practice." Clough, *On Animals*, 161.

²⁹⁹ Clough, *On Animals*, 162.

This is not to make the claim that we are not called to work for the transformation of relationships between cats and birds in the same way as we are called to work for peace between human individuals, institutions, and societies. It would be unjust for humans to attempt to write our (distorted, limited) perception of the kingdom onto nature as we experience it: in the above example, we would be hard-pressed to interfere in the cat-bird dynamic without negatively impacting the flourishing of one or both parties. Instead, in the hope of the kingdom and in our efforts to reflect the triune relationality of God, we attend to fragmentations in human relational networks. This will include inter-human relationships, but also those networks which involve both human and nonhuman; such as the networks of factory farming, looked at more closely in chapter 5.

What does this account of redeemed animal relationality suggest for how we might relate to our nonhuman brothers and sisters? We inhabit a world which is not the kingdom; but that should not inhibit us as Christians from attempting to anticipate the *eschaton*, our hope for the future and our inspiration for the present, in our relationships and the exercise of our responsibility here and now. Just as talk of the perfectly equal and ex-centric human relationships of the *eschaton* should never justify acceptance of the *status quo* – or abandonment of ventures for social justice – in the fallen creation we now inhabit, the talk of similarly transformed relationality with other animals in the peaceable kingdom cannot justify practices which override and ignore animal particularity here and now. Michael Northcott was wary of this when he wrote that

St Paul, and the writer of the Book of Revelation, speaks of a time when the whole cosmos will be brought into relationship with the supreme justice of the Lord who is God in Christ. Christians have often proclaimed this justice to people of their own race and gender and class. They have more rarely proclaimed it amongst people different from themselves. Far more rarely has it been proclaimed to those orders of life which are not human flesh and blood.³⁰⁰

God's grace justifies and sanctifies us; but the fact that it justifies us (redeeming us through an act of love that comes as a gift) does not mean that we can resist or ignore it sanctifying us (forming us into a pattern of

³⁰⁰ Michael Northcott, *The Environment and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 326.

living that strives to reflect that freeing love). If we do not display, in our creaturely relationships, the transformed responsibility that comes through grace, we are not acting as thankful disciples. If we do not try to work for what we hope for in the kingdom, even knowing that we cannot achieve it through our own power, we neglect the call to respond to our fellows (human and nonhuman). In Isaiah's vision of the lion lying down with the lamb, and the stories of the saints and their animal companions who lived out eschatological relationality in a fallen world, we see shared mutuality and the potential for transformed relationships between humans and other animals. This is a perception which meshes with the recognition of other animals as relational individuals, and with the inauguration of the *eschaton* wrought by the Incarnation.

Before moving to consider the ethical (specifically, the dietary) implications of this chapter's theological work, it is worth returning – prior to concluding – to the doctrine of human dominion. Proceeding from human creation *imago Dei* and foundationally linked to the stewardship theologies critiqued in chapter 2, the possibility of 'redeeming' stewardship in a relational direction is in this way considered.

Dominion

In light of the divine transformation of our natural relationality which comes when we joyously accept grace – and the novel way we can view animal relationality in light of Incarnation, covenant and *eschaton* – perhaps the most significant point to be made here is that election to dominion is not election to exploitation. Such a reading of human dominion, historically prevalent and often pinpointed as the ideological heart of human abuses of nature,³⁰¹ can only be underpinned by a hierarchical understanding of power and lordship. In God's creative, redemptive and sustaining action, however, and in the free outflow of grace to undeserving human creatures, Christians witness that a lordship of coercion is no lordship at all. God's gracious action reveals that true lordship is service to one's fellows: being in relationship with God calls us towards right relationship with all. For John Howard Yoder, the cross of Christ is the model of Christian social

³⁰¹ See for example Lynn Townsend White, Jr., "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis", *Science*, 155.3767 (1967) 1203-7.

efficacy³⁰² precisely because it is the locus where God's sovereignty is subverted; a subversion which shows up relationships of worldly power as neither really powerful nor really relational. The lordship of Christ is servanthood;³⁰³ the omnipotence of God, absolute freedom to love.

To be sensible for Christian action and witness, then, dominion must be understood in light of the responsibility-to-God which accompanies human creation *imago Dei*. This cannot, however, be only understood as a monodirectional responsibility to the Creator, but must be read in light of the relational call-and-response which draws us to respond to our neighbours in the church and the world. This definition of neighbourliness is not dependent on species boundaries, but on the recognition of particularity and relationality, and the willingness to respond with respect to these and with the aim of ensuring mutual flourishing. 'Election', after all, implies selection from a larger population: the Deuteronomical prescriptions for Israel's kings, wherein the king is elected as one among equals, not to profit from his people but to serve them, gives scriptural precedent for how election is to be lived out in a fallen creation.³⁰⁴ Were human dominion read in isolation from the revelation of God's love for us, or from the shape of perfected human relationality revealed in the life of Jesus Christ, we would still be unable to avoid the reality that election to dominion is a call intended to transform us. Richard Bauckham writes that "the vertical does not cancel the horizontal";³⁰⁵ meaning that any dominion humans have over other creatures does not annul the brute fact of human creatureliness.

If dominion is understood as election from among equals, this is not in the sense that humans are not different from other animals, but that the distance between creatures pales in relation to the distance between creation and Creator. We must remember to read the first creation narrative in the context of scriptural warnings about God's ownership of all creation, such as when the Psalmist reminds us that "the earth is the Lord's, and all that is in it."³⁰⁶ As Greenway suggests, "If we are rightly to understand how

³⁰² Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, 250.

³⁰³ Mark 10:43-44 – "Whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all."

³⁰⁴ Bauckham, *The Bible and Ecology*, 32. Cf. Deut. 17:14-20.

³⁰⁵ Bauckham, *The Bible and Ecology*, 31.

³⁰⁶ Ps. 24:1. See also Ps. 8, 115.

to exercise our dominion, we must strive to imitate and understand God's dominion."³⁰⁷

Paulos Gregorios has spoken of the need for humans to balance "mystery and mastery."³⁰⁸ He does so in the context of environmentalism, but this need for balance is also instructive for human-animal relationality. The *mystery* to be balanced is that God creates, sustains and redeems all creation; the *mastery* is the active responsibility humans have to our fellows, human and nonhuman. If mutual creatureliness is recognised, the way is open for dominion and any attendant ideas of stewardship to be understood in the language of responsible community and right relationship, as well as faithful service. Different species of animal differ in their relationality – as do particular members of specific species, including humans – but difference does not easily translate to value, and if one is to be king then one is to be understood as being elected from among equals. *Pace* the theos-rights of Andrew Linzey – discussed in chapter 2 – true relationality is not about serving one as an act of service to another (e.g. serving animals as an act of service to God); rather, it is about serving one as one is served by another (e.g. serving animals as God serves us). "Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Pet. 4:10), we are to embody what dominion we have in service to our fellows – human and nonhuman – with whatever gifts we have received.

In the concluding chapter (9) of this thesis, I will return to the doctrine of dominion and consider whether there is a place for stewardship in an embodied theology (and ethic, and ecclesiology) of human-animal relationality. For the purposes of this chapter, it should suffice to conclude that dominion as a classical theological doctrine is not inimical to reviewing and revising understandings of human-animal relationality.

Conclusion

Distinct among their particular and relational fellows, humans are created in God's image and elected to dominion within and for creation. This election is also a calling, to live out right and proper relationships with God's other relational creatures – human and animal – and it is by responding to this

³⁰⁷ Greenway, "Animals and the Love of God," 681.

³⁰⁸ Paulos Gregorios, *The Human Presence: An Orthodox View of Nature* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1978), 82.

calling, in relationship with God and the body of Christ, that sinful human creatures might hope to be transformed by grace. If we recognise other animals as relational creatures with whom we share commonality, while having particular capacities and needs of their own (as do we), it then follows that relating to them as God relates to us will involve paying close attention to what is necessary for their flourishing within creation as it is now. Understood in this way, human election to dominion is expressly not a licence to dominate but a call to serve: dominion is the exercise of our responsibility on behalf of all our creaturely fellows, as an act of service to God *and* an act of relationship with other animals.

It must be remembered that humans are creatures: “The fact that humans are commanded to what other species do as well as, uniquely, to exercise dominion over other species, is important to our understanding of the latter. Creation in the image of God does not make them demi-gods. They are unequivocally creatures.”³⁰⁹ Our creatureliness, and our transformative relationship with our Creator, call us to respond to our animal fellows as individuals worthy of relationship, and so seriously and reflectively take a new look at them and our relations with them. The importance of this is highlighted by God’s covenantal action with nonhuman animals, recognising them as responsible individuals and bringing them into relationship with humans.

The triune God, relational in God’s very being,³¹⁰ freely chose to create beings with whom God could be in relationship. The Incarnation of God’s Word into flesh, an act of cosmic significance,³¹¹ is the revelation of God’s relational care for all God’s creatures; the paradigmatic example of perfected human relationality; and the inauguration and foretaste of the peaceable kingdom where relationships will be made anew.³¹² The need for this remaking of creaturely relationships was raised through reflection on relationality and sin: here the possibility of nonhuman animal culpability for sin was left open, but their need for redemption was affirmed. The necessity of reconciliation for nonhuman animals was highlighted by noting

³⁰⁹ Bauckham, *The Bible and Ecology*, 19.

³¹⁰ See McFadyen, *The Call to Personhood* and McFadyen, *Bound to Sin*. See also Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self*; Kathryn Tanner, *Jesus, Humanity and the Trinity: A Brief Systematic Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2001); cf. Kilby, “Aquinas, the Trinity and the Limits of Understanding”.

³¹¹ See Clough, *On Animals*, 83-8.

³¹² Isa. 11:6-9.

their ensnarement in distorted relational networks analogous to (and overlapping with) those in which humans are caught and corrupted.

The eschatological remaking of human relationality will fulfil in us the image of the triune God; freeing us to live for the other in a way which rejoices in their particularity and relationality.³¹³ This other can be human or nonhuman: striving to witness to God's dynamic relationality and unbounded grace, we are to attend to our animal fellows – so far as we are able³¹⁴ – as individuals and as creatures-in-relationship. Although we must remain cautious about claiming too deep a *gnosis* of the shape of kingdom living, to exclude nonhuman animals from redemption on the grounds that they are presently grounded in networks of predation is to make too great a claim in the opposite direction: we do not know how animals will be transformed by God come the kingdom, but neither do we know they will not be transformed. Nonhuman animals are relational beings – even though their relationality differs from the human – and if we exist in a unique position of responsibility within creation, this position is to be understood as being that of 'first among equals'. Dominion is not a licence to exploit and ignore our nonhuman brothers and sisters.

In this chapter, I have constructed a theology of human-animal relationality, with the intention of demonstrating that the sanctification of human relationality need not only impact upon inter-human relationships, but can and should be good news for all relational creatures. A relational understanding of the *imago Dei*, in which our call to respond to God is likewise a call to respond to our fellows, is therefore appropriate. This is so in the light of the cosmic and transtemporal events of Incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection: made aware of God's love for us, shown the perfected form of human relationality (and the ex-centric orientation that involves), exposed to the tragic depths of our own sinfulness, and shown the eschatological end to sin and death, the question of what makes humans distinctive in creation pales into insignificance compared to the

³¹³ McFadyen, *Bound to Sin*, 207-208, 218-220.

³¹⁴ I do not here make the excessively ambitious argument that all Christians should live for nonhuman animals in all times and places. When Jesus called his followers to "be perfect, therefore, as your Father in heaven is perfect" (Mt. 5:48), he did not expect humans to become as God through their own power. Our inability to be perfect, however, cannot preclude us from striving to be so as an act of worshipful thanksgiving for grace: "We strive for excellence of practice, knowing that we can never earn the excellence of grace." Serene Jones, "Graced Practices: Excellence and Freedom in the Christian Life", in Miroslav Volf and Dorothy Bass (ed), *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B Eerdmans, 2002), 51-77 at 70.

question of how humans are to relate to those other animals alongside whom we were created, and with whom we are brought into relationship. Answering this question will involve thinking seriously – with attention to the nature and will of God – about the place of animals in creation.

This chapter's theology of human-animal relationality places a degree of importance upon our dietary choices (as choices which impact and influence how we perceive and relate to other animals) which other embodied and relational practices – particularly sexuality and inter-human violence – have long received in the Christian traditions. In chapter 4, I move, *via* conversation with Stanley Hauerwas, to reflect on these dietary choices in light of the theological work undertaken thus far.

4. Dietary Pacifism

Stanley Hauerwas and Dietary Ethics

Having raised concerns about the theological adequacy of existing stewardship models for thinking about human-animal relationality in chapter 2, in chapter 3 I articulated a theology with greater scope for responding to other animals as relational individuals. Recognising animals as having relationality of a kind – even if such is not directly translatable to human standards – they are included in the world in which Christians are called to put their faithful response to grace into practice. The point should be made, however, that the framework thus far constructed is exactly that: a framework. Recognising the particularity and relationality of nonhuman animals is not in itself an argument for practising nonviolence towards them, any more than a recognition of the novelty of human relationships lived *imago Christi* automatically precludes all use of coercion by Christians. If we accept other animals as relational creatures, however, we should therefore be concerned to think about how we relate to them in the world as it is now: in this thesis, I am particularly concerned with *eating*, which incorporates the question of how we relate to nonhuman animals in procuring our food.³¹⁵ Over the next two chapters, I outline an ethical model of ‘dietary pacifism’ – this is not an argument which stands on its own, but rather one potential implication of a theology which recognises nonhuman animals as creatures of God with whom humans are called to relate; in the hope of the kingdom, in thanks for grace, and in striving to heal those relational networks most fractured by sin.

It is worth posing, and answering, one pre-emptive question: why *dietary* pacifism? Why not *animal* pacifism? Eating is certainly not the only practice I could have selected through which to reflect on our relationships with other animals: it was chosen because our diet – what we eat – is an embodied practice, which both reflects and shapes our beliefs about that which we choose to eat. Food, as a culturally-shaped embodied practice, is

³¹⁵ The theological formulation of dietary pacifism is intended to serve both as an ethical argument in itself and also as an exhortation to casuistry. The absence of serious moral reflection on diet in the churches is such that the dietary pacifist outline of this chapter serves to further moral discourse on its subject matter as much as it does to endorse vegetarianism.

important: if we eat without thinking, we eat without seeking to discern God's will; and in this way, we fail to act responsibly in relation to those among our animal brothers and sisters we destine to be butchered.

As mentioned in chapter 1, the biological fact of food's importance seems too obvious to mention. Those of us who are able to eat regularly and often, but the ease with which we obtain our meals can obscure the processes behind their production. For Christians, this lack of knowledge about what goes on 'behind the scenes' should be worrying, because it covers up another way in which food is important – *theologically*, as something central to the life of all animals. In the words of Norman Wirzba (whose theology of food is engaged with critically in chapters 5 and 9):

What a theological approach to eating does is enable the perception of food within a context that stretches *through* the many ecological and social relationships of this world *to* the divine creator and sustainer of it. To approach food with a concern for its theological depth is to acknowledge that food is precious because it has its source in God.³¹⁶

What we eat, and how we relate to what we eat, is a particular element of bodily life, as vulnerable to concupiscence as any other. Unlike some elements of bodily life, such as sexuality, *diet* is one that regularly impacts on relational networks which extend beyond the human, including other animals and the environment we share with them. The specific meanings of, and complexities within, *dietary pacifism* and *Christian vegetarianism* will be explored in more detail in chapter 5:³¹⁷ first, I will consider the dietary implications of the theology outlined thus far, in conversation with the work of Stanley Hauerwas.

Hauerwas' work joins John Howard Yoder's Anabaptist nonviolence with Alisdair MacIntyre's tradition-oriented emphasis on casuistry, creating a framework which calls the church to truthful witness above all else – a truthfulness which is achieved when its theology is embodied and lived out in its ethics. In the second part of this thesis, I turn to relationality within the

³¹⁶ Norman Wirzba, *Food and Faith: A Theology of Eating* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 29.

³¹⁷ This will include an evaluation and location of dietary pacifism within one possible taxonomy of pacifisms; David Clough's four-dimensional typology. See David Clough, "Understanding Pacifism: A Typology", in Hans G. Ulrich and Stefan Heuser (ed), *Political Practices and International Order* (Munich: Lit, 2007), 370-81.

church – how the community engages in moral reflection, and relates to its marginal members and the human and nonhuman animals outside its walls – but here my primary concern is with *nonviolence*. In dialogue with the pacifist Hauerwas, whose communitarian emphasis is a ready partner for the theology of human-animal relationality outlined thus far, I will construct a foundation for dietary pacifism. Through engagement with criticisms of Hauerwas’ work, primarily those of Jeffrey Stout, I will then begin to nuance dietary pacifism, as well as considering possible criticisms of the framework constructed up to that point. Prior to concluding this chapter, I will engage closely with Stanley Hauerwas’ co-authored article “The Chief End of All Flesh,” a sustained look at the suitability of vegetarianism for Christian ethics from within the Hauerwasian framework. Questions about ‘nature’ and the meaning of ‘natural’, as well as the tenability of the trope of sacrifice for Christians thinking about diet today, arise from this discussion and are considered through a dietary pacifist lens. In chapter 5, the complexities and nuances of dietary pacifism will be explored further; along with a critical comparison of dietary and military pacifism, and a similarly analytical juxtaposition of Hebrew Bible animal sacrifice and modern-day factory farming.

Stanley Hauerwas

The body of work produced by Stanley Hauerwas spans nearly forty years; and it is arguably best understood through the lens of *The Peaceable Kingdom*,³¹⁸ a keystone work first published in 1983. In this book Hauerwas builds on the essays that comprised the 1981 *A Community of Character*,³¹⁹ outlining his virtue-based theological ethics and his emphasis on formation in community,³²⁰ which stand in contrast to any deontological or authoritarian approach. Relationship, and the necessity of recognising one’s own creatureliness and sinfulness, are strong and recurrent themes, highlighting the necessity of conforming one’s will to God’s. How one does this, for Hauerwas, is through learning from and relating to one’s fellow

³¹⁸ Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983).

³¹⁹ Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981).

³²⁰ Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, chapter 2.

Christians, in this way being formed to view the world through the lens provided by scripture and tradition.

For Hauerwas, we live in a world of moral fragments: with no firm conceptual scheme for resolving disagreements, and with postmodern awareness that our contexts (to a greater or lesser extent) shape our outlook, it is easy to become cynical or even resigned about our actions and motivations and those of others.³²¹ This reality, as perceived by Hauerwas, is exacerbated by modern liberal culture's fallacious claim that we are autonomous individuals; that we are free to make our choices as we see fit, weighing up whatever options are available and reaching the decision which best fits our chosen values.³²² For Hauerwas, the liberal worldview thus envisioned is a formative narrative which denies that it is such – a story which claims we do not need stories.³²³

Hauerwas rejects the claim that we have a choice to avoid such narratives. We are formed by the narratives we live within: what we *can* choose is which narratives and which communities to be formed by³²⁴ (although even these choices will be contextually constrained). The Christian narrative, as that which is about and has been revealed by the one true God, is the story which shows us the world as it truly is: a divided world, a world of sinners, a world whose ideals are not shared by God, a world which propagates selfishness under the pseudonym 'individualism'.³²⁵ If we seek to see the world through the lens of the Christian narrative, we can learn the extent to which we are compromised by sin and in need of grace.³²⁶ For Hauerwas, this recognition of sin and acceptance of grace is not a denial of freedom; it is rather a freeing from selfishness and materialism, freeing us to be truly open to the other.³²⁷ Even 'freedom', a concept taken by many to be concrete and fixed, is revealed to hold a meaning which differs depending on how one's character has been formed: for Hauerwas, modernity "names the times when a people are produced that believe they have no story, except the story they chose when they had

³²¹ Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 4-6.

³²² Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 25-6.

³²³ Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 78-84.

³²⁴ Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 25-8. Here Hauerwas takes up Alisdair MacIntyre's defence of tradition as a base for moral enquiry: see Alisdair MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry: Encyclopaedia, Genealogy, and Tradition* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990).

³²⁵ Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 91.

³²⁶ Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 47-9.

³²⁷ Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, p43-9.

no story.”³²⁸ Choosing to ‘self-determine’ is effectively a choice to be determined by one’s impulses and environment, condemning one to persist within the perpetual cycle of sin. Looking instead to God for guidance – and reflectively approaching scripture and tradition to discern that guidance – offers the chance to escape one’s own concupiscence, and so be transformed.

Hauerwas’ focus on narrative provides a ready and directly relatable language through which to discuss the conformation of one’s will to God’s – and the sanctification that can proceed from this – but the fundamental similarity to the theology of chapter 3 should be clear. If we imagine we are acting in total freedom, we are not: we are simply allowing our will to be shaped and directed by the corrupted relational networks within which we live and move. It is only by recognising this fundamental truth that we can hope to become more like Christ; to have our relationality transformed by his Spirit, and so attend to the individual other with our view to our shared mutuality and our respective flourishing. Our internal inheritance (the formation of our character within the relational networks which constitute the world) is always an ambivalent one; but, as Rachel Muers writes in a review of Hauerwas’ autobiography,³²⁹ it is through relationship with God that we are shown “the graced possibility of transforming as well as acknowledging that inheritance.”³³⁰ And it is in the church – the community shaped around the story of God and God’s people – that we seek and find formation in the here and now.

Comparing Hauerwas and John Howard Yoder (himself a formative influence for Hauerwas’ nonviolent ethics), Gerald Schlabach characterises the Hauerwasian framework thus:

Craftlike training at the hands of masters who have internalized a community’s moral standards and purposes, apprentices who cannot know that moral craft until they learn it first by habit, ancient narratives retold across generations, saints and other mentors who are a bridge to Jesus across time, sacraments that reenact and represent the fullness of his very life, moral disciplines learned

³²⁸ Stanley Hauerwas, *The State of the University* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 37.

³²⁹ Stanley Hauerwas, *Hannah’s Child: A Theologian’s Memoir* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010).

³³⁰ Rachel Muers, “Digging It: On Understanding Theology as Bricklaying”, *Modern Theology* 28.2 (2012), 303-7 at 306.

through patient accountability both to the weakest in a community and to its authorities—all these are the stuff of continuity, character formation, and tradition.³³¹

It should be noted that the key point of divergence between Hauerwas and Yoder, for Schlabach a “chasm of a hidden ravine”,³³² is that of continuity.³³³ both emphasise nonviolence and communal formation, but Hauerwas places a far greater emphasis than Yoder on the role of tradition and continuity for the formational community.³³⁴ Ethics, understood within his framework, is not a question of legalistic precepts but of how we see the world; in particular, how we must be transformed to see the world truthfully:

For Christians, such seeing develops through schooling in a narrative which teaches us how to use the language of sin not only about others but about ourselves... Christian ethics must serve and be formed by the Christian community, a community whose interest lies in the formation of character and whose perduring history provides the continuity we need to act in conformity with that character.³³⁵

It is along these lines that Hauerwas argues for the centrality of truthful witness to Christian living, “because peace comes only as we are transformed by a truth that gives us the confidence to rely on nothing else than its witness.”³³⁶ The church’s first social task is therefore nothing more complicated than being the church;³³⁷ but although this is a simple precept, to embody it is a radical and dangerous undertaking, particularly if one agrees with Hauerwas that nonviolence is fundamental to Christian witness.³³⁸

³³¹ Gerald W. Schlabach, “Continuity and Sacrament, or Not: Hauerwas, Yoder, and Their Deep Difference”, *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 27.2 (2007), 171-207 at 172.

³³² Schlabach, “Continuity and Sacrament”, 192.

³³³ Schlabach, “Continuity and Sacrament”, 192-3.

³³⁴ In the words of J. Daryl Charles, “Yoder is at his worst to the extent that he is unwilling to submit his notion of moral formation – and Christian social ethics – to the collective wisdom of the historic Christian tradition.” J. Daryl Charles, “Protestants and Natural Law”, *First Things* (December 2006), 36. It is at this point of divergence from Yoder that Hauerwas’ work owes more to Alisdair MacIntyre.

³³⁵ Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 33.

³³⁶ Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 14.

³³⁷ Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, xviii.

³³⁸ Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, chapter 6.

It is a fundamental proposition of Hauerwas' work that theology is ethics,³³⁹ that our theology ought to be praxis, and if our action does not reflect our theology then our action is false and our theology arid. To live a nonviolent communal life, trusting in God and giving up on worldly claims to power and self-determination,³⁴⁰ is to embody Hauerwas' theological claims – and it would seem that this is the example Hauerwas has in mind. To live 'out of control' in this way, accepting our ultimate dependence on God and not on ourselves, is a radical and eschatological commitment;³⁴¹ something noted by Stout, a prominent critic of Hauerwas who summarises his ecclesiology as "a matter of maintaining a pacifist community of virtue in the midst of a violent world, thus providing a foretaste of the peaceable kingdom in which God reigns absolutely and eternally."³⁴²

For Hauerwas, we are formed in and by the church-as-community: commenting on evangelism, he notes that part of his work is to challenge "the assumption that conversion has primarily to do with an individual's self-understanding rather than his or her being put in the context of a different community with a different set of practices."³⁴³ Being formed to see the world as it is revealed in the Christian narrative, in the midst of a new community with radical practices, necessarily involves coming to view history doxologically.³⁴⁴ The historical centre of our ethical worldview becomes a divine animal, Jesus Christ, who brought the dynamic relationality of the triune God and the good news of grace's triumph over sin, and was killed for it by limited human creatures. To refuse to exclude the enemy, once history is understood in this way, is to witness to the kingdom Christ inaugurates and points towards.³⁴⁵ This is because we recognise our shared mutuality with the human enemy, as another relational creature of God: if we recognise the same of nonhuman animals,

³³⁹ Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, xviii.

³⁴⁰ Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 105.

³⁴¹ The eschatological underpinning of Hauerwas' theology remains perhaps under-emphasised, even with *The Peaceable Kingdom's* titular reference to Isaiah's prophecy of an ultimate end to violence through the transformation of animal relationality (Isa. 11:6-9). Chapter 3 of this thesis engaged in eschatological reflection on human-animal relationality, with a view to how we relate to other animals now and how we might relate to them in the kingdom to come.

³⁴² Jeffrey Stout, *Democracy and Tradition* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004), 146.

³⁴³ Stanley M. Hauerwas, *Wilderness Wanderings: Probing Twentieth-Century Theology and Philosophy* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1997), 194.

³⁴⁴ Stanley Hauerwas, "Bearing Reality" (Presidential Address, Society of Christian Ethics 2012 meeting).

³⁴⁵ Hauerwas, "Bearing Reality".

and hope for the supernatural relationships promised in the kingdom, can we do anything other than include the animal too?

Hauerwas and the Narrative of Jesus

Within the narrative at the heart of the Christian narrative (which is to say, scripture), Hauerwas recognises Jesus' earthly life and ministry as centrally important.³⁴⁶ Indeed, *The Peaceable Kingdom* makes clear that in the world as it is, the church is called to be a counter-cultural community of character, following Jesus' example in practicing nonviolence. And this nonviolence "is not one among other behavioural implications that can be drawn from the gospel but is integral to the shape of Christian convictions."³⁴⁷ Hauerwas' post-Constantinian theology reminds us that early church Christology bothered itself less with the theological ramifications of the resurrection than the lived example of Jesus' life, which we must understand before we can know who he is post-resurrection.³⁴⁸

This does not, however, mean that we should simply copy the actions of Jesus, so much as we should look to understand and emulate the virtues underpinning those actions.³⁴⁹ How we understand and emulate Jesus correlates to how we live and act in anticipation of the *eschaton*. "Jesus is the *autobasileia* – the Kingdom in person... There is no way to know the Kingdom except by learning the story of this man Jesus."³⁵⁰ In Mark's gospel, Peter struggles to understand how Jesus can be the Christ and simultaneously be so out of control as to be led to suffering and death.³⁵¹ This is Jesus' example to humanity, and it is one of suffering servitude for the whole creation, even and especially those parts of creation

³⁴⁶ Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, chapter 5.

³⁴⁷ Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, xvi.

³⁴⁸ Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 73-5.

³⁴⁹ Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 76. Such a virtue-based understanding of Jesus' life is relevant to ethical reflection on Jesus' worldly diet – i.e., his status as a non-vegetarian. Accepting that we cannot become sanctified through our own power, we are called to be like Christ in imitating his virtuous character and submission to the Father, rather than in mere linear imitation of his worldly actions (which, at the very least, requires attentive awareness of the specific historical context within which God became Incarnate).

³⁵⁰ Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 45.

³⁵¹ Mark 8:31-33 – "Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, 'Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.'"

over which one is in a position of relative power. The use of power to profit from one's worldly relationships is alien to the sanctification that God offers humans. As Hauerwas writes in *A Community of Character*, "The incarnation is not the affirmation of God's approval of the human, but God's breaking through the borders of man's definition of what is human to give a new and formative definition of the human in Jesus."³⁵²

Relationships of coercion are in stark contradistinction to the example of Jesus' life; and, therefore, to the kingdom. Jesus' openness to the unclean, denial of the right of violence even when under attack, association with those on the outside, resistance of temptation, peaceful challenge of the authorities, acceptance of his fate, and trust in God's power to bring peace all serve as relational examples for our lives that we are challenged to understand. "His life is the life of the end – this is the way the world is meant to be – and thus those who follow him become... the people of the new age."³⁵³ God's peaceable kingdom, the subversion and submission of the 'natural' order to God's will, is inaugurated and foreshadowed in Jesus; and it is what the church is called to witness to today, as it lives out its unique narrative in a fallen world. Aware of the radical inversion of worldly power dynamics lived out in the Incarnation, Hauerwas finds in the life of Jesus the inauguration of kingdom living; the open path to sanctified relationships. This inversion of power-relationships adds extra impetus to the call for Christians to consider other animals when thinking through their call to live out transformed relationality in creation – at the very least, it supports the argument of chapters 2-3, that the reality of our dominion over creation does not free us from the responsibility to respond to our fellow animals in love.

Hauerwas and Liberalism

Hauerwas' opposition to contemporary liberalism, outlined above, is worth considering in more detail, as a way into exploring why nonhuman animals are so often undermined and objectified. Central to Hauerwas' opposition is the individualism he perceives at the heart of modern secular liberalism,³⁵⁴ caught up in which is the idea that we have complete power and control

³⁵² Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 48-9.

³⁵³ Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 85.

³⁵⁴ Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 7-10.

over our lives. For Hauerwas, this self-centred focus on power and control feeds and is fed by sin:

Sin is the form our character takes as a result of our fear that we will be ‘nobody’ if we lose control of our lives. Moreover our need to be in control is the basis for the violence of our lives. For since our ‘control’ and ‘power’ cannot help but be built on an insufficient basis, we must use force to maintain the illusion that we are in control. We are deeply afraid of losing what unity of self we have achieved. Any idea or person threatening that unity must be eliminated.³⁵⁵

To justify our sense of power, control and unity of self one must ultimately be prepared to resort to coercion against others: other individuals, ethnicities, religions, cultures, and institutions, each of which have their own self-centred claims to power, control and unity of self. This is sin as outlined in chapter 3: the refusal to live out of control³⁵⁶ and denial that we need God to be truly free – a refusal which leaves us mired in and compromised by the corrupted relational networks of the world – can lead us to value individuality above all else. The distortion of our relationality that can proceed from this is well-recognised by Isaiah in the lament that “The ox knows its owner... [but] my people do not understand” (Isa. 1:3) – that is, while other animals understand their place in the relational networks of the world, humanity struggles with the concept that it is not the ultimate. This struggle is a rebellion against the transformed relationality which creation *imago Dei* and life *imago Christi* calls Christians towards.

Hauerwas reserves particular criticism for the language of ‘rights’, which remains popular among activists advocating animal liberation.³⁵⁷ Rights-language is objected to on the grounds that it is a product of liberal society’s atomic individualism, wherein people “no longer trust their lives to

³⁵⁵ Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 47.

³⁵⁶ The feminist critique of theologies which emphasises submission – such as Hauerwas’ call to live out of control, or the Augustinian conception of sin as pride, or Martin Luther King Jr’s stress on redemptive suffering – should not be neglected at this point. The ways in which critiques of selfishness and pride can be used to support abusive and/or degrading relational networks, as well as victim-blaming and a *laissez-faire* attitude towards worldly injustices, are many and complex. It should be remembered, for the purposes of this discussion at least, that any talk of living out of control, accepting our limitations, and being wary of hubris is in the specific context of humans standing before God – not women before men, or the oppressed before their oppressors.

³⁵⁷ Hauerwas’ criticism is of the secular rights-language employed by predominantly secular animal liberation efforts: the “theos-rights” of Andrew Linzey, although arguably not doing enough to emphasise animal particularity and relationality, manage to avoid many of the complaints Hauerwas makes here.

the hands of those they live with”³⁵⁸ and therefore demand inalienable rights over and against them. “The political consensus has been that the most nearly just social arrangement is the one which requires no commitment to any good except the protection of each individual to pursue his or her interests fairly.”³⁵⁹ With worldly claims to power and control come fear of the power and control of others: the language of rights, although functionally contributing to maintaining a minimally violent society, ultimately furthers the dissolution of right relationship which self-centred culture produces.

Additionally problematic when the language of rights is applied to nonhuman animals is the conceptual link between rationality – deemed a prerequisite to have and defend rights – and speech, recognised by Jacques Derrida in *Of grammatology*.³⁶⁰ Not having speech, animals can therefore only be “given” rights by humans, and only then if those humans can adequately demonstrate that they feel pain, or are subjects-of-a-life.³⁶¹ Andrew Linzey’s claim in defence of the “theos-rights” model discussed in chapter 2, that “Rights talk moves the discussion away from feeling and sympathy to what is objectively owed to animals,”³⁶² is only accurate if one already believes that nonhuman animals are valuable subjects; something rights-language cannot establish in isolation. Animal rights theorists and activists are free – indeed ‘well within their rights’ – to apply their preferred ethical language to nonhuman animals; but those who disagree with them are equally free, and equally consistent, to reject and ignore any manifestation of ‘animal rights’ that does not align with their interests. In chapter 2, it was argued that speech is a tool and function of inter-human relationship, and that it does not follow that the absence of vocal communication in other animals renders them less capable of relationship. Recognising the limits of human speech is not a denigration of human *logos*, but a more accurate situation of its significance in relation to the divine Logos, who calls us to fresh relationships in anticipation of the peaceable kingdom.

³⁵⁸ Stanley Hauerwas and John Berkman, “The Chief End of All Flesh”, *Theology Today*, 49.2 (1992), 196-208 at 200.

³⁵⁹ Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 216.

³⁶⁰ Jacques Derrida, *Of grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 11-8.

³⁶¹ See for example Tom Regan, *The Case for Animal Rights* (Berkeley & LA, CA: University of California Press, 2004).

³⁶² Andrew Linzey, *Why Animal Suffering Matters: Philosophy, Theology, and Practical Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 161.

Building on his argument that rights-language is inherently self-centred and negative, Hauerwas has written (in an article which will be explored further below) that

To ascribe rights to an animal may, in the short run, be a strategy for its survival, but, in the long run, this language will simply maintain the current understanding of and practices in relation to other animals that continually bring about their destruction.³⁶³

Rights-language is not fundamentally hostile to responsible relationship, as is self-centred individualism: a focus on what others cannot do to you, however, seems to not be a productive base from which to work for transformed relationships in creation. If Christian discipleship involves responding to others as relational individuals with whom we share commonality, striving to bring healing and peace in those places in creation most marred by sin, a fundamentally negative presentation of freedom appears incompatible with living *imago Christi*.

Having outlined Hauerwas' theological ethics – with a particular focus on the primacy of nonviolence, Jesus' incarnate life, and criticisms of modern liberalism – it will now be beneficial to turn to consider some of Hauerwas' notable critics, before reflecting alongside Hauerwas on the application of his theology to questions of diet.

Hauerwas' Critics

Among Hauerwas' critics, it is perhaps Jeffrey Stout who best systematises objections to Hauerwas' fusion of narrative, communal character formation, tradition, and idealism. Stout's most forceful criticism of Hauerwas lies in what he sees as an overly simple and extreme separation of church and world. He writes that "what Barth saw as an ever-shifting boundary between church and world appears to have hardened in Hauerwas's rhetoric into a rigid and static line between Christian virtue and liberal vice."³⁶⁴ I believe that Stout simultaneously overstates and oversimplifies the case: Hauerwas' understanding of the messianic community is not one that denies the presence of sin inside the church – however, his account (and the rhetoric underpinning it) *does* understate the presence of virtue and

³⁶³ Hauerwas and Berkman, "The Chief End of All Flesh", 201.

³⁶⁴ Stout, *Democracy and Tradition*, 154.

wisdom and positive ways of relating in the world outside it. Scott Holland conceptualises this as

a temptation in Hauerwas's program to identify the church as the kingdom of God... Yet because the church is not the kingdom of God, there is salvation outside the church. Where is this salvation? Jesus said: "If I cast out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Luke 11:20). We would do well to be attentive to those who exorcise the demons of racism, sexism, heterosexism, militarism, classism, and religionism. They may be in the church or far from the church, but they are not far from the kingdom of God.³⁶⁵

When the church recognises and accepts that it is not enacting or approximating, but simply *anticipating*, the kingdom, it is called to seek new and transformed relationships, which necessitates a new perception of what lies outside the church but within creation. Stout highlights that, for Barth³⁶⁶ as for others, the fallen church of fallen individuals is not set apart from the non-Christian world and can indeed never be so before the *eschaton*. As Barthian ethicist David Haddorff makes clear, an ecclesial theology which considers itself above "eavesdropping" on the world "leads to a wrong understanding of the person (as saint but not sinner), the church (as excess but not defect), and the world (as fallen but not redeemed)."³⁶⁷

Nigel Biggar questions why Hauerwas' resistance to the world extends beyond opposition to selfish individualism to complete dismissal of the whole of liberalism, given that liberalism can be humane, polyglot and accommodating. He asks, "Does it issue, ironically, from an all too worldly anxiety about identity, self-definition, and boundaries?"³⁶⁸ In short, Hauerwas' picture of the church-world relationship is one which tends towards the negative and the monodirectional: the justified and sanctified church tells the world what it is, and in so doing witnesses that its ways are not the ways of God.³⁶⁹ More recently, Hauerwas seems at times to accept

³⁶⁵ Scott Holland, 'Mennonites on Hauerwas: Hauerwas on Mennonites', *Conrad Grebel Review*, 13.2 (1995), 142-51 at 146, fn. 11.

³⁶⁶ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* III/1 (London and New York: T&T Clark, 1958), 60.

³⁶⁷ David Haddorff, *Christian Ethics as Witness: Barth's Ethics for a world at risk* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 2010), 359.

³⁶⁸ Nigel Biggar, "Saving the 'Secular': The Public Vocation of Moral Theology", *Journal of Religious Ethics*, 37.1 (2009), 169.

³⁶⁹ Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 100.

that the sin of the church is manifest; but this is only when the church is spoken of in a vacuum. When Hauerwas' focus is on the world, and its relation to the church, the dichotomy in his rhetoric reappears. In his 2012 Presidential Address to the Society of Christian Ethics, Hauerwas claimed that "the world has trouble acknowledging that we are wounded animals."³⁷⁰ This is true; but it is equally true for the church. Any binary-oppositional model of church and world is problematic for talk of transforming relationships: if we are called as Christians to attend to others as valued individuals, with concern for their flourishing as well as our own, we fall short whenever we adhere to such absolute boundaries.

C. Melissa Snarr argues similarly, focusing on Hauerwas' emphasis on truthfulness; an emphasis which causes him to advocate living consistent with the Christian narrative over any concerns of temporal justice.³⁷¹ Snarr rejects this, writing that Christians

are called to be concerned about public policies because they are called to love their neighbour. Their religious lives do not float above their existence in the world, and their existence in the world is always affected by political decisions. To think otherwise is the privilege of the privileged few.³⁷²

This is one of the most significant problems Hauerwas' work poses for any relational theology. His separation of church and world, effected *via* the language of narrative communities, is such that faithful adherence to the norms of the church can obscure the story of sanctified relationality running through scripture. More simply, Hauerwas' particular blend of narrative theory and church-world dualism can produce self-contradictory consequences. The story of Jesus' earthly ministry, central to the Hauerwasian framework, shows us the need to break down the world's boundaries;³⁷³ but if the perceived selfishness of liberal culture is taken as a cue for Christians to withdraw from political action,³⁷⁴ new boundaries are drawn up, and new relationship avoided.

³⁷⁰ Hauerwas, "Bearing Reality".

³⁷¹ Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 100.

³⁷² C. Melissa Snarr, *Social Selves and Political Reform: Five Visions in Contemporary Christian Ethics* (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 65.

³⁷³ Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 86, 100.

³⁷⁴ Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, chapter 8.

Aaron Conley situates Hauerwas' strong boundary between church and world in his adherence to the "master narrative" of Constantinianism, inherited from Yoder.³⁷⁵ This is a reading of church history which sees the early church as divorced from worldly politics, highlighting the church's later failures as outgrowths of complicity with the state – an order created when Constantine sponsored Christianity as the official state religion. Regardless of the extent to which this is true, Conley suggests, the key problem lies in how church history and narrative are read *through* the Constantinian master narrative. Similarly to Biggar's question over delineation of identity, Conley argues that Hauerwas' use of Constantinianism to define and delineate his own theological narrative leaves certain elements (i.e., those which do not fit) neglected or obscured.³⁷⁶ Hauerwas' framework struggles with secular virtue and liberal Christians because any adherence to a master narrative will hamper examination of traditional norms. This has certainly been the case regarding the location of vegetarianism within church history: a popular master narrative of 'Christian freedom' from dietary regulation has been allowed to obscure the not-insignificant episodes of vegetarianism practiced faithfully by Christians in different times and places, and for different reasons.³⁷⁷ Those on the margins suffer whenever truths are cropped in service to a master narrative: this has been the case too often for the church's 'heretics', as well as for women and minorities; and, it might be argued, for animals too.

Summary

Stanley Hauerwas' framework for Christian ethics is rooted in communal character formation: a rightly formed Christian character will see the world through the lens of the Christian narrative, living out the virtues embodied by Jesus as best they are able, not seeking worldly power but recognising their dependence on God, and so living in the hope of the peaceable kingdom. Being so formed involves the realisation that one's will is constrained by sin's perpetual presence in the relational networks of the

³⁷⁵ Aaron D. Conley, "Injustices of an Outdated Historiography: Or how Christian pacifism does not translate easily across two millennia", paper, Society of Christian Ethics Annual Meeting (2012).

³⁷⁶ Conley, "Injustices of an Outdated Historiography". For a theological defence of affiliation between church and state, see Rowan Williams, *Faith in the Public Square* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012).

³⁷⁷ Samantha Calvert, PhD thesis.

world: simultaneously, however, it involves the joyous acceptance of grace, through which one can be sanctified and so find true freedom. This freedom lies not in the capacity to do whatever one wants, but in the opening of new possibilities for life-in-relationship.

Having outlined Hauerwas' theological-ethical framework – focusing on the example of Jesus' life and ministry, and Hauerwas' critique of liberalism – and having found them sympathetic to chapter 3's theology of human-animal relationality, attention was turned to the criticism that Hauerwas' understanding of the church-world relationship is unrealistically monodirectional. On this matter, Yoder issues his own warning in *The Politics of Jesus*: "What is Caesar's and what is God's are not on different levels, so as never to clash; they are in the same arena."³⁷⁸ Yoder goes on to add that the cross of Christ's crucifixion is "a cross identified as the punishment of a man who threatens society by creating a new kind of community leading a radically new kind of life."³⁷⁹ What is radically new about this life is, at least in part, the sanctification of our relationality that grace can work; a transformation that will involve seeking to serve our fellows. The question I will answer in this chapter and the next is whether embodying this necessitates a dietary choice.

Human-Animal Relationality, Christian Nonviolence, and Dietary Ethics

Hauerwas is known for dealing with a range of pressing social issues in the process of working out his arguments about Christianity, the church, and society. Furthermore, it is a fundamental proposition of his work that our theology should *be* our ethics. It is interesting, in light of this, that engagement with dietary issues constitutes only a minor footnote to his body of work. From the perspective of the theology outlined in the previous chapter this may appear doubly odd, because ways of relating God calls us to are explicitly recognised by Hauerwas when he writes that "The church is a people on a journey who insist on living consistent with the conviction that God is the lord of history. They thus refuse to resort to violence in order to secure their survival."³⁸⁰ If our transformed understanding of worldly

³⁷⁸ Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, 53.

³⁷⁹ Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, 63.

³⁸⁰ Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 10.

relationships includes how we relate to those animals in whom we recognise relationality and share mutuality, a clear maxim might be derived from this alone: if you don't need to kill to eat, don't.

Having considered Hauerwas' theological framework, and the negative distortion of relationship which he locates in liberal individualism, it is worth attempting to bring these into conversation with the call towards extra-human relationships which chapter 3 proposed as a faithful response to God's transformative grace. Although such a move may seem unusual, I believe it will be helpful, before applying Hauerwas' theology to the embodied practice of diet, to first consider Hauerwas' own application of his theology to another embodied practice. This is the issue of *abortion*,³⁸¹ still a difficult question for theologians both liberal and conservative, perhaps particularly so in Hauerwas' native USA. Parallel to the argument above that rights-language should not be central to any theology of animal liberation, Hauerwas argues that the focus of any argument over abortion should *not* be on determining whether the foetus is "fully human" (and therefore deserving of human rights).³⁸² To do this, he argues, would only underwrite the Cartesian worldview wherein rationality is a prerequisite of full humanity and full rights; a position which diminishes or ignores the rights of foetuses, babies, those with learning difficulties or mental illness, and animals.

Instead of the language of rights, Hauerwas argues that our concern with respect to abortion should be how the church relates to children. For Christians, having children ought to be a sign of their belief that "in spite of evidence to the contrary, God rules this world."³⁸³ In the face of the selfish individualism of the surrounding world, having children testifies to the Christian belief that this world does not belong to the materially powerful but to God; and that the newborn therefore have the hope of transformed relationships come the peaceable kingdom. Any negative attitude Christians have to abortion is therefore "but an aspect of their conviction that they must be people who are ever ready to welcome children into the

³⁸¹ The issue of abortion is one Hauerwas engages with in much greater breadth than dietary matters: I largely quote here from *A Community of Character* because it deals with the issue in a way I perceive as being most relevant to the debate on flesh-eating. See also Stanley Hauerwas, *Vision and Virtue: Essays in Christian Ethical Reflection* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981).

³⁸² Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 203.

³⁸³ Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 210.

world.”³⁸⁴ The church is a community of character whose emphasis on nonviolent relationship is in opposition to the selfish individualism which sees children as simultaneously obligation (having children being culturally normative) and burden (being objectively a drain on resources).

Christians cannot oppose abortion by talking about failure to respect the human life of the foetus because we share no recognisable form of life or common response with the foetus³⁸⁵ in the way that a white person does with a black person, or a man does with a woman (to compare the abortion debate to recent and ongoing liberation efforts). Similarly, dietary pacifists will struggle to combat the exploitation of nonhuman animals by referring to shared interests, because the phenomenological gap between ourselves and other animals (which warns against reductive accounts of animal agency and relationality) limits any common response with them.³⁸⁶ As discussed in the previous chapter, we know what it is to be an animal, and the righteous know the needs of their animal³⁸⁷ – just as the righteous know the needs of fetuses – but shared animality is not the same as knowing what it is to be a *particular* animal, and there are limits to what we can say for them.

There is nothing faulty with the perception of fetuses as other. Neither is there anything fundamentally wrong with a parallel perception of animals: as the feminist vegetarian scholar Carol Adams contends, “Animals are not equal to humans... [and we] need to develop an ethic that recognises this.”³⁸⁸ Animals’ status as other in no way reduces our responsibility to them. We should not be concerned with establishing that we are *similar* to unborn fetuses and animals: arguing on these grounds leads to the sectarian conclusion that those who are *different* are undeserving of our attention. Instead, our concern should fall on the community we want to be. As a Christian community seeking to trust in God’s sanctifying grace, looking to the example of Jesus’ incarnate life to learn virtuous perception and action, our focus should be on the effort for

³⁸⁴ Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 210.

³⁸⁵ Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*, 222.

³⁸⁶ Note that this is not the same as saying that animals are not responsible or relational. Rather, they *are* (at least some of them); but they are in a way which the phenomenological gap between them and us means we cannot intimately understand.

³⁸⁷ Prov. 12:10.

³⁸⁸ “Introduction”, in Josephine Donovan and Carol J. Adams (eds), *Beyond Animal Rights: A Feminist Caring Ethic for the Treatment of Animals* (New York, NY: Continuum, 1996), 15.

novel relationships in the world, in anticipation of the kingdom. Regardless of similarity or difference, the call to nonviolent relationship which constitutes life *imago Christi* places upon Christians the obligation to respond, with love, even to those with whom we cannot fully identify.

Yoder provided structural inspiration for the commonality of the animal creation when he wrote that “Christians are by definition committed to positing the larger commonality of all mankind, rather than the territorial unit, as their homeland.”³⁸⁹ The whole (human) creation, not just the nation state, is for Yoder our community: but if we recognise that all animals are part of creation, at least some of whom are in some way relational, and all of whom are ultimately dependent on God, then to remove national boundaries and neglect to attend at all to the human-nonhuman binary is to arbitrarily limit our involvement within creation. Aaron Gross has argued, similarly to Carol Adams,³⁹⁰ that it does little good to shift the balance of a binary construct if one does nothing to attempt to deconstruct the binary itself.³⁹¹ Slavoj Žižek writes, with reference to the unhelpfully reductive claim (critiqued and dismissed in chapter 2) that humans are unique in their rationality and command of speech, that “it is not enough to say that, while such a determination of animals as speechless, etc., is wrong, the determination of humans as rational, speaking, etc., is right, so that we just have to provide a more adequate definition of animality – the entire field is false.”³⁹² To attend to racial or national boundaries without doing similarly for species boundaries is to limit the potential of God’s grace and joy in creation to the human part of it: our shared covenantal history and the cosmic nature of Incarnation and reconciliation are not given their due. To return to Yoder:

When we speak of the pacifism of the messianic *community*, we move the focus of ethical concern from the individual asking himself about right and wrong in his concern for his own integrity, to the human community experiencing in its life a foretaste of God's

³⁸⁹ John H. Yoder, *Nevertheless: The Varieties and Shortcomings of Religious Pacifism* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1971), 19.

³⁹⁰ For Adams' thoughts on this topic see Carol J. Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory* (New York, NY: Continuum, 2002).

³⁹¹ Aaron Saul Gross, “The Question of the Animal and Religion: Dietary Practices, Subjectivity, and Ethics in Jewish Traditions” (PhD Thesis, University of California, 2010), 196-197.

³⁹² Slavoj Žižek, “The Animal Gaze of the Other”, in Slavoj Žižek and Boris Gunjević, *God in Pain: Inversions of the Apocalypse* (New York, NY: Seven Stories, 2012), 221-40 at 231.

kingdom. The pacifistic experience is communal in that it is not a life alone for heroic personalities but a society.³⁹³

As a community of character the church is called to reject selfish individualism, anticipating the peaceable kingdom through the practice of nonviolence, towards animals both human and nonhuman. As Yoder – not himself concerned with vegetarianism – asserts at the end of *The Politics of Jesus*, “A social style characterised by the creation of a new community and the rejection of violence of any kind is the theme of New Testament proclamation from beginning to end.”³⁹⁴ This connection between nonviolence and human-animal relationships is not an external ideal imposed upon scripture: Jacob’s last words to Simeon and Levi, where their murder of men and hamstringing of oxen are condemned in the same breath (Gen. 49:5-6), shows a precedent for such a connection going back to Genesis. Dietary pacifism, by making an embodied ethical claim – that Christians should seek relationships with other animals which ensure mutual flourishing as far as possible, and so should not eat other relational animals without necessity – makes praxis from this precedent.

The implications of recognising nonhuman animal relationality – and our calling to respond to them – need not only be manifest among Christian vegetarians. All Christians, in seeking the sanctification of their creaturely relationships, can strive to live more generously towards their animal brothers and sisters. Those Christians who do come to identify as vegetarian or dietary pacifist, however, are able to acknowledge, through their dietary practices, commonality with their fellow relational creatures. In this way, dietary pacifists aim to live with other animals in the image of the God who created, affirmed, and will redeem all creation. Dietary pacifism, then, anticipates the peaceable kingdom, and the end to violence it will bring. If, conversely, one neither practices vegetarianism nor reflects on the theological-ethical significance of diet *at all*, one neglects one’s relational engagement with creation and so ends up “eating in exile”:

When we eat well, we honour and accept responsibility for the gifts of God given to each other for the furtherance of life. We move more deeply and more sympathetically into the membership of creation. But when we eat in exile we eat alone and with

³⁹³ Yoder, *Nevertheless*, 125.

³⁹⁴ John H. Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus: Vicit Agnus Noster* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1972), 250.

considerable violence, without deep connection or affection, experiencing food and each other as mere objects and threats or as the means to our power, control, and convenience.³⁹⁵

In chapter 3, I outlined the fundamental relational link between the Incarnation – which looks back to creation and covenant, and forwards to the *eschaton* – and the peaceable kingdom. In this chapter, I have discussed the inversion of power relationships which characterised Jesus' life, enacted for all time by his crucifixion, which is so central to the Hauerwasian framework. If we anticipate the kingdom without recognising the crucifixion's victory over sin, death, and the hierarchical relationships of the world, our own worldly relationships (with humans and with other animals) cannot be transformed through our response to God. If we do not live ex-centrally, attending to the fractured relationships which make up creation, it is hard to argue that we are living as faithfully as we could. Hauerwas stresses that the theological enterprise is embodied and situated in particular contexts and standpoints:³⁹⁶ today those of us fortunate enough to live in North America or Western Europe (to say the least) rarely need to kill to eat – and neither do we need to get other people to kill animals *for us* to eat! Looking towards the *eschaton*, and in so doing working to will as God wills in the world as it is, those Christians for whom vegetarianism is a practicable option are faced with a moral imperative to consider (if not to change) their dietary practices.

To change dietary practices for this reason is an explicitly positive act of relationship, something perhaps best understood by considering the way in which cattle farming is a *negatively* relational act. We see this when, for example, the individual cow destined for slaughter is designated as “beef”: her individuality, even her status as a living member of a particular species, is collapsed into a term which lays bare the reductive and destructive nature of humanity's relationship with her. Not a particular cow, not even a cow in general; but *beef*, a food product, whose evisceration and consumption is explicitly recognised long before it is actually enacted. Human relationship with the beef-cow is not concerned with her individual flourishing, but solely with what can be gained from her ordained death. Our relationship with the animal creation suffers from the self-centred

³⁹⁵ Wirzba, *Food and Faith*, 77.

³⁹⁶ Discussed in Mark Thiessen Nation and Samuel Wells (ed), *Faithfulness & Fortitude: In Conversation with the Theological Ethics of Stanley Hauerwas* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000).

individualism Hauerwas locates in the liberal narrative: animals should not be approached with the question “How can I make use of this creature?” but “How should I relate, as a Christian, to my fellow?” This kind of reflexive openness is vital for any work towards new relationship, be it with humans or other animals; and it is surely necessary if human dominion is to more truthfully be practiced in the image of God, encompassing charity and service rather than domination.

The call for Christians to seek sanctified relationships does not mean that individuals can never benefit from particular relationships or exchanges. Rather, it means that Christians, appropriately formed in the narrative of self-giving love, need not feel that personal or mutual benefit is *necessary* in each and every relational transaction. Grace does not usher human creatures into self-denying asceticism: instead, it calls humans to relate to creation in a way which faithfully anticipates the kingdom to come.

One paradigmatic human-animal relationship, that between pet-keeper and pet, generally involves mutual benefit: Stephen Webb writes that

Animals are beneficial to us in part... because they are indifferent to our social status, age, health, beauty, and other variables. Pets are a source of constant affection in lives that can change quickly and without warning.³⁹⁷

As with inter-human relationships, however, it does not follow that the presence of personal benefit inimical to genuine and mutual relationship. The combined realities of our status as flawed creatures, the primacy of nonviolence seen in the example of Jesus’ life, and the recognition of animal relationality lead to an account of human-animal relationships which is open to the possibility of these relationships being affected by grace. As humans we are God’s creatures, part of creation; and so too are other animals. If Christians are called to re-examine their ways of relating to nonhuman animals, and if they are similarly called to reject violence in the world as it is, it logically follows from this that abstention from animal flesh (or even animal products) is a dietary option that needs, at least, to be seriously considered. Commenting on the presence of nonhuman animals in scripture, Webb writes that

³⁹⁷ Stephen H. Webb, *On God and Dogs: A Christian Theology of Compassion for Animals* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 81.

The Bible contains no animal magic, animals are rarely symbolic of a greater mystery, and animals do not influence human affairs. In a word, the Bible is more realistic than romantic about the world of animals... [It] treats animals as others who are really different and yet similar enough to merit kindness and to be included in God's plan for the world. By treating animals as animals, the Jewish tradition has been able consistently to insist on fair play between humans and animals while acknowledging the special role that humans have in that relationship, an outlook that has ample scriptural warrant.³⁹⁸

I would like to nuance Webb's claim that animals do not influence human affairs in scripture: there are times when they clearly do, from the wild animals visiting justice on Israel in Hosea 2 to the whale swallowing and then ejecting Jonah. In most of these incidents,³⁹⁹ however, the animals do not act independently or for their own purposes, as is the case in some mythologies: here, the animals act in faithful response to God, demonstrating the covenantal relationship between themselves and God and also with humans, emphasising the relational networks we share and the responsibility we have to our fellows. Webb's point is that in scripture animals are neither mythologized nor degraded: they are animals, part of God's creation and worthwhile for that reason alone. In Genesis 1, the first creation is nonviolent and vegetarian,⁴⁰⁰ while land animals are made on the same day as humans and are pronounced good independently of them.⁴⁰¹ Adam names the animals,⁴⁰² showing a personal connection that acknowledges the particularity of his fellow creatures and the ways in which his relationality is bound up with theirs; an act which emphasises that "Creatures cannot and were never meant to exist in isolation or separation from each other. Kinship and harmony, mutuality and intimacy are to be the rule of healthy life together."⁴⁰³

³⁹⁸ Webb, *On God and Dogs*, 20.

³⁹⁹ In the meeting between Balaam, his donkey, and the angel (Num. 22), it does not appear that the donkey is acting out of anything more than fear of the angel, which he sees when Balaam does not: that the angel is visible to an animal which Balaam thought beneath him, and treated cruelly, holds a powerful message for those who maintain that only humans are significant to the Creator of everything.

⁴⁰⁰ Gen. 1:29.

⁴⁰¹ Gen. 1:25.

⁴⁰² Gen. 2:19.

⁴⁰³ Wirzba, *Food and Faith*, 39.

Later in Genesis we see the first instances of a recurrent theme in the Bible, the language of “all flesh”⁴⁰⁴ (as opposed to “all people” or “all human flesh”). Only post-Fall, and particularly post-Flood, do we see this harmony dislocated and human exploitation of creation begin in earnest:⁴⁰⁵ even then, legislation is made describing the ideal diet as flesh-free (Deut. 8:7-10) and extending the Sabbath rest to cattle (Exo. 20:10). God’s ultimate will for creation remains cast in the language of a new vegetarian garden (Isa. 11:6-9). The message to be drawn here for Christians reconsidering how they relate to others animals is simple: if we can trust in God’s power and Jesus’ example to sustain us in a life of nonviolence within the relational networks that constitute human society, and if we recognise our place alongside other relational animals within the wider creation, we are liberated to seek sanctified relationships with all animals, and so consider the extension of nonviolent practices into the dietary arena. *If we are called to transformed relationship with nonhuman animals, dietary pacifism is a serious option for discipleship.*⁴⁰⁶ Through critical conversation with the article in which Hauerwas applied his framework to thinking about human-animal relationality and diet, I aim to begin to test the adequacy of the theological-ethical work undertaken thus far. Is dietary pacifism an application of Hauerwasian ethics which Hauerwas could find tenable?

“The Chief End of All Flesh”

“The Chief End of All Flesh”, an article co-authored by Hauerwas and John Berkman, is a valuable example of the application of Hauerwas’ eschatological and ecclesiological ethics to human-animal relationality.

⁴⁰⁴ Gen. 6:13.

⁴⁰⁵ It is worth highlighting that the first incidence of any animal use in the Bible (God giving Adam and Eve animal skins for clothing) occurs in Genesis 3:21, directly between God’s condemnation of the first humans for disobeying his command and their expulsion from Eden. Human exploitation of creation and human sinfulness are foundationally linked.

⁴⁰⁶ This raises the question of *degrees of relationality*. For example, if we assume from experience and observation that a salmon is a less relational creature than a pig – if we even go so far as to say that there is little to no meaning for a human to ‘relate to’ a salmon – does it follow that it is less ethically significant to eat fish than to eat red meat? It might; but we must remember at the same time the conclusions of chapter 3’s eschatological investigation – that although it is difficult to say what redeemed life will be like for particular species, we go too far if we say that any of God’s creatures does not have the potential for transformed relationality come the kingdom. The question with regards to the salmon, then, is not “Is this animal insufficiently relational to be morally significant for Christians?” but “Does this animal display relationality of a kind, which – limited as it is – might be transformed by its Creator?”

Through a detailed and critical conversation with “The Chief End of All Flesh”, I hope firstly to consider how well dietary pacifism as discussed thus far fits with Hauerwas’ own understanding of what his theology reveals about human-animal relationality; as well as drawing out further theological questions pertaining to how humans relate to other animals in creation. The key questions that emerge in conversation with “The Chief End of All Flesh” concern how human-animal relationships impact upon human and animal *identity*; what ‘nature’ and ‘natural’ mean in the context of theological ethics; and whether sacrifice can be Christian if it is not *self-sacrifice*. Exploring these questions, and how they relate to Hauerwas’ theology more generally, highlights new and important points of consideration for dietary pacifism, which I will go on to explore.

Building in “The Chief End of All Flesh” from a relational understanding of the triune God, and the humans created *imago Dei*, Hauerwas and Berkman stress that

The only significant theological difference between humans and animals lies in God's giving humans a unique *purpose*. Herein lies what it means for God to create humans in God's image. A part of this unique purpose is God's charge to humans to tell animals who they are, and humans continue to do this by the very way they relate to other animals. We think there is an analogous relationship here; animals need humans to tell them their story, just as gentiles need Jews to tell them their story.⁴⁰⁷

Hauerwas and Berkman are right in noting that we tell animals who they are, and have done so since Adam named his nonhuman companions in Eden.⁴⁰⁸ It is also worth noting that we tell animals who they are when we functionalize, symbolize and eat them, just as much as we do when we love and care for them: in the words of Carol Adams, the feminist and animal liberationist thinker, “A value hierarchy that is upheld by a logic of domination places animals so low on the hierarchy that their bodies can be viewed instrumentally.”⁴⁰⁹ In the epistemological act of defining nonhuman animals as sufficiently low in a devised hierarchy of nature that their bodies

⁴⁰⁷ Stanley Hauerwas and John Berkman, “The Chief End of All Flesh”, *Theology Today* 49.2 (1992), 196-208 at 199.

⁴⁰⁸ Gen. 2:18-20.

⁴⁰⁹ Carol J. Adams, *Neither Man nor Beast: Feminism and the Defence of Animals* (New York, NY: Continuum, 1994), 185.

are unproblematically available as food (or as research material), Adams suggests, those animals are turned from particular creatures to categorical objects, as concept grounds action grounds ontology.⁴¹⁰

It should be noted at this point that the relational process wherein humans tell nonhuman animals what they are is not monodirectional. Žižek, commenting on an encounter with an image of a laboratory animal, writes of

seeing a photo of a cat after it had been subjected to some lab experiment in a centrifuge, its bones half-broken, its skin half-hairless, its eyes looking helplessly into the camera... What [its sad gaze] expresses is perhaps the cat's horror at having encountered The Animal, namely ourselves, humans: what the cat sees is us in all our monstrosity, and what we see in its tormented gaze is our own monstrosity.⁴¹¹

In telling animals who they are – in this case, an object to be used – we learn something of who we are: in this case, an animal, a creature of God, who chooses material progress over attending, with concern and open eyes, to another of God's relational creatures. The relationship between human and nonhuman in this instance is not monodirectional; but it is tragic.

This multidirectional image of human-animal relationships is but a reflection of how God relates to creation – something explored in chapter 3's opening sections. In God's relationship with human creatures, who are called to respond to grace and so joyfully conform their will to God's,⁴¹² and with the nonhuman creatures who praise God in their very being,⁴¹³ the

⁴¹⁰ It is worth noting, furthermore, that it is along these lines that Adams argues for misogyny and animal exploitation being "linked oppressions", in as much as institutionalised violence against both women and animals involves the abrogation of the particularity of the other, the identification of appropriate victims, the presence of denial mechanisms, and public passivity. See for example Adams, *Neither Man nor Beast*, 163-78. In chapter 6, the use of nonhuman animals in defining human identity is explored further, through reflection on the use of animals as negative descriptors for humans.

⁴¹¹ Žižek, "The Animal Gaze of the Other," 234 & 237. In chapter 9, I think about the possibility of humans learning from other animals: perhaps seeing our monstrosity in the eyes of another is one way we might learn.

⁴¹² McFadyen, *Bound to Sin*, 108-9, 185-6; Barth, *Church Dogmatics* II/2, 535. 553-75.

⁴¹³ Isa. 43:20; see also Barth, *Church Dogmatics* III/2, 172. The Catechism of the Catholic Church also acknowledges this much: "Animals are God's creatures. He surrounds them with his providential care. By their mere existence they bless him and give him glory. Thus men owe them kindness" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2416).

relationships are joyfully multidirectional. The same is true of humanity's relationships within creation: as the image of God, we are called to rejoice in the other in their particularity and relationality (that is, as individuals and also as members of wider relational networks).⁴¹⁴ If we are to tell animals what they are, then, we must also attend to the myriad ways in which we define ourselves and our relational networks through this process of telling.⁴¹⁵

The realisation that humans define themselves (and the distorted relational networks they live within) whenever they tell animals what they are offers a valuable perspective on the presence of nonhuman animals in scriptural descriptions of the relationship of God to creation, and of Christ's action in and for the world. David Clough draws attention to the description of YHWH in Isaiah 31 as a lion; fierce, territorial, and unable to be shaken by any number of people called out against it.⁴¹⁶ For Clough, the lion can be understood in this manner as a "partial image of God";⁴¹⁷ a revelation both in relation to how humans know lions and how humans know God. When we look to the lion, or to the ant (Prov. 6:6), and consider their ways – when we look to them and strive to consider them in their state of relative flourishing,⁴¹⁸ which will be different for each creature – we relate to them as individuals with whom we recognise commonality. In so doing, we open ourselves to the possibility of learning about God (and ourselves) *through* them, as well as learning about ourselves and others from God. This understanding of how humans relate to other animals, bound up with them in the relational networks of creation – fallen, and yet declared good by God – offers insight into the connection between understanding Christ as Lamb of God and the modern industry of factory farming. Aaron Gross puts the question to the Judeo-Christian tradition well:

It seems astonishing, for example, that it could be a matter of indifference to Jewish and Christian thought that not merely the

⁴¹⁴ Alistair I. McFadyen, *The Call to Personhood: A Christian Theory of the Individual in Social Relationships* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 126.

⁴¹⁵ This is without considering the ways in which animals tell *us* who *we* are; something which will be explored in more detail in the concluding chapter.

⁴¹⁶ Clough, *On Animals*, 102, referencing Isa. 31:4.

⁴¹⁷ Clough, *On Animals*, 102. This idea of nonhuman animals as participating in the divine likeness finds support in Aquinas' claim that "because His goodness could not be adequately represented by one creature alone, He produced many and diverse creatures, that what was wanting to one in the representation of the divine goodness might be supplied by another." *Summa Theologica*, 1.47.1.

⁴¹⁸ See for example Clough, *On Animals*, 44.

shepherd but the entire tradition of husbandry to which the shepherd belonged has been largely replaced in the last century by corporately owned factory farms and assembly-line slaughter and processing facilities. These new and global reconfigurations in animal agriculture are potentially as theologically significant as the notion of shepherding, but they remain largely unthought.⁴¹⁹

If observing nonhuman animals in their states of relative flourishing has the potential to teach us both about the animal in question and about the God who created that particular animal, the multiple and deep distortions of right relationship at play in the industrialised networks of factory farming ought to be a matter of deep concern for Christians (and, as Gross notes, for Jews as well). If our primary experiences of lambs and shepherds is collapsed into factory farming, and the commodified (and usually invisible)⁴²⁰ mass of lambs, sheep, pigs, and cows raised and slaughtered without concern for their pre-slaughter experiences, we can at best make only partial sense of Jesus as the Lamb of God.⁴²¹ This is not to say that we cannot still learn about individual lambs, human-animal relationality, and the action of Christ in such a context: certainly, the gross distortion of human relationality which factory farming represents speaks to a profound corruption of the relational networks of creation in a manner reminiscent of humanity's tragic response to the Incarnation. We should remember here that the death of Christ on the cross was not undone but *worked through* in the resurrection:⁴²² to live more closely for creation, then, requires that factory farming and similarly destructive relational networks are neither denied nor ignored but *made visible*.⁴²³ From that visibility, and the lamentation and confession that should proceed from it, can come the beginning of the process of healing; a microcosm of the cosmic healing inaugurated on the first Easter day.⁴²⁴

⁴¹⁹ Aaron S. Gross, "The Question of the Creature: Animals, Theology and Levinas' Dog", in *Creaturely Theology*, 121-137 at 128.

⁴²⁰ Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, 14.

⁴²¹ This suggestion arose from a discussion with John Berkman (private correspondence).

⁴²² McFadyen, *Bound to Sin*, 211.

⁴²³ Adams, *Neither Man nor Beast*, 163-8.

⁴²⁴ Augustine's comment that "it is of service to the proud that they should fall into some open and obvious sin, which can make them dissatisfied with themselves, after they have already fallen through self-complacency" dovetails with Adams' (and others') call for factory farming to be rendered visible. *City of God*, 14.13.573-4.

Eschatological Dietary Ethics: Humans, Animals, Creation, Nature

Running through “The Chief End of All Flesh” is a key component of Hauerwas’ work, involving acknowledgement of sin’s omnipresence within human relationality. This proceeds from Hauerwas’ wariness about rights-language: here, Hauerwas and Berkman argue that we should begin not with ‘rights’ but with God’s creation of the world. This world, now fallen and containing human and animal predation, is not perfect; and so we are cautioned against confusing the way things are now with the way God intends them to be.⁴²⁵ We must read the eschatological hope of Romans 8:19-21⁴²⁶ alongside God’s ultimate will for creation as expressed in Isaiah 11:6-9.⁴²⁷ This world, as creation, is less than its Creator: to talk of natural law or natural order is to neglect the eschatological hope of Christianity by placing more significance in the way things are than the way things ought to be.⁴²⁸

This seemingly simple acknowledgement – that nature is creation fallen – is in fact a powerful one, worth considering a little more closely. In the first volume of his *Scientific Theology*, Alister McGrath highlights how “In modern western thought, the term ‘nature’ has acquired tones of innocence and nostalgia, perhaps evoking the memory of a distant rural past, whose idealized simplicities contrast sharply with the harsh realities of life in the urban west.”⁴²⁹ ‘Nature’ as most commonly used in modern English is not an empirical reality so much as a philosophical construct, usually serving an ideological function⁴³⁰ in a Derridean opposed binary.⁴³¹

⁴²⁵ Hauerwas and Berkman, “The Chief End of All Flesh”, 202-3.

⁴²⁶ Rom. 8:19-21 – “For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.”

⁴²⁷ Hauerwas and Berkman, “The Chief End of All Flesh”, 204.

⁴²⁸ See for example Andrew Linzey, *Animal Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1994), 81-2.

⁴²⁹ Alister E. McGrath, *A Scientific Theology: Volume 1; Nature* (Edinburgh and New York: T&T Clark, 2001), 82.

⁴³⁰ Snyder and Scandrett expand on the romanticizing of nature by examining four interrelated “warped views” of nature: romantic (which attends to the beauty in nature at the expense of neglecting its brutality, transitoriness, and fallenness); commodification (which attends to nature’s resources at the expense of ignoring our mutual relationality and responsibility within creation); worship (which recognises nature’s sublimity at the expense of failing to worship the God who created it all); and spiritualizing (which recognises nature’s spiritual significance at the expense of ordering all creation to human ends). Some combination of elements from all four of these views can be helpful, but only within a holistic understanding of what it means to profess that God is Lord over all, and that all creation groans and awaits redemption. See Howard A. Snyder and Joel Scandrett,

As was discussed in chapter 2, nonhuman animals most commonly suffer in this way by their reduction into a non-sentient monolith, set against rational and relational humankind – McGrath has more in mind the perverse relationship between the idealization of nature and the onwards expansion of human urbanity. In this way, *nature* is more an ideological tool than something that actually exists; and in this way, it is also highly variable. The general reception of the famous stanza from Tennyson’s *In Memoriam*,⁴³² referring to “nature red in tooth in claw,” highlights this ideological use of nature (as well as exemplifying how a reductive binary between “human” and “nonhuman” hampers reflection):

Man...
 Who trusted God was love indeed
 And love Creation’s final law –
 Though Nature, red in tooth and claw
 With ravine, shrieked against his creed.⁴³³

Note first that my consideration of this stanza is neither the result of literary or historical criticism, but of theological reflection. We are informed that humans who know God, and know God is love, are capable of living lives of love themselves (for love is “Creation’s final law”, following the pattern of its Creator). Meanwhile, Nature, set against humanity, is amoral and self-centred, concerned with propagation and advancement and unconcerned with the means by which these are procured. This is a provocative and productive observation, particularly with regards to chapter 3’s discussion of nonhuman sin. But looking at the two ways of living Tennyson here outlines – selfless love and self-preservation – can we say that the human creation, as it is now in actuality, is categorically in the former, and nature categorically in the latter? Humans may not be red in tooth and claw, but that as a species we spill blood – and often for reasons far less noble than the propagation of our genes – is undeniable. And what of Passion, the cannibal chimp examined (alongside Clough’s own examination) in the prior chapter? It was suggested that her actions might be thought of as both

Salvation Means Creation Healed: The Ecology of Sin and Grace; Overcoming the Divorce between Earth and Heaven (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2011), 42-5.

⁴³¹ See Julia De Nooy, *Derrida, Kristeva, and the Dividing Line: An Articulation of Two Theories of Difference* (New York, NY: Garland, 1998).

⁴³² Note that I refer to the general reception, or one possible reading, of *In Memoriam* – I am not interested here to claim that Tennyson himself intended his poem to carry this particular meaning.

⁴³³ Alfred Tennyson, *In Memoriam A.H.H.*, Canto 5.

natural and sinful. As Tennyson wrote, we trust that God is love indeed; but much like those who have faith sufficient to move a mountain (Mt. 17:20), the existence of any human who can embody that love, beyond the divine person of Jesus Christ, is an impossible ideal in creation as it is now. Nature is creation fallen; and humans are a part of nature.

There exists an interesting and somewhat paradoxical relationship between claims that humans are set apart from nature (red in tooth and claw) and arguments which defend a particular human practice as morally acceptable *because* it is natural. A key example of this is hunting: I have in mind a piece from the *Hansard*, in which James Thompson asserted in defence of fox-hunting that people “who believe in God must come to terms with a creation of mutual hunting and eating.”⁴³⁴ In our inter-human relationships, a defence of ‘naturalness’ would presumably be insufficient justification for hunting or killing one’s fellows: when Thompson turns to human-fox relationships, however, not only is ‘natural’ taken to mean ‘morally neutral’, but the efficacy of grace is implicitly denied to these relational networks through the implicit claim that God cannot redeem human-fox relationality. A romanticized and simplistic understanding of nature is used as an *ex post facto* justification of fox-hunting, in a way which bypasses proper theological reflection on creation, creatures, and Creator.

To refer to human animal nature as legitimating flesh-eating betrays a peculiar blind spot with regards to Christian responsibility. It is, biologically speaking, quite *natural* for humans to fight and kill each other; and for strong virile males to take as many mates as they can in observance of the biologically-rooted tenet of the survival of the fittest. To recognise and admit this is to take a responsible and realistic view of the fallen world we inhabit: what is problematic is when the definition of ‘nature’ is allowed to undulate as need dictates, rendering one’s description of both creation and nature theologically bankrupt. *Contra* Thompson, for humans who have said Yes to God and so have accepted God’s sanctifying grace, killing without necessity is an unacceptable relationship which both denies that grace can be holistic and refuses to acknowledge the value and commonality shared with the other. In the words of Andrew Linzey, “The natural order does not constitute a moral order so that we are beholden to

⁴³⁴ James Thompson, *Hansard* 623.45 (12 March 2001), 537.

follow whatever we observe therein. On the contrary, behaving morally sometimes involves acting contrary to what we perceive in nature, or against our natural impulses, such as the desire for revenge.”⁴³⁵ There is a strong and consistent precedent – constituted by the whole of theological ethics – for recognising grace’s transformational power over our biological proclivities; and it is not at all clear that (even in a conservatively anthropocentric cosmology) the transformation grace can work is limited to human relationships with other humans.

Hauerwas and Berkman share my caution about the conflation of creation and nature, noting the danger of moving from recognition of animal predation as natural to the construction of a “survivalist” ethic, wherein anything which ensures human survival is *de facto* justifiable.⁴³⁶ Such an ethic must be avoided

because Christians simply do not have an overriding stake in the survival of the earth or of our own survival. As God’s creatures, our ‘chief end’ is not to survive but to be capable of serving one another, and in doing so to serve as signs of the kingdom of God.⁴³⁷

This is a significant point, and one well-made. As Christians who worship God – the Father, who created us *imago Dei*; the Son, who redeemed us and opened the possibility of new relationship; and the Spirit, which moves in us as we live towards the kingdom – we are called to live not curved in on ourselves but ex-centrally and peaceably, in anticipation of God’s peaceable kingdom. “Survival is not and cannot be a proper end for the moral life.”⁴³⁸

Hauerwas’ anti-survivalist claim can be extended: as Christians we should not look to root our beliefs or practices in the way things are now, but should focus on the way things will become. Christians are called to respond to grace by rejoicing in creation and its Creator, striving to live for the world and so attending with love to individual creatures as God attends to us.⁴³⁹ If we are to talk of natural relationships and responsibilities, we should not talk of living and eating as the wolf does now but as he will in the

⁴³⁵ Linzey, *Why Animal Suffering Matters*, 15.

⁴³⁶ Hauerwas and Berkman, “The Chief End of All Flesh”, 204.

⁴³⁷ Hauerwas and Berkman, “The Chief End of All Flesh”, 203-4.

⁴³⁸ Stanley Hauerwas et al, *Truthfulness and Tragedy: Further Investigations in Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977), 68.

⁴³⁹ McFadyen, *Bound to Sin*, 218-20.

kingdom prophesied by Isaiah; not of living in the corrupted relational networks of the world,⁴⁴⁰ but of the reconciled and redeemed relational networks of the *eschaton*. This does not require a refusal to see the world as it is now, but it does require the recognition that the world as it is is neither normative for Christian praxis nor an end in itself.

Above all, add Hauerwas and Berkman, we must remember that God is the end of all creation.⁴⁴¹ If we differ from other animals – which we do, although the matter is not so simple as a bifurcation of human and nonhuman animals⁴⁴² – our difference comes in our unique *telos*, not in any fundamental *ontos*. God is the ultimate end of creation: animals (including human animals) are not. In the language of Andrew Linzey, if we are higher animals, called to higher relationships, we must exemplify this in being servants for the lower animals:⁴⁴³

In light of the scriptural witness that humans and other animals share in the ultimate end, which is God's peaceable kingdom, we thus believe that each and every creature is created to manifest God's glory. Animals will not manifest God's glory insofar as their lives are measured in terms of human interests, but only insofar as

⁴⁴⁰ See McFadyen, *Bound to Sin*, particularly 185-97 and 236-49.

⁴⁴¹ Hauerwas and Berkman, "The Chief End of All Flesh", 199.

⁴⁴² David Clough rejects theological anthropologies which "treat 'human' and 'non-human' as parallel categories, instead of recognising that 'human' names one species of animal and 'non-human' names about 1,250,000 species... There is no obvious species-neutral reason" for the anthropomomist bifurcation which claims that "the human/non-human boundary should be considered of greater magnitude to most other species boundaries." Clough, *On Animals*, 74.

⁴⁴³ Andrew Linzey uses the motif of "suffering servanthood" to present a Christological take on the language of stewardship. See for example Andrew Linzey, *Animal Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1994). Concerns might be raised about Linzey's understanding of humans as the "servant species", however: what, for example, does this mean for ecclesiology and Christian mission? If we are called to will as God wills in all our creaturely relationships, how do we distinguish between our responsibilities to a rock, a tree, a fish, a cow, and a human? Clough offers one possible answer to this in looking to Jesus' ministerial affirmation of God's care for nonhuman animals as a way of emphasising God's greater providential care for humans (see Mt. 6:25-30, 10:29-31, 12:11-12/ Lk. 12:24-28, 12:6-7, 14:5; discussed in Clough, *On Animals*, 75-6). There is no suggestion by Jesus here that God's valuing of humanity over sheep is contingent on any physical or even spiritual capacity of the human; but human-nonhuman difference is affirmed as theologically significant. It should be noted that recognition of this in no way undermines any theological argument for humanity to attend to the nonhuman in creation: that God is superior to us *and* the other animals, for example, in no way undermines God's particular and relational care for both us and them. McFadyen's claim that it is in inter-human relationships that we best come to understand the dynamic relationality of God (McFadyen, *Bound to Sin*, 239) might nuance this point: it is through our human relationships, as servants of God, that we best learn what it means to be human; but this process of learning might well involve recognising and realising the call to live for all God's creatures, beyond the merely human.

their lives serve God's good pleasure. Similarly, humans manifest God's glory when we learn to see animals as God sees animals, recognising that animals exist not to serve us, but rather for God's good pleasure.⁴⁴⁴

Animals are a part of creation; creatures who respond to God in a way that serves God's good pleasure. If we wish to better manifest God's glory, we are called to respond to other animals as God responds to them; with ex-centric love, open to relationship, closed to the possibility of selfishly doing harm. Hauerwas and Berkman go some way towards recognising this in their comparison of dietary debates with the theological tension between pacifist and just war traditions, casting vegetarianism as (potentially) an eschatological and relational act of discipleship.

Just as we believe that Christians are not called to be nonviolent because nonviolence is a strategy to free the world from war, but because as Christians we cannot conceive of living other than nonviolently in a world of war, so it may also be true that Christians are called to live nonviolently towards animals in a world of meat-eaters... Christian vegetarianism might be understood as a witness to the world that God's creation is not meant to be at war with itself. Such a witness does not entail romantic conceptions of nature or of our fallen creation but rather is an eschatological act.⁴⁴⁵

As has already been argued in this chapter, our status as beings created *imago Dei* should not lead us to think that those relational networks which constitute creation and which God is interested in are limited to those made up of inter-human relationships. This much is recognised by Jürgen Moltmann when he writes of the triune God's presence in and for creation:

If the Creator is himself present in his creation by virtue of the Spirit, then his relationship to creation must be viewed as an intricate web of unilateral, reciprocal and many-sided relationships... relationships of *mutuality* which describe a cosmic community of living between God the Spirit and all his created beings.⁴⁴⁶

⁴⁴⁴ Hauerwas and Berkman, "The Chief End of All Flesh", 196.

⁴⁴⁵ Hauerwas and Berkman, "The Chief End of All Flesh", 207-8.

⁴⁴⁶ Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: An ecological doctrine of creation* (London: SCM Press, 1985), 14.

If it is in the depths of sin in creation – those places where the loving relational networks God intends for us are most corrupted – that God’s grace and active willing in the Spirit are most concentrated,⁴⁴⁷ we cannot neglect the possibility that relational networks involving nonhuman animals (and the creaturely networks of the environment) are willed to be healed by God as well.⁴⁴⁸ Vegetarianism might then be understood as an act of joyful worship of the God who created, affirmed, and will redeem all creation, performed within the world by practicing a diet which witnesses to the present corruption within commonly-accepted patterns of human-animal relationship;⁴⁴⁹ living for other animals in the image of the God who is for us now and in the *eschaton*.

The Weapon of Choice: Human-Animal Relationality and the Language of Sacrifice

In the conclusion to “The Chief End of All Flesh”, Hauerwas and Berkman consider the dietary implications of their thesis up to that point. They argue that, just as just war theory is a theory of *exceptions* to the rule of Christian nonviolence (and does not therefore justify war in general),⁴⁵⁰ so too is the

⁴⁴⁷ McFadyen, *Bound to Sin*, 210-1.

⁴⁴⁸ It should be noted that the claim here is *not* that humans are called by God to ‘heal’ relational networks that do not involve humanity at all – relationships between nonhuman animals, and between animals and the environment. Lacking the potential to more closely conform their will to God’s (unlike human creatures), nonhuman animals and nonanimal creatures cannot be expected to reform prior to the *eschaton*, regardless of how one understands their involvement in the constancy of sin. The implications of this for human intervention in ecosystems are not immediately obvious: it would mean, to be sure, that intervention within ecosystems untouched by human activity should be viewed with severe caution. The reality, however, is that no such ecosystem exists within modernity: the balance between working to heal damage inflicted by human activity and arrogantly overstating humanity’s capacity to work towards the kingdom is a complex one.

⁴⁴⁹ It must be noted at this point that it is neither my intention here to espouse dietary pacifism as a *necessary* element of Christian practice, nor to imply that following specific dietary rules can separate one from the distorted networks of relationality between human and nonhuman animals in creation. Even a strictly maintained vegan lifestyle, unless one is entirely self-sufficient and in no way engaged in modern political and economic networks, cannot remove one from the profound distortions at the heart of human-animal (and human-human, and human-environmental) relationality; and in the unlikely case that one *is* entirely removed from human relational networks (whatever form that might take), the avoidance of responsibility for the other such a lifestyle requires is as much a perversion of what we are called to be as is complicity in (for example) factory farming. The *compromised idealism* which lies at the heart of Christian ethics – being called towards an ideal we know we cannot reach, but knowing we are justified by grace rather than by our relative success – is explored further in chapter 5.

⁴⁵⁰ Yoder, *Nevertheless*, 23.

burden of proof on Christians who wish to eat animal flesh,⁴⁵¹ a characteristically bold statement which parallels the logical conclusion of Barth's emphasis on the significance of *necessity* for flesh-eating.⁴⁵² This is immediately qualified, however, by the suggestion that Christians might yet be able to eat meat, if it is understood as an animal sacrifice made for human survival.

If any form of meat-eating is to be justified for Christians, it must be understood as animals making a sacrifice for us that we might live, analogous to the way soldiers are seen to be making a sacrifice of their lives for their nation-state, empire or tribe. This is but a reminder that, as Christians, we cannot understand the story of our lives apart from the importance of sacrifice, because God sacrificed his son Jesus that we might live.⁴⁵³

In this way, a defence of 'just flesh-eating' might be built upon the presence of sacrifice in the Christian narrative and tradition, from the sacrificial legislation of the Hebrew Bible to the Eucharistic enactment of Christ's sacrifice for creation. Hauerwas and Berkman do not go so far as to build such a defence themselves,⁴⁵⁴ so much as propose theologically acceptable boundaries for a counter-defence of flesh-eating. In doing so, however, they recognise the dangers inherent in their brief appeal to sacrifice:

We are aware that the language of sacrifice is dangerous language, and we have no desire to underwrite the way this language of sacrifice has so often been used in the past, and no doubt will continue to be used, to justify all kinds of murderous deeds.

⁴⁵¹ Hauerwas and Berkman, "The Chief End of All Flesh", 208.

⁴⁵² Barth, *CD III/4*, 351-4.

⁴⁵³ Hauerwas and Berkman, "The Chief End of All Flesh", 208.

⁴⁵⁴ It should also be noted that both Hauerwas and Berkman espouse pacifism with regards to inter-human relationality as a faithful reading of Christian scripture and tradition, and that any defence of just flesh-eating rooted in sacrifice would be submitted to the same critical rigour as any argument in favour of a just war. Also to be remembered is that applications of just war theory are shown to be theologically and morally serious in those times and places where its advocates speak out against unjust wars, refuse to fight on unjust terms, and criticise any injustices visited *in bello*. For this reason it might be possible to articulate a just flesh-eating parallel to just war theology, functioning only in those times and places where the *ad bellum* conditions can be shown to require the death of a nonhuman animal for human survival.

However, Christians cannot give up the language of sacrifice if they are to be the kind of people Jesus has made possible.⁴⁵⁵

“Giving up the language of sacrifice” is, in light of Christ’s sacrifice for all flesh and the Eucharistic ritual whereby the church as body of Christ performs this, certainly unacceptable if Christians are to live faithfully within their narrative traditions as “the kind of people Jesus has made possible.” It is, however, worth reflecting on how the language of sacrifice can be used (and misused) “to justify all kinds of murderous deeds,” in light of Hauerwas’ and Berkman’s comparison of “animals making a sacrifice for us that we might live” with “the way soldiers are seen to be making a sacrifice of their lives.” Placing the deaths of soldiers and the slaughtering of nonhuman animals alongside the crucifixion, we can see what might be crudely described as three different ‘classes’ of sacrifice, as pertains to the willing of those who are sacrificed. In short, to collapse the different types of what we call sacrifice into a monolith is – without further nuance – to undermine the call to new and beneficial human-animal relationships Hauerwas and Berkman have constructed up to this point in the essay.

The crucifixion of Christ, where the mocking of Jesus on the cross as unable to save himself⁴⁵⁶ belies the divine power evident in his miracles (and the explicit acknowledgement of the material potential of that power in the wilderness⁴⁵⁷), is the willing death of an individual. Christ’s death is not self-sacrifice, but an acceptance by the Son of God of the demise visited upon him by sinful humanity – not to be undone but to be worked through in the resurrection.⁴⁵⁸ The death of soldiers in military conflict are – speaking in general terms – willed, but only implicitly (as opposed to the explicit acceptance of his crucifixion by Christ, at Gethsemane⁴⁵⁹ and then in his passivity during trial and execution⁴⁶⁰). Soldiers can accept the possibility that they will die – that is, the reality that their service puts their lives in danger – but the death of the individual soldier is not seen, prior to the fact, as a necessary sacrifice. Soldiers are willing,⁴⁶¹ therefore, to accept the

⁴⁵⁵ Hauerwas and Berkman, “The Chief End of All Flesh”, 208.

⁴⁵⁶ Mt. 27:42.

⁴⁵⁷ Mk. 1:12-13; Mt. 4:1-11; Lk. 4:1-13.

⁴⁵⁸ McFadyen, *Bound to Sin*, 211.

⁴⁵⁹ Lk. 22:43-44.

⁴⁶⁰ See for example Jn. 18:35-36.

⁴⁶¹ It should be noted here that the modern and geographically-specific reality of so-called volunteer armies was not the norm for much of history, and conscription and compulsory terms of service are still the norm in some countries today. With regards to volunteer

possibility of their death, but do not explicitly acknowledge their sacrifice as inevitable.

Feminist theologian Kelly Denton-Borhaug has written on American “war culture” and the central role sacrificial language plays in the *ex post facto* justification of the deaths of American soldiers: the deaths of young men are portrayed as a “necessary sacrifice” in the service of national security, or the ‘liberation’ of foreign peoples, not prior to the conflict but after the American casualties are announced.⁴⁶² Such an understanding of the place of warfare in the world portrays not only violent conflict, but the deaths of individual human beings, as a necessary reality. This cannot but raise concerns parallel to those of Hauerwas and Yoder about the stifling of moral imagination⁴⁶³ that can arise when worldly realities such as armed conflict are deemed to be brute facts which the church is to relate to,⁴⁶⁴ rather than sinful distortions which the church can stand against. Relationally, there is also the legitimate concern that such a reading of the *telos* of the soldier can affect the collapse of individual soldiers into their military function; their identity being subsumed into their role within the interrelated networks of modern warfare.⁴⁶⁵ The particularity of the individual soldier, although not explicitly denied, is collapsed into their end as a sacrifice⁴⁶⁶ – still lamentable, the tragedy of their death is ameliorated

armies, the fact that it is impossible to discern the actual degree of willing involved – given that many soldiers in these armies are from poor and marginalised sections of society, presented with an opportunity to learn and earn – is noteworthy, particularly so in that it reflects the ways in which our willing is distorted by sin and environment. In comparison with the killing and consuming of nonhuman animals, however, the difference in willing can still be said to be categorical, rather than a difference of degree.

⁴⁶² See Kelly Denton-Borhaug, “War-Culture and Sacrifice”, *Feminist Theology* 18.2 (2010), 175-91.

⁴⁶³ Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 124.

⁴⁶⁴ John Howard Yoder, *When War is Unjust: Being Honest in Just-War Thinking* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1996), 72.

⁴⁶⁵ For a relational analysis of sin as collapsing individuals into their relationships (defined here as *sin-as-sloth*; rather than *sin-as-pride*, wherein one collapses one’s relationships into oneself) see McFadyen, *Bound to Sin*, 236-7. See also Jenson, *The Gravity of Sin*, 176.

⁴⁶⁶ This understanding of the sacrifice of a soldier does not do justice to the reality depicted in the motto of “laying down one’s life for one’s friends” (Jn. 15:13). This model of sacrifice, an act of self-abrogation which does not collapse one into one’s relationships but does attend to the particularity and relationality of one’s fellows, is closer to Christ’s sacrifice than is the killing of nonhuman animals. This comparison, however, raises the further issue of *breadth*: the crucifixion was a cosmic sacrifice, for all creation (Clough, *On Animals*, 81-8, 94-8); the death of a soldier for his friends, while a commendably selfless act, is a local sacrifice for a particular subset of humanity. This is not to say that all soldiers are *de facto* restricted in their creaturely concern and relationality; but it is to recognise that the context of warfare *de facto* omits some humans, in certain times and places (those fighting for opposing forces, at the very least), from the realm of particular and relational concern.

by the depiction of its necessity in service of an allegedly transcendent end (nation, ideology, ethnos, tribe).

How, in light of the explicitly willing sacrifice of Christ and the implicitly willing sacrifice of the soldier, should the call for Christians to understand flesh-eating “as animals making a sacrifice for us that we might live” be understood? As the phrasing of this question suggests, I believe that an important element of the Christian understanding of sacrifice is the foundational necessity of *willing*.⁴⁶⁷ Whatever one’s view of animal sacrifice, it is a fact that the nonhuman animal does not elect to be killed; whereas, in the words of Wirzba,

Christ’s self-offering marks the ‘end’ or completion of sacrifice because he gives the unsurpassable expression to how self-offering leads to true life. He turns all of us into altars for the receiving and giving again of the gifts of God. He turns our bodies and our entire being into gifts to be given to others.⁴⁶⁸

The affirmation of Jesus as the final and complete sacrifice, who atones and defeats sin for all time (Rom. 3:25; Heb. 2:17, 9:22, 9:26, 12:2; 1 Jn. 2:2), is also an affirmation about the character of God. “Jesus’ death speaks to God’s way of being with the world... On the cross Jesus encountered the alienating and violent death of this world and transformed it into the self-offering death that leads to resurrection life.”⁴⁶⁹ Within such a reading, it seems difficult to continue to assert that it is appropriate for Christians to think of death inflicted on other animals as ‘sacrifice’, especially in the case of those who are fortunate enough to live in times and places where we do not depend on the death of other relational creatures for our survival. Wirzba writes that “A sacrifice is an offering from one’s livelihood and life,”⁴⁷⁰ which is appropriate and true – but if our livelihood and life do not depend on the death of nonhuman animals, to talk of their death as a sacrifice is to move away from self-offering towards

⁴⁶⁷ It is worth noting that I adhere loosely here to an Augustinian, rather than Pelagian, understanding of human willing. Corrupted, fallible, and unavoidably incorporated into myriad relational networks which are distorted by the perpetuality of sin, it is true that whenever we think of ourselves as ‘willing’ to do a thing we are not choosing that thing in pure autonomy but are acting within the constraints of our formed (or malformed, or – through willing as God wills and accepting grace – *transformed*) character.

⁴⁶⁸ Wirzba, *Food and Faith*, 124; commenting on Heb. 9:22, 9:26, 12:2.

⁴⁶⁹ Wirzba, *Food and Faith*, 125.

⁴⁷⁰ Wirzba, *Food and Faith*, 128. If this is indeed what Christian sacrifice is, then it would seem that within Wirzba’s schema only animal farmers can eat meat and truthfully call it ‘sacrifice’.

selfish destruction. If Christ's sacrifice is the end of all sacrifice (Heb. 10:1-18), this cannot faithfully be interpreted as a sacrifice which liberates us to love our fellow humans while simultaneously freeing us to abuse and exploit other animals as we wish. In the death of Christ, God become flesh,

The sacrificial system in which animals are put to death is brought to a conclusion in the death of the animal in which God was enfleshed... For Israel, therefore, non-human animals were sacrificed for the sake of humans; in Christ, a human animal was sacrificed not for humans but for the sake of all creatures.⁴⁷¹

Clough here reads Christ's death as an animal sacrifice which ends the need for animal sacrifice.⁴⁷² The kingdom has not yet come, and violence is still pervasive in the world; but if Christians are called to tell the world what it is, and to live for the *eschaton*, not by "trying to force contingency into conformity"⁴⁷³ but by sinning boldly in their efforts to live for creation, then Christ's *self-offering* cannot be inverted to *other-sacrifice* without undermining the transformation worked in Incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection.

In his incarnate life and ugly death, Jesus Christ was a radical inversion of the distorted relationality of the world; a downwards movement from divine to creature, which Christians are called to spread outwards into creation. The Eucharist, understood at the sacramental level, is *anamnesis*: the bringing together of individual Christians into the body of Christ in and through the Spirit, and the memory⁴⁷⁴ of Christ's passion, resurrection and ascension. Included in this remembrance is the knowledge of our complicity in – our being formed by, and in turn forming – the profoundly broken networks of relationship which led to the execution of the Son of God, and which continue to wound and kill today. In short, in communion the church simultaneously rejoices in God's Incarnation and resurrection, and confesses that it was for our sins that Christ died. If we wish to be transformed in the process, sanctified by our acceptance of the self-offering of God's Son, this cannot be done by baptising systemic violence visited upon others (and this includes, among other things, warfare and factory farming) with the language of sacrifice. Rather, we are to offer *ourselves*, in

⁴⁷¹ Clough, *On Animals*, 128-9.

⁴⁷² See Clough, *On Animals*, 127-9.

⁴⁷³ Hauerwas, *Hannah's Child*, 137.

⁴⁷⁴ See Lk. 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:24-25.

order that we may become peaceable citizens of the kingdom that abides the end of history.⁴⁷⁵ Rowan Williams notes that the Eucharist is the sacrament which confirms “the church on earth as a fundamentally sacrificial phenomenon”:

[The church] is a place where offering is made, and there is nothing surprising in its being described as a shrine or an altar, or its members as priests – though it is a shrine because it manifests the heavenly altar, the underlying reality of Christ’s intercession, and Christians are priests entirely in a derivative sense: they ‘offer’, which is the characteristic priestly act, but only because they are *being offered* by the eternal high priest, and because they have been made a worthy offering by the atonement achieved *ephapax* in the cross.⁴⁷⁶

The offering of bread and wine, the body and blood of Christ, is a sacrifice which affirms that our offering to God is only possible through the revelatory, intercessory, and salvific action of Christ. Christian sacrifice is self-sacrifice. All this is not to say that there will be absolutely no circumstances in which a Christian might eat a nonhuman animal: nor do I believe that there are absolutely no circumstances in which a Christian might harm a human being. Such circumstances will, however, be exceptional, predicated by genuine necessity, and conducted with a prayer of confession. Christians are called to sacrifice of themselves for creation: an appeal to Christian sacrificial language, after Christ’s death has undone the need for sacrifice of others, is an unsuitable theological approach to considering our destructive relationships with others; particularly if, like Hauerwas and Berkman, we are concerned to avoid “justify[ing] all kinds of murderous deeds”. If the language of sacrifice is to be used, it must be the language of self-sacrifice – recognition of which reveals consumption of mass-produced animal flesh as sheer concupiscence;⁴⁷⁷ a capitulation to our senses over and against the particularity of the animal killed, contrary to God’s loving intimacy in and for creation.

⁴⁷⁵ Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon, *Resident Aliens* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1989), 87.

⁴⁷⁶ Rowan Williams, *Eucharistic Sacrifice: The Roots of a Metaphor* (Bramcote: Grove, 1982), 15.

⁴⁷⁷ See for example Augustine, *City of God*, 15.5.575.

Earlier in “The Chief End of All Flesh”, Hauerwas and Berkman state that “our practices with regard to other animals shape our beliefs about them”,⁴⁷⁸ a claim which echoes Carol Adams’ drawing together of ontology, epistemology and ethical practice into the argument that whenever animals’ bodies are instrumentalised and consumed, the potential for any relationship with them – let alone one transformed by grace – is denied.⁴⁷⁹ “The way we humans look at animals,” for Adams, “literally creates them as usable.”⁴⁸⁰ The cyclical and destructive relationships the flesh-farming industry, itself a clear and present symptom of sin’s distortion of creaturely relationality, stands in stark contrast to the thesis of “The Chief End of All Flesh”: that humans and animals are co-members of creation,⁴⁸¹ that transforming relationships with the animal creation is an eschatological act,⁴⁸² and that, as Christians, our ultimate stake is not in our survival but in serving one another and in this way serving as signs of the kingdom.⁴⁸³

If our ultimate stake is not in surviving but in serving, if we recognise other animals as relational individuals with whom we share significant commonality,⁴⁸⁴ and if we live in a part of the world where there is minimal difficulty in pursuing a vegetarian or even vegan diet, an appeal to sacrifice does not negate the radical implications of recognising God’s sanctifying grace at work in creation. If *necessity* is a prerequisite for faithfully using the language of sacrifice with regards to humans eating other animals, we must remember the ethical pitfalls of recasting specific exceptions as general maxims. Here, the danger is that a turn to sacrifice will hamper

⁴⁷⁸ Hauerwas and Berkman, “The Chief End of All Flesh”, 197.

⁴⁷⁹ Note that the claim here, at least as I am using it, is not that (for example) a human who eats animal flesh is incapable of having a relationship with his or her pet dog. The claim is rather that the potential for relationship with, and recognition of the particularity of, individual cows and pigs (for example) is undermined by active engagement in the networks of factory farming. This distortion of particularity and relationality does not, then, automatically extend to include all animals. One of the simplest and clearest delineations to make here is the distinction between companion-domesticated and food-domesticated animals, alongside that between domesticated and wild. The denial – or ignorance – of the particularity of a cow does not prevent one from recognising the particularity of a dog (say), any more than active service in a system that denies the particularity of certain humans (e.g. Nazi guards in death camps, American soldiers at Guantanamo) prevents one from recognising the particularity of other humans.

⁴⁸⁰ Adams, *Neither Man nor Beast*, 194.

⁴⁸¹ Hauerwas and Berkman, “The Chief End of All Flesh”, 196.

⁴⁸² Hauerwas and Berkman, ‘The Chief End of All Flesh’, 208.

⁴⁸³ Hauerwas and Berkman, “The Chief End of All Flesh”, 203-204.

⁴⁸⁴ See for example Clough, *On Animals*, chapter 2.

recognition of nonhuman animals as particular creatures of God, and so hinder the attempt to present a holistic theological challenge to flesh-eating.

Hauerwas and Berkman acknowledge this danger when introducing the language of sacrifice, and add further implicit qualification in the article's concluding sentence: "In this time between the times, the good news for the other animals is that Christians do not need to ask the other animals to be part of a sacrifice that has no purpose in God's kingdom."⁴⁸⁵ Giving eschatological grounding to a dietary ethic which acknowledges other animals as individuals with whom we are called into new and charitable relationships, Hauerwas and Berkman provide substantive support for the dietary pacifist argument constructed thus far. Their recourse to the language of sacrifice, however, is shown – *via* dialogue with Denton-Borhaug, Clough, Yoder, and Hauerwas himself – to be no less problematic (and, practically, no less open to distortion) than the use of the same language in the context of warfare.

If part of our calling as *imago Dei* is to tell nonhuman animals what they are (a process through which we also learn about ourselves, and our common Creator), then if we collapse individual human-animal relationships into the consumer-consumed dynamic, we are telling these animals that our shared commonality is only significant so long as there is something else for us to eat. Whatever (sinful, tragic) compromises might need to be made in the unknown future, we are called to rejoice in all creation's relational networks. If circumstances of genuine necessity compromise human-animal relationship to the extent that an individual animal is reduced to a food source, this can be accepted with confession and lamentation in the secure knowledge of God's justifying grace; the same grace that exhorts us to relate to nonhuman animals in the image of Christ and the hope of the kingdom.

Conclusion

In this chapter, Hauerwas' nonviolent, narrative-grounded, and communitarian theology has provided the framework upon which dietary pacifism can be constructed, in conversation with chapter 3's theology of human-animal relationality. If we trust in God's power to bring peace and do

⁴⁸⁵ Hauerwas and Berkman, "The Chief End of All Flesh", 208.

not insist on our own,⁴⁸⁶ we are freed to no longer be selfish and exploitative ‘individuals’ but to truly follow Jesus’ example in our creaturely relationships; particularly with those animals (including humans) we recognise as being relational and responsible. The life of Jesus Christ reminds us of the importance of suffering servitude, the necessity of self-sacrifice – to be understood in stark contrast to the imposition of ‘sacrifice’ on others – and also that the power of our dominion can only be understood through the New Testament inversion of hierarchy. This is not our world, but God’s, and we are animals in it: our differences from other animals neither abrogate that reality nor limit the exercise of right relationship with them. This exercise, for Christians who understand their creation *imago Trinitas* through the lens of Christ’s life and ministry, necessarily involves nonviolent living.

In conversation with “The Chief End of All Flesh” – and, before that, Jeffrey Stout’s critique of Hauerwas – I suggested that the Hauerwasian framework itself can legitimate understandings of witness and mission which obstruct the work of grace; understandings which could potentially limit the extension of right relationship beyond church boundaries, let alone species boundaries. Dietary pacifism does not follow in this direction – neither does it walk the same individualist path as the language of ‘rights’. Our focus should not be on ‘rights’ for animals, and the anthropocentrism rights-language underwrites; but rather on the dawning of the new creation as prophesied by Isaiah. In this way Christian vegetarians are able, through their diet, to recognise their responsibility to the animal creation; and in this way live in anticipation of God’s peaceable kingdom, and the end to violence we hope it will bring. In chapter 5, I develop and explore the dietary pacifist ethic thus far constructed, by considering some embodied and practical questions which arise whenever the attempt is made to make practice out of theory: questions of *realism* and *idealism*, and questions of *degree* and *purity*. To construct a theological-ethical framework for Christian vegetarianism is one step: to think through how dietary pacifism works in practice is another, which chapter 5 will take.

⁴⁸⁶ Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 12.

5. To Eat, or Not to Eat

The Complexities of Dietary Pacifism

In the last chapter, I considered the work of Stanley Hauerwas through the prism of chapter 3's relational theology, outlining an ethic of dietary pacifism. Here, I turn to consider some of the more practical questions that arise whenever one attempts to situate and embody a particular moral theory. Dietary pacifism arises from recognising other animals as relational individuals, with whom we share commonality as creatures of God; moving from this to argue that we should not kill and eat our animal fellows if we do not need their death to secure our life. If, however, our theology is to *be* our ethics – as Hauerwas argues it must be – then how this will work in specific situations is not adequately or helpfully covered by a categorical maxim. There is a need for informed, prayerful, reflective engagement with specific cases.⁴⁸⁷ In this chapter I attempt to perform that engagement for some questions and complexities around the dietary pacifism articulated in chapter 4; and in chapters 6-8, I will look at how churches pray and reflect, as communities, on questions of animal and dietary ethics. Even the relatively straightforward suggestion of ceasing to eat meat raises questions over *realism* and *idealism*: is vegetarianism an 'ideal' diet; and if it is not, why is it worth practicing? It also raises related questions of *degree* and *purity*: are some diets, some ways of relating to nonhuman animals, theologically and ethically superior to others; and if they are, does that mean there is a dietary line beyond which Christians should not cross?

In this chapter I will also outline (in conversation with David Clough) one possible typology of pacifisms, a necessary step in order to justify my claim to most appropriately extrapolate a theological pacifism into the

⁴⁸⁷ In warning against "quandary ethics", Hauerwas argues that evaluating ethical principles using localised case studies is a lopsided approach, because the formulation of the case study and the possible choices presented are determined in large part by the conscious and unconscious biases of whoever formulates it – see Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 117-25. There is no denying that this will be true for any case studies I generate, but I believe I do not fall foul of Hauerwas' criticism of quandary ethics, for two reasons: I am not interested in evaluating dietary pacifism, so much as I am in considering how it might work as a holistic ethic; and, for this reason, I do not engage with particular cases so much as with abstracted issues (e.g. with culls *in general* as opposed to the recent UK badger cull *in particular*).

context of dietary ethics. It is worth clarifying at this juncture what I mean in reference to *dietary pacifism* and *Christian vegetarianism*; beyond the elemental level of referring to a Christian who does not eat animals. In talking of dietary pacifists, or Christian vegetarians, I refer to individuals who practice a vegetarian diet *for reasons connected to their Christian faith*. Note that this does not require knowledge or acceptance of the theology of chapter 3: this move is not intended to claim more adherents than my work deserves, but simply to acknowledge that many different casuistical and theological processes might lead one to abstain from animal flesh. ‘Vegetarian’ is here used as a blanket term for any diet free from animal flesh: in instances where ‘vegan’ (understood as abstinence from animal flesh and all animal products) is used simultaneously, ‘vegetarian’ will be taken to refer more specifically to diets which contain no animal flesh but some animal products.⁴⁸⁸

By defining Christian vegetarianism and then acknowledging that veganism is a distinct practice *within* vegetarianism, the complexities of dietary pacifism are foregrounded. Do vegans perceive the boundaries of what is acceptable relationship with nonhuman animals differently? Are they purer, or holier, or more sanctified in their engagement with the animal creation? In this chapter, I argue that questions concerning diet, like all questions of embodied living, are not best answered with deontological maxims and absolute boundaries. Karl Barth’s criticism of vegetarianism as wanton anticipation of the kingdom (and Norman Wirzba’s related criticism that Christian vegetarianism romanticizes a fallen creation); the different ‘types’ of pacifism and how they relate to my work and Hauerwas’; parallels between dietary pacifism and military pacifism; Paul’s dietary advice to the Roman church; questions over degrees and purity; even the tension for

⁴⁸⁸ In highlighting the centrality of an individual’s theology for determining whether they might be deemed a ‘Christian vegetarian’, principle and intention are of paramount importance. A Christian who was vegetarian solely because their doctor had suggested they pursue such a diet, for example, would not fall under this definition despite being both Christian and vegetarian. One possible response to this is that, as the majority of vegetarians are not raised as such and so experience a manner of ‘conversion experience’ en route to becoming vegetarian, their articulated dietary theology might have more to do with how one expresses a coherent rationale *post facto* than the instigating reason for their vegetarianism. I do not dispute that this will often be the case; but neither do I believe that recognising this poses a significant challenge to understanding dietary pacifism in this way. If someone’s reasons for becoming vegetarianism differ markedly from how they explain the rationale for their diet today, this should be no more surprising than the reality that any individual believer’s theology has developed and become more (or less) defined through their life, as a result of their formation in community, personal experiences, and the work of grace and Spirit.

vegans concerning honey will be addressed in the attempt to nuance dietary pacifism without lapsing into legalism. Proceeding from this, a critical and relational comparison of Hebrew Bible animal sacrifice and modern factory farming will provide a situated theological case study concerned with the value of dietary pacifism as a Christian ethic.

Wanton Anticipation? Eating for the Kingdom in a Fallen World

Any theologian interested in vegetarianism must at some point engage with Karl Barth's famous warning against it, as "a wanton anticipation of what is described by Isaiah 11 and Romans 8 as existence in the new aeon for which we hope."⁴⁸⁹ He refers to Isaiah's peaceable kingdom to come and Paul's depiction in Romans of the present creation groaning in bondage: vegetarianism is wanton anticipation of the kingdom for Barth, even as he recognises its value as a radical protest against the routine exploitation of animals.⁴⁹⁰ He even goes so far as to state this in terms sufficiently strong that, out of context, he seems at once amenable to dietary pacifism: "If [humankind's] lordship over the living beast is serious enough, it takes on a new gravity when he sees himself compelled to express his lordship by depriving it of its life. He obviously cannot do this except under the pressure of necessity."⁴⁹¹ This fundamental element of *necessity*, recognised by Barth as a key precondition for killing a fellow animal, was mentioned in chapter 4's initial outline of dietary pacifism. Here Barth's argument becomes almost paradoxical: if conditions of necessity must be met for flesh-eating to be acceptable Christian practice, can vegetarianism so easily be dismissed as wanton anticipation?

It would surely be blasphemous to disagree that we cannot *approximate* the kingdom here on earth; but it seems that Barth goes too far in dismissing the practice of vegetarianism on the grounds that it is *anticipation*. As Christians we anticipate the kingdom in so many ways – through practicing and worshipping as a community of character, charity, forgiveness, repentance, and so on – that it becomes arbitrary to dismiss any individual Christian practice on the grounds that it anticipates the

⁴⁸⁹ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* III/4 (London and New York: T&T Clark, 1958), 356.

⁴⁹⁰ Neil Messer, "Humans, Animals, Evolution and Ends", in Celia Deane-Drummond and David Clough (ed), *Creaturely Theology: On God, Humans and Other Animals* (London: SCM Press, 2009), 211-27 at 221.

⁴⁹¹ Barth, *CD* III/4, 354.

kingdom. Should Christian vegetarians espouse as their aim a desire to *bring about* the kingdom, Barth's criticism might hold more merit. Neil Messer engages Barth on this point: recognising that there are bad reasons for Christians to be vegetarian – he has in mind primarily “a pseudo-ascetic flight”⁴⁹² from the world as it is, the total subversion of the penultimate to the ultimate – he nonetheless takes up Barth's own stress on necessity when he writes that

It has to be said that much present human use of non-human animals has the appearance of humanity *sicut Deus* [like God]: an exercise of raw power that hardly seems to reflect the *imago Dei*. It also has to be acknowledged that much of what the Christian tradition has in the past taken to be proper dominion reflecting the *imago Dei* looks, with hindsight, much more like the kind of domination characteristic of humanity *sicut Deus*. We might say that the tradition has often failed to appreciate the difference made by the *agnus Dei* [incarnate God] in this sphere.⁴⁹³

Messer's criticism of the anthropomomist ignorance of God's love for all creation parallels David Clough's stress on the cosmic nature of Incarnation and redemption, discussed in chapter 3. Relationships with other animals which are rooted in power and domination are hard to synchronise with the inversion of hierarchy and end to sacrifice inaugurated by Christ. Dietary pacifists should rightly be cautioned to use the language of anticipation, rather than approximation – something Messer notes the danger of in reference to Andrew Linzey's work⁴⁹⁴ – but those who wish to agree with Barth that vegetarianism is “wanton” would do well to be careful that they do not arbitrarily limit what grace is capable of.

Questions over the sufficiency of pacifism for a responsible dietary ethic might offer Barth's accusation of “wanton anticipation” more traction: any attempt to live a life *absolutely* devoid of harm to animals will fail, unless one takes the extreme and impractical measure of sealing oneself away from all life. Insects will be unintentionally stepped on or swatted on a daily basis; and this is to say nothing of the far greater number of animals

⁴⁹² Messer, “Humans, Animals, Evolution and Ends”, 222.

⁴⁹³ Messer, “Humans, Animals, Evolution and Ends”, 223-4.

⁴⁹⁴ “Linzey's language of ‘approximating’ the peaceable kingdom has its dangers, because it tends to obscure this distinction between witnessing to and establishing the kingdom.” Messer, “Humans, Animals, Evolution and Ends”, 224.

who become collateral damage in crop farming, killed by tractors and pesticides and threshers. It must be remembered, therefore, that dietary pacifism – as a good Christian ethic – is not about purity. The extension of pacifism to nonhuman animals is an exercise of relationship lived *imago Christi*; but that does not mean absolute asceticism is the goal, such that one is obligated to withdraw from all networks wherein animals suffer. Take military pacifism as a parallel: being a military pacifist does not leave one unable to live in any nation involved in warfare – this would be an unrealistic and irresponsible idealism – and neither does dietary pacifism require one to (for example) cease shopping anywhere animal produce is sold.

The goal of a dietary pacifist is not to attain personal purity, but to serve as a sign of the kingdom in one's worldly relationships, by rejoicing in the God who loves humans and other animals as individuals and in relationship. This is not to be achieved through legalistic striving for an unobtainable ideal, but through recognising our limitations and opposing the destructive forces at work in the relational networks of the world. The choice is not a binary one between 'harming animals indiscriminately' against 'never harming animals'; and if we accept that we are fallen – the prerequisite for receiving grace⁴⁹⁵ – we can anticipate the kingdom through our relationships with humans and other animals, without believing we are capable of never causing harm.

Norman Wirzba's criticism of Christian vegetarianism is fundamentally similar to Barth's accusation of wanton anticipation (although it should be noted that Barth is not cited during Wirzba's critique):

It is tempting to think that a vegan or vegetarian diet can avoid the concerns raised about sacrifice and the life and death character of life. This is an illusion... A strictly vegetable diet cannot avoid the death of a great number of creatures ranging from microorganisms in the soil to rodents and other small animals above the ground.⁴⁹⁶

⁴⁹⁵ Mk. 1:15 – “Repent, and believe in the good news.” Repentance – involving recognition and admission of one's sins – is conceptually linked to being able to hear the good news of reconciliation.

⁴⁹⁶ Norman Wirzba, *Food and Faith: A Theology of Eating* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 130.

Quite so: but, as Wirzba himself goes on to acknowledge, “not all deaths are the same.”⁴⁹⁷ Should there exist a model of Christian vegetarianism which conformed to its representation by Barth and Wirzba – an idealism so removed from the reality of our fallen creation as to be at right angles to it – it would surely be an unsustainable ethic, not only within the standards of good theology but for any sane person. It is doubtful, however, whether such a model really exists; and if it does, dietary pacifism is not it. It should be noted that Wirzba is in broad agreement with the most common pro-vegetarianism arguments (that “not eating meat contributes to better personal health, prevents cruelty to animals, and saves the earth”⁴⁹⁸), and is primarily concerned to evaluate whether eating meat can ever be thought of as being *in all times and all places* problematic for Christians. The dietary pacifist ethic outlined thus far does not make such a claim, however; and by performing his evaluation over-against a stylised and one-dimensional understanding of Christian vegetarianism, serious concerns are raised concerning his theological method; or, at least, about the validity and generalizability of his conclusions. Wirzba is correct that it is “impossible to hide or escape from death”⁴⁹⁹ – but given that dietary pacifism’s concerns are less with purity or perfection, and more with striving prayerfully towards sanctified relationality, one need not hide from anything to think that killing other animals without necessity is a problematic and sinful act.

Wirzba is right to highlight that Jesus was not vegetarian, and did not endorse a vegetarian lifestyle for his followers; but to extrapolate from this to the argument that vegetarianism cannot therefore be an ideal for Christians is unhelpfully dismissive.⁵⁰⁰ Should we consider the abolition of slavery to be something which Christians should be uninterested in, because Jesus did not condemn the centurion in Luke 7 but simply healed the man’s property (that is, his human slave)? Or should we instead note the spatiotemporal context within which God’s Word became Incarnate, and seek through prayerful reflection to better understand the relationship between revelation, virtue, and context which faces us when we read the gospels today? Jesus Christ himself is not blind to the complexities of the cosmic Incarnation being grounded in a particular time and space: John records him telling the disciples, “I still have many things to say to you, but

⁴⁹⁷ Wirzba, *Food and Faith*, 130.

⁴⁹⁸ Wirzba, *Food and Faith*, 130-1.

⁴⁹⁹ Wirzba, *Food and Faith*, 135.

⁵⁰⁰ Wirzba, *Food and Faith*, 132.

you cannot bear them now” (Jn. 16:12). Is it beyond the bounds of reason to suggest that, in an agrarian society rooted in subsistence living, in which animal flesh (particularly fish) was necessary to human survival, the liberation of our nonhuman brothers and sisters might have been one of these things?

Building on his own understanding of animal sacrifice (examined in more detail later in this chapter), Wirzba attests that when it comes to eating other animals, “We must – through care-full and compassionate living – learn to accept and honour the gift of the death of others as God’s means of provision and salvation for the world. All sentimental and romantic notions of faith and life are brought to ruin at the cross.”⁵⁰¹ The two sentences quoted here appear to contradict one another, despite both being theologically appropriate when considered independently. Chapter 4’s critique of “The Chief End of All Flesh” involved the argument that to depict the killing of another animal for human appetite as sacrifice was romantic and unrealistic in the extent to which it bypassed questions of willing and self-offering. Wirzba here defines sacrifice similarly, as the death of one for the benefit of another, without involving questions of willing or necessity: the implication that it is the vegetarians who are in this instance being sentimental and romantic is ironic, indeed. To once more quote Wirzba *contra* Wirzba, “not all deaths are the same” – and indeed, in an article written elsewhere, Wirzba affirms the self-giving logic which must underpin any Christian understanding of sacrifice, arguing that “The cross is... where God reveals definitively that true and abundant life consists in the complete and costly giving of oneself to another,” and that “There is no resurrection life without the self-giving that the cross reveals.”⁵⁰²

To nuance this criticism of Wirzba, it needs to be recognised that he is neither advocating a thoughtless use of nonhuman animals nor leaving existing animal farming practices unexamined. His “sacrificial logic,” which leads him to the conclusion that “animals can be eaten in ways that respect

⁵⁰¹ Wirzba, *Food and Faith*, 134. See also Richard Cartwright Austin, *Beauty of the Lord: Awakening the Senses* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox, 1988), 196-7 – “Death may be part of the goodness of God’s creation, so long as death and life remain in balance with each. To eat, and finally to be eaten, are part of the blessing of God.” There is a leap from *is* to *ought* here: because predation is a part of nature, therefore the individual prey animal is of little moral value. See my criticism of James Thompson’s defence of fox-hunting in chapter 4 for more on why ‘natural’ is not the same as ‘morally acceptable’.

⁵⁰² Norman Wirzba, “Eating in ignorance: Do we know where our food comes from?” *Christian Century* May 30 (2012), 24-7 at 24.

their integrity and well-being and that honour God,” also leads him to the conclusion that “a great deal of industrial agriculture, livestock production, and slaughter practices must stop.”⁵⁰³ I am in agreement with all of these points: in instances where the death of a nonhuman animal is necessary for the survival of a human animal, it is theologically appropriate to take their life prayerfully and with sacrificial understanding, in a spirit of combined thanksgiving (for sustenance) and lament (for the fallenness of creation). But for those of us blessed to live in a time and place where such an instance is highly unlikely, let alone a daily reality – which includes most academic theologians, including myself and Wirzba – to omit conditions of necessity from such a “sacrificial logic” is an affront to the particular situatedness of our nonhuman brothers and sisters. The reduction of individual animals to ‘potential sacrifices’ might even be deemed an affront to God; who made us all, brought us into relationship with each other, and inaugurated and showed the way to our ultimate reconciliation.

It remains true, however, that violence is part of the world we know, whatever we believe about God’s original intentions or the kingdom to come. The verses immediately preceding Isaiah 11:6-9 are instructive in this regard,⁵⁰⁴ reminding us of the violence inherent to the fallen world which exists before the *eschaton*. Isaiah’s vision serves as a reminder that violence will continue long after God Incarnate revoked it on the cross; and if we accept that conditions of dire necessity may legitimate the prayerful killing and eating of a fellow animal, might there be other situations where limited violence against either individual animals or specific species will be necessary? This is a difficult but fair question; and the need for situational reflection, key to Hauerwas’ communitarian ethics,⁵⁰⁵ is vitally important for dietary pacifists. In the words of John Howard Yoder, “Only if we recognise that ethics is not generalizable are we free to use in a wholesome way the concept of *virtue*, i.e., of goodness intrinsic in certain kinds of action or character.”⁵⁰⁶ Responsible and reflective dietary pacifism, then, involves the

⁵⁰³ Wirzba, *Food and Faith*, 136.

⁵⁰⁴ Isa. 11:4-5 – “With righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins.”

⁵⁰⁵ Chapter 6 will involve further exploration of Hauerwas’ emphasis on communal moral reflection, itself rooted in John Howard Yoder’s communitarian theology and Alisdair MacIntyre’s outline of casuistry.

⁵⁰⁶ John H. Yoder, *Nevertheless: The Varieties and Shortcomings of Religious Pacifism* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1971), 78.

recognition that pacifism is *not* an absolute rule in itself (something Hauerwas and Yoder would contest), but is the ethical outgrowth of attempting to live for others as God is for us. Questions remain, however, as to on what grounds one engages in such reflection: by turning to consider Paul's dietary advice to the Roman church, I hope to propose an answer.

"The weak eat only vegetables" (Rom. 14:2): Romans and Compromised Idealism

To nuance dietary pacifism it will be constructive to refer to Romans 14, a text which has been too often misunderstood and misused in Christian conversations about food. Paul's navigation of an ongoing debate within the Roman church, between the weak who "eat only vegetables" and the strong who "believe in eating anything" (14:2), should not be mapped directly onto modern theological reflection on diet,⁵⁰⁷ as though the point of contention was the ancient equivalent of a disagreement between a meat-lover and a vegan today. Instead, we must recognize that this passage is but one part of the wider Pauline thesis concerning the tension between Christ and the Law; and in particular the debate over the extent to which Christians needed to observe prohibitions such as that against eating meat obtained *via* pagan sacrifice. Paul's primary concern here is to promote church unity: the Roman vegetarians refused to eat flesh, not as a relational act, but due to a misplaced concern about ritual purity.⁵⁰⁸

In this way Romans 14 is related to Hebrews 10's presentation of the crucifixion as the ultimate sacrifice, the command for Peter to kill and eat in Acts (10:13), and Jesus' proclamation that it is what exits, rather than enters, the mouth which renders one unclean (Mt. 15:11). In Acts 10, Peter sees the old distinction between clean and unclean swept away,⁵⁰⁹ and is told that "What God has made clean, you must not call profane."⁵¹⁰ This

⁵⁰⁷ For more on the historical context of Rom. 14, see Gary Steven Shogren, "Is the kingdom of God about eating and drinking or isn't it?" (Romans 14:17)", *Novum Testamentum* 62.3 (2000), 238-56.

⁵⁰⁸ Webb, *On God and Dogs*, 27.

⁵⁰⁹ C. K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, v. 1 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 506. See also Wirzba, *Food and Faith*, 171.

⁵¹⁰ Acts 10:15. It should be noted that dietary pacifism does not involve the claim that animal flesh is *profane* (spiritually unclean). In fact, the opposite is the case: the flesh of

proclamation, however, can only be understood in light of Paul's reminder to the church in Corinth, that "All things are lawful', but not all things are beneficial. 'All things are lawful', but not all things build up" (1 Cor. 10:23). There is an infinite distance between something being ritually pure or legal, and that same thing being *de facto* morally unproblematic. Name-brand trainers, for example, are ritually pure and legal to buy; but the corrupted and corrupting relationships at the heart of the sweatshop labour behind their production might render them morally problematic. The same must be said about the unnecessary killing of God's other relational creatures.

Commenting on Jesus' confrontation with the Pharisees in Matthew's gospel, Craig S. Keener elegantly explicates the statement that "It is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but it is what comes out of the mouth that defiles" (Mt. 15:11) as a condemnation of the Pharisaic elevation of law over virtue.⁵¹¹ All of these passages form part of the early Christian debates over grace and law, and how to put the radical upheaval of creation wrought by Christ's Incarnation and resurrection into practice. To read these texts in the context of modern dietary questions, focused on how we are called to live alongside other animals in creation, is a serious reflective task. Perhaps most instructive here is the practical instruction Paul offers the church:

Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not pass judgement on those who eat; for God has welcomed them. Who are you to pass judgement on servants of another? It is before their own lord that they stand or fall. And they will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make them stand. (Rom. 14:3-4)

Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for you to make others fall by what you eat; it is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that makes your brother or sister stumble. (Rom. 14:20-21)

Paul's message to the Romans seems clear: even if we disagree as to food's significance, it is better to love and respect one's brothers and sisters in Christ than to make them stumble by engaging in practices they

the animal – human and nonhuman – is indeed clean and to be loved, not destroyed for base consumption except under conditions of absolute necessity.

⁵¹¹ Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 411.

see as abrogations of the Lordship of God. More than this, I believe that Paul speaks here against un-nuanced idealism. “Who are you to pass judgement on servants of another?” he provocatively asks (ironically doing so immediately after labelling the Roman vegetarians “weak”). In his instruction to the Roman church he is profoundly realistic; but it should be noted that Paul’s realism, although acknowledging the temporality and fallenness of the world, does not affirm it. I would like to suggest Paul stands in a position of *compromised idealism*: that is, an idealism which explicitly recognises that sinful creatures will always fall short of the ideal. Although we cannot today ‘be perfect, as our heavenly Father is perfect’ (Mt. 5:48), it is something we are called to work towards as we are justified and ultimately sanctified by God’s grace and the movement of the Spirit. Confident in the justifying action of grace, as disciples of Christ we must, as Serene Jones puts it, “strive for excellence of practice, knowing that we can never earn the excellence of grace.”⁵¹²

This is not, it should be said, to completely divest compromised idealism from either realism or idealism: rather, it is a particular manifestation of Christian realism, which aims to balance recognition of creation’s fallenness and human sinfulness with a refusal to justify in principle any particular outgrowths of our fallen condition. Defending his pacifist idealism, Hauerwas argues in *The Peaceable Kingdom* that “when violence is justified in principle as a necessary strategy for securing justice, it stills the imaginative search for nonviolent ways of resistance to injustice.”⁵¹³ Violence, on small and large scales, will occur in the world; and sometimes, as in the case of some American military action overseas, it will indirectly benefit Hauerwas and his compatriots. To recognise and accept the reality of this, however, is not the same thing as to implicitly or explicitly affirm it.

The Spirit of Christ sanctifies us not when we capitulate to the ‘realities’ of the world – so-called realities including ‘free’ market capitalism and factory farming – but when we try to live in Christ; to conform our will to that of the triune God who is for creation, regardless of the extent to which we ‘succeed’ in any tangible or measurable sense. This emphasis on truthful discipleship over worldly impact is a hallmark of both Hauerwas’

⁵¹² Serene Jones, “Graced Practices: Excellence and Freedom in the Christian Life,” in *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life*, ed. Miroslav Volf and Dorothy Bass (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B Eerdmans, 2002) 51-77 at 70.

⁵¹³ Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 114.

and Yoder's theology: Hauerwas' call for Christians to live out of control, "recognising that our task is not to make history come out right,"⁵¹⁴ proceeds naturally from Yoder's claim that "the cross of Christ is the model of Christian social efficacy."⁵¹⁵ It is not what we achieve in the world that defines our relative success as disciples of Christ – rather, it is *who we are*, and how we try to live in the world. Theirs is a theology of idealism quite opposite to the realism of (for example) Stephen Webb: in "Against the Gourmands" he writes that dietary decisions should "flow naturally from acts of worshipping God, not efforts to change the world."⁵¹⁶ Webb is absolutely right; but if worship does not include the hope that our will might be more closely conformed to God's, that we might come to live more truly the life of the kingdom in the world as it is, then it is manifestly not worship of the God who created, affirmed, and will redeem all creation. Good worship will involve – or will lead to – efforts to change the world, in the hope of the kingdom. There is not the delineation between worship and practice that Webb here implies there is.

If our belief is to be our practice, and if we are – *pace* Webb – to accept the fallen realities of the world without becoming defeatist or complacent, the need for serious theological engagement with specific dietary questions is emphasised. Compromised idealism (realism which laments reality and works to show another way; idealism which recognises that we are not ideal) is the practical-ethical foundation for doing this thinking. Compromised idealism is a foundation which is less concerned with purity than it is with working for transformed relationships. It is ironic that, in *Good Eating*, Webb outlined an argument in favour of Christian vegetarianism which explicitly affirms the compromised idealism that his more recent political realism undermines:

The Bible is full of wars and battles, just as the Bible is full of meat-eating, but that is because the Bible is a realistic book, written about and to a fallen humanity. We should not take the biblical description of human behaviour as our norm and goal. Instead, we should look to the biblical prescriptions found in the accounts of what God originally intended and what God promises for the world.

⁵¹⁴ Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 105.

⁵¹⁵ John H. Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus: Vicit Agnus Noster* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1972), 250.

⁵¹⁶ Stephen H. Webb, "Against the Gourmands: In Praise of Fast Food as a Form of Fasting", *The Other Journal* 19 (2011), 2-13 at 7.

Vegetarianism is not a prerequisite for Christian faith, but it is a consequence of the Christian hope for a peaceable kingdom, where God will be all in all and all violence will come to an end.⁵¹⁷

Striving for sanctification as we work to heal the fractured relational networks of creation, knowing that we can never earn the justification of God's grace,⁵¹⁸ the virtue of humility communicated to us by the Christian narrative teaches that our praxis need not be founded upon efficiency.

Christian pacifism, including dietary pacifism, should not be about purity: the ideal of nonviolence is manifestly not one that fallen humans can live up to at all times. The necessity of a situational and dialectical approach, and the reality that we ourselves as well as others will fall short of the ideals we hold, means that instances of compromise and mediation will be as inevitable and necessary as they are regrettable. But there is an infinite distance between accepting one's inability to always perfectly adhere to an ideal, and writing off that ideal as impracticable and therefore lowering one's standards, so that deontology might replace responsibility. To draw an admittedly rough parallel, those churches which remarry divorcees are not denying the value of marital fidelity. In light of events beyond their power to alter – the breakdown of virtuous relationship which divorce is – they are taking a situational approach and performing the action which, they believe, best stimulates the growth and sustenance of new relationship and transfigured responsibility. Like Paul writing to the vegetarians and meat-eaters of Rome, theirs is a community-centred and pastoral response, responding with love to individuals in the complexities of their person and relationships. The reflective engagement with *military* pacifism which follows serves to further nuance this understanding of compromised idealism, in the context of outlining the plurality of ways in which so-called 'military' pacifism can be understood and so translated into a dietary context.

A Plurality of Pacifisms: Translating from the Dietary to the Military

In constructing an ethic of dietary pacifism, it would be remiss to try to do so without engaging with Christian military pacifism (and its primary

⁵¹⁷ Stephen H. Webb, *Good Eating* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2001), 228.

⁵¹⁸ Jones, "Graced Practices," 70.

opponent and dialogue partner, just war theory). In order to do this productively, it is first necessary to outline one possible typology for understand the varieties of Christian nonviolence, so that the ‘type’ of pacifism I am extrapolating into a dietary context is both appropriate for dietary thinking and consistent with Hauerwas’ own conception of pacifism..

Yoder’s *Nevertheless* is one notable attempt to create something like a taxonomy of pacifisms, and as a major influence upon Hauerwas it might seem most fitting to use his as the normative typology for this work. However, the reality that his typology is essentially rhetorical – the twenty-ninth of his twenty-nine types, “the pacifism of the messianic community” mentioned briefly in chapter four, is declared the right and proper pacifism for followers of Christ⁵¹⁹ – means this should be augmented by engagement with another, more value-neutral typology. To this end, I have elected to consider David Clough’s typology of pacifisms, which arose from a project to “recognise the diversity of the pacifist positions by plotting their position on four independent axes” and so provide “a framework for assessing their commonalities and differences.”⁵²⁰

Clough’s four independent axes can be summarised as *principled/strategic* (which might also be called *idealist/realist*); *absolute/classical* (concerning the degree to which one recognises legitimate uses of violence, e.g. in policing); *separatist/integrationist* (concerning the degree to which responsibility to non-members of one’s community is affirmed); and *communal/universal* (i.e., the extent to which pacifism is deemed imperative for non-members of one’s community).⁵²¹

Having outlined Hauerwas’ pacifist ethic and made the theological case for extending it into dietary ethics in the preceding chapter, I would tentatively locate Hauerwas’ Christian nonviolence as *principled*, *absolute*, *separatist*, and *communal*. Hauerwas calls Christians to live nonviolent and counter-cultural lives, regardless of the actual efficacy of so doing, and seeks to avoid admitting any exceptional circumstances to his theological-ethical argument. Sharing as I do the concerns of some of Hauerwas’ critics – particularly those who feel he over-emphasises the church’s separation from the world, and that he writes for the ideal at the expense of

⁵¹⁹ Yoder, *Nevertheless*, 123-8.

⁵²⁰ David Clough, “Understanding Pacifism: A Typology”, in Hans G. Ulrich and Stefan Heuser (ed), *Political Practices and International Order* (Munich: Lit, 2007), 370-81 at 371.

⁵²¹ Clough, “Understanding Pacifism”, 375-8.

considering the lived reality – it is my hope that my pacifism ultimately sits less resolutely at the extreme of each axes than does Hauerwas', but this classification is one I broadly adhere to in the attempted translation from the military to the dietary that follows.

I write for the church as it is with a view to the church as it is called to be: my understanding of pacifism cannot be universal; and neither can it be purely strategic, for such an ethic would neglect the reality that we cannot establish the kingdom through our own power. My compromised-idealist position – from which I built a dietary ethic upon a relational theology – necessitates principle having primacy over strategy, even if some exceptional circumstances to my dietary pacifism might ultimately be admitted. The only axes upon which my pacifism could claim to truly diverge from Hauerwas' is the *separatist/integrationist*,⁵²² for by its very nature dietary pacifism and the relational theology upon which it is built seeks to extend Christian moral concern beyond the human community to encompass God's other relational creatures. On this point, I have already critically engaged with Hauerwas, in chapter 4's discussion of "The Chief End of All Flesh".

How, then, does my understanding of pacifism relate to pacifisms' primary dialogue partner in a military context – "just war theory", the idea that under certain circumstances and conditions, a war can be permissible and just (although still a sinful endeavour in a fallen world).⁵²³ Just-war theorist James Turner Johnson offers one such "realistic" contrast to the compromised idealism outlined above:

We may still yearn – and work – for a world without war, for an end to the menace of catastrophic nuclear war, for an end to the arms race; yet with such military capabilities we would be the better

⁵²² It might be argued that, as I am not against all instances of petkeeping, the dietary pacifism I espouse is more classical than Hauerwas': while I would accept that it could be perceived in this way, I would suggest that the coercion present in petkeeping is closer to that present in parenthood than in policing.

⁵²³ In chapter 4's critique of "The Chief End of All Flesh," it was suggested that Hauerwas and Berkman were attempting to clear the ground for a defence of 'just flesh-eating' analogous to just war theory: the conclusion was reached, however, that their use of sacrificial language paid insufficient heed to the questions of willing and self-offering at the heart of Christian understandings of sacrifice.

prepared to meet morally the threats to value that may be expected to be inevitable so long as these ideals are not achieved.⁵²⁴

The danger in this line of reasoning lies in how, with little to no substantiation, one is able to override all considerations of responsible relationship simply by invoking creation's fallenness. While an appeal to the perpetuity of sin might be used to account for why an individual strayed from nonviolence in a particular instance, its blanket use to justify a whole host of un-Christian acts – including acts which explicitly anticipate future destruction of relationship – seems disingenuous. The charge might even be made, in addition to the noteworthy criticism that just-war rhetoric is too often used retrospectively to justify crusading or national-interest wars,⁵²⁵ that just war theory's primary function is not to defend one's fellows but to justify the church acting in complicity with the world.

Is it ever better to take the fallen path without first stretching for the redeemed one? Is it not closer to the life of Christ, more fully seeking to live out in practice the sanctification that comes through grace, to strive for peace – not *pax Romana* but true peace – and accept any consequences as the result of looking towards the kingdom in a world that is not yet there?⁵²⁶ This does not necessarily preclude all violence, but it strongly warns against using sinfulness, or natural proclivities or human creatureliness, as an ontological justification for sinful acts. If we deny pacifism as an ideal we begin down a slope whereby we increasingly justify irresponsible action in the name of living in an irresponsible world.

A parallel might be drawn here: if we allow a substantialist reading of the *imago Dei*, for example, to obscure the commonality we share with other animals, we are already on a 'slippery slope'. This is because, under such conditions, any attempt to talk about transformed relationships with

⁵²⁴ James Turner Johnson, "Threats, Values and Defence: Does the Defence of Values by Force Remain a Moral Possibility?" in Jean Bethke Elshtain (ed), *Just War Theory* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 1992), 55-76 at 72.

⁵²⁵ This is a criticism Yoder elaborates on in John Howard Yoder, *When War is Unjust: Being Honest in Just-War Thinking* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1996).

⁵²⁶ The first fundamental principle of just war theory – *jus ad bellum* (justification for going to war), the second being *jus in bello* (just action in war) – is worth reflecting on here. It is interesting to note that, for those humans who are blessed to have easy and convenient access to a range of foodstuffs, pacifism is more easily justifiable as an absolute ideal when applied to nonhuman animals than when applied to humans. With regards to war between human nations, broader notions of responsibility might lead one to consider deviation from absolute nonviolence: when we turn to consider our relationships with nonhuman animals, it seems unlikely that humans will ever have to systematically defend anything (let alone the abstract justifiers of 'values' and 'freedoms') from cows or sheep!

other animals will be *de facto* abnormal.⁵²⁷ Treating pacifism as an ideal – albeit an ideal we will sometimes fall short of – keeps us safer from our natural and fallen proclivity for violence than can any approach which defines when and how we may use violence before the fact. Hauerwas’ concern that the justification of war in general can still the imaginative quest for nonviolent alternatives to conflict is pertinent here; as is Yoder’s lament that the majority of Christians “think the fact that there exists a doctrine of just war constitutes a justification of war in general, whereas, in fact, it constitutes a *denial* that war can ever be generally justified.”⁵²⁸

What must be remembered, if dietary pacifists are to argue along these lines, is the fundamental connection between our practices and our beliefs, recognised by Carol Adams in her interweaving of ontology and epistemology.⁵²⁹ As animals we are bodily creatures, and our embodied actions impact upon our beliefs as much as the reverse is true. With regards to food, whatever thinking happens beforehand cannot obscure the reality that we eat with our bodies: humans become physically and mentally accustomed to eating flesh by the simple physical process of eating flesh, in this process becoming habituated to the activity so that flesh-eating becomes an apparent part of the normal order of things. *The act itself* can desensitise us to its *moral significance*; and by being situated in daily life, dietary ethics are more prone to exceptions and allowances than are military ethics. During pregnancy or foreign travel, to take two common examples, it is not uncommon for vegetarians and vegans to relax their dietary restrictions: whether one is a dietary pacifist or a vegetarian for medical reasons is here of secondary practical relevance. We are not souls existing in bodies, but embodied souls: our beliefs and our practices cannot remain so separate as to not touch one another for long. What we say, what we think, and how we live exist in a mutually reconstructive network. With this fundamental relationship so identified, I turn now to look more closely at some specific questions of *degree*: is it the case that certain dietary practices – and, therefore, certain ways of indirectly relating to nonhuman animals – are purer, or more amenable to this thesis’ theology of human-animal relationality, than others?

⁵²⁷ Chapters 6 and 8 will reflect in more detail on how an elementary bias against genuine reflection on other animals, in church communities, can atrophy whatever recognition of nonhuman animals that community maintains.

⁵²⁸ Yoder, *Nevertheless*, 23.

⁵²⁹ Adams, *Neither Man Nor Beast*, 194.

Degrees and Purity in Dietary Pacifism

Having noted, above, the distinction to be made between veganism and vegetarianism, a question of degree is raised: does recognition of other animals as relational individuals draw one beyond abstinence from flesh towards the rejection of all animal products? I would like to suggest here that veganism is not more pure than vegetarianism; but it can be thought of as a distinct ‘level of practice’. Dietary pacifism involves abstention from killing and eating animals; divesting oneself as far as one is able from the corrupted relational networks which produce meat; and working to heal this corruption when possible. Given the strong connections between modern meat and dairy industries, however – and the violence inflicted upon animals within both – the conclusion might be reached that veganism, rather than vegetarianism, is necessary to live responsibly for other animals. This is not to say that veganism is a ‘superior’ formulation of dietary pacifism: just as Christian pacifists are not called remove themselves from relationships of coercion and death to the end of maintaining their personal holiness, dietary pacifism is not about personal purity but the living out of novel relationships in creation.

If, however, one feels called towards a *vegan* dietary pacifism, there remains the question of how to delineate what is and is not an animal product; and the further question of whether all animal products are *de facto* morally problematic. Honey is one example of an animal product that might remain on the prayerful and casuistical dietary pacifist’s menu. Concerned with the declining honey bee population in Europe and North America, the apiologist Elke Genersch argues that, “Although the phenomenon ‘decline of honey bees’ is far from being finally solved, consensus exists that pests and pathogens are the single most important cause of otherwise inexplicable colony losses.”⁵³⁰ Their decline, although possibly the indirect result of human interference (as was argued in chapter 2, we are almost blind to the long-term impact of our actions upon creation), is not directly caused by human violence. Indeed, the work of beekeepers and honey producers as well as that of apiologists serves to counter this trend of decline: at the very least it seems reasonable to assume that those

⁵³⁰ Elke Genersch, “Honey bee pathology: current threats to honey bees and beekeeping”, *Applied Microbiology and Biotechnology*, 87 (2010), p. 87.

profiting from the sales of organic honey have a strong vested interest in preserving the honey bee population. The question for dietary pacifism here is one of purity against practicality; or, put another way, of deontology against teleology. Is the maintenance of a rigidly ‘pure’ veganism more important than seeking to live for our animal fellows as God is for us? In the case of honey, concern for our bee brothers and sisters would seem to dictate that purity give way to practical service.⁵³¹

The question of honey relates to the consumption of animal *products*: with regards to human involvement in the *killing* of other animals, the significance of animal particularity and relationality is best represented in cases of the euthanasia of pets;⁵³² those animals with whom the reality of our relational interconnection is most immediately apparent. Situations will arise where those committed to dietary pacifism will feel they have little choice but to practice or sanction violence against animals. Following Hauerwas’ stress on truthfulness over efficacy, the dietary pacifist might conclude that the end cannot justify the means. In such an instance, however – euthanasia performed for a member of the family – the end and the means are more difficult to delineate. This is not the case of killing one to save another, or killing many to preserve ‘freedom’ – it is the case of killing one to save that one from great suffering.⁵³³ The phenomenological chasm between humans and other animals means that we cannot *know*, as

⁵³¹ One might even argue, *contra* the purist vegan, that a legalistic binary setting ‘exploitative’ animal products over-against ‘ethical’ vegan foodstuffs neglects to attend both to the hidden costs of producing vegan products and to the symbiotic relationship between hive and keeper. The defining of boundaries and the maintenance of (an imaginary) purity are in this way affirmed as more important than relating to our animal fellows.

⁵³² I use the word ‘pet’ rather than the phrase ‘animal companion’ – popular among those concerned with animal liberation – because I am wary of the self-deception such a phrase seems to endorse. By using the language of *companionship* all association of *ownership* is removed from petkeeping, depicting the relationship between human and animal as a fundamentally egalitarian one. This is a fallacy both theological and empirical: If my pet kitten tried to run outside when he was too young for it to be safe to do so, I would stop him and attempt to discipline him: this in no way obscures the genuine and reciprocal relationship between us, any more than it would for a human parent to place restrictions on their child’s freedom of action. When so many working for animal liberation lambast the flesh-farming industries for using a ‘language of invisibility’ to turn individual animals into faceless products (e.g. turning a ‘cow’ into ‘beef’), it seems hypocritical to employ similar linguistic gymnastics to deny the reality of one’s own animal relationships.

⁵³³ In the words of Andrew Linzey, “There are agonising situations (known only too well to those who keep companion animals) in which part of our responsibility to weaker, defenceless beings is deciding in extremis whether their own interests are served by their continuing to live. But such decisions are always agonising precisely because we need to be sure in each and every case that it is the individual’s best interests that are being served – and not our own.” Andrew Linzey, *Why Animal Suffering Matters: Philosophy, Theology, and Practical Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 159.

we can know with fellow humans, that euthanasia will ever be a nonhuman animal's preferred choice;⁵³⁴ but we can hope to recognise, while fully admitting the possibility that we are wrong, when the pain in one creature's life renders that life miserable and hopeless. The exercise of just and loving responsibility towards one's fellow in such a case dictates that absolutist pacifism will be no less problematic than euthanasia. In the absence of a legalistic approach, prayer and self-reflection remain paramount; and, should it need to be said, the situational acceptance of the tragic necessity of killing in a specific case in no way furnishes an argument for *always* killing under similar circumstances.⁵³⁵

But perhaps the euthanasia of a beloved pet is too easy an example with which to consider dietary pacifist involvement in the destructive relational networks that constitute the flesh-food industry. What, then, of the example posed in the person of Aaron Gross, whose work is cited in this thesis? An academic and an activist, Gross has campaigned for PETA as well as working towards better treatment of animals in kosher slaughterhouses.⁵³⁶ Although vegan himself, Gross enters into conversation with a system – that of kosher slaughter – he wishes abolished. To use the language of just war theory, a critic might argue that Gross violates *jus ad bellum* by so conversing: if we have no justification to kill other animals, we are equally unjustified in debating the mechanics of killing them. While particular situations, such as euthanasia or human starvation, can rightly lead to *jus in bello* discussions about violence to animals, the slaughterhouse cannot. Are we really living for our animal brothers and sisters, however, if we do not strive to alleviate their suffering, even

⁵³⁴ Similarly (and a similar reflection of the extent to which the animal is other), our pets cannot be educated as to the long-term benefits of, for example, chemotherapy to treat malignant tumours. In such a case, it seems difficult to argue that the short-term extreme pain and sickness such treatments involve exhibits genuine responsibility and concern for the animal.

⁵³⁵ Another area of human-animal relationality where this applies is the complex ethical issue of animal testing. Much as recognition of the compromised idealism at dietary pacifism's heart might allow pet-owners to euthanize their pets, with appropriate lamentation and/or confession, so might it allow for the use of animals in research and development, *if the end goal is sufficiently important and the particularity of the animals used is recognised and responded to*. Furthermore, it proceeds naturally from this that alternative research methodologies should be explored and developed: accepting something as a tragic necessity in a specific time and place should not lead directly to accepting it as transhistorically necessary. For one recent example of the pursuit of alternative methodologies, see "RSC welcomes non-animal test that could spare one million mice worldwide" (Royal Society of Chemistry press release, 5 November 2012, available online at <http://www.rsc.org/AboutUs/News/PressReleases/2012/RSC-welcomes-non-animal-test.asp> [accessed 15 March 2013]).

⁵³⁶ Aaron Gross, "When Kosher Isn't Kosher", *Tikkun* 20.2 (2005).

(especially?) in situations where it is outside our power to alter their fate? As Gross himself argues, lifespan and life quality are both welfare issues.⁵³⁷ However much the suffering of animals in kosher butchereries is reduced, though, they are still to be butchered: at what point does pragmatism override principle?

It can be assumed that if you are an ethical vegetarian, you would prefer slaughterhouses were not operational: working in a way which might present the public with an image of acceptable and 'humane' slaughter, then, might be deemed not only irresponsible but counter-productive. In this sense, Gross might also be criticised for placing immediate and temporal effect over truthful and productive witness. Similarly, schemes such as the RSPCA's Freedom Food farm assurance programme might be criticised on the ground that they are presenting certain instances of killing and eating animals as *de facto* morally unproblematic,⁵³⁸ an image wherein only the treatment of the animal during its life is relevant, and its untimely death is not. A theology of relationship which does not seek to limit grace to humanity stands firmly against such an image.

How, then, should dietary pacifists relate to slaughterhouses? The line between recognising that we will fall short of an ideal, and actually counteracting that ideal in the name of realism, is a thin and dangerous one – but there will be situations where relationship demands a clearer line be drawn. For the pacifist who wishes to discuss the ethics of warfare, such a line might be the indiscriminate killing of non-combatants: debating the extent to which non-combatants can be tortured before being killed would presumably (and rightly) be anathema to such an individual. For dietary pacifists, the line might potentially be debate over slaughterhouse practices. It seems uncharitable, however, to indict Gross for his commendable work on behalf of his nonhuman brothers and sisters: indeed, to do so would be to neglect to attend to Gross' own particularity, as an American who works where he can to better the lives of individual

⁵³⁷ Aaron Gross (private correspondence).

⁵³⁸ This is to say nothing of recent abuse and neglect cases which suggest the RSPCA does not adequately monitor the farms it endorses. In April 2012, a pig farm in Norfolk was suspended from the scheme after an independent investigation raised concerns; in 2009, the same happened with a turkey farm; and in 2008 with an egg farm. In all three cases it was an independent investigation, not one performed by RSPCA workers, which highlighted the abuses: in all cases, it was in response to external pressure that the RSPCA took action. A graphic video of the conditions at the farm can be accessed at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IVIF-Bf-Lo> [accessed 27 March 2012].

animals presently in the American farming system and those who are yet to be born into it. In such a case, perhaps debating the killing of non-combatants is an inappropriate parallel: a better one might be that of bringing food and water to a wrongfully imprisoned fellow. In so doing, one neither endorses nor accepts the terms of the other's imprisonment, instead recognising the other as an individual with whom one is called to relationship, and so serving him or her in the image of the God who became flesh for us all.

Vegetarianism, for Christians, can be a dietary choice which puts into practice a theology concerned with the particularity and flourishing of other animals. Like all Christian ethics, it is eschatologically-oriented, but this does not render it "wanton anticipation" of the kingdom – at least, it is no more 'wanton' than living as a peaceable community of character in a world at war. Dietary pacifists are called to see the world for what it is: fallen, permeated by sin, corrupted, violent. But this recognition of the realities of sin is no reason to capitulate to those realities: rather, Christians are called to be *compromised idealists*, recognising our own corruption but striving to work past it, secure in the knowledge of grace and the victory over sin painfully won through the crucifixion. Through considering the situated examples of pet euthanasia, vegans eating honey, and vegetarians working with slaughterhouses, I have made the case that dietary pacifism is an ethic consistent with compromised idealism. I move now to a comparative analysis of Hebrew Bible animal sacrifice and modern factory farming, informed by the constructive work of the thesis thus far: in this way, I will expand and extrapolate dietary pacifism's practical framework, as well as testing the claim that animal sacrifice is more relational and responsible than factory farming.

Animal Sacrifice and Factory Farming

In the brief discussions of Hebrew Bible animal sacrifice conducted up to this point, it has been suggested that God's allowance for humans to eat animals (Gen. 9:3-5) is a concession to human sinfulness,⁵³⁹ akin to the

⁵³⁹ Jonathan Morgan, "Sacrifice in Leviticus: Eco-Friendly Ritual or Unholy Waste?" in David G. Horrell, Cheryl Hunt, Christopher Southgate and Francesca Stavrakopoulou (ed), *Ecological Hermeneutics: Biblical, Historical and Theological Perspectives* (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2010), 32-45 at 36. See also Bauckham, *The Bible and Ecology*, 25.

Mosaic divorce laws.⁵⁴⁰ Mark McEntire disagrees, arguing “that if the flood signals a new beginning then the vegetarian diet of Genesis 1 is judged as a mistake that is corrected in Genesis 9.”⁵⁴¹ His claim falters, however, in light of the observation that God simultaneously allows ritualised animal slaughter and sanctions capital punishment (9:6). God attempts to limit the extent of human sinfulness and violence, and so bring humans into relationship with God, through legislation; and the proximity of animal sacrifice to capital punishment here strongly suggests that flesh-eating is one kind of undesirable violence.⁵⁴² For sure, it is not as undesirable as killing a human (it carries no capital punishment, even if practiced non-ritually); but, set against the peace of the original creation and the reconciliation to come, it is undesirable killing nonetheless.

Simultaneous legislation against killing humans and other animals makes sense in the context of Genesis 9’s covenant involving all animals. God appears realistic about the capacities of human moral progress (which is why in 1 Samuel 8 the people are allowed a king despite not needing one), and there are many biblical events which demonstrate how gluttony is part of human nature (e.g. Num. 11).⁵⁴³ The biblical provision concerning animal sacrifice, then, is not a licence to kill and eat as one wishes but is a concession to sin – a divine act of compromised idealism on behalf of humanity – and one concerned with animal welfare even then.

Respecting the blood of an animal as the life-force shared with humans is a fundamental feature of the Hebrew attitude to animals and this attitude is manifest in the laws about kindness and respect to living animals. The conditions laid down by the law for animal slaughter also reflect compassion and respect. Thus, for example, mother and young are not to be killed in sight of each other.⁵⁴⁴

It is unfortunate, in light of this, that the language of sacrifice is still applied to animals as a way of justifying their unnecessary deaths: “The language of voluntary and generous acts of sacrifice is imposed on animals, who are

⁵⁴⁰ Mt. 19:8 – “He said to them, ‘It was because you were so hard-hearted that Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but at the beginning it was not so.’”

⁵⁴¹ Mark McEntire, “A Review of Andrew Linzey’s *Animal Theology* from an Old Testament Perspective”, *Review & Expositor* 102.1 (2005), 97.

⁵⁴² Webb, *Good Eating*, 72.

⁵⁴³ Webb, *Good Eating*, 75.

⁵⁴⁴ Michael S. Northcott, *The Environment and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 185.

sacrificed, obviously, against their will.”⁵⁴⁵ The argument that we can eat animals if we understand their deaths as a sacrifice for our survival remains resilient, despite so many of us having the luxury of being able to live healthy and fulfilled lives without animal flesh (or products). As was demonstrated to be the case in chapter 4’s conversation with Hauerwas and Berkman, such arguments neglect the significance of *willing* and *self-offering* for Christian sacrifice, while giving no attention to the particularity of the animal other, nor to the ways in which our humanity is bound up with their animality.

It might seem peculiar to find such a positive review of animal sacrifice in a theological work concerned with nonhuman animals. However, through recognition of our mutual dependence on God,⁵⁴⁶ admission of human responsibility for the animal’s death, and the strict command to only eat the flesh without its *nephesh*,⁵⁴⁷ the sacrificial legislation shows clearly the significance of the individual animal. In this way, the multidirectional responsibility – to God and to other creatures – that stewardship theologies so often neglect is affirmed by Hebrew Bible animal sacrifice.

Building on the argument that Genesis 9’s allowance of flesh-eating is a “regulatory measure,”⁵⁴⁸ Jonathan Morgan presents Levitical sacrifice as a ritual which affirms, rather than destroys, the human-animal relationship; emphasising as it does “the profundity of the impact of human sin on the wider created order, and on the relationship between humans and non-human animals in particular.”⁵⁴⁹ Offered as expiation for human sin, the death of the sacrificial animal is to be lamented as a tragic consequence of sin’s omnipresence in the relational networks of creation. Morgan goes on to emphasise that the animal is more than a member of the *covenantal* community: in the Hebrew Bible context, he or she lives alongside humans in *local* community. Although in modernity farmed animals occupy a space quite separate from human society,⁵⁵⁰ “the realities of ancient Near Eastern life would have meant... that such animals lived in

⁵⁴⁵ Webb, *On God and Dogs*, 129.

⁵⁴⁶ For example, the sacrifice of the firstborn of the flock, inaugurated by Abel in Gen. 4:4, which recognises that all life – human and nonhuman – ultimately belongs to its Creator.

⁵⁴⁷ Gen. 9:4 – “Only, you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood.”

⁵⁴⁸ Morgan, “Sacrifice in Leviticus”, 36.

⁵⁴⁹ Morgan, “Sacrifice in Leviticus”, 37.

⁵⁵⁰ This will be explored further in chapter 6 *via* Adams’ talk of a language of invisibility.

a fashion much more in line with our notion of ‘domestic’ animals.”⁵⁵¹ Wirzba agrees, attesting that “A goat or sheep, though clearly not a pet, was nonetheless an important member of a household economy... [to] be treated with respect and care rather than contempt.”⁵⁵²

In Morgan’s presentation, the sacrificed animal is liminal – it spans two realms – and in this way it makes possible a movement from the divine to the mundane, cleansing sins and restoring relationships.⁵⁵³ “It is only by virtue of being a member of the (covenant) community that desires the presence of God and would suffer from its withdrawal, but *not* a member of the community of (immediate) culpability for sin that the animal can play this vital role.”⁵⁵⁴ The animal performs a role which humans cannot: it is more ritually capable and significant, and so it can heal the corrupting effects of sin upon the relational network that is the (human-and-nonhuman) community. One could even argue that it is *relationship itself* – the relationship between one member of a community and the community as a whole – that is sacrificed, marking the act as ritually significant and an appropriate response to the God upon whom all life depends.

I believe Morgan goes too far when he concludes that, although beginning as a victim suffering the effects of a particular sin, the sacrificial animal “ends by dissolving the very context of the victimhood of all concerned.”⁵⁵⁵ It remains the case that the particularity of the sacrificed animal is insufficiently recognised, being collapsed into its relational significance for the whole community. The healing function of the animal’s death is deemed more valuable than its continued existence as a relational individual – there remains cause to lament, and to work for greater recognition of our animal fellows. To focus on the quality of the relationship at the expense of considering the individuality of the animal, questions of willing, and the destruction of relationship that killing always is, is to move back towards an anthropomorphism which recognises value in the nonhuman only when it serves a human interest. As an example of the scriptural

⁵⁵¹ Morgan, “Sacrifice in Leviticus”, 40.

⁵⁵² Wirzba, *Food and Faith*, 117.

⁵⁵³ See Douglas Davies, “An Interpretation of Sacrifice in Leviticus”, in Bernhard Lang (ed), *Anthropological Approaches to the Old Testament* (London: SPCK, 1985), 151-62.

⁵⁵⁴ Morgan, “Sacrifice in Leviticus”, 42. In chapter 3, I concluded that we should be cautious when it comes to declaring whether or not relational animals can be deemed culpable for sin. For that reason, I would disagree with Morgan’s description of the two realms the sacrificial animal spans, but not the point he makes about them.

⁵⁵⁵ Morgan, “Sacrifice in Leviticus”, 42-3.

significance of animals, however, and for its profound recognition of the ways in which human and animal flourishing are bound up together, Morgan's analysis is helpful. The contrast with factory farming, a holistically negative and ignorant means of relating to nonhuman animals, is significant. Before considering in more detail the vicarious destruction of God's creatures that factory farming is, however, I will think about animal farming more generally.

In discussing Proverbs 12:10 in chapter 3, it was suggested that right relationship with nonhuman animals involves recognition of our shared mutuality. The "mercy of the wicked," oppositely, was deemed "cruel," being concerned only with how the wicked might benefit. There is something deeply relevant to animal farming here: if one raises an animal with the end of profiting from its death, it seems tenuous to describe any feeding or caring for that animal as an act of hospitality. Feeding a sow and treating her for illnesses, for example, is reduced to a fundamentally economic action as soon as you decide to ultimately sell her for slaughter. Instances of small-scale or family farming, where a small number of animals (even just one) are raised and cared for at a relational level, are less clearly obstructive to the existence of genuinely positive human-animal relationships: the 'mercy' visited upon such animals is ambiguous at worst, not fundamentally cruel. But if the end product of such small-scale and relational farming is the death and resultant consumption of the animal(s) so raised, it remains the case that such farming is neither merciful nor conducive to the transformation of our natural proclivities.

Arguing against vegetarianism, Christopher Southgate points to the small hill-farming community from which he hails as an example of farmers caring for their animals.⁵⁵⁶ Although Southgate is specifically only referring to free-range (and, presumably, organic) farming,⁵⁵⁷ the natural concern

⁵⁵⁶ Christopher Southgate, "Protological and Eschatological Vegetarianism", in Rachel Muers and David Grumett (ed), *Eating and Believing: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Vegetarianism and Theology* (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2008), 247-65 at 256.

⁵⁵⁷ In a recent exchange of articles, Stephen Webb and William T. Cavanaugh debate the appropriateness of theological ethics which privilege organic and free-range farming as ethically superior (a claim Cavanaugh makes, and defends). Webb's concern is that such formulations are inherently classist and hierarchical, given that the relative luxury of obtaining genuinely free-range meat is unaffordable for the majority of Christians: it is regrettable, however, that he moves so quickly from this into an endorsement of mass-market capitalism, even going so far as to seemingly rebut some of his earlier work with the claim that "food is fuel" (and that McDonald's is therefore ethically unproblematic to patronise). I would respectfully suggest that, in the course of this debate, rhetoric was

raised by his argument is that it takes him to a dangerously vague conclusion: Southgate's concern is to defend free-range farming, but by leaving the contours of what kinds of farming *are* problematic undefined, the implicit conclusion seems to be that because some kinds of animal farming are acceptable, Christians have no good reason to avoid eating meat. Southgate also neglects to answer the question of whether a relationship is genuinely 'caring' if it is destined to end in one party profiting from the death, evisceration and consumption of the other. The claim that "the relationship between farmers and their animals... is more than a commercial one"⁵⁵⁸ is certainly of little comfort to their animals come slaughter time. Indeed, it might even be suggested that such a claim draws an unfortunate parallel with nineteenth-century defences of human slavery: in 1855, William Grayson claimed that

Among slaves... Every one is made to work, and no one is permitted to starve. Slavery does for the negro what European schemers in vain attempt to do for the hireling. It secures work and subsistence for all.⁵⁵⁹

As was the case among slavery's defenders less than two hundred years ago, Southgate is concerned to depict animal farming as – at worse – a necessary evil which ensures the survival and flourishing of both the 'higher' and 'lower' being; and at best, as an unobtrusive fact of nature (*nature* in this usage being synonymous with *the way things should be*).⁵⁶⁰

allowed to cloud the arguments of both scholars: it is certainly surprising that neither Webb nor Cavanaugh seriously considers vegetarianism as a practicable option for their fellow American Christians. See Webb, "Against the Gourmands"; William T. Cavanaugh, "Out to Lunch: A Response to Stephen Webb's 'Against the Gourmands'", *The Other Journal* 19 (2011), 14-19; Stephen H. Webb, "A Response to William T. Cavanaugh's 'Out to Lunch'", *The Other Journal* 19 (2011), 20-24. For my response, see Matthew Barton, "Eating for the Kingdom: A Response to Stephen Webb's 'Against the Gourmands' and William T. Cavanaugh's 'Out to Lunch'", *The Other Journal*, online at <http://theotherjournal.com/2012/10/08/eating-for-the-kingdom-a-response-to-stephen-webbs-against-the-gourmands-and-william-t-cavanaugh's-out-to-lunch/> [accessed 15 March 2013].

⁵⁵⁸ Southgate, "Protological and Eschatological Vegetarianism", 257.

⁵⁵⁹ Excerpt from William John Grayson, *The Hireling and the Slave* (Charleston: John Russell, 1855). Taken from "The Nineteenth Century American 'Conversation' on Slavery: Arguments in Support of Slavery" at <http://antislavery.eserver.org/proslavery/graysonhireling> > [accessed 16 December 2011].

⁵⁶⁰ While not wishing to draw too close a comparison between human slavery and animal farming, it might also be noted that neither practice is fundamentally against our biological proclivities, while both are assumed background norms in scripture. Like slavery, then, the presence of flesh-eating in scripture should never be deemed sufficient justification for its acceptability today.

Our complicity in creation's fallenness, and the potential for our sanctification into new relationships *via* grace, find no place in such a worldview.⁵⁶¹

The recognition of human responsibility for the animal's death – and our mutual dependence upon God – within Hebrew Bible animal sacrifice leads to the claim that it is more conducive to responsible relationship with nonhuman animals than is modern factory farming. In *Animals and World Religions*, Lisa Kemmerer compiles a number of sources, gathered by animal welfare organisations,⁵⁶² which highlight the invisibility of animals within factory farming, and the systemic lack of compassion for their suffering. Analysed theologically, Kemmerer highlights the extent to which sin corrupts the relational networks of the farming industry, and the negative and destructive human-animal relationships which result. Kemmerer reveals that “Every year, thirty-five million cattle are destroyed for beef, nine million cows are exploited for milk (and soon destroyed), and one million calves are exploited for veal.”⁵⁶³ She cites a *Washington Post* article which illustrates the invisibility of the nonhuman animal, but also the complete absence of concern the mechanised industry of animal farming has for the humans who are drafted to serve as its killers:

The cattle were supposed to be dead before they got to Moreno. But too often they weren't... ‘They blink. They make noises,’ he said softly. ‘The head moves, the eyes are wide and looking around.’ Still Moreno would cut. On bad days, he says, dozens of animals reached his station clearly alive and conscious. Some would survive as far as the tail cutter, the belly ripper, the hide puller. ‘They die,’ said Moreno, ‘piece by piece.’⁵⁶⁴

It is feasible and possible for a dietary pacifist, informed by relational theology, to accept the theoretical necessity of some animals dying in specific situations – if absolutely necessary for human survival, or (as considered above) in the case of euthanasia. Faced with the uncaring, unseeing cruelty at the heart of modern factory farming, however, it seems

⁵⁶¹ Similarly, any argument which recognises the abolition of sacrifice through Christ (Heb. 10:12-14), but does not recognise the transformative power of grace over our lives and relationships, rests upon a lopsided soteriology.

⁵⁶² Lisa Kemmerer, *Animals and World Religions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 314-15.

⁵⁶³ Kemmerer, *Animals and World Religions*, 292.

⁵⁶⁴ *Washington Post* (April 2001), cited in Kemmerer, *Animals and World Religions*, 294.

difficult for any Christian to reconcile faith in the triune God with the horrific stories which emerge from factory farms – places which are embodied examples of the fallacious Cartesian notion that animals are only machines. Such stories are neither place- nor species-specific:

Deprivation, chronic pain, and frustration causes sows to adopt neurotic coping behaviours. Sows would normally build a nest of leaves or straw before giving birth. In their barren cells, sows repeatedly and desperately try to build a nest, and often fall to moving their heads backward and forward pointlessly in a rhythmic fashion, gnawing on surrounding metal bars. Overcrowding and boredom also cause aggression, which is why pigs' tails are chopped off and their teeth cut at birth (without anaesthesia). Giving pigs more space would allow them to create nests, root, and wallow – normal pig behaviours – which would also prevent neurotic behaviours and aggression. But from an economic point of view, it is cheaper to dock tails and cut teeth than it is to provide pigs with adequate space.⁵⁶⁵

The newborn turkeys were dumped out of metal trays, jostled onto conveyer belts after being mechanically separated from cracked eggshells, then sorted, sexed, debeaked and detoed, all without anaesthetic. Countless baby turkeys were 'mangled from the machinery,' suffocated in plastic bags, and dumped into the 'same disposal system as the discarded egg shells they were separated from hours earlier.'⁵⁶⁶

Factory farms and large confinement feeding operations regularly crowd and restrict animals so that they cannot live their God-given potential but are made – in some cases genetically engineered – to grow to slaughter weight as quickly as possible. 'Life' for these animals is so stressful and damaging that they could not survive without a steady diet of steroids and antibiotics. Of the billions that do survive this industrial ordeal, even death becomes a shame. Describing the slaughter of cattle, Foer observes that a typical steer enters a chute in which a 'knocker' shoots a steel bolt into its skull, rendering the steer unconscious or dead. The steer is then hoisted

⁵⁶⁵ Kemmerer, *Animals and World Religion*, 298.

⁵⁶⁶ Karen Davis, "The Mother Turkey and Her Young", *Poultry Press* Winter 2008-9, 6-7 at 6.

up by a leg and sent down a disassembly line so it can be skinned, gutted, and carved up. In many instances ‘animals are bled, skinned, and dismembered while conscious’ (Jonathan Sarfran Foer, *Eating Animals* (London: Little, Brown 2010), 230).⁵⁶⁷

The numerous regulations attached to animal sacrifice are, on at least one level, about responsibility to the individual animal,⁵⁶⁸ as well as being an explicit recognition of the ways in which human and animal flourishing are bound together. Although the particularity of the sacrificed animal is obfuscated, we have seen how the sacrificial system can in fact affirm the significance and value of positive human-animal relationships, calling God’s people to attend more closely to other animals than their own natural inclinations might demand of them. What is there equivalent to this in modern factory farming?

Conclusion

In this chapter I have attempted to nuance the dietary pacifism outlined in chapter 4 (and constructed on the theological foundation of chapters 2-3). To this end, I have engaged with a range of criticisms of Christian vegetarianism, as well as looking more closely at some specific complexities within pacifist and dietary ethics. The first major conversation of this chapter, with Karl Barth and Norman Wirzba, addressed concerns that vegetarianism is “wanton anticipation” of the kingdom and/or excessively romantic about creation – in other words, that it is too idealistic to be practicable. Recognition of the transformative power of grace – the justification which leads to sanctification – coupled with a realistic awareness of creation’s and our own fallenness, leaves such charges looking anaemic. We are called to live like Christ, aware that we will get there through the grace of God only, and aware that we will repeatedly fall short. To discount vegetarianism on the grounds that it is not perfect, and not everyone can practice it, is no different from discounting pacifism on the grounds that it is not a perfect politic, and not everyone can practice it. Christianity is a religion of *compromised idealism*, wherein lament over our sinfulness goes hand in hand with joyous thanksgiving for grace and the

⁵⁶⁷ Wirzba, *Food and Faith*, 175.

⁵⁶⁸ Northcott, *The Environment and Christian Ethics*, 185. See Deut. 22:6-7 and 25:4 for other examples of Hebrew Bible animal welfare laws.

transformation it can bring, should we truthfully invite it to do so. Indeed, dietary pacifism is shown to be realistic precisely at the point of our lived relationships with other animals – this is also the point at which my dietary pacifism diverges from Hauerwasian pacifism on the four-dimensional typological map constructed by Clough. Being integrationist rather than separatist with respect to other species (as well as non-Christian humans), dietary pacifism includes the claim that without absolute necessity, killing of any kind is a rejection of grace. Certainly, the repurposing of ancient traditions of animal sacrifice to exculpate unnecessary killing and eating of animals seems closer to unreflective romanticism than the theology which asserts that God's other relational creatures should be loved and protected, so far as is practicable.

If we are to truly follow Christ's example and realise our place as *imago Dei*, the extension of Christian nonviolence to the animal creation, as an embodied practice of transformed relationality, is one conclusion. This does not, however, mean that Christians can never and will never be involved in systems which cause harm to animals. Recognition of our creatureliness and dependence involves humble acceptance of our sin and limitation; which is not to say that we should not strive to live for other animals as God is for us, attending to them as individuals and striving to heal the sin-wrought corruptions of our cohabited relational networks. If, while occupying the privileged position wherein we have no need of animal flesh for survival, we neglect to consider dietary pacifism at all, we place limits on which creaturely relationships can be transformed by grace. To neglect to even *consider* the ethical issues related to diet cannot help but be seen, in light of the theological work undertaken thus far, as a failure to respond with adequate joy and thanks to the One who created, affirmed, became Incarnate for, and will redeem all flesh. In chapters 6-8, I look more closely at those instances where Christians do refuse to consider dietary ethics; asking *why*, and *how*, Christians are called to think and pray about all their creaturely practices – including diet.

6. Creaturely Church

Ecclesiology and Communal Discernment on Animal and Dietary Ethics

In my argument thus far, I have proposed that – in light of the commonality we share with other animals, and the transformation of relationship grace can work – there is a moral impetus for Christians to consider the ethical issues surrounding animals and diet. In order to explore in more detail the theological and practical mechanics of responding to this impetus, I turn in this chapter to ecclesiological reflection; the end goal of which is to outline in greater depth how Christians are called to reason and discern in community. In chapter 5 it was suggested that, although dietary pacifism is not about personal purity, a dietary pacifist might proceed from a vegetarian to a vegan diet as a result of thinking ethically about the connection between the dairy and flesh-food industries. Such a situational and deliberative response is an appropriate living out of the Christian calling to work and pray for transformed relationships within creation: it is unfortunate that the church has so infrequently deemed other animals, and how we relate to them, as acceptable topics for moral discernment.

This chapter will explore in more detail the theology and mechanics of church casuistry,⁵⁶⁹ considering its place within the relational theology (chapter 3) which informs the dietary pacifist framework outlined thus far (chapters 4-5). This task will be performed in conversation with Hauerwas' ecclesiology, in particular through raising concerns with his understanding of casuistry – consideration of the ecclesiology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer will also be instructive on this point. The problems that can arise from local and situated failures of communal discernment will also be considered: the work of Carol Adams, and her description of how nonhuman animals are rendered invisible by the language we use, will inform the latter part of this discussion.

Chapter 6 lays the ground for this thesis' latter part, wherein I will theologially engage with a series of conversations with Christian

⁵⁶⁹ What I mean by 'casuistry' is outlined in more detail below: a working definition is that casuistry is the communally-situated and tradition-rooted practice of moral discernment.

vegetarians. By considering their theological understanding of nonhuman animals, justification for their dietary choices, ecclesiology, and situated church experience, I aim to draw out fresh insight for churches seeking to live for God in creation. I also hope to in this way demonstrate the systematic integrity of the relational theology employed thus far in service to nonhuman animals. This thesis is not a liberation theology for animals – which is not to say there would be anything wrong with such a project – so much as it is a constructive theology of human-animal relationality, concerned to draw out and consider its dietary and ecclesiological implications.

Dietary Ethics or Animal Ethics?

As already mentioned in the introduction to chapter 4, throughout this thesis I refer to both *animal* matters and *dietary* matters. As already stated, the two terms are not used interchangeably; but they are fundamentally linked in a relational sense. As an embodied practice, eating is an important locus for reflection on our relationships with other animals; and in the context of thinking about communal discernment, the interplay between *animal* ethics and *dietary* ethics is ecclesologically important, too. If an individual Christian or church community does not recognise our relationships with other animals as a topic worthy of serious moral reflection, the way in which that individual or community thinks about dietary ethics will differ significantly from an individual or community which does.

In the interest of exploring the relationship between animal ethics and dietary ethics more closely, some questions can be posed. Do some people, and/or some communities, differentiate between dietary and animal ethics? If so, why? When and if a church is deemed to have fallen short in its dietary casuistry, is it a failing of moral discernment in general, or are animals a *casuistical blind spot* for that community? This chapter's preliminary discussion of casuistry conducted below will inform chapters 7-8, wherein the theological ethic of dietary pacifism and the mechanics of church casuistry will be further explored in conversation with a number of "ordinary"⁵⁷⁰ Christian vegetarians. In short, I am interested to explore how

⁵⁷⁰ I use here the meaning of "ordinary" advanced by Jeff Astley; "ordinary" Christians being those "who have received little or no theological education of a scholarly, academic

the church relates to creation; not merely to the world-understood-as-human-public.⁵⁷¹

Casualty and Relationality

John Howard Yoder, Mennonite theologian and major influence on Stanley Hauerwas (among others), stressed the necessity that the church be the nonviolent community of voluntary commitment he saw called into being in Luke's gospel⁵⁷² and elsewhere. For him, the church is to exist outside sociocultural norms,⁵⁷³ a body comprised of individual members with individual gifts (Rom. 12; 1 Cor. 12-14). Yoder placed Romans 12's 'rule of Paul' at the heart of the church: this is the notion that when believers meet, each brings a distinct contribution⁵⁷⁴ that affirms both their individuality and their status as part of the whole. Commenting on Yoder's 'believers church', James McClendon writes that "The biblical *priesthood of all believers* grows from practicing the way of Jesus: it is not that each of us makes his or her way to God independent of all the rest of us; rather such priesthood means we are members one of another in Christ."⁵⁷⁵ The priesthood of all believers is in this way understood as an expression of the radical transformation of relationship that comes through grace.

In a community where corporate life and practice are theologically significant, and religious authority is recognised outside the ordained,⁵⁷⁶ the church's authority comes in part through its formation of Christian

or systematic kind." Jeff Astley, *Ordinary Theology: Looking, listening and learning in theology* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 56.

⁵⁷¹ This expansion of the understanding of 'world' – to include nonhuman as well as human animals – will be taken further in chapter 9, where the possibility that humans can 'learn' from nonhuman animals is raised and considered.

⁵⁷² See for example Lk. 14:26 – "Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple."

⁵⁷³ John H. Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus: Vicit Agnus Noster* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972), 37.

⁵⁷⁴ John Howard Yoder, *The Fullness of Christ: Paul's Vision of Universal Ministry* (Elgin, IL: Brethren Press, 1987).

⁵⁷⁵ James Wm. McClendon, Jr., "The Believers Church in Theological Perspective", in Stanley Hauerwas et al (ed), *The Wisdom of the Cross: Essays in Honour of John Howard Yoder* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 309-26 at 321.

⁵⁷⁶ Note that, although I write from inside a Protestant (British Methodist) context, and as such speak most directly to that theology and ecclesiology, these conditions do not limit the applicability of this chapter's thesis to Protestant, congregational traditions. Communal discernment, in particular, is a feature of the church catholic; regardless of the theological differences and varying importance placed on it by different denominations.

characters, equipping individual Christians to discern and act honestly and reflexively. Hauerwas writes that “Christian ethics must serve and be formed by the Christian community, a community whose interest lies in the formation of character and whose perduring history provides the continuity we need to act in conformity with that character.”⁵⁷⁷ This focus on character formation stresses the link between theology and ethics: as Christians are inducted into the narrative of God and God’s people,⁵⁷⁸ learning to see the world through the eyes of the church,⁵⁷⁹ the intimate relationship between one’s intellectual and spiritual beliefs and one’s embodied practices is made clear. Theology is ethics⁵⁸⁰ – our confessional beliefs should be significant for every aspect of our creaturely lives. For his part, Hauerwas laments what he sees as the historic separation of theology from ethics, arguing that its consequence has been that claims about the Christian life

have too often appeared to be assertions that certain kinds of behaviour or actions were to be done simply because “that is the way Christians do things.” The relationship between behaviour and belief was assumed rather than analysed. This has had many unfortunate consequences, as it has often created the context for and even encouraged the growth of legalism, self-righteousness, and a refusal to analyse the rationality of Christians’ moral convictions.⁵⁸¹

If our theology is not embodied and reflexive, it is not only dry but can actively contribute to the conflation of sociocultural norms with responsible Christian practice. If, instead, our theology is to be our ethics, generalisations and maxims will only take us so far: as described in chapter 5, situational and prayerful reflection will be required in specific situations. Thus, there is a vital need for *casuistry*. Yoder defines casuistry as “decision making by open dialogue and consensus”,⁵⁸² Alisdair MacIntyre describes it as “tradition-constituted, craft-constituted enquiry.”⁵⁸³ What

⁵⁷⁷ Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 33.

⁵⁷⁸ Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 25.

⁵⁷⁹ Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 33.

⁵⁸⁰ Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 132.

⁵⁸¹ Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 132.

⁵⁸² Gayle Gerber Koontz, “Meeting in the Power of the Spirit: Ecclesiology, Ethics, and the Practice of Discernment”, in *The Wisdom of the Cross*, 327-48 at 327.

⁵⁸³ Alisdair MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry: Encyclopaedia, Genealogy, and Tradition* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), 83.

MacIntyre means, for a church context, is that although communal acts of discernment will be rooted in scripture and tradition, the reason and experiences of the individuals involved are also significant. “Not Scripture alone, not the individual interpreter of Scripture, but the discerning church in union with the living Christ guides Christian ethics.”⁵⁸⁴ For Yoder, this enactment of the ‘rule of Paul’ sees the Spirit work “in and with, through and under what men and women do.”⁵⁸⁵ Stephen Fowl and L. Gregory Jones join Yoder, Hauerwas, and MacIntyre in calling for the church to engage in casuistry; “the hard process of conversation, argument, discussion, prayer and practice.”⁵⁸⁶

It is important for the church, as a counter-cultural community of character, that casuistry takes place in an environment amenable to difference. This is not to say that all theologies and ethics are equally valid, but that disagreeing with one’s fellow in love – and not allowing divergent positions to become justification for the absence of charity – is a profound act of character formation. In the words of Hauerwas, “It is through the other that I am finally able to make peace with myself and thus have the power to make my life my own.”⁵⁸⁷ The act of relating to others, whether their difference from us lies in a difference of theology or a difference of species, is an embodied practice which enacts the transformative power of grace.

Such an ecclesiology places a strong impetus towards honest and open casuistry upon the church community; and if the individual members of the community are concerned to reflect their theology in their ethics, this casuistry will involve questions of animal and dietary ethics. Christians are, after all, followers of a God who created and affirmed creation and everything in it;⁵⁸⁸ a God who covenants not only with Noah and not only with all humans but with all *animals*,⁵⁸⁹ a God who cares for the individual

⁵⁸⁴ Koontz, “Meeting in the Power of the Spirit”, 340.

⁵⁸⁵ John Howard Yoder, *Body Politics: Five Practices of the Christian Community Before the Watching World* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1992), 73.

⁵⁸⁶ Stephen E. Fowl and L. Gregory Jones, *Reading in Communion: Scripture and Ethics in Christian Life* (London: SPCK, 1991), 20.

⁵⁸⁷ Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 44.

⁵⁸⁸ Gen. 1:1-28.

⁵⁸⁹ Gen. 9:8-17. The significance of covenant for human-animal relationality is discussed in chapter 3.

members of creation⁵⁹⁰ (even when God's prophets don't themselves⁵⁹¹), who became Incarnate for all flesh,⁵⁹² and who will redeem the whole groaning creation⁵⁹³ that looks now towards the kingdom.⁵⁹⁴ If our theology is our ethics, and the church is the community of character that Hauerwas says it is, to reject animal matters as unworthy of serious reflection is to claim – implicitly or otherwise – that there are elements of one's embodied life that do not need to be touched by grace.

Social Boundaries

If church casuistry is limited to particular 'worthwhile' ethical questions, the absence of a communitarian corrective for the theology and ethics of individual Christians can easily lead to a divorce between professed belief and embodied practice. If not arrested, this can even lead to social and cultural norms and boundaries being normalised as distinctively *Christian* practice. The danger of theologically endorsing sociocultural norms has been highlighted by David Clough, in his criticism of Nicolas Malebranche's denial of the possibility of nonhuman suffering; a denial Clough roots in as a preference "for the coherence of a particular thought-world over attending properly to the lives of other[s]."⁵⁹⁵ Without genuine casuistry, the church is unable to truly work out how to live (as best fallible creatures can) the transfiguring Yes that God offers to humanity: as Amy Plantinga Pauw observes, critical reflection on both belief and practice is necessary to

⁵⁹⁰ Isa. 43:20. As noted in chapter 3, not only are the wild animals recognised as individuals benefiting from divine action, but they respond to God by praising God for bringing "water in the wilderness."

⁵⁹¹ Jon. 4:11. Jonah, who cares more about the plant that gave him shelter than the whole population – human and nonhuman – of Nineveh, is reprimanded by YHWH. "The story of Jonah acknowledges a solidarity between humans and the animals." James Limburg, *Jonah: A Commentary* (London: SCM Press, 1993), 97.

⁵⁹² Jn. 1:14.

⁵⁹³ Rom. 8:22. Karl Barth, who generally stressed humanity's total separation from other creatures, wrote that nonhuman animals were part of the "the longing and groaning creation, according to 8.22 travailing in pain." Karl Barth, *A Shorter Commentary on Romans* (Abingdon: Ashgate, 2007), 62.

⁵⁹⁴ Isa. 11.6-13. The significance of eschatology for human-animal relationality is discussed in chapter 3.

⁵⁹⁵ Clough, *On Animals*, 147-8.

ensure the mutually constructive relationship between the two remains healthy.⁵⁹⁶

If we discourage casuistry and so avoid facing the transformation grace can bring, we risk simply rubber-stamping whatever practices society deems acceptable. If, for example, flesh-eating is the cultural norm, as it is in Britain, then it can become enshrined as a *Christian norm* for British Christians if critical reflection is avoided. As Hauerwas and Berkman recognised in “The Chief End of All Flesh”, (in agreement with Carol Adams’ claim that our practices ground our ontology⁵⁹⁷), “Our practices with regard to other animals shape our beliefs about them.”⁵⁹⁸ In this case, if what individual Christians practice is the unreflective patronisation of the factory farming industry, the church will come to endorse the belief that the industry’s denial of animal relationality is morally irrelevant. If individual Christians wish to eat animals, the call to relate to them in the light of the kingdom requires, at the very least, reflection as to which animals will be eaten, and how their flesh will be procured. To do less than this – for example, to buy factory farmed meat without reflection – is to make the claim that there are aspects of our creaturely lives which do not need to change, and over which grace has no power.

The avoidance of communal reflection on animal and dietary ethics goes some way to explaining why, in some communities, animal matters are so frequently displaced. To take the popular Christian debate between just war and pacifism; although a number of different positions will likely coexist in one church community (ranging from pro-military nationalist to absolutist pacifist), it would be expected that each individual would not merely have an opinion but be able to justify it. This is not to say that every member of the church would know every other member’s position on war; but it is to say that, in debate, interlocutors can expect reasoned responses from each other. With animal and dietary ethics, such an expectation rarely exists: a position in favour of eating animals is assumed to be the default, needing no specific justification in any context. In chapter 4, I noted Aaron Gross’ lament that Jews and Christians familiar with “good shepherd”

⁵⁹⁶ Amy Plantinga Pauw, “Attending to the Gaps between Beliefs and Practices”, in Miroslav Volf and Dorothy Bass (ed), *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 41-2.

⁵⁹⁷ Carol J. Adams, *Neither Man nor Beast: Feminism and the Defence of Animals* (New York, NY: Continuum, 1994), 168.

⁵⁹⁸ Stanley Hauerwas and John Berkman, “The Chief End of All Flesh”, *Theology Today*, 49.2 (1992), 196-208 at 197.

imagery could be indifferent to the anti-relational and abusive practices of modern factory farming.⁵⁹⁹ To use the metaphor of the good shepherd without considering the distance between the shepherd-sheep relationship and the relationships enacted by factory farming is symptomatic of the failure of responsibility which occurs when specific topics for reflection are deemed off limits. Casuistical blind spots such as these leave the church captive to the norms of the world: by next looking at the ways in which the world linguistically removes animals from its vista of moral concern, the danger this poses other animals – and our responsibilities to them – is further explored.

The Language of Invisibility

In her critique of modern factory farming, Carol Adams suggests another element behind the church's avoidance of casuistry on animal and dietary ethics. She terms this the "absent referent".⁶⁰⁰ "When we turn an animal into 'meat', a relational creature with a very particular, situated life, a unique being, is converted into something that has no distinctiveness, no uniqueness, no individuality."⁶⁰¹ The mass term 'meat' robs the life *and* death of individual animals of significance, reducing them to a product for consumption and so collapsing their individuality into the specific and deadly function they are conscripted to serve. Adams grounds this language of invisibility in the wider spectrum of "arrogant-eye gazes," including sexism and racism,⁶⁰² in an argument which anticipates Slavoj Žižek's drawing-together of speciesism and colonial racism.⁶⁰³ Naming practices like these serve an exculpatory function, brushing over the agency of those who kill and consume other animals.⁶⁰⁴ if a cow is not a cow but 'beef', a food product, its *telos* is to be killed and eaten, and therefore those who necessitate and fulfil that end do not bear the burden of responsibility. Commenting on the sinful and inhuman relational networks

⁵⁹⁹ Aaron S. Gross, "The Question of the Creature: Animals, Theology and Levinas' Dog", in Celia Deane-Drummond and David Clough (ed), *Creaturely Theology: On God, Humans and Other Animals* (London: SCM Press, 2009), 121-137 at 128.

⁶⁰⁰ Carol J. Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory, Tenth Anniversary Edition* (New York, NY: Continuum, 2002), 14.

⁶⁰¹ Adams, *Neither Man nor Beast*, 27.

⁶⁰² Adams, *Neither Man nor Beast*, 168.

⁶⁰³ Slavoj Žižek, "The Animal Gaze of the Other," in Slavoj Žižek and Boris Gunjević, *God in Pain: Inversions of the Apocalypse* (New York, NY: Seven Stories, 2012), 221-40 at 229.

⁶⁰⁴ Adams, *Neither Man nor Beast*, 29.

of factory farming (discussed in chapter 5), Žižek claims that this invisibility is necessary for a human society which has determined to attend neither to the particularity nor the relationality of its nonhuman animal members:

Human industry alone is continuously causing immense suffering to animals, which is systematically disavowed – not only laboratory experiments, but special regimes to produce eggs and milk (turning artificial lights on and off to shorten the day, the use of hormones, etc.), pigs which are half blind and barely able to walk, fattened up fast to be slaughtered... [A]lthough all of us know what goes on in such places, this knowledge has to be neutralized so that we can act as if we don't know.⁶⁰⁵

In Genesis, Adam gives all animals a name (2:19), recognising their individuality and the relationship he has with them as a fellow member of creation. In the modern era, humans use mass terms like 'meat' to *remove* the name given by Adam, reducing sentient and relational creatures to foodstuffs.⁶⁰⁶ This use of the language of invisibility might be termed *speciesism*, defined as human avoidance of respect for "the feelings and sensate experiences of those they maltreat or kill."⁶⁰⁷ The semantic connection of speciesism to racism, sexism, ageism, and other 'isms is not mere rhetoric. To avoid treating animals as morally serious beings is to deny individuality, relationality, and commonality in the same way as racism and sexism. Rachel Muers gives an illustrative example of this, pointing to the many ways humans have performed the anthropological task using animals as convenient symbols. From defences of a substantialist understanding of the *imago Dei* that cast humans as rational and beasts as mechanic,⁶⁰⁸ to modern day uses of "bitch" and "monkey" to denigrate the human other,⁶⁰⁹ Muers argues that when we use animals to define the human we deny the animals the chance of appearing as themselves.⁶¹⁰

⁶⁰⁵ Žižek, "The Animal Gaze of the Other," 234.

⁶⁰⁶ Brian Luke, "Justice, Caring, and Animal Liberation", in Josephine Donovan and Carol J. Adams (ed), *Beyond Animal Rights: A Feminist Caring Ethic for the treatment of Animals* (New York, NY: Continuum, 1996), 77-102 at 95.

⁶⁰⁷ Michael Northcott, "'They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain' (Isaiah 65:25): Killing for Philosophy and a Creaturely Theology of Non-violence", in *Creaturely Theology*, 231-48 at 233.

⁶⁰⁸ David S. Cunningham, "The Way of All Flesh: Rethinking the *Imago Dei*", in *Creaturely Theology*, 100-17.

⁶⁰⁹ Rachel Muers, "The Animals We Write On: Encountering Animals in Texts," in *Creaturely Theology*, 138-50 at 140.

⁶¹⁰ Muers, "The Animals We Write On", 140.

This exemplifies Adams' "linked oppressions":⁶¹¹ to call a woman a bitch, or a black person a monkey,⁶¹² is to refuse to acknowledge commonality with, responsibility to, and the particularity of the offended human party *and* the animal reduced to an insult. "The point to be grasped," for Andrew Linzey, "is that these are not just libels on human beings."⁶¹³

When nonhuman animals are used as negative foils for humanity, we not only neglect valuable lessons which might be learned from our relationships with them. We also pass over the task of telling animals what they are, and where they stand in relation to us – according to Hauerwas and Berkman, a theologically important task.⁶¹⁴ Instead, we corrupt Adam's naming of the animals, imposing function where he acknowledged relationship, denying commonality with other animals without admitting to ourselves what we are doing. This incurvature of relationality invokes Luther's description of sin as humanity curved in on itself:⁶¹⁵ the denial of the particularity of the other in a manner which also neglects to attend to the relational networks in which both one's self and the other move.⁶¹⁶ Žižek argues that such negative characterizations of animals, which work to "engender the appearance of positive determinations which are false,"⁶¹⁷ are functionally analogous to the reductive and illusory distinction between colonizer and colonized in "traditional Eurocentric anthropology... Is it not the same to oppose the Western Judeo-Greek legacy to the 'Oriental' stance, thereby obliterating the incredible wealth of positions covered by

⁶¹¹ Adams, *Neither Man nor Beast*, 168.

⁶¹² Carmody Grey makes the point that, problematic as such 'animal insults' are, they serve to demonstrate the point that nonhuman animals are psychologically and philosophically important to human identity. Carmody Grey, "Nonhuman Beings in Eschatological Perspective: some reasons to take them seriously", paper at Postgraduate Theology and Religious Studies conference, March 2013.

⁶¹³ Linzey, *Why Animal Suffering Matters*, 45. Prior to this, Linzey asks us to "Consider the historic language we use about animals: 'brutes,' 'dumb brutes,' 'unfeeling brutes,' 'critters,' 'sub-humans,' 'beasts,' 'wild beasts,' and the adjectives 'brutal,' 'beastly,' and 'bestial.' [...] By definition, it is difficult to champion the rights of 'beastly,' 'brutal,' or 'bestial' life" (44).

⁶¹⁴ Hauerwas and Berkman, "The Chief End of All Flesh", 199.

⁶¹⁵ Matt Jenson, *The Gravity of Sin: Augustine, Luther and Barth on Homo Incurvatus In Se* (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 77-91.

⁶¹⁶ Alistair I. McFadyen, *The Call to Personhood: A Christian Theory of the Individual in Social Relationships* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 236. David Clough discusses the inadequacy of animal classifications which collapse the multiplicity (and commonality) in the animal creation into a bifurcation of "human" and "animal". See David L. Clough, *On Animals: Volume One: Systematic Theology* (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2012), 74.

⁶¹⁷ Žižek, "The Animal Gaze of the Other," 229.

the term 'Oriental thought'?"⁶¹⁸ The same process – wherein one elevates oneself and one's immediate comrades over those who occupy a different place, or gender, or ethnos, or species – is at play in colonial racism as is present when humans dismiss and diminish their nonhuman brothers and sisters; and this process is the perpetual work of sin in fallen human beings. As Leon Hynson has written,

Sin is not attached to our nature as an alien substitute in the vacuum of lost righteousness. Sin is deprived human nature acting out of itself, rather than out of the Spirit. Without the Spirit, every human expression is bent; bent away from God and toward self.⁶¹⁹

The language of invisibility has the power to obscure the commonality we share with other animals – how my flourishing as a human being is coincident with theirs as animals – and so keep human minds and hearts focused on how animals can benefit them: to mimic Hynson, it allows deprived human nature to act out of itself, rather than out of the Spirit. This power to obscure mutuality is eloquently illustrated by Douglas Adams in *The Restaurant at the End of the Universe*, when Arthur Dent and his 'alien' companions are confronted with a (talking) cow which has been bred to want to be eaten. The aliens respond with appreciative hunger – Arthur, the only human present, reacts somewhat differently.

"I just don't want to eat an animal that's standing here inviting me to," said Arthur, "it's heartless."

"Better than eating an animal that doesn't want to be eaten," said Zaphod.

"That's not the point," Arthur protested. Then he thought about it for a moment. "Alright," he said, "maybe it is the point. I don't care, I'm not going to think about it now. I'll just ... er ..."

The Universe raged about him in its death throes.

"I think I'll just have a green salad," he muttered.⁶²⁰

⁶¹⁸ Žižek, "The Animal Gaze of the Other," 229-30.

⁶¹⁹ Leon O. Hynson, "Original Sin as Privation: An Inquiry into a Theology of Sin and Sanctification," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 22.2 (1987), 65-83 at 77.

⁶²⁰ Douglas Adams, *The Restaurant at the End of the Universe* (London: Pan, 2009), 84-5.

The Dish of the Day will presumably not suffer, given that he leaves and shoots himself (promising to be “very humane” about it),⁶²¹ but this is not Arthur’s concern. Rather, Arthur is motivated by an apparently instinctual reaction to seeing his meal has a face and a voice: his confrontation with the Dish of the Day brings into sight that which was previously invisible, and despite his best efforts to not think about it, he finds himself unable (even if only temporarily) to be complicit in a system which ensnares one of his fellows in a relational network which destroys for profit. The fact that the Dish of the Day speaks leaves Arthur no alternative to acknowledging his particularity: in societies where the language of invisibility serves to remove the individual animal from view, until a part of it appears on our plates, the alternative Arthur gropes for is provided and encouraged. Holistic casuistry, undertaken in the presence of a creative and redeeming God – in full awareness of how little we deserve grace – will challenge contemporary Christians parallel to how the Dish of the Day challenges Arthur Dent. This is the challenge to look at one’s animal fellows with open eyes; and for Christians, if not for Arthur, to will as God wills in relationship with them.

Adams writes that, “When we make animals’ experiences visible, we expose traditional ethical, moral, and religious discussions that ignored animals.”⁶²² Visibility is key to defending animal and dietary ethics as morally important (and so is also key to the promotion of dietary pacifism): without it, ‘out of sight’ will continue to mean ‘out of mind’ with regard to the institutionalised exploitation of nonhuman animals, as the language of invisibility encourages the acceptance of cultural norms as ‘Christian practices’. Failures of casuistry and the language of invisibility are mutually reinforcing: avoiding reflection on dietary ethics both contributes to, and is reinforced by, the invisibility of nonhuman animals. If we do not recognise other animals as relational and morally significant creatures, there is no need to debate whether or not we should eat them; and if casuistry is not performed in this way, our invisible brothers and sisters have no hope of becoming visible. Statements and practices which describe animals as objects inherently deny the need to question their objectified status. As belief shapes practice, the language of invisibility is shaped by the rejection of dietary matters as ethically important.

⁶²¹ Adams, *The Restaurant at the End of the Universe*, 85.

⁶²² Adams, *Neither Man nor Beast*, 200.

Having described the language of invisibility and its connection with failures of church casuistry, I will now look more closely at how churches might practice *good* casuistry. One of the central questions here is how an individual or community identifies something as an ethical question (or not). Hauerwas' argument, rooted in his criticism of "quandary ethics",⁶²³ is that casuistry best serves the church when it is *situational* (responding to specific instances) and *holistic* (open to discussion of any ethical question).⁶²⁴ Within such an ecclesiology, how the church responds and relates to its minority members and voices becomes highly important: in beginning to think about how a relational church might practice casuistry, I pay particular attention to the link between communal discernment and Hauerwas' call for churches to value their heretics.⁶²⁵

Casuistry and the Heretic

In chapter 4, I cited Aaron Conley's criticism of Hauerwas' "master narrative" of Constantinianism; that the Constantinian narrative is maintained by obscuring or ignoring those elements of history which do not fit it (such as the tradition of liberal Christianity).⁶²⁶ This kind of distortion is also at work whenever casuistry on dietary ethics is avoided on the grounds of a loosely-defined 'Christian freedom'; while sexual ethics, to take a counter-example, is distinctly not a topic where 'Christian freedom' is deemed to be relevant. We do a disservice to the church cosmic if we ignore or obscure the numerous Christians who have engaged in dietary reflection throughout the church's history. The Desert Fathers,⁶²⁷ Benedictine and Cistercian orders,⁶²⁸ John Wesley,⁶²⁹ the Victorian-era

⁶²³ Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 117-25.

⁶²⁴ Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 119.

⁶²⁵ Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 107.

⁶²⁶ Aaron D. Conley, "Injustices of an Outdated Historiography: Or how Christian pacifism does not translate easily across two millennia", paper, Society of Christian Ethics Annual Meeting (2012).

⁶²⁷ Blake Leyerle, "Monastic Formation and Christian Practice: Food in the Desert", in John Van Engen (ed), *Educating People of Faith: Exploring the History of Jewish and Christian Communities* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 87-111.

⁶²⁸ Dianne M. Bazell, "Strife Among the Table-Fellows: Conflicting Attitudes of Early and Medieval Christians toward the Eating of Meat", *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 65 (1997), 73-99.

⁶²⁹ See for example Wesley's discussion on fasting in John Wesley, *Works Volume I: Sermon 27: Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Discourse the Seventh* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975).

Bible Christian Church⁶³⁰ and Order of the Golden Age,⁶³¹ Seventh Day Adventists,⁶³² and Christian Vegetarian Association (USA⁶³³ and UK⁶³⁴) are some examples of this. With the exception of the Christian Vegetarian Associations, none of these examples cited could be claimed as dietary pacifists – but Christianity’s established precedent of moral reflection on dietary practices is evident.

Given Hauerwas’ theological debt to Yoder – through whom can be traced his emphases on nonviolence and communitarian character formation – it is ironic that his ecclesiology might isolate those who hold unorthodox or minority positions within their church community. If casuistry is a *communal* practice, then *individuals* at odds with the majority are in danger of not being heard; regardless of how their position, or the majority position, is substantiated. Should any minority not be heard, this would surely be the result of malfunctioning theology: living *imago Trinitas*, we are not called to surrender our individuality, but to recognise the balance between affirming ourselves and relating to others. An idealised image of communal discernment, which emphasises the virtuous community by understating the tensions present in any grouping of individuals, can damage this balance and so marginalise minority voices. In a contemporary British church (at the very least) this will include vegetarians.

Hauerwas himself anticipates something like this, writing in *The Peaceable Kingdom* that:

The church is the extended argument over time about the significance of [the story of Jesus Christ in the world] and how best to understand it. There are certainly differences in the church which may even cause separation, but that is why the church should learn to value her heretics. We never know what it is we should believe or be until we are reminded to by another.⁶³⁵

Implicit in the call to casuistry is the call to value the “heretics” within one’s

⁶³⁰ See for more information Karen Iacobbo and Michael Iacobbo, *Vegetarian America: A History* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004); James Gregory, *Of Victorians and Vegetarians: The Vegetarian Movement in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London: Taurus, 2007).

⁶³¹ A thorough collection of Golden Age literature is available online at <<http://www.ordergoldenage.co.uk>> [accessed 18 December 2012].

⁶³² See “The Seventh-day Adventist Position Statement on Vegetarian Diets”, online at <http://www.sdada.org/position.htm> [accessed 15 March 2013].

⁶³³ <<http://www.all-creatures.org/cva/default.htm>> [accessed 18 December 2012].

⁶³⁴ <<http://www.christianvegetarian.co.uk>> [accessed 18 December 2012].

⁶³⁵ Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 107.

community – those minorities in the church whose personal theology differs from the majority's. An emphasis on communal casuistry, without parallel recognition that churches are constituted by individuals with different perspectives, can (and does) lead to heretics being marginalised.

Michel Foucault roots intra-national racial strife in the modern move from monarchy to democracy: where once a single authority figure spoke for the nation, and the enemy was that which fell outside the borders designated by the monarch, the shift to the rule of the majority meant that the minority *within* the nation's borders became more dangerous than the enemy outside.⁶³⁶ Could it be that similar dangers exist for churches practising communal casuistry? What happens to the only pacifist in a community which believes that Christians have a responsibility to engage in just war? What about the one republican in a church where the majority recognise the Queen as church sovereign? What of the lone vegan in a church where most Christians read Genesis as legitimating human exploitation of creation? These 'heretics' should not go unchallenged in their theology; but neither should the majority. Without reflexive attention to the natural (which is to say sinful) tendency towards conformity, the church is vulnerable to a majority rule which silences challenging voices. In such an environment, the Spirit cannot be seen to move; and it is the movement of God's Spirit, dwelling in us (Rom. 8:9), which is needed for the church to be a community which values its heretics.⁶³⁷

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, writing during the years of Nazi rule in Germany, was intimately concerned with questions of community and discernment, and reflected on them while embedded in the practical and spiritual life of the Confessing Church. His ecclesiology is profoundly rooted in his Christology: in *Sanctorum Communio* he asserts that the church is Christ acting as community.⁶³⁸ A sermon preached in 1940 makes this clear: "The Spirit will not permit our community to grope about in darkness,

⁶³⁶ Michel Foucault, trans. David Macey, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège De France, 1975-76* (London: Penguin, 2004), 80-1.

⁶³⁷ Note that my criticism of Hauerwas here stems from dissatisfaction with the lack of nuance in his exhortation of casuistry, and the idealised depiction of the church which serves a rhetorical function in his drawing of a church-world dichotomy which is distinctly unflattering to the world. I am not claiming that Hauerwas is too hard on heretics, but that his simple call to casuistry – in the context of his idealised ecclesiology – offers heretics insufficient protection against the natural (sinful) tendency towards conformity and majority rule.

⁶³⁸ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Sanctorum Communio: A Theological Study of the Sociology of the Church* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1998).

if only we are willing to take the Spirit's teachings seriously. But every lesson of the Holy Spirit remains conjoined to the words of Jesus."⁶³⁹ What, then, is the church community – led by the Spirit, centred in Jesus Christ – to be? How is it to discern? In an essay written while a student at Berlin University, Bonhoeffer emphasised the importance of "Supplication to the Holy Spirit which alone, as it pleases, gives [scripture] the hearing and understanding without which the most highly intellectual exegesis is nothing."⁶⁴⁰ The Spirit guides reflection as it shapes those in the church to see the world through the eyes of Christ.⁶⁴¹ But Bonhoeffer was also awake, arguably more so than Hauerwas, to "the ethical potholes that can open up when the Holy Spirit is so identified with the church community."⁶⁴² A tyrannous majority might claim the inspiration of the Spirit for themselves, denying its presence in the community's heretics; and so the Spirit's mission to the community is to work against this, moving believers to see others "as love, as Christ."⁶⁴³

But what, then, of communities which do not reflect in this way? What of churches where majority rule is seen as, if not ideal, at least acceptable? For Bonhoeffer these questions were immediately relevant: when his Confessing Church decided the oath of fealty to Hitler was to be left to individual conscience, he asked in frustration, "Will they ever learn that majority decision in matters of conscience kills the Spirit?"⁶⁴⁴ Bonhoeffer's anger here is not directed against majority decisions as such, but the reduction of a complex theological and ethical conversation to a binary vote. How, though, are we to distinguish between church communities where casuistry is truthfully practiced, and those which "kill the Spirit" by leaving ethics to a majority decision informed more by social norms than by the gospel? Incidentally, any binary division of church and world falls down on this issue: counter to the claims made sometimes by Hauerwas (and frequently by those who situate themselves within "radical

⁶³⁹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, sermon for Whitsunday (1940), taken from Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Theological Education Underground: 1937-1940* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2011), 569.

⁶⁴⁰ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "Can a Distinction Be Drawn between a Historical and a Pneumatological Interpretation of the Scriptures, and How Does Dogmatic Theology Regard This?" in Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Young Bonhoeffer: 1918-1927* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2002), 322.

⁶⁴¹ Geffrey B. Kelly and F. Burton Nelson, *The Cost of Moral Leadership: The Spirituality of Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 59.

⁶⁴² Kelly and Nelson, *The Cost of Moral Leadership*, 60.

⁶⁴³ Bonhoeffer, *Sanctorum Communio*, 212-3.

⁶⁴⁴ Bonhoeffer, *Theological Education Underground*, 56-7.

orthodoxy”),⁶⁴⁵ it is not only the secular which can quash difference.

It seems instructive here to refer again to Bonhoeffer’s simple assertion that the Spirit of Christ frees us to be for others.⁶⁴⁶ A character formed in and by the Spirit is a character formed not merely to debate, but to *serve*; and it is from this basis that we can approach questions of discernment. A community practicing majority rule is a community which dictates to itself as a corporate tyrant; a community practicing casuistry in the Spirit is a community that sees Christ in every individual – including those with a personal theology divergent from the majority.

So we can discern between a reflective community and one tyrannized by the majority. But what are we to do about genuine and foundational disagreements? For Bonhoeffer, the question of allegiance was such a disagreement: the Reich Church declared its allegiance to the Fuhrer, which for Bonhoeffer was an unconscionable abrogation of the Lordship of God. Yet even here the Spirit is active: as Geoffrey B. Kelly and F. Burton Nelson ask in their excellent spiritual overview of Bonhoeffer’s life and work, *The Cost of Moral Leadership*, “Is there community in the Holy Spirit without the Holy Spirit at the same time having the power to separate and divide?”⁶⁴⁷ We are called to love and forgive those with whom we disagree; but if some members of the church are unwilling to do the same, it is our responsibility to them as much as to the wider church to call them to question.⁶⁴⁸

⁶⁴⁵ In particular, see the work of John Milbank, especially *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (London: Blackwell, 2006). Simon Oliver’s claim – in “Introducing Radical Orthodoxy: from participation to late modernity”, in John Milbank and Simon Oliver (ed), *The Radical Orthodoxy Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), 3-27 at 9 – that “The tendency to see ‘difference’ as more a source of violence than the basis of collective peace can... be seen in the programmatic culture of early modern science,” while true, is disingenuous in that it implies that aversion to difference and persecution of minorities is a particularly secular phenomenon. His prior recognition (on page 4) that churches are not utopian, for “the world is, of course, fallen,” is an inadequate justification for concluding that secular institutions are more violent than ecclesial ones. If the church is to be held to a different standard than the world, it should be a higher standard: to talk of (passive) fallenness with regards to the church and (active) sinfulness with regards to the world is an unrealistic and irresponsible approach, concerned more with supporting a preordained conclusion than with thinking, faithfully and humbly, about how the church can be more responsive to God’s grace in the world.

⁶⁴⁶ Kelly and Nelson, *The Cost of Moral Leadership*, 65.

⁶⁴⁷ Kelly and Nelson, *The Cost of Moral Leadership*, 77.

⁶⁴⁸ Cf. Mt. 18:15-35. Procedures for discipline and debate within the church must be informed by the love which is always prepared to forgive.

Implicit in the call to casuistry is the call to value the heretic; to hear and engage with the position of even the smallest minorities in the community. How, though, does Hauerwas' idealized picture of communal discernment fit with this call? Writing for the ideal should be the heart of all Christian writing; but if it is not tempered by awareness that people are *not* ideal, it can ultimately reinforce anti-relational attitudes and practices. In this case, an emphasis on casuistry-in-community without a parallel emphasis on the reality that churches are made up of *individuals* – some of whom will find themselves in a distinct minority on some issues – might lead to heretics being summarily rejected in an exercise of majority rule. This might take the form of their being given scant opportunity to discuss their theological and ethical convictions; or perhaps the community at large will even come to reject food as a topic Christians need to think about.

Wherever the church does not perform casuistry – where its casuistical blind spots are – the ground is fertile for the normalization of sociocultural beliefs and practices as 'Christian'. This happens not because the belief or practice in question is theologically warranted, but because we are embodied creatures whose beliefs and practices shape each other. If culturally normative practices are unreflectively engaged in by church members, these practices will eventually become as normal for the church as they are for the world outside it. The gap in the casuistical blind spot becomes filled by sociocultural norms and presumptions, and worldly practices are left to distort our Christian beliefs. To recognise the blind spot is to admit the need for fresh moral reflection – but if the majority stance on the relevant issues is not theologically but *culturally* rooted, resistance to any effort to illuminate the blind spot can be expected.

A situated example can be drawn from Robert Jones' account of the casuistry of a church community in Oregon, USA, concerning proposed healthcare changes which would add physician-assisted suicide to the list of state-sponsored treatments at the same time as removing other treatments (including heart and blood pressure medications, and treatments vital to those with certain disabilities).⁶⁴⁹ Jones' theological reflection on the church's discernment led him to conclude that the absence of disabled narratives in many middle-class white churches severely

⁶⁴⁹ Robert P. Jones, "Ethnography as Revelation: Witnessing History, Faith, and Sin", in Christian Scharen and Aana Marie Vigen (ed), *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics* (London: Continuum, 2011), 118-141 at 140.

hampered their casuistry on disability issues; even to the extent of not recognising them as morally significant.⁶⁵⁰ A church community of healthy and wealthy individuals needs a serious commitment to self-critical casuistry – particularly on those issues which do not directly affect the community’s individual members – if they are not to make similar oversights. If an absence of disabled stories is something a church can recognise and work to adjust for in its acts of moral discernment, a theology of human-animal relationality prompts the question: should the same recognition and adjustment be made by churches without animal stories?

Paying close attention to Hauerwas’ call to value heretics – perhaps closer attention than he has sometimes paid himself⁶⁵¹ – is one affirmative way for a church community to approach casuistry on less orthodox matters. One example of this unorthodox casuistry might involve the New Testament passages referenced in relation to animal sacrifice and human-animal relationality: Hebrews 10:12-14, Romans 14, Acts 10:10-15, and Matthew 15:11. It is not reflection on these passages in themselves that constitutes unorthodox casuistry – rather, it is the discussion about their significance for the dietary practices of contemporary Christians. Three of these four passages make direct reference to eating, while Hebrews makes the claim that Christ was the final sacrifice. In debate over dietary ethics, Hebrews 10 and Romans 14 (the latter discussed in detail in chapter 5) are readily cited by Christian vegetarians; while Acts 10 and Matthew 15 lend themselves more readily to non- or anti-vegetarians. In many cases, however – and from multiple directions – there is a tendency towards using the texts non-reflectively and out of context; which does more to confirm dietary ethics as a casuistical blind spot than to illuminate it.

If Christ’s sacrifice ended the need for animal sacrifice, can we no longer eat the flesh previously regulated by sacrificial law?⁶⁵² If it is not

⁶⁵⁰ Jones, “Ethnography as Revelation”, 141.

⁶⁵¹ For example, black, Latino/a, and feminist theologians (among others) have criticised Hauerwas for neglecting marginalised viewpoints, arguing (ironically, in light of Hauerwas’ call to value heretics) that his insistence on writing for the ‘ideal’ church without reflexively examining his own standpoint – and related biases – has reinforced the exclusion of outsider voices in mainstream churches. John Berkman and Michael Cartwright (ed), *The Hauerwas Reader* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), and Charles R. Pinches et al (ed), *Unsettling Arguments: A Festschrift on the Occasion of Stanley Hauerwas’s 70th Birthday* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2010), are two collections containing criticism along these lines.

⁶⁵² The tendency to treat Heb. 10’s primary significance as the end of *sacrifice* can obscure the central importance of the break from *law*, liberating Christians to make situational

what goes into the mouth that makes one unclean, do Christians have any moral responsibility when it comes to food? Both questions massively oversimplify the issues present; but if dietary ethics continue to be a casuistical blind spot, further simplification and a poverty of moral discernment will follow.⁶⁵³ Communal discussion of questions such as these is not the *end* towards which churches should aim, but rather the *beginning* of a process concerned with situating the church as a relational community concerned for creation – and for their fellow relational animals in particular.

Conclusion

The church claims at least some of its authority on the grounds that it bears the responsibility for the formation of truthful Christian characters. Upon this foundation, I have argued in this chapter that *casuistry*, practiced holistically and relationally, is vital for the church's belief and practice. Animal and dietary ethics fall within this holistic casuistry, as does the question underlying dietary pacifism, about the extent to which grace can transform our natural proclivities and responsibilities in relationship with our animal brothers and sisters.

responses informed and transformed by grace. Christ's sacrifice – "once for all" (10:10) – ends the priestly work, freeing Christians to live the good news. When Christ "sat down at the right hand of God" (10:12) he signalled the end to the need for priestly mediation between God and God's people: where the priest would stand before the altar when making the covenantal sacrifice, Christ follows his ultimate sacrifice by sitting, offering a striking visual metaphor for the fulfilment of his priestly work. See J. Ramsey Michaels, "Hebrews", in Philip W. Comfort (ed), *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Hebrews* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2009), 303-476 at 415; and Brooke Foss Westcott, *Epistle to the Hebrews* (London: Macmillan, 1892), 313-4.

When 'the end of the law' is applied to particular cases, such as the permissibility of eating flesh in a post-sacrificial church, casuistry is required. Which sentiments and virtues had underpinned the sacrificial regulations? Why was the priestly system ended? What is the significance of grace (and the transformation it works in individuals) replacing law? What are the contextual differences regarding meat procurement between the ancient Levant and modern Britain? Perhaps most important for any consideration of what sacrifice means after Christ is the foundational question of *willing*, examined in chapter 4 in conversation with Hauerwas and Berkman.

⁶⁵³ This is without mentioning the reductionist dangers inherent to any attempt to treat early Christian questions over diet as directly translatable to modern questions of diet. The millennia separating us from our Christian forefathers; the vast difference in farming practices, and the way humans perceive and relate to the world-as-ecosystem; the relative ease of removing meat from one's diet (in a modern British context) – there are many serious practical reasons, beyond the fundamental theological premise of grace's transformative power, which demand more nuanced and truthful engagement on questions of dietary and animal ethics.

In conversation with Carol Adams, the language of invisibility's power to obstruct truthful casuistry was explored. The mutually reinforcing relationship between the language of invisibility and the refusal of dietary ethics as something worth talking about suggests a preliminary answer to one question posed in this chapter's introduction: if a church falls short in its casuistry on dietary matters, is it a failing of casuistry *in general*, or are *animals* a particular casuistical blind spot for that community? The latter seems more likely to be the case, but general failings of casuistry and specific casuistical blind spots exist in a mutually reconstructive relationship: if animals are not recognised as morally important – a recognition which should include some appreciation of their particularity and our shared mutuality – this will have a major detrimental effect on any communal discernment on dietary and animal ethics.

Bonhoeffer's Christocentric pneumatology, which grounds the inspirational action of the Spirit in the person of Christ, ties together communal reflection with the call to love and serve our fellows – and this means attending to them as relational individuals. Accepting grace's transformative potential for our lives and responsibilities, we are freed to live for others. The tyranny of the majority, a danger to any community, is hamstrung by the justification and sanctification Christ opened for us.

A lack of commitment to casuistry can lead to the acceptance of sociocultural norms (such as eating flesh) as distinctively 'Christian'. If dietary questions are allowed to become a casuistical blind spot, efforts to engage in moral discernment on diet may come to face opposition from the church majority, as well as needing to engage with relatively unsophisticated readings of scripture on food. If, however, the church is able to promote and practice truthful casuistry, honouring and valuing its unorthodox members (such as vegetarians) in the process, animal and dietary ethics might be returned to the table of Christian moral discourse. The result of this would not be that all Christians become vegetarians: a situation parallel to the debate over just war and pacifism, wherein a variety of positions may be defended within any one community, is the more likely (and desirable) outcome. Engaging in communal exegesis and cultivating personal and corporate reflexivity are two ways in which individual churches might attempt to broaden their casuistical horizons.

In chapters 7 and 8, through reflecting on conversations with Christian vegetarians about their beliefs, practices, and church experiences, I will continue this chapter's argument in support of dietary casuistry; while applying this thesis' relational theology to the ecclesiological conclusions of these conversations. In chapter 9, I will then syncretise this thesis' theological work – the theology of human-animal relationality, and the dietary pacifist ethic and casuistical ecclesiology built upon this framework – to answer the question I first posed in chapter 1. *How should the church live and eat as a community which attends seriously and holistically to the all-pervasiveness of sin in the relational networks which constitute creation, in the hope of sanctification by grace and the ultimate hope of the kingdom?*

7. Ordinary Dietary Pacifists

Talking to Christian Vegetarians

In this chapter I outline the methodologies – theological and sociological – underlying a series of interviews with Christian vegetarians, which will be explored in detail in chapter 8. Both these chapters draw upon the work of this thesis thus far – chapter 3’s theology of human-animal relationality, chapters 4-5’s dietary pacifist ethics, and chapter 6’s relational and casuistical ecclesiology – and attempt to think in a more situated way about the issues raised thus far. If I want to say that the church is called to be a community of creatures, attending to other animals as relational individuals; and if I want to defend vegetarianism as a legitimate Christian act of relationship with God’s other animals, it seems prudent to reflect (in concert with scripture and tradition) on the theology and lived experiences of Christian vegetarians. In the course of this chapter’s methodological outline, I outline the thinking behind bringing my theological project into conversation with social science methodology, and reflect on the issues raised in making this move; a move which is becoming increasingly common, but which continues to be viewed with suspicion by some theologians.

Methodology

In order to test and develop the theological, ethical, and ecclesiological work of the thesis thus far, I turned to a series of semi-structured qualitative interviews performed with Christian vegetarians.⁶⁵⁴ Drawn from a variety of denominations, and professing a range of different affiliations to Christian, vegetarian, and Christian vegetarian organisations, I engaged my dialogue partners in conversation concerned to explore a range of issues. These included

- Why individual Christians are vegetarian
- How they relate their Christianity to their vegetarianism (and which came first)

⁶⁵⁴ In the interest of methodological clarity, I have largely refrained from using both ‘dietary pacifism’ and ‘Christian vegetarianism’ in this chapter, sticking to the more literal ‘Christian vegetarian’ unless the use of ‘dietary pacifism’ is necessary.

- How they feel their diet is viewed by peers in their church community
- Whether they feel marginalised
- What their beliefs are regarding nonviolence

Conducting the interviews along these lines was intended to procure adequate material with which to test and develop the work of this thesis, while simultaneously providing my interlocutors with sufficient space to express their personal theology.⁶⁵⁵ In the words of Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, a theologian who utilises social-science methodology:

Intensive [qualitative] interviewing is an appropriate technique... because it provides an opportunity for the interviewees to articulate their lived-experience, to tell their own story... Whereas structured questionnaires tend to mould answers, intensive interviews allow for free flowing answers which are not unduly directed or shaped by the questions.⁶⁵⁶

There was no sampling process in the conventional sense to obtain a base of respondents: to engage with Christian vegetarians is to engage with a very specific minority of the church population (and an even smaller minority of the general population). Given that a randomly-selected participant would be unable to actually participate unless he happened to be both Christian and vegetarian – and to ideologically connect the two – probability sampling was infeasible. A self-selection approach proved the most workable option: to this end, I approached Christian vegetarians who had already identified themselves as such through membership of organisations such as Christian Vegetarian Association UK (CVAUK), and put out an open call for Christian vegetarian respondents⁶⁵⁷ on Christian message boards such as the Student Christian Movement (SCM) forum and Ship of Fools. The initial approach was to identify myself and provide a neutrally-worded information sheet about the study: individuals who read

⁶⁵⁵ Having structured my 'interview outline' in such a way that one question proceeds into another, I hope that my dialogue partners might have been indirectly prompted towards fresh insight. See Alan Bryman, *Social Research Methods* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 320.

⁶⁵⁶ Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, *Elaborating a mujerista theology – En la Lucha/In the Struggle: A Hispanic Women's Liberation Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), 78-9.

⁶⁵⁷ Christian vegetarian respondents self-identifying as such were taken at their word: that is, I did not attempt to verify their dietary practices. My concern is with *how* and *why* Christians come to be vegetarian – occasional lapses in dietary observance will not impact on answers along these lines. *Intention* is more important than *content* for this aspect of the research.

the information and agreed to participate were provided with a consent form and invited to provide a short written statement about their personal connection between faith and diet.⁶⁵⁸ Having obtained consent and a written statement, the conversation could begin in earnest: this was a *one-on-one*⁶⁵⁹ *semi-structured interview*,⁶⁶⁰ lasting around an hour, all but one of which was conducted by telephone (the exception being conducted in person).⁶⁶¹

The final sample size was twelve respondents, this number being chosen in large part due to time and work commitments: as twelve respondents provided an adequate spread of denominations, ages, genders, and affiliations, it was decided that a larger sample, while desirable, was not necessary. Only one of my dialogue partners was born outside the United Kingdom: Alison,⁶⁶² a woman raised in the American south who currently lives in London. It is with regard to age that the respondent base exhibits the greatest breadth, with an even spread of ages between early twenties and late sixties. Nine of the twelve respondents were women: in strictly quantitative work, this would be more problematic than it is for the present study – my respondent base is not intended to be quantitatively representative of either Christians or vegetarians at the

⁶⁵⁸ The length of this written statement was (deliberately) not specified: responses ranged in length from one paragraph to two sides of A4.

⁶⁵⁹ I opted to pursue individual interviews as opposed to using the focus group format, believing that the potential benefit to be gained from group development of ideas and themes would be outweighed by the potential for the suppression of minority views (and for individuals to dominate the discussion). For example, all but one of my dialogue partners identified compassion for animals – as individuals and in relationship – as important to their vegetarianism. The one respondent who was exceptional in this case, identifying his vegetarianism as an act of environmental stewardship, explicitly did not consider concern for individual animals part of his vegetarian theology. In a focus group scenario, it seems unlikely that there would have been sufficient time afforded him to outline and explicate his ideas.

⁶⁶⁰ I avoided the use of a questionnaire, even as a precursor to a more involved discussion. As outlined above, my engagement with Christian vegetarians is an engagement with a very specific minority. There is little point to a large-scale questionnaire if the majority of respondents will be unable to answer the bulk of the questions due to not belonging to the particular group I am interested in. A questionnaire, particularly an online one, might have been used as a way of identifying respondents to approach concerning a qualitative interview, but given the presence of other options I deemed equally efficient and less time-consuming, this did not seem a worthwhile addition to the process.

⁶⁶¹ Regarding the contested issue of interviewer self-revelation, I did not explicitly state or reveal my position on Christianity and/or vegetarianism to the respondents. If directly asked, I stated the bare truth: I am a Christian, and I self-identify as a ‘vegan’ dietary pacifist.

⁶⁶² In the interest of confidentiality, all respondent names are pseudonyms.

national level.⁶⁶³ This study is not concerned to speak to what Christian vegetarians think *in general*: rather, I am seeking to examine Christian vegetarianism in a situated and embodied way; with a view to its theological, ethical, and ecclesiological dimensions.⁶⁶⁴

Why Qualitative Research?

It would have been quite feasible for me to produce a theological ethics thesis concerned with human-animal relationality and dietary pacifism without straying from my comfort zone into the social sciences. Why, then, did I do so? There are two key reasons. The first concerns the contrast between *ordinary* and *academic* theology: engaging with ordinary theologians not only allows me to further my own work, but also enables my thesis to be a test of Jeff Astley's argument in favour of doing theology in conversation with non-experts.⁶⁶⁵ The second reason concerns the awkward place of vegetarianism and vegetarians within churches.

It is worth briefly qualifying what I mean by "ordinary" theology using the opening page of Astley's book: "Ordinary theology is [the] term for the theological beliefs and processes of believing that find expression in the God-talk of those believers who have received no scholarly theological education."⁶⁶⁶ Ordinary theology in this way involves

⁶⁶³ The 2008 British Social Attitudes survey suggests that 45% of religious believers within Britain are male, while the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' 2007 "Survey of attitudes, knowledge and behaviour in relation to the environment" suggests that 48% of vegetarians (a definition which *includes* vegans) are men. See "British Social Attitudes 1985-2008", available online at <http://www.britsocat.com/Body.aspx?control=HomePage> [accessed 15 March 2013]; and DEFRA, "Survey of attitudes, knowledge and behaviour in relation to the environment", cited online by the Vegetarian Society at <http://www.vegsoc.org/page.aspx?pid=753> [accessed 15 March 2013].

⁶⁶⁴ In this way, I hope that my use of the interview data gathered is acceptably "grounded" – "grounded theory" is defined by Alan Bryman as "theory that was derived from data, systematically gathered and analysed through the research process. In this method, data collection, analysis, and eventual theory stand in close relationship to one another." Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 390; cf. John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (London: SCM Press, 2006), 77-97. If my interview work and the dietary pacifist theology it informs are to be reliable, valid and generalizable in the sense meant within qualitative research (Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 270), a grounded approach will be necessary when it comes to the analysis of the data.

⁶⁶⁵ Jeff Astley, *Ordinary Theology: Looking, Listening and Learning in Theology* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002). Cf. Christian Scharen and Aana Marie Vigen (ed), *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics* (London: Continuum, 2011); and Pete Ward (ed), *Perspectives on Ecclesiology and Ethnography* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012).

⁶⁶⁶ Astley, *Ordinary Theology*, 1.

religious language as it is used by ordinary believers to speak descriptively or expressively of God, Jesus and other transcendent categories such as salvation...

the overtly religious beliefs (beliefs-that and beliefs-in) that are manifested in or implied by such language...

the processes and forms of thought and argument that are employed in people's theological reflection on and discussion of explicit religious concepts.⁶⁶⁷

Ordinary theology is too often disregarded by ecclesial and academic institutions. Yet, as Astley reminds us, every believer has a theology; and while a lack of formal education may mean that ordinary theologies are (in general) less rigorous and more transparent in showing their formative influences, it does not follow that there is nothing to be gained from conversation with them. John Howard Yoder raised similar concerns when he considered the relationship between academy and church on the question of nonviolence. Recognising the relationship as problematic, he wrote that

It is a source of deep historical confusion to identify the history of Christian morality as a whole with the record of the thought of academic moralists... Such academic formulations may, in some cultures, make a major contribution to how people will actually make decisions in the future, *if* local preachers or confessors take their cues from the professor. But in other traditions, where the instrument of enforcement that the confessional provides is not used, the relation between the academic articulation and the real life of the community is more like that of the froth to the beer.⁶⁶⁸

It is worth briefly unpacking Yoder's metaphor: the froth, after all, remains connected to the beer. But with this connection comes *debt* – the froth owes its existence to the beer – and superficiality. Who savours the froth more than the beer? If the relationship between theology and church is not considered more carefully, academic theology is in danger of this superficiality. Christian character is primarily formed in the community, not the academy: I hope that by engaging with ordinary theologians I will not only find resources and inspiration, but also demonstrate the value of

⁶⁶⁷ Astley, *Ordinary Theology*, 94.

⁶⁶⁸ John Howard Yoder, *When War is Unjust: Being Honest in Just-War Thinking* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1996), 70.

talking (and listening) to those outside the academy. Quite simply, Christian vegetarians – be they ordinary, academic, ecclesial, or liminal across these crude categories – *think about the things I want to talk about*, and so their insight is potentially valuable regardless of their education.

It is possible that on such a heterodox (and therefore niche) topic as vegetarianism, those arguing in favour are likely to share other beliefs, whether their theological background is academic, ordinary, or ecclesial; which would limit the usefulness of surveying ordinary theology. While this is indeed possible, it remains true that the material read and referenced by ordinary Christian vegetarians often differs markedly from that utilised in academic work on Christian vegetarianism.⁶⁶⁹ I make no value claim here; only the claim that whatever shared beliefs and practices might exist across boundaries, a noteworthy difference between academic and ordinary theology remains. As theology and doctrine are at all times influenced by environmental and individual concerns, however, it is no good to dismiss ordinary theology merely because it is not academic. Such a dismissal would in fact run counter to this thesis' central argument; that living *imago Dei* means living as an individual in relationship, hoping for one's natural tendencies to be transformed by grace, and so seeking to live for others as God is for us. To limit theological input to specific sections of the community is to forget this fundamental theological truth.

Defending Qualitative Research (and Ordinary Theology)

Despite being increasingly accepted as methodologically sound, scepticism remains within Christian theology regarding the appropriateness of the social sciences for theological work. It is perhaps ironic, in the context of this thesis, that among contemporary theologians Stanley Hauerwas is one of the louder voices declaiming the value of social science methodology for the church – a critique consistent with his opposition to the *ethos* and *telos* of secular liberalism and his (sometimes oversimplified) depiction of the relationship between church and world. When Peter Gathje writes on the failure of Christian virtue ethics to attend to the virtues in actual communities, it is Hauerwas he has in mind:

⁶⁶⁹ For a demonstration of this, refer to the Christian Vegetarian Association website (<<http://www.all-creatures.org/>> [accessed 18 December 2012]) and compare the books offered and suggested in their store to those on parallel topics in any university library. Shared beliefs and goals (between ordinary and academic theologians) do not necessarily translate to shared reading material.

Christian virtue ethics focuses upon the moral formation of persons within a community of faith that takes place through practice of the community's vision. What I have found strange in this field of Christian virtue ethics is a lack of sustained attention to the practice of actual communities and how that practice does or does not shape persons in virtues consistent with a community's vision.⁶⁷⁰

Arguably, this lack of sustained attention arises from the wariness with which Hauerwas and others (perhaps most recently the "radical orthodoxy" of John Milbank⁶⁷¹ et al) view the social sciences. *With the Grain of the Universe*, the edited collection of Hauerwas' 2001 Gifford Lectures,⁶⁷² is one locus of Hauerwas' critique of the Christian use of social science methodology; and Robert Jones sees Hauerwas' criticism as proceeding from his stark delineation between church and world.⁶⁷³ To analyse the church by the standards of sociology, the criticism goes, is to seek and produce findings consistent with the narrative of the secular world – a world ontologically rooted in systemic violence⁶⁷⁴ – rather than that of God and God's people.

Counter to this, Jones cites H. Richard Niebuhr's claim that "The standpoint of the Christian community is limited, being in history, faith, and sin."⁶⁷⁵ This sin, treated in chapter 3 as both cause and result of the human refusal to accept grace, is bound up with our creatureliness: if we refuse to recognise our creatureliness and attendant limitations, and as a result reject the sanctification grace can bring, we fall short of our calling and are therefore in sin. The individual and corporate limitations of any particular Christian community suggest that the church should be open to revelation from outside itself. The use of social science methodology in theology, therefore,

serves as more adequate starting point for Christian moral reflection than a notion that the church simply possesses a witness that it

⁶⁷⁰ Peter R. Gathje, "The Cost of Virtue: What Power in the Open Door Community Might Speak to Virtue Ethics", in *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics*, 207-24 at 209.

⁶⁷¹ See John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006).

⁶⁷² Stanley Hauerwas, *With the Grain of the Universe: The Church's Witness and Natural Theology* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2001).

⁶⁷³ Robert P. Jones, "Ethnography as Revelation: Witnessing History, Faith, and Sin", in *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics*, 118-41 at 118.

⁶⁷⁴ Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 68-70, 83.

⁶⁷⁵ H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Meaning of Revelation* (New York: Macmillan, 1941), 86.

should deliver to the world. From this perspective, the task of the church is not simply to “witness” to the world on a given issue, but rather the task of the church is to see where it is already acting in sin in order to see how it might begin to act in faith.⁶⁷⁶

To be sure, if theologians were to subordinate theology to sociology, the concerns of Hauerwas *et al* might be justified. Among those theologians at the forefront of exploring this potentially fruitful overlap, though, this is manifestly not the case. John Swinton writes:

If the church’s task is to bear witness in the ways that Hauerwas suggests, then the need to explore the empirical church is of great importance, not for sociological purposes but for theological reasons... [T]heologians who desire to use ethnography as part of their theologizing should approach the issue as *theologians*.⁶⁷⁷

In the introduction to the collection wherein Swinton writes this, Pete Ward draws a stark contrast between how theologians relate to other humanities, and how they relate to the social sciences:

When it comes to history or philosophy, we proceed with considerable caution. We take great care to make sure that we abide by accepted academic convention and we want to demonstrate that we are proceeding with academic rigor. Then when we talk about the contemporary church, completely different rules seem to apply. It becomes acceptable to make assertions where there is no evidence. We assume a common perception of contemporary church life between author and reader. We base whole arguments on anecdote and the selective treatment of experience.⁶⁷⁸

For Ward, and myself, this dissonance is indefensible. For theologians concerned to write meaningfully about the church in the world, it is quite simply dangerous to avoid sociology.

It must also be recognised that Hauerwas’ stress on narrative plays a significant role in his desire to keep theology theological. In *With the Grain of the Universe*, he proclaims that “only by writing history on their terms can Christians learn to locate the differences between the church and

⁶⁷⁶ Jones, “Ethnography as Revelation”, 121.

⁶⁷⁷ John Swinton, “‘Where Is Your Church?’ Moving toward a Hospitable and Sanctified Ethnography”, in *Perspectives on Ecclesiology and Ethnography*, 71-92 at 74, 87.

⁶⁷⁸ Pete Ward, “Introduction”, in *Perspectives on Ecclesiology and Ethnography*, 1-10 at 4.

the world.”⁶⁷⁹ In other words, the church is called to live as a community of character which witnesses to God’s Incarnation and resurrection for creation – a distinctive theological commitment, not to be compromised by sociocultural standards and prejudices. In line with Astley’s stress on the unique theology of every believer, however, it needs to be recognised that the situated church does not witness as a monolith: individual Christians will learn and represent the Christian narrative differently, their personal theology being nuanced by and interwoven with other narratives (familial, political, sociocultural) to varying extents. Hauerwas does anticipate this through his emphasis on casuistry; but if the church adheres to the *ideal* (witnessing to the world in a distinctively Christian language) at the expense of understanding the *real* (all the ways our Christian language is influenced by extra-ecclesial sources and relationships), its theology has become aberrant. Simplistic understandings of church practices are not merely harmful to the relationship of church to world, but (as seen in chapter 6) can do significant harm to marginal members of the community.

Gloria Albrecht criticises Hauerwas’ lack of engagement with concrete examples of actual church communities, arguing that his ecclesiology dissuades American Christians from participating in any efforts by liberal society to work for social justice.⁶⁸⁰ For one in Hauerwas’ position, such an attitude neglects the reality of oppression and suffering that so many Christians and churches (to say nothing of those outside the church) face on levels rarely experienced by white middle-class Americans.⁶⁸¹ Claiming to speak to the ideal, and claiming that this liberates one from needing to engage with situated examples, is one thing – claiming to speak to the ideal while actually speaking to the white American Christian situation raises serious questions about power, responsibility, and justice. I am not claiming that Hauerwas intentionally ignores his non-American brothers and sisters; and none of this endangers the validity of his wider theological framework. Rather, the problem is created when he writes naturally from his own context without looking at the context of others.

Albrecht’s criticism is one which could be made more generally of Hauerwas’ work: it would be perhaps harsh, but not outlandish, to call it a recurrent criticism of his work that he moves too hastily, and without proper

⁶⁷⁹ Hauerwas, *With the Grain of the Universe*, 234.

⁶⁸⁰ Gloria Albrecht, *The Character of Our Communities: Toward an Ethic of Liberation for the Church* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), 52-4.

⁶⁸¹ Albrecht, *The Character of Our Communities*, 55-61.

substantiation, from abstract claims about the church in the ideal to proclamations about how actual church communities should actually live and practice. A theological ethic rooted in Hauerwas' narrative and communitarian framework – such as dietary pacifism – therefore stands in need of a corrective against this theological pitfall. By conversing with ordinary Christian vegetarians, I therefore hope to test the constructive work of this thesis – that is, articulating an animal theology and vegetarian ethic and calling the churches to new and deeper and more genuine casuistry on these topics. *Via* this critical endeavour, it will also be possible and necessary to test the presumptions of Astley's ordinary theology, which informs much of my approach to analysing the data gathered through the interviews conducted.

Astley eloquently confronts a number of criticisms of ordinary theology⁶⁸² – such as its being incoherent,⁶⁸³ anthropomorphic,⁶⁸⁴ and biographical⁶⁸⁵ – but I don't believe these criticisms need to be answered in great detail for my purposes. If I am concerned with the lives, faith, diet, and experiences of ordinary Christian vegetarians, then any incoherence or personal biography is part and parcel of what I wish to obtain! As for the charge of anthropomorphism, it is hardly a fallacy that academic theology has long ago rid itself of; as was demonstrated in the critique of substantialist understandings of the *imago Dei* in chapters 2-3.

One line of criticism protests there is an irresolvable tension in doing ordinary theology in an academic context: to think about people's ordinary theology you have to systematise it. While this is true, it is also irrelevant – the same criticism could be levelled at the entire field of ethnography (if not sociology as a whole). Academic engagement with non-academic thought will necessarily involve some degree of systematisation: this is the point. Through systematisation and analysis, new insights may be reached, of benefit to 'ordinary' and 'academic' alike.

Another potential concern is that interviewing ordinary Christians could actually *further* the divide between the ordinary and the academic, by establishing a nonnegotiable gap between interviewer and interviewee. In response to this I would emphasise the importance of informality and semi-structured interviewing to 'breaking down' this gap – and I would also point

⁶⁸² Astley, *Ordinary Theology*, 123-45.

⁶⁸³ Astley, *Ordinary Theology*, 126-9.

⁶⁸⁴ Astley, *Ordinary Theology*, 129-32.

⁶⁸⁵ Astley, *Ordinary Theology*, 132-4.

to the common perception of academics as remote and inaccessible, something that engaging with ‘ordinary’ people could hardly make worse!

A criticism with more validity might be that any conversation between academic and ordinary theologians will by definition be limited to (and therefore privilege) those topics which both interviewer and interviewee can talk about. Therefore, while a strictly academic theology on a given issue can reasonably be expected to be comprehensive, a theology constructed in conversation with ordinary Christians might see the contemporary privileged over the context; or the anecdotal over the universal. I certainly do not wish to claim that my sample of twelve constitutes the voice of British Christianity: neither do I wish, however, to reduce their role in our conversation to that of an object to be analysed, ‘objectively’, by me as a scholar. Here I am in agreement with Jeffrey Tribble, who advises that “Wisdom, judgement, love, and respect for persons and congregations must guide our representations of communities where we, the scholars, are not the only ‘knowers.’”⁶⁸⁶

If I am to criticise, lovingly and respectfully, the theological commitments of my fellow Christians, I must at the same time be prepared to criticise (and be open to criticism of) myself and my theology. Isasi-Diaz reminds us of this in her methodological outline: “Who I am, where I am coming from and where I wish to go shapes the method and content of my theological work.”⁶⁸⁷ Such an admission is but one element of what Swinton and Mowat call “epistemological reflexivity”:

Epistemological reflexivity requires us to engage with questions such as: How has the research question defined and limited what can be “found”? How has the design of the study and the method of analysis “constructed” the data and its findings? How could the research questions have been investigated differently? To what extent would this have given rise to a different understanding of the phenomenon under investigation?⁶⁸⁸

There are two further, perhaps less pivotal, methodological questions to answer. The first is whether, given the selection process and the small sample size, the data gathered is in any way generalizable. As respondents were self-selecting, and – by nature of being vegetarian – a minority within

⁶⁸⁶ Jeffrey L. Tribble, Sr, “Ethnographic Research on African American Pastoral Leadership and Congregations”, in *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics*, 77-96 at 86-7.

⁶⁸⁷ Isasi-Diaz, *En la Lucha*, xii.

⁶⁸⁸ Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 60.

the Christian population, it is worth noting the possibility that data obtained will be skewed against the church. Individuals responding to a call to discuss their beliefs and experiences as a Christian vegetarian are presumably more likely to be those who have particular church experiences to share. Critical consideration of respondents' standpoints will be important if my work here is to be reliable, valid and generalizable. Also noteworthy is Swinton and Mowat's concept of ideographic knowledge, which "presumes that meaningful knowledge can be discovered in unique, non-replicable experiences,"⁶⁸⁹ as well as Astley's reminder that "Studying a person's ordinary theology is *not* the same as agreeing with it."⁶⁹⁰

The final question also concerns context: who is representative, and what do they represent? If I am drawing respondents from a variety of denominations, is it possible to get any context for comparison? I would answer similarly to the above: it will be necessary to obtain as much context as possible in the interviews.

Interviewing people will not reveal their theology in a way that we can understand, *unless* we can get them to talk about what this theology means in their practice, in their lives and in their culture. Better still, we should also seek to observe that behaviour, life and culture, as far as we are possible.⁶⁹¹

Admittedly it *would* be better "to observe that behaviour, life and culture," but for this thesis the time available in which to do so was limited. The next best option – getting respondents "to talk about what [their] theology means in their practice, in their lives and in their culture" – was pursued instead, in order to furnish each interview with sufficient context for adequate comparisons to be made. In addition, interviewing across multiple denominations can be as much a help as a hindrance: were I to discern a consistent theme of respondents feeling marginalised for discussing dietary ethics (for example), this theme will be more reliable and significant for an argument about Christian vegetarians *in general* if it comes from a wide denominational spread, than if it came from a group comprised entirely of Methodists.

⁶⁸⁹ Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 43.

⁶⁹⁰ Astley, *Ordinary Theology*, 121-2.

⁶⁹¹ Astley, *Ordinary Theology*, 116.

Testing the Methodology

I hope that my conversations with ordinary Christian vegetarians will serve a purpose beyond enabling situated reflection on Christian vegetarianism; that my use of social science methodology – informed by this thesis' relational emphasis and Astley's work on ordinary theology – might be a test of the method itself. By doing academic theology in conversation with ordinary Christians, I aim to contribute one more case study to the growing amount of work being done at the intersection of theology and ethnography. Contributing to the development of the method in this way fits (despite his own misgivings about social science) with Hauerwas' notion that theology should be constructed in conversation with the church.⁶⁹² In this way, my engagement with ordinary Christians is not merely methodologically but *theologically* consistent with the wider thesis. As already argued, if the church is to not just *have* but *be* a social ethic,⁶⁹³ its members should be doing ethical reasoning.

Isasi-Diaz, a Hispanic feminist theologian who engages with ordinary Christians from the Latino/a diaspora in the USA, is a valuable example of someone doing constructive theology in conversation with ordinary theologians. My dialogue partners (Christian vegetarians) are generally not marginalised in anything like the way hers (Hispanic women in the USA) are; and also unlike her respondents, mine are relatively privileged in terms of access to education.⁶⁹⁴ I would contend, however, that both groups exist on the margins (even if there is a notable difference in degree); and furthermore, that Isasi-Diaz and I share a common subject matter in questioning the boundary between the ordinary and the academic. In the introduction to *En la Lucha* she expresses her "hope that *mujerista* theology's method and insistence on the validity and importance of Latinas' religious understandings and practices will impact not only theology but also the churches and, through them, society."⁶⁹⁵ Abstracted from her context, the sentiments Isasi-Diaz expresses here apply just as well to my concerns in developing dietary pacifism: I hope that my insistence on the validity and importance of Christian vegetarians' religious understandings

⁶⁹² Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 131.

⁶⁹³ Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 99.

⁶⁹⁴ It should be highlighted that 'ordinariness' in a theological sense is not equivalent to a lack of education *per se*, but to a specific lack of formal theological education.

⁶⁹⁵ Isasi-Diaz, *En la Lucha*, xii.

and practices will impact not only theology but also the churches and, through them, society.

Conclusion

The use of qualitative semi-structured interviews in service to theology, ethics, and ecclesiology is not methodologically perfect. Put simply, this is because it spans a variety of disciplines and methodologies. For my purposes – reflecting on Christian vegetarianism in a situated and embodied way, developing and testing dietary pacifism in concert with ordinary Christian vegetarians, and testing both ordinary theology and the value of social science methodology for academic theology – engaging with the social sciences is necessary, if not uncontroversial. It is possible that the small sample size and self-selection mean that my data is not wholly generalizable; but neither are my own personal reflections, nor those of other academic theologians. That my personal experiences are not generalizable is no barrier to their role in informing, testing, and shaping my work – and the same is true for the ordinary theology of my interlocutors, so long as the data obtained is valid, reliable, and consistent.

Having reviewed some of the theological opposition to social science methodology, I hope that my research might contribute in a small way to the growing acceptance of ethnography's usefulness to theologians and ethicists. In the sense that what I am doing remains a relatively uncommon practice within theology today, my thesis is able to not only reflect on the place of dietary ethics within the churches, but also to test and potentially develop this way of doing 'ordinary' theology. This will involve listening to my conversation partners with an ear at once sympathetic and critical, and the analysis of chapter 8 will function as a test of their theology as well as mine; in addition to testing my presumptions about the former. In this thesis I aim to construct an ethic of dietary pacifism, rooted in a theology of human-animal relationality, which functions to draw the churches towards an open and reflexive debate which is largely not happening at present: my interview work and the analysis thereof will contribute to this end, and in so doing will also function deepen understanding of how (and/or how *not*) to do theology in conversation with non-academic Christians.

8. Dietary Heretics?

Reflecting on the Conversations

Having outlined the methodological basis for, and theological goals of, my engagement with ordinary Christian vegetarians, in this chapter I will reflect on the data gathered. In so doing, I am interested to test and develop the relational theology and dietary pacifist ethic of this thesis' first part; to further explore how situated church communities perform casuistry; to test whether my theoretical claims about church and diet are substantiated by lived examples; and to evaluate my methodological approach in pursuing these ends.

After conducting the interviews and performing an initial round of coding,⁶⁹⁶ reflection on the conversations largely proceeded by way of identifying and exploring potentially instructive relationships between respondents' beliefs, practices, and experiences. In this chapter, I will explore the following relationships, identified through the coding process as significant:

- *Relationship between* different Christian vegetarian themes
- *Relationship between* reasons for (initially) becoming vegetarian and Christian vegetarian themes referenced
- *Relationship between* thoughts on pacifism and Christian vegetarian themes referenced
- *Relationship between* personal ecclesiology and situated church experiences
- *Relationship between* situated church experiences and the danger of spiritual pride⁶⁹⁷

⁶⁹⁶ The transcribed interviews were coded using the qualitative research software, NVivo. Initially coding the data under 'free' nodes, re-reading and analysing the coded data allows a number of 'trees' to be drawn, identifying relationships between the respondent's beliefs, practices, and experiences. Analysis of these relationships and further development of the coding structure occur in an interrelated manner.

⁶⁹⁷ These are not the only relationships noted in the data; but for reasons of time and space, they are the relationships I will explore.

I will also, towards the end of this chapter, reflect on the methodology employed in the interview work which is this chapter's foundation; including the ordinary theology of Jeff Astley and my own presumptions in approaching this aspect of my research.

The initial reason for talking and listening to ordinary Christian vegetarians was to consider how ordinary vegetarian theology related to, and differed from, its academic counterpart. The interviews conducted did not disappoint on this account, but they did surprise: a surprise that stemmed at least partly from my naive assumption that ordinary theological reasoning would be substantially different from that conducted in the academy. Explicitly contextual⁶⁹⁸ and relatively unsophisticated⁶⁹⁹ it may be, but conscious and complex engagement with scripture and tradition was evidenced by all twelve respondents; and often the end product was closer to academic formulations than critics of doing ordinary theology might suspect. Alison, raised in a Mennonite context, offers one example of this:

Alison: The “organic” trend has given people the idea that they are making a soundly humane choice of cows are killed in some kind of happy way...but my experiences on a very sweet, small Kansas farm tell me that it is not just factory farms where abuse occurs.

Alison recognises the distance between perception and reality, echoing Carol Adams' critique of the farming industry's 'language of invisibility'⁷⁰⁰ which distances consumers from the animals whose deaths their diets depend upon. And reason is brought to bear on experience and theological inheritance when, in response to perceived cruelty, violence is disavowed with respect to other animals. While Alison does not consider what possible failures of casuistry led to abuses on her “sweet, small Kansas farm”, we should not think that a lack of systematization equates to a lack of theological significance. Indeed, Jeff Astley rebukes criticism of ordinary theology as unsophisticated or confused on the grounds that such criticism

suggests that it is only the academically sophisticated who will be taken seriously when they suggest that God does not (or that God does) intervene in human affairs – or that God is (or is not) finite,

⁶⁹⁸ Jeff Astley, *Ordinary Theology: Looking, Listening and Learning in Theology* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 60.

⁶⁹⁹ Astley, *Ordinary Theology*, 47.

⁷⁰⁰ Carol J. Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory, Tenth Anniversary Edition* (New York, NY: Continuum, 2002), 14.

that God is (or is not) a mere concept, or whatever. These theological positions, and many others, have been held both by academic theologians and by ordinary believers. It is, therefore, rather perverse to ignore, and worse to scorn, such beliefs when they are expressed by people with no theological education.⁷⁰¹

It is a similar case for individuals motivated by the reality that many of us are fortunate enough to live in a context where animals do not need to be raised for slaughter in order for humans to survive. Carol, a middle-aged woman who attends both Baptist and United Reformed churches, demonstrated this when she told me, “I don't believe we should be causing death and suffering in animals for something that's going to give us five, ten minutes at most pleasure, eating.” To claim that necessity is an absolute minimum condition for humans to consider eating animals is to affirm other animals as valuable individuals: that this affirmation is not explicit or systematised in no way diminishes its centrality to Carol's personal theology.

In moving, next, to reflect on the range of different Christian vegetarian themes drawn out during the conversations, I shall pay particular attention to how these themes interrelate within the personal theology of my dialogue partners.⁷⁰²

Relationship between different Christian vegetarian themes

Coding the way my interlocutors spoke about the connection they saw between Christianity and vegetarianism, three major themes – *environmental*, *anthropocentric*, *pacifist*⁷⁰³ – were identified to help understand how individuals understand and justify their faith-diet connection. The majority of my conversation partners spoke about their

⁷⁰¹ Astley, *Ordinary Theology*, 47.

⁷⁰² Some of the analysis present in this chapter was compiled and presented as Matthew Barton and Rachel Muers, “A Study in Ordinary Theological Ethics: Thinking about Eating,” in Jeff Astley and Leslie J. Francis (ed), *Exploring Ordinary Theology: Everyday Christian Believing and the Church* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2013), 169-77.

⁷⁰³ As will become clear through this chapter's analysis, recognition of nonhuman animals as relational individuals is a thread that runs through the responses of a number of my conversation partners; but the language of *relationality* is rarely used to articulate this, suggesting that some respondents' communities do not equip the characters they form with adequate conceptual resources to talk about relationships. A theology of human-animal relationality can work to amend this, offering a more developed foundation for Christian vegetarians who perceive their faith-diet connection in these terms.

theology and ethics with a breadth that saw their responses coded under all three headings; but four individuals in particular were interesting in that their responses were coded under only two. By reflecting on the relationship between two distinct themes in an individual's thought, we can hope to understand their ordinary theologies of vegetarianism in more detail; and constructively compare these with the animal theology explored in this thesis.

Helena (an Anglican in her twenties) and John (a Methodist in his twenties) gave answers coded under the *anthropocentric* and *environmental* trees. In chapter 2, I explored the relationship between anthropocentrism and environmental theology, and the common locus of 'stewardship' where they intersect: in considering how Helena and John fit this identified pattern, this earlier conversation is taken up, and its conclusions re-examined. Daisy and Kevin were also frequently coded under the *anthropocentric* heading; but instead of professing specifically environmental concerns they were also coded as *pacifist*. By considering Daisy and Kevin in contrast with Helena and John, the contrast between stewardship and dietary pacifism might be clarified; and an example of an anthropocentric pacifism concerned also for other animals might be provided.

Anthropocentric + environmental = stewardship?

Helena: Animals are a part of God's creation and we're stewards of that creation and so we need to care about all of it, not just a little bit... I think that's part and parcel of being a Christian is being compassionate on all creation.

John: I'd like to cut down my carbon footprint in any way I can, but ever since I heard how much carbon that the meat industry knocks out that I thought okay I can't legitimately be not a vegetarian anymore. So I think that'd be the core reason, I mean obviously beyond that there's a lot of good reasons for being vegetarian obviously if the whole world became vegetarian there'd be plenty more fields to grow crops and world hunger could be solved much easier etcetera etcetera but yeah primarily it's the carbon footprint really.

For Helena, vegetarianism proceeds from stewardship; defined as “being compassionate on all creation.” Other animals are to be cared for – whether one recognises them as relational individuals or not – because they are part of what has been entrusted to humanity by God. This is a hierarchical theology: humans top the created order, and for that reason bear the responsibility of stewardship. John emphasises the duties of stewardship yet more strongly: the impetus to steward creation ties into environmental motivations for vegetarianism and global justice concerns, like relieving world hunger. No specific mention of nonhuman animals is made.

In chapter 2, it was argued that stewardship theologies emphasise our responsibility to God to the extent that our shared mutuality with other animals is obscured. Without recognition of their relationality, the possibility of working for transformed relationships with our animal brothers and sisters is simply not an option. To see animals as our fellows is an eschatological act, dependent on God’s transformative grace; but it also depends on *seeing* nonhuman animals as relational individuals, in relation with whom – as a human creature of God, created *imago Dei* and so called to live for others as God is for me – my very humanity is at stake.

To make a specifically inter-human human parallel; in seeking to be the church, we are called to live for our fellow Christians as God is for us. This is an act of responsibility to God – it is what God calls the church to be – but at the same time it would be unusual for an individual Christian to see this as an act of relationship with God *only*. When we serve another, we are responding to God *and* relating to whoever we serve: the core theological argument of this thesis is that the same thing happens when we seek transformed relationships with other animals.

Helena’s and John’s primarily anthropocentric-environmental stewardship models fit broadly within the understanding of stewardship used in chapter 2. Helena does feel compassionate towards animals, but her definition of stewardship does not depend on concern for individual animals. John does not mention other animals when outlining his stewardship theology, and later declared he’d have no problem shooting a wild rabbit – particularly if said rabbit was a pest to farmers. This does not (necessarily) mean John is unconcerned with animal suffering: given the major environmental impact of the mass farming industry, clear delineation between concern for animals and concern for the environment is difficult.

Helena and John are not merely theologically consistent but are in the theological mainstream. The question for dietary pacifism, a model which exhorts and depends upon recognition of other animals as relational individuals – whose flourishing is furthermore bound up with our own – is whether stewardship is consistent with this recognition.⁷⁰⁴

Anthropocentric + pacifist = dietary pacifism?

Matthew: What would you say is central to your vegetarianism?

Kevin: I would say a love of God, and the world he has made, and the sort of creatures he has brought into being, um, through love of God love and respect for them ...

Kevin's written statement: My basic feeling and belief is that all life is 'good' and has value in the eyes of God, and the 'dominion' we have been given as human beings implies a duty of care. Lordship and authority, in the light of Jesus the Servant-King, is seen to be characterised by service rather than exploitation. My guiding principles, therefore, are that I should play my part in caring for Creation, only take life where it is necessary for health or survival, and work to minimise suffering.

Kevin – a middle-aged member of the Anglican Society for the Welfare of Animals (ASWA) – was typical of my conversation partners, in that he expounded a personal theology drawing on scripture and tradition, demonstrating serious ethical reasoning. In articulating a “duty of care” (similar but different to a ‘duty of stewardship’ in being explicitly *relational*) to other animals, expanding it to include avoidance of harm unless “necessary for health or survival,” Kevin draws together anthropocentrism and pacifism into something like an ‘ordinary’ formulation of dietary pacifism.

In *Ordinary Theology*, Astley distinguishes between *primary* and *secondary* learning of faith. The primary stage is *learning about religion*; being inducted into the narrative and language used to speak about God.⁷⁰⁵ The secondary stage is *embracing the faith*; seeking to understand what

⁷⁰⁴ Further discussion of stewardship, and how it might be redeemed in a relational direction, is undertaken in chapter 9.

⁷⁰⁵ Astley, *Ordinary Theology*, 25.

has been learned on a deeper level, and “to behave in a manner appropriate to the beliefs and affects that we have learned.”⁷⁰⁶ Besides being the stage at which genuine formation of character takes place, it is through *embracing* one’s *learning* that ordinary theology becomes personal: “The nature of this second learning will depend much more on the nature of the person and personality of the learner than does the first learning, in the sense that it will be more affected by our attitudes, emotions, cognitive skills, and so on.”⁷⁰⁷ Kevin’s testimony displays the learning context within which his Christian character was formed,⁷⁰⁸ while simultaneously embracing and embodying his faith by internalizing and acting on it in a way meaningful (and therefore, within Astley’s framework, salvific⁷⁰⁹) for him. For Kevin, knowledge of God’s love, creation’s goodness, and Jesus-as-servant could not be limited in their ethical significance to only the human part of creation. His dietary practice is in this way shaped by his “tradition-constituted, craft-constituted enquiry.”⁷¹⁰

Daisy, a charismatic evangelical in her fifties, shares Kevin’s concern to live peaceably alongside God’s other animals.

Daisy: They’re not just a commodity, they’re sentient beings and they feel pain, and they’re God’s creatures, particularly as they’re God’s creatures... I can’t see that a God of love would put animals on this earth for us to eat, I cannot see it.

Daisy and Kevin support my earlier suggestion that dietary pacifism might act as a theological corrective to problematically monodirectional models of stewardship. Both affirm commonality between human and nonhuman animals, recognising them as fellow creatures of God who are therefore deserving of love and respect and service. This commonality does not mean we are no different from other animals: it is a *theological* commonality, which sees us linked in the webs of relationship that constitute creation.

To return to chapter 2 of this thesis: “Our responsibility is to God, at the level of worship, and from there to all creatures, in both their

⁷⁰⁶ Astley, *Ordinary Theology*, 27.

⁷⁰⁷ Astley, *Ordinary Theology*, 31.

⁷⁰⁸ Astley, *Ordinary Theology*, chapters 1-2.

⁷⁰⁹ Astley, *Ordinary Theology*, 43.

⁷¹⁰ Alisdair MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry: Encyclopaedia, Genealogy, and Tradition* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), 83.

particularity (in so far as we can understand it) and their involvement in the wider networks of relationship which constitute creation.” In the time between resurrection and reconciliation, our stewardship is better understood in the language of 1 Peter 4:10 than of Genesis 1:28. We are not mere fillers and subduers but “good stewards of the manifold grace of God,” called to live out grace’s transformational potential with our human and nonhuman animal fellows. Kevin and Daisy provide two excellent examples of how anthropocentrism is not inherently problematic: as stewards of grace following Christ the Servant-King, we are freed to live for our animal brothers and sisters; not as custodians, but as partners.

Relationship between reasons for (initially) becoming a vegetarian and Christian vegetarian themes referenced

Cross-referencing the stories of how and why people first became vegetarian with the Christian vegetarian themes their conversation was coded under offered a straightforward way to consider the causal relationships between belief and practice (in this case, faith and diet). It should not be surprising to learn that those with formative concerns about animals and violence were much more likely to reference *pacifism* in relation to their vegetarianism. Those whose initial motivation for becoming vegetarian was not directly related to animals – such as those influenced by friends or family members – were more likely to reference *environmental* themes.

Carol, a middle-aged Methodist woman whose responses were primarily coded under *pacifist*, offers an example of the former:

Carol: I had for a long time thought about meat and where it came from, but I loved meat, loved eating meat and the taste of it and everything and cooking with it and everything, but later on moving towards Christianity and seeing the connection there and the suffering and everything that the animals went through... it was just so awful, and then I couldn't make the connection between being Christian and eating meat where so much suffering has gone.

What is arguably most notable about Carol’s response here is that, for her, becoming Christian and going vegetarian happen simultaneously! The

connection between animal suffering and the Christian call to lived transformed lives in creation was not something Carol put together over time, but was from the start a key element of her discipleship. Through learning the faith and learning about the treatment of food animals, she came to abandon the practice of eating meat – an example of the transformed relationality (and casuistry) this thesis argues for.

In all, seven respondents (Alison, Becky, Carol, Daisy, Fiona, Kevin and Mary) identified concerns about other animals and a belief in nonviolence at the genesis of their faith-diet connection. Three respondents (Erin, Helena and Lianne) evidenced a causal relationship between becoming vegetarian for reasons unrelated to other animals and justifying Christian vegetarianism using *anthropocentric* and *environmental* language (i.e., the language of stewardship).⁷¹¹ Take Helena, quoted above for her belief that “part and parcel of being a Christian is being compassionate on all creation.”

Helena: So I have a friend who is a vegetarian, she was actually vegetarian first and then became a Christian, and maintained her vegetarianism, and it's interesting because I think her reasons for being vegetarian have probably changed slightly in light of her becoming a Christian... she always challenged me on numerous issues, vegetarianism being one of them, and it was just one of those things that kinda niggled me really and I felt like actually reading a bit..

It is also worth noting that two respondents cited scripture when explaining their reasons for initially becoming vegetarian. Carol referenced the sixth commandment,⁷¹² arguing for its extension beyond the merely human. John, a vegetarian out of concern for the environment, referenced Mark 16:15⁷¹³ to support a claim that “the gospel is good news for all creation.” In both cases, scripture is cited to support the respondent’s understanding of Christian vegetarianism: Carol considers the sixth commandment a disavowal of all violence, while John uses the symbol of ‘spreading the good news’ to advocate the expansion of Christian care for creation. The

⁷¹¹ Two respondents, Ingrid and John, did not discuss their reasons for *becoming* vegetarian in a manner distinct from their *current* argument in favour of Christian vegetarianism.

⁷¹² Exo. 20:13 – “You shall not kill.”

⁷¹³ Mk. 16:15 – “He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.’”

exegeses performed by Carol and John are open to debate (as are all exegeses), but for the purposes of this analysis they demonstrate the claim that a causal relationship, between how and why one became a vegetarian and how one theologizes about it afterwards, exists.

Hauerwas' stress on casuistry, character formation, and learning from the community's saints⁷¹⁴ is consistent with the existence of a causal relationship between the example of friends and family members, and the decision to become vegetarian. Our character is shaped by our experiences and our relationships, and within the church these relationships are themselves informed by scripture, tradition, reason, and grace. If theology and ethics are linked in communal casuistry, and if exemplary Christians play a significant role in character formation, then it is to be expected that exemplary Christians *who are also vegetarian* might shape the characters of their brothers and sisters in this way.⁷¹⁵ From here, individuals who have come to understand their vegetarianism as theologically-motivated will further develop their personal theological ethics within the Christian narrative context.

We need to remember, though, that the process of formation is more nuanced (i.e., more messy) than Hauerwas describes: as an individual existing in the world as well the church, the Christian is rarely formed exclusively by the narrative of God and God's people. The language of *narrative* is useful for unpacking this: we might speak, for example, of a *vegetarian narrative* existing in relationship with the individual's *Christian narrative*. One's theology and one's dietary ethics change and develop simultaneously; and should the individual be concerned to live out the claim that theology is ethics, these two narratives need not develop along parallel lines but may converge and grow together. The story of one's diet and the story of one's faith – even if proceeding from entirely distinct starting points – ‘overlap’ both practically and theologically. Casuistry is paramount here: reflecting on our embodied commitments through the lens of the Christian narrative, we ask how the former fit into the latter. Dietary practices are one such embodied commitment, which Christians are called by grace to

⁷¹⁴ Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 70.

⁷¹⁵ Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 16.

examine critically and with love. A vegetarian who is also a Christian⁷¹⁶ might, through a process of discernment, come to understand their dietary ethic as one expression of a life lived in and for Christ: this was the case for Alison, who (as has been mentioned) learned and embraced her faith in a Mennonite context.

Alison: I've always admired the Mennonites I was raised amongst... many of my relatives are of a more conservative sect who are very obviously removed from mainstream life, and the strong commitment to pacifism. I have been confused, however, about the pacifist disconnect when it comes to animals and food. I really appreciated your emphasis on this point and the encouragement it gives me to re-brand my background into something that fits me better today.

Through personal casuistry, Alison has come to understand vegetarianism as an expression of Christian nonviolence, leading to her perceiving a “disconnect” between Mennonite theology and Mennonite dietary practice. Encouraged, by the simple opportunity to discuss her faith-diet connection, to “re-brand” her theological inheritance, she intends to engage with this disconnect and so move towards a more holistic outliving of her pacifist theology. The “pacifist disconnect when it comes to animals and food” which Alison perceives in her home church is one example of the *casuistical blind spots* discussed in chapter 6,⁷¹⁷ potentially leading to her feeling distanced from the community which first shaped her as a Christian. The church’s call to form truthful Christian characters includes the call to illuminate casuistical blind spots, enabling the bringing together of divergent narratives⁷¹⁸ by facilitating individual and communal moral discernment.

⁷¹⁶ In this way I distinguish between ‘a vegetarian who is also a Christian’ (wherein these two facts about the individual are not related in his or her personal theology) and a ‘Christian vegetarian’ (wherein these two facts *are* in some way related).

⁷¹⁷ Five points for further consideration can be made here, on the back of chapter 6’s discussion. 1) More work can be done to discuss vegetarian theology in the churches. 2) A Christian vegetarian ethic needs to be grounded in a systematic theology, as is the case for dietary pacifism. 3) Recognition of nonhuman animals as relational individuals is important for the extension of pacifism beyond the human creation. 4) Failures of casuistry at the local level lead individual members of the community to reconsider their personal theology, potentially moving away from the church in the process. 5) Dietary pacifists are ill-equipped to justify their faith and diet because not only animal and dietary ethics, but also pacifism itself, are rarely deemed suitable for church casuistry.

⁷¹⁸ This weaving together of narratives is not the preserve of ordinary Christians: the same occurs ‘behind the scenes’ of academic theology. It is true, however, that ordinary

But what, then, of those who became vegetarian because of the formative influence of friends or family members, and who later espouse a vegetarian theology devoid of concern for individual animals? What would it mean for my thesis – and my twinned arguments for relational dietary pacifism and church-centred casuistry – if those Christians shaped by *good* casuistry were actually less likely to become dietary pacifists than those initially influenced by concern for animals? I would cautiously suggest that such examples might actually emphasise the importance of communal casuistry, and of recognising other animals as relational individuals. If one's church community does not see the individuals outside its boundaries as morally significant,⁷¹⁹ and so does not engage in truthful casuistry on issues pertaining to them, one will be left to articulate their Christian vegetarianism with the conceptual and theological tools available to them. If, in such a situation, one adopts vegetarianism at the urging of a friend or relative, rather than as a result of seeing other animals face to face, then it logically follows that one will be less likely to develop a dietary pacifist ethic than a Christian who became vegetarian through personally experiencing and relating to other animals and their suffering. If church casuistry is to bring Christians to seriously consider dietary ethics, it is vital that it also brings them to see other animals as moral subjects; and therefore, at some level, as relational individuals.

Relationship between thoughts on pacifism and Christian vegetarian themes referenced

I turn now to consider the interplay between pacifism *in general* and the Christian vegetarian themes referenced by my dialogue partners. The seven respondents who referenced *pacifist* themes in defining their vegetarianism are, as one might expect, against the use of violence. This is not to say they are absolutist pacifists: all seven admitted exceptional circumstances under which the use of violence would be necessary, although tragic. World War II, and threats on one's life or the lives of one's

theology most readily displays its inner workings, its "learning process" (Astley, *Ordinary Theology*, 60) – this is why there is much to learn from talking with ordinary theologians.

⁷¹⁹ See the conversation with Hauerwas on abortion in chapter 4, and the argument that casuistical blind spots lead to the exclusion of 'heretics' in chapter 6, for examples of how those outside the church's boundaries are never only nonhuman animals.

family, were the most common circumstances cited. Becky, a middle-aged Anglican, offers one example:

Becky: [On vegetarianism] It's such a horrific thing that goes on, I can't think that God would be happy... for example, the chicken factory farming, and the slaughter of the sheep and how they have their throats cut without any, any warning, get herded up and killed and I just don't think he'd like it at all...

[On pacifism] I think if it was the First or Second World War, and you saw someone coming towards you with a gun - which of course they did in those days - or bombs, maybe you'd have to retaliate? And I think to myself would I, or wouldn't I? I don't know.

The presence of potential exceptions to her military pacifism, without accompanying exceptions to her dietary pacifism, might suggest for Becky the existence of a 'necessity clause': perhaps conditions of extreme necessity, for example, would legitimate the killing and eating of a fellow animal. As discussed in chapters 4-5, such a clause might be thought of as an analogue to just war theory, in that it establishes a general rule of nonviolence, to which there might be exceptions under certain conditions. For just war theory, the conditions of *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* are well-established (although still debated)⁷²⁰ – for dietary pacifism, the exceptional condition which might override nonviolence towards nonhuman animals is human survival (note: survival, not luxury). This argument from necessity was made by Kevin, cited above for the connection he draws between following Christ and serving creation:

Kevin: I'm not, I wouldn't describe myself as completely pacifist actually, I'm from a military family, my dad was in the army, and I've always regarded as far as war is concerned that kind of thing that in a sort of, for want of a better word a fallen world, that uh government has a limited but legitimate role in maintaining a degree of order and peace within the world, and in order to do that I think it's only realistic that uh a measure of force needs to be used... you can't sort of obtain the kingdom of God in that way, but you can uh put the lid if you like on some of the worst of evil. And I think it can

⁷²⁰ For a recent contribution to, and expansion of, the debate, see Mark J. Allman and Tobias L. Winwright, "Growing Edges of Just War Theory: *Jus ante bellum*, *jus post bellum*, and Imperfect Injustice", *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 32.2 (2012), 173-91.

be the lesser of two evils, sometimes, to do these things, and I'd to some degree take the same approach with animals... there can be situations I can foresee where sometimes taking life is the lesser of two evils and can be kind of necessary....

If I was uh in a plane crash in the Andes, uh I wouldn't, and there was no kind of food, vegetables or anything like that, from a vegetarian point of view to eat, then um I would not have a problem morally, even if I had a problem some difficulties emotionally, I wouldn't have a problem morally in eating dead passengers or indeed catching any sort of game that might be around if the vegetable sort of option was not there.

Violence is seen by Kevin as being in some cases necessary, although only ever as “the lesser of two evils” – a Christian realist position comparable to that of Reinhold Niebuhr.⁷²¹ This position finds support in chapter 5's outline of compromised idealism, both being rooted in Hauerwas' claim that Christians do what they do, “not because it is effective, but simply because it is true.”⁷²²

Kevin's argument from necessity extends to his diet, although the moral and relational esteem in which he holds nonhuman animals is suggested by his claim that conditions of extreme necessity would justify the eating of a dead human as much as it would the eating of a nonhuman animal. We can, however, infer that hunting a living human would not be legitimated in the same way that “catching any sort of game that might be around” would. A sacrificial understanding of flesh-eating, such as that advanced by Hauerwas and John Berkman⁷²³ or Norman Wirzba,⁷²⁴ is appropriately situated within the kind of argument from necessity Kevin advances. The foundational difference in *willing* between Christian self-sacrifice and the ‘sacrifice’ of an unwilling animal renders the sacrificial understanding of flesh-eating suspect in the context of (for example)

⁷²¹ The debate between Reinhold Niebuhr and his brother H. Richard, concerning the extent to which U.S. military involvement in Japan's invasion of China would be just, produced an exchange of articles which remain key texts in Christian debates over violence and pacifism. The articles can be found online at <http://www.ucc.org/beliefs/theology/two-famous-brothers-debate.html> [accessed 19 December 2012].

⁷²² Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 151.

⁷²³ Stanley Hauerwas and John Berkman, “The Chief End of All Flesh”, *Theology Today* 49.2 (1992), 196-208 at 208.

⁷²⁴ Norman Wirzba, *Food and Faith: A Theology of Eating* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), chapter 4.

everyday British life – but in conditions of extreme necessity, a sacrificial understanding of the animal's death leaves room for recognition of the animal as an individual, confession of responsibility for his or her death, and thanksgiving to God for one's continued survival.

Interestingly, only one respondent was absolute in his defence of human pacifism as a Christian ethic. This was John, whose *environmental* motivation meant that he was not vegetarian out of concern for animals in themselves.

John: [On vegetarianism] I'd be very happy to go hunting and kill and eat an animal myself and that doesn't bother me whatsoever. And actually having said that the meat I possibly would consider eating would be things like, um, 'cause I used to know a farmer I don't see him very often anymore, and he would go hunting wild rabbits which are just considered pests to the local farmers, so he shoots them and then gives them to people and that, so on the whole I haven't got a big problem with that, 'cause obviously the carbon emission of going out into a field near your home and shooting them. So those kinds of things I wouldn't have a problem with at all...

[On pacifism] Sunday just gone we got onto the topic of World War II, and we were saying what would it have been like if people had said no we're not gonna fight, and after that discussion I don't think there particularly is an excuse to fight in any circumstances... as an example the German people obviously were told by the Nazi government that people in Europe... are evil people. So therefore if the German army marched on these evil people it's okay to kill these people 'cause they're evil and we're just fighting for good. If they'd met thousands of people who said shoot us if you want, but all we want to do is show you love and kindness, then suddenly the whole Nazi argument that you know these countries are evil suddenly starts to fall apart in the eyes of the troops, and then if you don't have an army then there's nothing you can do...

Military pacifism, even in the face of mortal danger, is supported by John as a truthful outliving of Christian faith; and also as a strategy that can work⁷²⁵ in practice. This concern with practical impact diverges from Hauerwas' truth-centred idealism, and is potentially instructive in unpacking why the only respondent who advocated absolute *human* pacifism was theologically uninterested in *dietary* pacifism. For John, military pacifism can work, not only as a witness to the transformed relationships we hope for come the *eschaton*, but as a strategy to stifle war. To use Clough's typology outlined in chapter 5, John's pacifism is *strategic* where dietary pacifism is *principled*.⁷²⁶ His vegetarianism, as has been outlined, is motivated by the environmental concerns of stewardship: the concern here is not for individual animals but for creation-as-ecosystem.⁷²⁷ Understood in this way, universal pacifism practiced in relation to nonhuman animals is undesirable and unsustainable, if one is concerned with (among other things) functionality. In John's words, rabbits are "pests" – living nonviolently towards them can compromise both human flourishing and the ecosystem. Within his vegetarian theology, dietary pacifism quite simply does not work.⁷²⁸

In closing, a word should be said about George, a middle-aged member of Catholic Concern for Animals (CCA), whose vegetarian theology explicitly affirms the eschatological significance of nonviolence. Like Hauerwas in his foundational work,⁷²⁹ George invokes Isaiah's image of the peaceable kingdom, wherein the relationships between individual animals (including the human ones) will be transformed by their Creator.⁷³⁰

George: Perhaps being vegetarian could be described as a faith-based persuasion: in that hordes of humans will never care less about other creatures or the eventual destruction of the earth,

⁷²⁵ Given the small sample size – John is one of only three men interviewed – substantive claims cannot be made, but it is interesting that the only respondent who situated themselves as a pragmatist was male. For discussion of the intersection between gender identity and human-animal relationality, see Josephine Donovan and Carol J. Adams (ed), *Beyond Animal Rights: A Feminist Caring Ethic for the treatment of Animals*, (New York, NY: Continuum, 1996).

⁷²⁶ David Clough, "Understanding Pacifism: A Typology", in Hans G. Ulrich and Stefan Heuser (ed), *Political Practices and International Order* (Munich: Lit, 2007), 370-81 at 375.

⁷²⁷ In this way, John's personal theology is a close fit with the ecotheology critiqued in chapter 2: similarly, his realist pragmatism raises questions of hubris and the long-term consequences of our actions parallel to those raised over stewardship theologies.

⁷²⁸ The importance of a theology of human-animal relationality to dietary pacifism is in this way affirmed.

⁷²⁹ See Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*.

⁷³⁰ Isa. 11:6-13, 65:25.

therefore vegetarianism could be understood as a choice for the Kingdom rather than worldly ways.

Just as it is proper and Christian to work for sanctification in the church and the world – and just as the impossibility of absolutely attaining this does not render it wanton but rather faithful anticipation of the kingdom⁷³¹ – so it is with the call to live out transformed relationships with other animals. The struggle for existence is a feature of the fallen world,⁷³² but our inability to approximate the kingdom in no way means we should not strive for a foretaste of it. In moving from a lament that “hordes of humans will never care less about other creatures,” to the more optimistic belief that “vegetarianism could be understood as a choice for the Kingdom,” George succinctly summarises the compromised idealism underpinning dietary pacifism (see chapter 5). Ultimately, dietary pacifists look not to humans to end the suffering of other animals, but to God; without allowing recognition of our dependence to halt our efforts to work for God’s ultimate intention for creation.

Thus far, I have surveyed the personal theology of my ordinary respondents; looked at the relationship between different Christian vegetarian themes referenced, and how their initial reasons for becoming vegetarian fit with their wider theological commitments; and engaged with their beliefs about pacifism. Next, I will consider their reception – as Christian vegetarians – in their local church communities. Beginning with a consideration of their situated church experiences and their understanding of church, two avenues proceeding from this will be explored: the movement of ostracized ‘heretics’ into alternative communities of character; and the danger of spiritual pride which can arise when one is made into an outsider.

Relationship between personal ecclesiology and situated church experiences

⁷³¹ *Contra* Barth, whose criticism of vegetarianism as “wanton anticipation” of the kingdom was rebutted in chapter 5. See Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* III/4 (London and New York: T&T Clark, 1958), 356.

⁷³² Neil Messer, “Humans, Animals, Evolution and Ends,” in Celia Deane-Drummond and David Clough (ed), *Creaturely Theology: On God, Humans and Other Animals* (London: SCM Press, 2009), 211-27 at 224.

In chapters 4 and 6, Hauerwas was criticised for writing on the church as it should be (the ideal) at the expense of examining the church as it is (the real). In considering the relationship between the situated church experiences and personal ecclesiology of my conversation partners, I am interested to see how the ideal and the real shape each other: how are the individual's beliefs *about* the church be shaped by their experiences *within* it?

Ingrid, an older Baptist woman, outlined a personal ecclesiology which shares much with Hauerwas; particularly regarding the role of the church in forming Christian characters, and the importance of truthful casuistry rooted in scripture and tradition. Ingrid recently stopped attending her local church, feeling that neither casuistry nor communal respect were being practised.

Ingrid: I once suggested that we could have for Sunday lunch spaghetti bolognese made with soya. Oh my goodness! That was my only venture into ... how can you have this as a Sunday meal? You know, and then you would need to have different food for different people, um, now how can you – you need to have roast on Sunday, of course! But nut roast was not considered as an alternative either, you know ...

The rejection of soya bolognese as an option for the communal lunch may seem, at an academic level, a minor issue. Such a presumption, however, would only emphasize the need for a more nuanced understanding of communal casuistry: in the everyday life of real churches, such issues can have significant and potentially destructive impact. It is worth contrasting Ingrid with Kevin, who reported no strong feelings of exclusion as a result of his diet.

Kevin: I see the church as there to, people coming together to worship, for teaching and, well you know working together in mission, uh supporting encouraging each other, uh being a sign of God's love in the community, all kinds of things...

I think we should be uh counter-culture, I think that we should be thermostats and not thermometers...

I think it's uh, well currently people are quite polite about it. I think it's not totally understood by a lot of people. I found there's a

lot greater understanding now than when I first started, huge change over the years, big improvement.

For Kevin, the church is a counter-cultural community; an ecclesiological claim he does not use in any dietary critique of his church. One potential reason for this lack of criticism is that, in his own words, “there’s a lot greater understanding [of Christian vegetarianism] now than when I first started.” It certainly seems to be the case, at the national level, that vegetarianism is less counter-cultural than it has been in the past.⁷³³ This is not necessarily to identify the shift in attitude as proceeding from a generation gap; something Lianne, a young Anglican woman whose church contains a number of vegetarians, would reject in any case.

Lianne: I don't think it's a young, like a young-old divide like I think there are quite a lot of the older congregation that are vegetarian.

Generation gap or not, it seems it is decidedly less controversial now to be a Christian vegetarian than it has been in the past. Alison, who intends to “re-brand” her vegetarian theology in opposition to the “pacifist disconnect” she perceives between Mennonite theology and Mennonite dietary practice, offers an interesting contrast. This is because her home church is in Kansas, and there are no vegetarians there:

Alison: It's kind of viewed as un-American... many or most of them are convinced that God gave us animals to eat and that it is practically sacrilege not to partake...

Clearly some degree of communal reflection has been performed in her home church, although it may be debatable as to what extent their discussions have been *deductive* rather than *inductive*. Put another way, is Alison's hometown a small farming community because it believes it “sacrilege” to not eat animal flesh? Or did the narrative of a small farming community intersect with their Christian narrative, leading to an

⁷³³ A variety of surveys conducted over the last decade seem to indicate that the vegetarian population of the UK, as a percentage of the total population, has fluctuated but not significantly increased: an array of these surveys and their findings can be found at <<http://www.vegsoc.org/page.aspx?pid=753>> [accessed 18 December 2012]. However, the growing number of people who limit their meat intake for health reasons has led to vegetarian- and vegan-appropriate products being increasingly easy to find – arguably, this increase in vegetarian produce is tied into an increasing acceptance of vegetarianism as a dietary choice.

interpretation of Acts 10:13⁷³⁴ which reads it as commanding, rather than allowing, the killing and consuming of other animals?

The interview data threw up many examples of communities which do not seriously engage with those members who have well-developed vegetarian theologies; and almost as many examples of this behaviour generating dissatisfaction and resentment in those pushed to the margins. Daisy spoke of being seen as “extreme, or a bit wacky,” and of being accused of misinterpreting scripture: having engaged in truthful personal casuistry, this was an accusation she felt strongly about, saying, “It’s turned me against some of my Christian peers, and I shouldn’t let it do that, but I can see how it could.” Fiona, a middle-aged member of ASWA, relayed a similar story.

The church? I think they think we’re all barking ... I do get quite irritated I have to say. I get, um, slightly resentful...

I know there’s quite often you know sort of slightly sarcastic comments made about me because I am the one who’s always cracking on about animals, and they know that given half the chance I will always bring it up, and if ever I’m asked to do prayers I will always slot animals into it somewhere. I mean I’m tolerated and people aren’t unpleasant but I do think they think I’m a bit of a crackpot, and I get very, very little support for anything I do, so you know nobody ever comes to my services... that’s quite a depressing side of it really...

Ignorance or rejection of the theology behind one’s ethics – in this case, ignorance or rejection of vegetarian theology – is clearly a negative experience. Even more troubling are those instances where casuistry on dietary ethics appears to have been rejected out of hand, leaving the Christian vegetarian with no engagement in his or her community, without providing a tangible justification for their isolation. Having criticised Daisy’s interpretation of scripture, at least some members of her local church are prepared to engage, at some level, in discussion of dietary ethics. Fiona, and others among my dialogue partners, felt marginalised without ever being engaged in real conversation. Subject in this way to the tyranny of the majority, such individuals have no opportunity for sustained dialogue:

⁷³⁴ Acts 10:13 – “Then he heard a voice saying, ‘Get up, Peter; kill and eat.’”

their learning context, wherein they were formed in such a way that personal casuistry led them to adopt vegetarianism, comes to implicitly reject their particular way of embracing the faith. When attendances at the services in which Fiona is involved are noticeably lower than normal, such rejection has arguably become explicit.

The concerns of Ingrid, Daisy, and Fiona mirror my own, outlined in chapter 6: if casuistry is not practiced honestly and reflexively, the communitarian idealization of the church can lead to the marginalisation of its ‘heretics’, by obscuring the myriad personalities and prejudices present in any community of individuals. As noted in that chapter’s discussion, Hauerwas anticipated this problem when he wrote that “the church should learn to value her heretics.”⁷³⁵ The call to casuistry incorporates the call to value the heretic⁷³⁶ – to honestly enter into conversation with those whose theology differs from one’s own – and this needs to be taken seriously by academic ecclesiology if it is to be relevant for situated churches and ordinary theologians.

As a result of their community’s antipathy, whether reached through casuistry or in absence of it, Christian vegetarians can come to feel marginalised. More than this, they can become self-consciously aware that what they feel convicted to is deemed esoteric or wrong. The peace of the kingdom in which we hope, the transformative power of grace, the person of Jesus Christ, the relational work of the Spirit, and the communal importance of casuistry all indicate that a church which does not work to

⁷³⁵ Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 107.

⁷³⁶ It should be noted that the meaning of ‘heretic’ is a complex matter, whatever context the term is used in. In the sense used above, it may simply be that a ‘dietary heretic’ is one whose ordinary theology has led him or her to pursue a dietary ethic which is notably divergent from the wider community. The definition may be more focused than that, if we understand a heresy to be something which the heterodox deem vitally important, but which the wider community deems irrelevant, inaccurate, or harmful. The need for reflection on this point is emphasised when we recognise that so-called heretics rarely identify themselves as such: rather, ‘heretic’ is a label applied by the ‘orthodox’ majority. It is not uncommon in such a case for the heretic minority to, in turn, label the majority as heretics themselves!

Some within the emerging church movement further complicate matters by speaking of the *importance* of heresy within a Christian context: under this view, embodying heresy is a way of empowering oneself while simultaneously challenging the wider community. In the discussion of alternative communities of character to follow, we find some Christian vegetarians who are empowered by their heretic status: but if this empowerment comes only through finding an alternative community wherein one is in the majority, is it really empowerment-by-heresy at all? See Pete Rollins, *How (Not) to Speak of God: Marks of the Emerging Church* (London: SPCK, 2006), and Kester Brewin, *The Complex Christ: Signs of Emergence in the Urban Church* (London: SPCK, 2004).

better incorporate its marginal members is not living out its first social task – it is not being the church.

Some respondents raised the issue that the reason for their marginalisation might run deeper than mere ambivalence:

Carol: Yeah, in no way do I want to ever cause a rift or anything like that, that's what I believe in, and if people want to ask me about that that's fine, I'll answer it, but it always seems like they've got to defend themselves when they're talking to me, and I find that quite odd because they've asked me the question.

Carol is asked about her diet, explains it, and receives a defence of flesh-eating in response: while debatably preferable to the total avoidance of casuistry, one cannot escape the conclusion that this is not a genuine discussion. Rather, it seems to be a result of Carol's questioners deciding that "they've got to defend themselves." The very presence of a Christian vegetarian, a member of the community with a heterodox faith-diet connection, might be seen as an implicit challenge to unreflective meat-eating (and the underlying notion that there are elements of our creaturely practice which do not need to be touched by grace). This is parallel to the way in which military pacifism is an implicit (sometimes explicit) challenge to unreflective militarism and patriotism.

I would like to suggest that one mechanism at work here is that identified in chapter 6: the acceptance of sociocultural norms and practices as distinctly *Christian*, something in danger of happening wherever the church has a casuistical blind spot. The gap left by the blind spot is filled by sociocultural presumptions, which are retroactively defined as 'Christian' without being theologically defined, or even appropriate. What we eat can be one such practice: in seeking to illuminate the casuistical blind spot that dietary ethics can be, Christian vegetarians like Ingrid, Daisy, Fiona and Carol come to be perceived as heretics. To repeat myself from chapter 6; "To recognise the blind spot is to admit the need for fresh moral reflection – but if the majority stance on the relevant issues is not theologically but *culturally* rooted, resistance to any effort to illuminate the blind spot can be expected."

We find an analogue to this situation in Acts 10:13, wherein Peter is told to get up, kill, and eat. As discussed in chapters 5-6, this revelation is

one part of the wider narrative of Christ's loving sacrifice bringing an end to the law. Wirzba writes that

For Peter to protest that he has never eaten anything that is profane or unclean is another way of maintaining that he is a good Jew. God's vision challenges Peter to reconsider his dietary practices because these are being used as the basis for exclusion. The designations clean and unclean are here shown to be an excuse to deny fellowship and limit hospitality to others... This is an exceedingly difficult message for Peter to appreciate, suggesting how deeply eating practices are tied to personal and ethnic identity.⁷³⁷

As seen in the experiences of marginalization (or hereticization) reported by my interlocutors, designations of 'right' and 'wrong' (or 'clean' and 'unclean') can become justifications for limiting community with those who make one uncomfortable. The reason Wirzba gives for this denial of fellowship is distinctly not one tied to the Jewish theology of the time: instead, it is a result of eating practices being deeply connected to personal and ethnic identity. In a British context at least, ethnic identity may not be an important factor in Christian debates over food (despite remaining hugely significant elsewhere): rather, personal and national⁷³⁸ identity are the factors which can lead to Christian vegetarians being ostracized by their brothers and sisters.

It would seem that holistic and reflexive casuistry is ecclesiologicaly vital if dietary pacifism is to be communicated in the churches. If our theology is our ethics, and the church forms our character, animal and dietary ethics – like all embodied matters – are questions which casuistry cannot avoid. When casuistry is not practiced on topics which are religiously significant to individual members of the community, those members might come to seek the nourishment and relationship they do not find in local church elsewhere, in alternative communities. Fiona, whose concerns about being seen as a "crackpot" have been quoted, is one example of this:

⁷³⁷ Wirzba, *Food and Faith*, 171. It should be noted, as discussed in chapters 5-6, that something's status as ritually pure does not equate to it being morally unproblematic.

⁷³⁸ For a rich and detailed discussion of "food nationalism" and its surrounding issues in a British context, see Ben Rogers, *Beef and Liberty* (London: Vintage, 2004).

Fiona: It is really quite depressing really, if I think about it too much. I mean thank God I've got people, you know sort of like my fellow committee members, so I do know that there are other Christians who do care about animals, because I think if I didn't have them it would actually be quite a lonely old journey actually.

An avoidance of animal and dietary ethics, to the extent that services by “the animal welfare crackpot” are apparently avoided by some members of the congregation,⁷³⁹ has caused Fiona to feel frustrated and isolated in her local church, leading to her increasingly identifying with ASWA. Like other alternative communities of character, ASWA is not part of a defined church structure, and does not conform to the paradigm of the local congregation. Despite this, shared concerns with extra-ecclesial organisations such as ASWA, CCA, and the Christian Vegetarian Association UK (CVAUK) can lead marginalized individuals to identify with, and so become shaped by, the communities these organizations are. Whether the “lonely old journey” to which Fiona refers would be continuing as a vegetarian, continuing as a member of her local church, continuing as a Christian, or some combination of these is unclear (and so could have been explored further in the interview); but what *is* clear is the community and quality of relationship she finds in ASWA, tragically absent from her local church. Carol and Alison provided similar testimony, with regard to CVAUK and its American equivalent (CVA).

Carol: I went to a conference last year with the CVAUK ... And I must admit that I felt so, so good there because I was with people that were like-minded and I've never come across people that have been, you know, with that kind of attitude before.

Alison: The CVA group was really encouraging ... Not to feel such the weirdo.

Ordinary Christian vegetarians like Fiona, Carol, and Alison find the fundamental ingredients of the church-as-community in organizations like

⁷³⁹ It must be noted that Fiona's statement is in itself insufficient evidence that members of her church community are actively avoiding services to do with animals: hearing only one side of the story, as it were, obscures possibilities such as Fiona being insecure, or her services being avoided for reasons other than scepticism concerning her theological ethics. In the context of our hour-long discussion, however, it does seem likely that her church community has not accommodated her vegetarianism; and that this exclusion, by denying particularity to animals and a listening ear to Fiona, is anti-relational in a sense entirely opposite to how the church is called to witness to the world.

ASWA and CVAUK. Without the physical proximity of typical congregations, it might seem that the opportunity for such alternative communities to be involved in Christian formation is limited. The learning context of CVAUK, for example, can play an important role in *developing* the character and theological ethics of its members: however, except for notable exceptions like Carol (for whom adult conversion to Christianity and the adoption of vegetarianism are related), or instances where a new member is the offspring of one or more CVAUK parents, it is unlikely that many will begin their education into faith there. This does not reduce the significance of what CVAUK does do as a community: character is developed and shaped, and casuistry performed. A learning context is provided, rooted in scripture and tradition, which is open and sympathetic to the narrative of ordinary Christian vegetarians. In short, alternative communities of character can become the vital “network of giving and receiving”⁷⁴⁰ for ordinary Christians who feel marginalized in their local church.

There is, however, a danger that organizations like ASWA and CVAUK, being communities oriented to a specific ethic, may invert their theology and casuistry so that vegetarianism becomes the *end* and Christianity the *means*. This natural (which is to say, sinful) temptation is memorably portrayed by C. S. Lewis’ *Screwtape* as “Christianity And”:

What we want, if men become Christians at all, is to keep them in the state of mind I call “Christianity And.” You know – Christianity and the Crisis, Christianity and the New Psychology, Christianity and the New Order, Christianity and Faith Healing, Christianity and Psychical Research, Christianity and Vegetarianism, Christianity and Spelling Reform. If they must be Christians let them at least be Christians with a difference...⁷⁴¹

The thing to do is to get a man at first to value social justice as a thing which the Enemy [God] demands, and then work him on to the stage at which he values Christianity because it may produce social justice... You see the little rift? “Believe this, not because it is true, but for some other reason.” That’s the game.⁷⁴²

⁷⁴⁰ Alisdair MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues* (London: Duckworth, 1999), 142.

⁷⁴¹ C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters: with Screwtape Proposes a Toast* (London: HarperCollins, 1959), 135.

⁷⁴² Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*, 126-7.

This temptation is noted by Alison, who is something of an outlier in this section, in as much as the negative reception of vegetarianism in her home church seems to have engendered few ill-feelings.

Alison: I think we have to be careful not to feel superior about this enlightenment... and ask ourselves if we get some kind of secondary gain out of being different.

Alison is more wary about this “secondary gain” than others among my conversation partners, cited below in considering the danger of spiritual pride which can arise from experiences of rejection and marginalisation. Ultimately, hers is a witness which confirms the reality that the church needs genuine casuistry – wherein individuals are reflexively and relationally open to the other – if it is to avoid resentment and ill-feeling between vegetarian and meat-eater alike. This is a message that extends far beyond dietary ethics, and it is one the church needs to take on board sooner, rather than later.

Relationship between situated church experiences and the danger of spiritual pride

It should be noted that reports of negative experiences in particular churches do not necessarily indicate something negative about those communities. Such reports might equally indicate that the churches are being held to an unfair standard. This is not to deflect the reality of what the interview data suggests;⁷⁴³ that many church communities are uninterested in casuistry on animal or dietary ethics, a position which indicates a lack of loving concern not only for other animals but for the Christian vegetarians marginalised as a result of their heterodox beliefs. That said, certain statements by some of my dialogue partners, examined in the context of their situated church experiences, suggest that negative communal experiences may foster feelings of pride in those rendered outsiders on account of their diet.

Consider Lianne, the only respondent whose local church contained a significant number of vegetarians. Lianne reported the most positive

⁷⁴³ Although it is bad form to make something quantitative out of qualitative interview data, it seems worth mentioning that out of the 47 pieces of data coded in relation to church casuistry, 4 were coded *positive*; 6 *neutral*; and 37 *negative*.

church experiences, at the same time expressing caution about being too forceful with her vegetarian ethics:

Lianne: In my church the majority of people understand why other people are vegetarian, and I think it's you know it's very acceptable to be vegetarian there...

Yeah, I would like it [the Student Christian Movement] to just be vegetarian, I think any organisation which claims to be socially aware doesn't really have an excuse for serving meat at things, but then I'd perhaps say that about individuals which is really hypocritical because you know like I said I've only been vegetarian since October it took me a long time to get there as well, so you know it would be great if it was a vegetarian church but you know I totally understand why it's not. And then there's the issue of you know imposing your views on other people as well.

Lianne's humility, arising from recognition of her own recent adoption of vegetarianism, gives rise to both patience and forgiveness with respect to her meat-eating brothers and sisters – a way of relating to them which respects their individuality and recognises shared mutuality. Becky, who shares Fiona's negative experiences of discussing dietary ethics in a church context, offers an interesting contrast: she wants her church to get involved with vegetarian campaigns, claims to “never hurt or do anything to anybody,” and expresses the belief that her illness is a punishment from God for having eaten flesh in the past.

Becky: If they could think hard about what they're doing... Like the Veg4Lent, try it see how you get on...

I can honestly say I never hurt or do anything to anybody or anything, and I save every blinking insect in the world, everyday I'm getting things out of the house and putting them out, and if I see other people doing it I say stop stop please let me deal with this, even if it's a really big spider I have to go and save it. I think I'm like that with most things, I have to save things...

Yeah, I want to say about the MS I've got and vegetarianism, I was a complete carnivore when I went MS. In my local group, 99% of the people attending are carnivores, so I wonder even if it has a bit of a bearing on me developing MS, and I think well maybe that is

another punishment from God for always having the meat, and not many people even have organic! They do have the traditionally-reared – horribly – meat.

This is not a straightforward case, and the suggestion that Becky here exhibits a blind spot about her pride is a subjective one. However, the possibility of her illness being a punishment for meat-eating indicates a belief that to do so is an abhorrent and anti-Christian sin. This casts stern, if implicit, judgement on “99%” of her local MS group; particularly so if the “99%” have the “traditionally-reared – horribly – meat.” Without debating her retributive account of divine justice, it should simply be noted that Becky’s theology of judgement is significantly divergent from the relational theology underpinning dietary pacifism: chapter 3’s theology suggests that the balance of divine justice is the creation and restoration of right relationship; anticipation of which should lead us to treat other animals better than fear of punishment ever could.

It is an unfortunate but regular consequence of disenfranchisement that those so disenfranchised will come to identify themselves over-against that from which they have been excluded. This identity-through-opposition is precisely what Yoder warns his Mennonite community – and the church catholic – against:

Such a systematic rejection of the wider world becomes a hidden dependence upon it. Whatever the outside society does, we must do otherwise. Thereby the church is dependent upon the world which she rejects but which she still permits to dictate the patterns of her rejection.⁷⁴⁴

This dependence on defining oneself *by what one is not* stifles genuine casuistry: a refusal to countenance what the other does, solely because the other is doing it, is a move away from any truly situational approach to moral reasoning. In the words of Lewis, speaking through Screwtape,

Any small coterie, bound together by some interest which other men dislike or ignore, tends to develop inside itself a hothouse mutual admiration, and towards the outer world, a great deal of pride and

⁷⁴⁴ John H. Yoder, *Nevertheless: The Varieties and Shortcomings of Religious Pacifism* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1971), 104.

hatred which is entertained without shame because the 'Cause' is its sponsor and it is thought to be impersonal.⁷⁴⁵

Pride, understood in the Augustinian sense as “putting oneself (or the group identity one represents) in God’s place,”⁷⁴⁶ is destructive of right relationship with our fellows; both human and nonhuman. In this thesis, I have argued that grace’s transformative potential calls us to perceive particularity and relationality outside the merely human; but if concern for one’s animal brothers and sisters leads one away from right relationship with one’s fellow *humans*, then the sin of pride is still at work in the relational networks that constitute church and world. We are called to live for others as God is for us – whenever we live only for other humans, or look down on our human brothers and sisters for not eating like we do, we fall short of this call. *Romans 14 is not only pertinent to the meat-eating majority*: the compromised idealism which beckons us to not “do anything that makes your brother or sister stumble” (14:21) swings both ways.

When casuistry is performed inductively rather than deductively, in avoidance of the critical balance that comes through reading scripture *against* as well as *for* oneself,⁷⁴⁷ all that can be achieved is at best a kind of sham reflection, its conclusions sketched in outline before ‘debate’ begins. To take one representative example, in a CVAUK newsletter Genesis 1:29-30 is referenced, without further substantiation, as leaving “no doubt that in God’s perfect world, all living creatures were created as vegans, except humankind, they were created in God’s image, so their diet was more stringent; seeds and fruit, a fruitarian diet, a diet that did not even kill plants.”⁷⁴⁸ In another example from the same newsletter, Jubilees 6:6-8⁷⁴⁹

⁷⁴⁵ Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*, 32-3.

⁷⁴⁶ Alistair McFadyen, *Bound to Sin: Abuse, Holocaust and the Christian Doctrine of Sin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 135.

⁷⁴⁷ Stephen E. Fowl and L. Gregory Jones, *Reading in Communion: Scripture and Ethics in Christian Life* (London: SPCK, 1991), 41-2.

⁷⁴⁸ Christian Vegetarian Association UK Newsletter, 9 (2009), 4.

⁷⁴⁹ Jub. 6:6-8 – “And behold I have given unto you all beasts, and all winged things, and everything that moves on the earth, and the fish in the waters, and all things for food; as the green herbs, I have given you all things to eat. But flesh, with the life thereof, with the blood, ye shall not eat; for the life of all flesh is in the blood, lest your blood of your lives be required. At the hand of every man, at the hand of every beast will I require the blood of man. Whoso sheddeth man’s blood by man shall his blood be shed, for in the image of God made He man.” Taken from <http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/jubilees/6.htm> [accessed 18 December 2012].

is manipulated to argue that God *commanded* vegetarianism in Genesis 9:3-4⁷⁵⁰:

God did not want man to eat anything, no thing, that contained blood; flesh with its blood means just that. The original text was compromised to make it appear that only 'blood' was the sin, while all along, the killing of any living thing with blood was the real crime.⁷⁵¹

Such a reading (exclusively *for oneself*) runs close to what Webb calls the "conspiracy-theory" model.⁷⁵² Given the broad consensus in the Jewish tradition about what the prohibition of blood constitutes, to argue that the real intention was a total prohibition of meat is a bold and contentious claim, lacking historical and scriptural support. This criticism, however, does not obscure the other side of the problem – church communities that marginalize those members with heterodox dietary ethics. If we are to note where alternative communities of character fall short of the paradigmatic church community, we must remember that 'real' churches fall short too – something of which conversation with ordinary theological ethicists is bound to remind us.

Evaluating the Methodology

Near the beginning of this chapter, I noted that my ordinary Christian conversation partners shared personal theologies which were more consistent with the tradition and academia than expected. Although (arguably) more informed by personal experiences, and less critically rigorous, most of the theological and ethical claims made stand up to theological scrutiny (which is not to say that extrapolation or expansion was never necessary for this to be the case) and are consistent with currents in contemporary academic theology. Simultaneously, there were a small

⁷⁵⁰ Gen. 9:3-4 – "Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you; and just as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything. Only, you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood."

⁷⁵¹ CVAUK Newsletter, 9, 29

⁷⁵² Stephen Webb, *Good Eating*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2001), 103. Richard Young offers another example of the "conspiracy theory" model, which is simultaneously an example of the wrong way to construct a vegetarian theology, in his discussion of whether Jesus, or the disciples, or the writers of the New Testament ate meat. Richard Young, *Is God a Vegetarian? Christianity, Vegetarianism, and Animal Rights* (Chicago and La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1999).

handful of theological claims – most notably Becky’s implication that MS might be a divine punishment for eating meat – that stood outside mainstream Christian traditions and theologies in such a fashion that the possibility of reconciliation with these would seem remote. It remains the case that engaging with ordinary Christian vegetarians was a necessary step to protect my thesis against the ecclesiological pitfall of moving too quickly from theoretical claims to practical proclamations; but in light of the breadth and depth of responses, I would suggest that academics seeking to engage constructively with ordinary theological voices view their data gathering as foundation and start point, rather than critical conversation partner for a constructive theology. It should also be remembered that, although the effort is commendable, some ordinary theological claims (as with some academic theological claims!) may not be reconcilable, even within a theological methodology (such as mine) sympathetic to engaging with theologians outside the academy.

One place where my conversation partners diverged from my own constructive work in this thesis was on the topic of stewardship. In addition to my presumption that ordinary Christians would impart theologies quite different to theologies emerging from universities (including but not limited to my own), I was surprised at the strong presence the language and theology of stewardship had within the personal theologies of a number of my conversation partners; particularly Helena and John. While in chapter 2 I argued against the relevance of stewardship theology for dietary pacifism, on the grounds that it undermines human-animal relationality – and, therefore, the potential for grace to work to transform how we see ourselves relating to them – this was manifestly not the case for the ordinary theologians I spoke to. If Christian vegetarians are content to use the language of stewardship, it seems sensible to assume that the non-vegetarian mainstream will be no less comfortable; and so, for the good of the constructive and debate-stimulating ends of this project, it will be necessary to ascertain whether a more sympathetic understanding of stewardship theology is possible (assuming, that is, that stewardship and my theology human-animal relationality are at all compatible).

Conclusion

Talking to ordinary Christian vegetarians, and reflecting on the conversations, has enabled me to draw a number of conclusions, and identify a range of topics for further theological exploration. Perhaps most importantly, failures of casuistry at the local level indicate the need for further work to be done, at the nexus of academy and church, to develop dietary pacifism and the theology of human-animal relationality which is its foundation. Comments about the disconnect made by some Christian pacifists with regards to nonhuman animals further emphasise this lack of resources; as well as highlighting how, in churches where pacifism is not discussed, Christian vegetarianism is even harder to maintain.

Casuistry is of vital importance for any church which seeks to genuinely be a community of character, forming and shaping its members to go into the world as disciples of Christ. As reflection on the relationship between personal ecclesiology and situated church experiences revealed, if a church engages in honest casuistry, its unorthodox members (which will generally include vegetarians) are more likely to be positive about – and seek to further understand their discipleship within – the community. If a church cannot or will not engage in this casuistry, it can be reasonably expected that vegetarians in these churches will increasingly identify with alternative communities of character; such as CVAUK, CCA, or ASWA. Further to this, experiences of being ostracized for what is essentially an act of ordinary theological praxis – witnessing in practice to beliefs about God and other animals – can foster the spiritual pride so destructive of transformed relationship.⁷⁵³ Truthful casuistry is paramount.

Chapter 3's theology of human-animal relationality is largely supported by the data drawn from the conversations. Highlighted at numerous points in the analysis of this chapter was the reality that the practice of nonviolence towards other animals theologically depends on them being recognised as relational individuals. Those who became vegetarian as a result of concern for animals were more likely to reference *pacifist* themes than those who did not. John's *environmental* concern with creation-as-ecosystem meant that he was not concerned with individual nonhuman animals, and so practicing pacifism towards them was

⁷⁵³ It might be suggested (albeit without substantiation beyond conjecture) that Becky's theological claim, that MS might be a punishment for meat-eating, is one by-product of her being ostracized and unreflectively criticised for her heterodox dietary ethics.

unnecessary. In looking at the dangers of spiritual pride that arise when one defines oneself over-against one's community, the destruction of right relationship (understood theologically as a refusal of the sanctification grace can bring) that can proceed from this further emphasises the centrality of transformed relationality to Christian ethics; ethics of diet included.

As mentioned above, I was surprised in the course of my conversations by the important place *stewardship* held for a number of my conversation partners (primarily, but not exclusively, those who referenced *environmental* themes). Further to chapter 2's critique of stewardship, it will be constructive to return to it in chapter 9 with fresh eyes, given its importance for ordinary Christian vegetarians. In the course of this examination – taking place as part of a broader consideration of how the church should approach its role as a community of relational creatures – stewardship's problems will not be forgotten. If our status as creatures made *imago Dei* is allowed to obscure the mutuality we share with other animals, stewardship might still reinforce harmfully anthropomist theological paradigms; but if there is space for recognising other animals as relational individuals, stewardship might yet be able to function as part of a relational dietary pacifist theology.

The compromised idealism at the heart of Christian ethics was highlighted in a number of conversations about necessity and meat-eating (for more on which see chapter 5). Absolutist pacifism is undeniably a lofty goal from which we will inevitably fall short: it is important to recognise this, but simultaneously to recognise that violence is not therefore automatically legitimated in certain circumstances, and that pacifism is truthful Christian practice whether we perform it perfectly or not. Humility and eschatology are vital to maintaining a dietary pacifist ethic: we do what we do not because it will 'work', or because we know we will succeed, but because we know it is true. We strive for sanctification in our practices not because we think we can achieve it on our own, but because striving in this way is an act of thanksgiving to the God whose grace justifies us. To be a dietary pacifist is not a claim to sainthood but a claim to sinfulness; with the attendant desire to work earnestly for reconciliation in full awareness of the fact that, without grace, we will never get there.

Chapter 9, this thesis' conclusion, will take up the range of ecclesiological and theological topics raised above – and, by bringing them into dialogue with the theological and ethical work of this thesis thus far, will furnish an answer to the question first posed in chapter 1. *How should the church live and eat as a community which attends seriously to the all-pervasiveness of sin in creation, in the hope of sanctification by grace and the ultimate hope of the kingdom?*

9. Conclusion: Radical Inclusivity

The Church in the Community of Creation

In the interests of correcting, only very slightly and only for my own work, Jeff Astley's observation that ordinary theology more readily displays its inner workings (i.e., the process of its formation and development through the situated experiences of the theologian) than academic theology,⁷⁵⁴ I would like to begin this final chapter by highlighting that the thesis' relational emphasis was not present at the beginning of my research. This is not noted in the interest of self-criticism or false modesty, but to stress that the connectivity between theology, ethics, and ecclesiology grew organically, so that the very evolution of the thesis became methodologically vital to its conclusions. I began by conducting a literature review of Christian vegetarian theology and ethics, and from there moved to speak to ordinary Christian vegetarians: through reflecting on the experiences of rejection and marginalization articulated by my dialogue partners, while simultaneously developing the theological framework for dietary pacifism, the centrality of *relationality* became apparent. In other words, I started by asking questions about diet, which led to questions about difference; which led, in turn, to theologizing about the church-as-community *at the same time* as thinking through that same community's relation to nonhuman animals.

Relationships within the church community (between vegetarians and meat-eaters, say) and relationships within the community of creation (between humans and other animals, say) are themselves intimately related, to the extent that one cannot reflect on human-animal relationality and dietary ethics without *also* thinking through how the church eats together as a community (and what they eat, when and why they eat it, and how it's procured). If human flourishing is bound up with animal flourishing such that unreflective meat-eating is not simply a destructive means of relating to other animals, but is a danger to the humanity we are called towards, it follows that the formative human community of the church should not be excluded from analysis (even in a project specifically

⁷⁵⁴ Jeff Astley, *Ordinary Theology: Looking, listening and learning in theology* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 60.

concerned with human-animal relationality). Bringing relational theology to bear on these questions made clear the need for a theology that recognises human difference – as those creatures made in God’s image and given the chance to choose grace – but does not make an idol of it.

This thesis has attempted to carry the insights of relational theology beyond inter-human relationships, into the animal creation; and to explore the theological, ethical, and ecclesiological implications of taking such a step. In this concluding chapter, I will first present an overview of the progression of the thesis up to this point, including a summary of the thesis conclusions thus far. I will then proceed to suggest, and begin to explore, ways in which theologians and churches might answer the question first posed in chapter 1. *How should the church live and eat as a community which attends seriously to the all-pervasiveness of sin in creation, in the hope of sanctification by grace and the ultimate hope of the kingdom?* In short – how should the church live and practice as a community of human animals in the wider community of creation? In answering this question attention will be paid to the theology of table fellowship; how humans might learn from other animals; lived examples of the church relating to animals; and the possibility of ‘redeeming’ stewardship, by moving it out of anthropomorphism towards the relational theology underpinning dietary pacifism.⁷⁵⁵ The radical inclusivity advocated in this thesis – the extension of Christian love across species boundaries – may appear strange to those outside the church; but it is my contention that it should not look this way to those inside the church, the task of which has ever been to witness to the world that its way of doing things is not the ultimate.

Thesis Summary

Having outlined in **chapter 1** the motivation for theologically exploring human-animal relationality (and attendant questions of diet), and the methodological considerations involved therein, I began in **chapter 2** with a survey of stewardship theology – arguably the most common Christian model for emphasising responsibility to the environment and other animals.

⁷⁵⁵ Any one of these topics could receive a chapter (if not a thesis) of their own – in the interest of broadening what is a niche field within theology, I am suggesting and conducting a preliminary exploration of a range of topics, rather than focusing in greater depth on just one.

The survey concluded that stewardship was inadequate for conceptualising how we are called to act in creation, as an elected animal among our fellow creatures: stewardship limits relationality and responsibility within creation, depicting human responsibilities to other animals as an act of service to God alone, and so leaving no room for appreciation or consideration of human-animal relationships, or the ways in which our flourishing is coincident with theirs. The myriad intertwined relational networks of creation – humans, other animals, environment, and God bound up together – is reduced by most models of stewardship to a monodirectional system of feudal accountability. Recognition of other animals as relational individuals cannot be sustained within such a framework: this was demonstrated by reflecting on criticisms of ecotheologies which accuse them of valuing biodiversity over the welfare of individual creatures.

In **chapter 3**, a theological framework of human-animal relationality was developed, to address stewardship's limitations when it comes to talking about nonhuman animals. Examining the doctrines of creation, *imago Dei*, the Trinity, dominion, covenant, incarnation, sin, and eschatology, a case was made for viewing other animals as individual creatures with relationality and responsibility of a kind; even if this kind is not always recognisable or understandable to humans. We are called to act in the world, not in accordance with our compromised will but with the will of God; and we are to do this by accepting grace, and the sanctification it can work. If God's will – revealed in God's own nature, covenantal action, and the Incarnation – is that we are to live out transformed relationships, living *for* others in anticipation of the kingdom, then to attempt to limit this call to right relationship to inter-human interactions only is to profess a disturbingly limited understanding of how comprehensively we are in need of redemption and reconciliation. How humans relate to other animals will not be the same as how they relate to other humans – but this neither means it is a non-theological issue, nor that what is 'natural' is the same as what is right.

Chapters 4-5 developed, in conversation with the pacifist and communitarian theological ethics of Stanley Hauerwas, an ethical model built upon the theology of chapter 3. This is a theological ethic of dietary pacifism, rooted in the idea that how we relate to other animals needs transformation no less than how we relate to other humans. If the ideal of nonviolence is an act of eschatological anticipation, to be understood as the

standard for Christians even if we cannot always live up to it, it is suggested that – as an act of worshipping our dynamically relational God – pacifism might, with some nuance, be extended to human-animal relationships. In this way, my theology of human-animal relationality gives rise to an argument in favour of pacifism (where possible) towards other animals. Dietary pacifism is (compromised) idealist, and communal while being integrationist with respect to other species – it is a theological ethic of Christian vegetarianism which does not seek to establish the kingdom in the world, but anticipates the perfection of nature through grace which awaits us at the end of history.

Chapters 6-8 expand on the theological ethics of the thesis' first part, moving to consider the testimony of a selection of Christian vegetarians, obtained *via* interview. Their personal theologies of diet, their personal ecclesiology, and their situated church experiences as vegetarians were all explored, in the twin interests of evaluating church casuistry on animal and dietary ethics, and further developing the theological ethics of the thesis' first part. My own presumptions, and the (ordinary) theological methodology I utilised in approaching the interview work, are also evaluated in chapter 8. Chief among the findings was that recognition of nonhuman animals as relational individuals was a (theo)logical fit for a dietary pacifist ethic. A major concern was raised over the course of these conversations, however, about the neglect of relational and casuistical practices in specific church communities, to the extent that Christian vegetarians who found themselves in a minority were criticised, teased, or even ostracized by their brothers and sisters in Christ. Church communities which cannot – or will not – deal with difference among their human members will surely struggle to recognise the mutuality we share with nonhuman others: these inabilities to relate to otherness are theologically linked, and theologically problematic. If grace calls us to look anew at how we relate to other animals, how much more than this does it place on us the impetus to take seriously the personal theology of our fellow Christians?

To summarise the conclusions of the thesis thus far, I would point first to the conclusions of chapters 2-3 as justifying my theological interest in human-animal relationality. The most common formulations of stewardship theology, which can serve to obscure human-animal commonality, remind us that our historic and popular ways of thinking about

animals are overwhelmingly and unjustifiably anthropocentric. If, however, we admit animals to our systematic theological thinking – which there is no good reason to avoid – then it becomes apparent that it is not only our inter-human relationships that can be transformed by grace, penultimately in this fallen creation and ultimately come the kingdom. As Stanley Hauerwas has argued, theology is ethics; and so the realisation that human-animal relationships are subject to grace means we need to look carefully at all the ways in which we relate to other animals – including dietarily. In chapters 4-5, the argument was made that a theology of human-animal relationality, in concert with the Christian ethic of nonviolence, calls Christians to at least consider the possibility of vegetarianism (dietary pacifism) as a legitimate and theologically-warranted act of discipleship. The reality that, as sinful creatures in a fallen world, we are unable to practice a perfect diet – even if we wanted to – is insufficient reason to avoid striving to live more responsibly to our animal brothers and sisters. We will not see an end to war this side of the kingdom, but that does not mean we should not work for peace: the same logic holds true for dietary ethics.

Reflexive, communal, and prayerful reflection will be needed on the part of those who are looking with open eyes at their dietary practices; and this casuistry, this situated moral discernment, is part of the church's authority and responsibility as the body of Christ. As was explored and argued in chapters 6-8, however, the church is often not as competent or willing in its casuistical practice as one might hope. Casuistical blind spots, which are formed whenever a community accepts cultural (rather than theological or ecclesial) standards as normative, act as obstacles to genuine and holistic casuistry. Heterodox church members, among them dietary pacifists, can struggle to be heard or taken seriously as a result of this unreflective acceptance of *cultural* norms as *Christian* norms; and this is complicated whenever individual churches or Christians would rather leave an ethical question unexplored than risk facing challenging questions for their own belief and practice. There is a theological impetus on the church, at the organisational and local levels, to engage in prayerful and reflexive casuistry, which includes the willingness to engage with difficult questions, and to treat seriously the theology and ethics of those whose views diverge from the majority and/or one's own. Given the ethical conclusion of this thesis (that is, dietary pacifism), this impetus clearly

extends to thinking – at the individual and communal level – about questions of dietary ethics, being a subset of questions about how humans relate to other animals.

The church needs to ask how it should live and practice, as a community of human animals in the wider community of creation. Through exploring table fellowship, relating to other animals, and returning to stewardship, I will now present some of the ways in which church communities might approach these questions. This will serve the interest of bringing the diverse narratives of this story towards a conclusion, while simultaneously taking preliminary steps to resource the church to employ relational theology in its casuistry on animal and dietary ethics. This chapter serves more to open up further areas for discussion which proceed from the argument of the thesis, rather than to place a capstone on the work done here. For a thesis on human-animal relationality, relatively unexplored in both theology and ethics, this seems appropriate. In concluding this chapter, I will present a summary of its preliminary explorations, before drawing the thesis as a whole to a final conclusion.

Table Fellowship

The lead title for this chapter, “Radical Inclusivity,” plays on the “radical inclusion” which Joshua Furnal perceives in the table fellowship of Jesus during his ministry.⁷⁵⁶ Although Furnal’s particular attention is on the sacrament of the Eucharist, I would like to extend his conclusions to thinking about table fellowship more generally, with a view to demonstrating how our eating as a community reflects and impacts upon how we relate to the nonhuman other in creation. This is not, should it need to be said, to deny the centrality of the Eucharist to the life of the church: as Stephen Webb has argued, it is indeed the one meal which puts all other meals into perspective.⁷⁵⁷ But if, as Hauerwas argues, the church’s temporal significance is that it is a “community of character”,⁷⁵⁸ shaping the characters of those within it so they view the world through Christian

⁷⁵⁶ Joshua Furnal, “A Theology of the Table”, *New Blackfriars* 92 (2011), 409-14.

⁷⁵⁷ Stephen Webb, “Against the Gourmands: In Praise of Fast Food as a Form of Fasting”, *The Other Journal* 19 (2011), 2–13 at 2 and 12-13.

⁷⁵⁸ Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981).

eyes,⁷⁵⁹ then it follows that *all* the church's meals – from catering church councils to informal cafe bible studies – are material for the development of a deeper understanding of our place alongside God's other relational creatures.

Noting that, "In Mark's brief account of Jesus' ministry, there is a significant place given to the role of food or eating,"⁷⁶⁰ Furnal draws this recurrent theme into continuity with the overarching scriptural narrative, pointing to the food of Eden, manna in the wilderness, and the diet prescribed in Leviticus as Hebrew Bible instances of God hosting God's people around the dinner table: "By providing food for His people, God teaches them what it means to rely on Him for their sustenance each day. In and through these meals, God invites His people to join Him in an intimate fellowship, by which I mean partaking of a meal where He is both host and provider."⁷⁶¹ Commenting on Jesus' table fellowship, Norman Wirzba appears sympathetic to such a reading, writing that, "The gospels frequently show Jesus eating with people because table fellowship is among the most powerful ways we know to extend and share in each other's lives."⁷⁶²

Pointing to the apparent offensiveness of Jesus' radically inclusive table fellowship in the eyes of certain Jewish authorities, Furnal discards interpretations which see this offensiveness as lying in a rejection of the Pharisaic conception of ritual purity.⁷⁶³ Rather, he accepts E. P. Sanders' idea that conflict with the Pharisees, in the context of table fellowship, came about because Jesus was "associating with, and offering the kingdom to those who *by the normal standards of Judaism were wicked*."⁷⁶⁴ The kingdom of God, represented in table fellowship, is extended beyond the

⁷⁵⁹ This claim is supported by Jeff Astley's argument that the move from *learning about religion* to *embracing the faith* is influenced in large part by one's initial learning context; which will usually be the church. Astley, *Ordinary Theology*, 20-32.

⁷⁶⁰ Furnal, "A Theology of the Table", 409-10, referencing Diemar Neufeld, "Eating, Ecstasy, and Exorcism (Mark 3:21)", *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 26 (1996), 158. It is unnecessary to limit this realisation to Mark's gospel in particular: Barbara Rossing points out that "There are at least ten meals in the Gospel of Luke", and Laura M. Hartman discusses Jesus' fasting and feasting across the synoptic gospels. Barbara Rossing, "Why Luke's Gospel? Daily Bread and 'Recognition' of Christ in Food-Sharing", *Currents in Theology and Mission* 37.3 (2010), 225-9 at 226; Laura M. Hartman, "Consuming Christ: The Role of Jesus in Christian Food Ethics", *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 30.1 (2010), 45-62.

⁷⁶¹ Furnal, "A Theology of the Table", 410.

⁷⁶² Norman Wirzba, *Food and Faith: A Theology of Eating* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 147-8.

⁷⁶³ Furnal, "A Theology of the Table", 411.

⁷⁶⁴ E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 187.

boundaries of those who are seen as morally upstanding – in Jesus’ choice of dinner partners, the radical inclusivity of the *eschaton* is laid bare, and it is scandalous. In the words of Jan Michael Jones, the table fellowship of Christ “recreated the world, redrew all of society’s maps and flow charts.”⁷⁶⁵

Warning that “the mistake of the church has been to think that the Eucharist is the *only* table fellowship”⁷⁶⁶ – a mistake which neglects all other meals, as well as those humans outside the church – Furnal goes on to propose that Jesus’ table fellowship in fact *collapses* the boundaries of church and world. The radical inclusivity of the table stresses that, in the end, *church* and *world* are imperfect human designations: what we live, and hope, and work towards is neither church nor world but the kingdom of God. A direct revelatory example of this, explored in chapters 5 and 8, is found in the proclamation to Peter to get up, “Kill and eat” (Mk. 10:13), which Peter interprets as God demonstrating how the kingdom spreads beyond Jewish tables into the rest of the world (10:28). The table fellowship of Christ is

not an exclusive membership where only some are invited. Rather, it is a radically inclusive process that changes our behaviour towards being for other people and opens up dialog between persons... [T]his table fellowship is not only a representation of the kingdom of God but also an embodiment of it. When Jesus said to his disciples at his last meal, “Do this in remembrance of me,” it was not a command to institute merely a religious ritual, but rather an instruction to the Church to continue embodying the kingdom of God through table fellowship which is open for all the world.⁷⁶⁷

Furnal argues convincingly that table fellowship was theologically and ethically central to Jesus’ ministry, and is now a primary embodiment of the kingdom in the world – the radical inclusivity that invites all to eat around the table, regardless of status. One is reminded of Paul’s scolding of the wealthy and greedy Corinthians who brought plentiful and exotic fare to communion which they did not share with their fellows (1 Cor. 10:23-32,

⁷⁶⁵ Jan Michael Jones, “Tasting the Kingdom of God: The Meal Ministry of Jesus and Its Implications for Contemporary Worship and Life”, *Worship* 74.4 (2000), 329-65 at 347-8.

⁷⁶⁶ Furnal, “A Theology of the Table”, 412.

⁷⁶⁷ Furnal, “A Theology of the Table,” 413-4.

11:18-29)⁷⁶⁸ – if we do not strive to overcome, through grace and reflexivity, our sinful proclivities towards self-preservation and tribalism, we implicitly reject the grace which God miraculously offers us.

Two key points from the thesis are pertinent to these observations: the first is the call for humans to pray and work for sanctification in how they relate to other animals (human and nonhuman); the second is human distinctiveness within creation, as creatures with the power to relate to our animal fellows destructively or charitably. Parallel to Alistair McFadyen's claim that it is through communal participation in the dynamic relationality of the triune God that one comes closer to being fully human,⁷⁶⁹ Furnal contends that Jesus' table fellowship gives us "a picture of the fulfilment of what it means to be human."⁷⁷⁰ I would not wish to diverge from their argument so far as to argue that the radical inclusivity of the table be extended so that all animals are invited to share in meal times (although there would be nothing sacrilegious about doing so). Rather, it is my contention that just as it is through table fellowship that we come closer to being fully human, so it might be that the practice of table fellowship around a *vegetarian* table – where as few as possible of our animal brothers and sisters have suffered and died to provide the fare – extends the table fellowship of Christ and the radical inclusivity of the kingdom to all our fellows, beyond boundaries not only of race, nationality, age, gender, class, and acceptability, but also of *species*.

The physical location of the nonhuman animals we extend fellowship to, when it comes to eating, is irrelevant. That is, it is not necessary for a place to be laid at the dinner table for pigs and cows and chickens in order for our eating – understood in the language of self-giving – to make room for others. In a world where most of the cruelty inflicted on our animal brothers and sisters remains invisible, their narratives unheard

⁷⁶⁸ Commenting on the way in which table politics fed into and was fed by the status hierarchy accepted as normative in Greco-Roman society, Christian Scharen writes: "The Lord's Supper depended on and reversed this status hierarchy, following the logic of the Lord whose meal it was, who took the form of a servant, and died for all, even the least. Rather than reinforcing a ritual of self-serving social hierarchy, the Lord's Supper as a social practice depends on one becoming servant to others and becoming one with the body." Christian Scharen, "Ecclesiology 'From the Body': Ethnographic Notes toward a Carnal Theology", in Pete Ward (ed), *Perspectives on Ecclesiology and Ethnography* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 50-70 at 51.

⁷⁶⁹ Alistair McFadyen, *Bound to Sin: Abuse, Holocaust and the Christian Doctrine of Sin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 239.

⁷⁷⁰ Furnal, "A Theology of the Table", 413.

and their selves uncared for, the very act of eating sympathetically is radical inclusivity of the kind typified in table fellowship of Christ. To invert the admonition of Jesus to the Pharisee who invited him for dinner (Lk. 14:12-14), it might be suggested to modern eaters that, “When you give a banquet, *don’t* invite the cow, the pig, the chicken, or the fish. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.” Again, this is not the same thing as saying that genuine Christian table fellowship *requires* a vegetarian table: rather, it is about proposing one potential act of genuine relationship⁷⁷¹ with nonhuman animals, in recognition of our shared mutuality and the ethical, ecclesiological, and ontological implications of responding to them in love.

Responding to concerns that the setting of a vegetarian table – as an act of solidarity with nonhuman animals – might seem excessive or outside the realms of acceptable Christian practice, Andrew Linzey emphasises both the creatureliness (and therefore physicality and situatedness) of table fellowship, and the reality that no element of our lives fall outside our relation to God:

There is something distinctly odd, even perverse, about an incarnational spirituality that cannot celebrate our relations with other creatures. I am getting a little tired of theologians who are eager, sometimes over-eager, to see incarnational resonances within almost every area of human activity (art, music, poetry, dance) but who look with astonishment at the idea that our relations with animals might be an issue worthy of spiritual, nay incarnational, concern.⁷⁷²

A vegetarian table fellowship not only radically includes our fellow animals,⁷⁷³ but emphasises commonality and serious engagement with

⁷⁷¹ Returning to chapter 3; a genuinely relational act “is one which is in the first place attentive to one’s relationship with God (and so gives thanks for grace), and in the second place attentive to both the particularity and relationality of the other (and so treats them as an individual who is also member of myriad relational networks, with loving concern motivated and shaped by the unmerited grace which the triune God extends to us).”

⁷⁷² Andrew Linzey, *Animal Rites: Liturgies of Animal Care* (London: SCM, 1999), 15.

⁷⁷³ A question might be raised at this point concerning the extent to which this understanding of a vegetarian table fellowship – which could be characterised as ‘inclusion *via* absence’ – depends on the context within which it is enacted. In other words, does the radical inclusivity of vegetarian table fellowship depend on meat-eating being a majority practice? Is inclusion *via* absence necessarily counter-cultural? My response is that vegetarian table fellowship does not *depend* on being counter-cultural: as an act which expresses solidarity with creatures who are undeniably other, it is a

those human members of the community with divergent dietary ethics – it is both conducive to the transformation of our relationality and consistent with Paul’s exhortation in Romans 14:21.⁷⁷⁴ Eucharistic eating, in which the practice of self-giving relationship around the table invites Christ to abide in us (Jn. 6:53-56), “alters the relationships that make up our lives, gives them a self-offering character, and in doing so changes the practice of life itself.”⁷⁷⁵ Table fellowship, being a visible, communal, and embodied Christian practice, deserves to be taken as seriously by the churches as it is by Furnal. The implications for animals of such a shift in understanding are enormous, not least because they are fundamentally linked to a shift in the understanding of the animal other.

Nonhuman animals are relational creature of God, with whom we are called to relate in a manner reflective of grace’s transformative power and the kingdom towards which we look and live and hope: their flourishing in creation is so intimately bound up with ours that destructive ways of relating to them are in fact destructive for our very humanity. If this theological truth is recognised and accepted, it follows that many of our current ways of relating to other animals – mostly notably the myriad perverse relationships that constitute the networks of factory farming – are open to serious and critical questioning. If, as I have argued in this thesis (and as has been substantiated *via* conversation with ordinary Christian vegetarians), human-animal relationships as are encapsulated in factory farming are improper and harmful for both human and animal flourishing, it follows that new ways of relating to our animal brothers and sisters are necessary. By engaging in eating practices that consciously exclude other animals from the list of acceptable foodstuffs, we enact a relationship that affirms the mutuality we share with other animals, and thus simultaneously work for their flourishing and (as disciples of Christ) our own. I now move to consider broader acts of radical inclusivity which seek to live out the transformation grace promises for our lives and relationality.

performance of radical inclusivity regardless of the majority diet within mainstream culture. That said – and this is the case in Western Europe and North America at the very least – it can *also* be an act of prophecy which witnesses to the transformative power of grace over our selfish wills and self-oriented relationality.

⁷⁷⁴ Rom. 14:21 – “It is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that makes your brother or sister stumble.”

⁷⁷⁵ Wirzba, *Food and Faith*, 155. Note the distinction to be made between this *self-offering* and the *other-offering* Wirzba places at the heart of his sacrificial understanding of eating (critiqued in chapter 5).

Radical Inclusivity: The Church and Nonhuman Animals

Helen Waddell's collection *Beasts and Saints* – a compendium of early Christian hagiographies detailing the relationships between saints and a wide variety of nonhuman animals – has already been cited and discussed, in chapter 3 of this thesis. The lives of the desert saints, and their transformed relationships with nonhuman animals, which Waddell collects and relays are neither “wanton anticipation”⁷⁷⁶ nor human innovation; they are a witness to the work of grace and Spirit in the world, and a looking ahead to the end to violence we will experience in the *eschaton*.

With this precedent for particular and relational engagement between the church and the animals of the world in mind, I intend to consider another source which emphasises human-animal relationship, concerned with discipleship in the present which looks to the future. This is Andrew Linzey's *Animal Rites*, a project undertaken by the forefather of vegetarian theology to address what he perceives as a poverty of animal-friendly liturgy and practice – primarily in his native Anglicanism, but more generally across Protestantism and most broadly across the church catholic. The purpose of turning to *Animal Rites* is not to highlight and comment on innovative liturgy, but to show one possible way in which church communities can take seriously the status of God's nonhuman animals as relational individuals – a way which, it should be noted, does not necessarily require vegetarianism in any or all of the celebrants.

Concerned that “prayers for animals appear an aberration,”⁷⁷⁷ Linzey suggests that this perception on the part of the church indicates an excessive and hubristic anthropomorphism, and the presence of a theology which either fails or refuses to apply the practical significance of creation, election, covenant, sin, Incarnation, and eschatology to those parts of creation which are not human.⁷⁷⁸

Although animal blessings are not uncommon, there are sections of the church where they are still resisted or viewed with suspicion. It

⁷⁷⁶ Barth, *CD III/4*, 356.

⁷⁷⁷ Andrew Linzey, *Animal Rites: Liturgies of Animal Care* (London: SCM, 1999), 1.

⁷⁷⁸ Linzey, *Animal Rites*, chapter 1.

is difficult to see the theological grounds for this resistance. Indeed, animals have a claim infinitely superior to many other current recipients. Only a very muddled church practice can entertain blessings for battleships or automobiles, not to mention whaling ships, but cavil about blessing animals who are God's own creatures and whose Spirit gifts them the 'breath of life' (Gen. 1:30).⁷⁷⁹

Two examples from *Animal Rites* illustrate what Linzey believes the church to be missing. The first is an interesting parallel to the saints collected in *Beasts and Saints*: while the Desert Fathers and Mothers ate with and taught nonhuman animals, Linzey recounts the tale of "the unusual twelfth-century cult of Saint Guinefort who was in fact a greyhound. According to legend, the dog saved a child from an attack by a serpent but was falsely accused and killed,"⁷⁸⁰ and a cult developed which venerated the greyhound as a saint who could protect children. Whether deemed apocryphal, heretical, both, or neither, Saint Guinefort stands as a marker of a time when the artificial dichotomy drawn today between humans and other animals – lamented by David Clough in his argument for species-uniqueness⁷⁸¹ – was not upheld by the church; a time when the diversity of creation was recognised and rejoiced in without collapsing the particularity of its nonhuman parts into an unrealistic monolith.

The second example is a prayer attributed to St Basil:

Enlarge within us the sense of
fellowship with all living things,
our brothers the animals to whom you
gave the earth as their home in
common with us.

We remember with shame that in the past
we have exercised the high dominion
of humans with ruthless cruelty
so that the voice of the earth
which should have gone up to you
in song, has been a groan of travail.

⁷⁷⁹ Linzey, *Animal Rites*, 101.

⁷⁸⁰ Linzey, *Animal Rites*, 10.

⁷⁸¹ Clough, *On Animals*, 72-7.

May we realize that they live not for
us alone but for themselves and for
you, and that they love the
sweetness of life.⁷⁸²

Recognition of particularity and commonality underpins a prayer of confession and intercession, not on behalf of nonhuman animals – as if humans were the priest-stewards of creation Moltmann imagines them to be⁷⁸³ – but on behalf of humans, to the end that humans and other animals might be brought closer together, to more closely image the dynamic relationality of God, and more faithfully live out the covenant of Hosea 2 (discussed in chapter 3).

Stressing the significance of liturgy in a distinctively Hauerwasian tone, Linzey writes that

We ‘learn’ our faith through liturgy, that is, through the regular recital of words and the performance of actions which focus our deepest beliefs. Our beliefs also concern and affect our understanding of animals. To leave animals out of liturgy is to take them out of our spiritual cognizance of the world. It is to leave them where for the most part they still are: peripheral objects, marginal to our concerns, unrelated to our thinking about God the Creator. The old adage remains true: Christians are, what Christians pray.⁷⁸⁴

In chapters 4-5, Stanley Hauerwas’ emphasis on narrative tradition and character formation – through internalising, understanding, discussing, and reflecting on the tradition in a community of faith – were drawn into the construction of dietary pacifism. In chapters 6-8, these elements of the Hauerwasian framework were brought into further conversation with the “ordinary theology” of Jeff Astley; in particular, with his argument that as individuals grow in faith, they move from *learning* the religion to *embracing* (i.e., internalising) it.⁷⁸⁵ The church’s responsibility is not merely to transmit the core of its narrative tradition to its individual members: if the church is truly to be the body of Christ in the world, *how* faith is taught and *what* is included in its practice and worship are of vital importance. Understood in

⁷⁸² Linzey, *Animal Rites*, 2; attributed to St Basil.

⁷⁸³ Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: An ecological doctrine of creation* (London: SCM Press, 1985), 190.

⁷⁸⁴ Linzey, *Animal Rites*, 13-14.

⁷⁸⁵ Astley, *Ordinary Theology*, 25-7.

this way, Linzey’s astute observation that “To leave animals out of liturgy is to take them out of our spiritual cognizance of the world” is of paramount importance – not only for the sake of our animal brothers and sisters, but for the very *being* of the church. This much was implicitly recognised in chapter 8 by Fiona, one of my conversation partners, who spoke of trying to “slot animals in” whenever she had the chance to lead prayers; an action intended to bring nonhuman animals before the spiritual gaze of her fellow Christians. A liturgy lacking the majority population of creation is a liturgy which teaches that there are limits to God’s concern, to the efficacy of grace, and to the extent to which our sin-ridden lives require transformation. A liturgy devoid of animals is not anti-Christian; but is it Christian?

Beyond emphasising, in broad strokes, the extent to which we are intertwined with God’s other relational creatures, liturgies such as that written by Linzey for animal burial⁷⁸⁶ can perform this lesson in a way that expresses loving solidarity with grieving humans while simultaneously recognising our commonality with other animals. Linzey notes with regret that “The ‘religion of the flesh’, as Christianity has been described, is curiously unable to relate its incarnational theology to the real world of ordinary people who love their companion animals and who dare to think that a God of love might care for them too.”⁷⁸⁷ A memorial service for a dead pet witnesses to the value of the individual animal, while at the same time being a loving and compassionate act towards the animal’s erstwhile owner. If inter-human relationships are (potentially) the fullest realisation of what it means to be created *imago Dei* – are in fact how we learn to reflect Christ in the world – then animal memorial services make clear that inter-human relationality is necessarily bound up with how we relate to other animals. To deny a memorial service in such a situation is not only to deny the value and individuality of a creature of God; is not only to neglect Paul’s ecclesiological advice in Romans 14:21; is not only to reject the pet-owner and their particular loss and sorrow – it is to deny the complex and embodied relationality which draws together humans, other animals, and our mutual Creator.

In chapter 6, I quoted Robert Jones’ claim that churches will struggle to perform truthful discernment on disability issues if disabled

⁷⁸⁶ Linzey, *Animal Rites*, chapter 9.

⁷⁸⁷ Linzey, *Animal Rites*, 16.

narratives are not present and told in the community;⁷⁸⁸ a claim supported by Wirzba's argument that reconciliation depends upon people dwelling together "in ways that allow them to see and learn each other's pains and joys, their limit and potential."⁷⁸⁹ As I have argued throughout this thesis, there is no good theological reason to limit this truth to the merely human creation: animal stories need to be told in churches if Christian communities are to avoid animal and dietary ethics becoming casuistical blind spots. Animal liturgies are one way of bringing animal stories into conversation with mainstream and human Christian narratives.

To relate *Animal Rites* to *Beasts and Saints* it is worth reflecting on the way in which the relationships of the desert saints, with wild animals deemed not only dangerous but ritually unclean by many of their contemporaries, witnessed to the transformation of worldly relationships which we anticipate and work towards today. Near the end of *Animal Rites*, Linzey argues in favour of memorial services for those animals who suffer and die in the process of scientific experimentation. If we are to make the ultimately utilitarian argument that it is an unhappy necessity that some animals die for the benefit of a larger number of (human) animals – and it is not at all clear that Christians, called to accept the tragic in a fallen world,⁷⁹⁰ should go even that far – then

It is important that we should remember that we frequently live at the expense of other creatures and the nature of our debt to the animal world... It may be thought that the act of remembering is a small response to the daily crucifixion that animals have had to undergo at our hands. And in purely human terms, it surely is. But from a Christian perspective re-membering is not just the commemoration of the past but rather the bringing of the past into the present in such a way that the present is decisively transformed.

⁷⁸⁸ Robert P. Jones, "Ethnography as Revelation: Witnessing History, Faith, and Sin", in Christian Scharen and Aana Marie Vigen (ed), *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics* (London: Continuum, 2011), 118-141 at 140.

⁷⁸⁹ Norman Wirzba, "Eating in ignorance: Do we know where our food comes from?" *Christian Century* May 30 (2012), 24-7 at 27.

⁷⁹⁰ Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 145. It should be noted that an argument in favour of animal experimentation fits far more readily with Hauerwas' and Berkman's turn to sacrifice in "The Chief End of All Flesh" (see chapter 4) than does any argument in favour of factory farming.

Remembrance is an inseparable part of the process of spiritual transformation.⁷⁹¹

Just as the lives of the desert saints were acts of anticipation which brought the future into the present in such a way that the present was decisively transformed, so do acts of remembrance of past misdeeds shape the present in such a way that we can view tomorrow's choices with transformed eyes. This is character formation, internalising the virtues, and embracing the faith – this is discipleship, and it is sanctification. To exclude nonhuman animals from the group of those who can be affected by the transformation of our self-centred will, on the grounds of an archaically and unscientifically anthropomomist understanding of rationality and relationality (or some non-scriptural understanding of which creatures are valuable to God), is to decline transformation; to prefer the world as it is to creation as it will be.

With the hope of the reconciliation of all things in mind, I turn now to consider ways in which stewardship theology might change with the recognition of other animals as relational individuals. Can stewardship, characterised in chapter 2 as problematically anthropocentric – if not anthropomomist – be redeemed?

Redeeming Stewardship

In the conclusion of chapter 2, traditional models of stewardship were criticised as being unduly anthropocentric; hubristic in their account of human capabilities; monodirectional in their depiction of responsibility and relationality (humans care for creation as an act of service to God, without needing or expecting to grow in their relationship with other creatures); and reductive in their account of *divine* relationality (God is so concerned with humans that God only cares about the wider creation to the extent which it serves as an exercise in stewarding for humanity). In the theology of human-animal relationality and ethic of dietary pacifism constructed over chapters 3-5, a move was made away from stewardship for these reasons.

However, my conversations with ordinary Christian vegetarians, covered in chapters 7-8, reminded me that stewardship is a well-known and

⁷⁹¹ Linzey, *Animal Rites*, 119-20.

commonly-referenced concept within ordinary theologies – not only those concerned with animal or dietary ethics, but also those whose primary concern is environmental. It would be severely amiss, given the argument of chapter 7 that ordinary theology is *real* theology which both church and academy should treat more seriously, to brush past these endorsements of stewardship. To hear such endorsements from Christian vegetarians concerned for individual animals suggests that dietary pacifism, and the theology of human-animal relationality underpinning it, need not sit at right angles to theologies which image human responsibility for creation as ‘stewardship’. The possibility of ‘redeeming’ stewardship therefore needs to be revisited, in light of the work of this thesis thus far. In the process – and in light of the observation in chapter 8 that many ordinary theologians have not inherited the conceptual resources for reflection on relational theology and its ethical implications – I aim to take a preliminary step towards resourcing modern church communities to engage in casuistry along these lines, in order that a genuine and reflexive debate may take the place of what is currently too often an unreflective adherence to cultural norms.

McFadyen writes that “The dynamics of God are oriented towards all humanity,”⁷⁹² and it is the case that through communion *with* God and human communion *before* God we learn what it means to be fully human – that is, a life characterised by living for others in a way that acknowledges both their individuality and their involvement in the myriad relational networks which constitute the world. When we think about human communities – in particular the community we call *church* – the relationships and responsibilities we acquire are rarely seen only as spiritual training, or a yardstick against which we can measure how well we have been formed as disciples of Christ. These things are true; but those individuals with whom we share community, and our responsibilities to them, are valuable in their own right. We serve our fellow humans as an act of service to God, but *also* as an act of service to them. Traditional accounts of stewardship, as explored in chapter 2, remove this multidirectional responsibility from all creaturely networks except the inter-human; and herein lies the move from anthropocentrism (unavoidable, to at least some extent, in any human construction) to anthropomonism.

⁷⁹² McFadyen, *Bound to Sin*, 239.

So what has this chapter contributed to the work of moving stewardship in a relational direction? Thus far we have considered the radical inclusivity of table fellowship; the potential for the church to learn from animals in the world; and how churches might begin to make animal narratives part of their own story. All of these arose from the relational theology, dietary pacifism, and interview work of chapters 3-8: it follows naturally that they feed back into it. By approaching table fellowship with a mind open not only to those one sits around the table with, but also those involved in the production of the food on the table (which includes any animals or animal products, but also those who worked to produce and transport the food),⁷⁹³ one expands the radical inclusivity of Christian table fellowship into an even more radical commonality with all creatures.

Situating concern for animals and concern for those who farm the animals together demonstrates how radical Christian commonality is attentive to the individuality of others. If one is concerned for dairy farmers, for example, one expresses commonality with them and in this way is concerned for them *as individuals* – the reality that one does not personally know each and every dairy farmer does not mean that one denies their particularity. So it is in a radically inclusive performance of table fellowship oriented towards nonhuman animals – by adjusting one’s eating habits out of concern for other animals (and for those involved in food production, the land farmed and grazed upon, and the environment damaged by mass transit), one can be a steward without being a domineer. A relational model of stewardship, redeemed from the corruption of anthropomorphism and drawing on the argument made in this chapter that humans can learn from other animals, is attentive and responsible beyond species boundaries. ‘Redeemed’ stewardship proceeds from the effort by human creatures to care and relate to the whole of God’s creation.

That stewardship has served anthropomorphist functions, and is often interpreted in such a way still, is irrelevant. The model of stewardship that proceeds from a theology of human-animal relationality – a stewardship which contains a call towards dietary pacifism – is a stewardship which calls humans to be kings and queens among equals.⁷⁹⁴ As “stewards of

⁷⁹³ Chapters 1-3 of Wirzba, *Food and Faith*, focus on the intertwined relational networks of humans, human organisations, animals, and the environment as pertains to food’s production, transport, and consumption.

⁷⁹⁴ See Richard Bauckham, *The Bible and Ecology: Rediscovering the Community of Creation* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010), 32.

God's good grace" (1 Pet. 4:10), whose natural proclivities are transformed by that same grace, we are to attend to all animals as relational individuals. At the same time, we are to work for ecological justice, fully aware that we are unable to satisfactorily predict the long-term impact of our actions, and so never privileging ecosystems or biodiversity over the lives and concerns of individual animals. Dietary pacifism exhorts a stewardship which recognises the interconnectedness of human relationships with God, other humans, other animals, and the environment. Relational stewardship, put most simply, is redeemed stewardship: as to the question of whether stewardship remains too closely-tied to anthropomomist claims about human distinctiveness, and/or the disavowal of value in God's other creatures, I leave the final word to Bauckham.

It may be that the image of stewardship is still too freighted with the baggage of the modern project of technological domination of nature. Can we entirely free it of the implication that nature is always better off when managed by us, that nature needs our benevolent intrusions, that it is our job to turn the whole world into a well-tended garden inhabited by well-cared-for pets? The problem is in part that stewardship remains, like most interpretations of the Genesis 'dominion' and as we have already suggested, an image that depicts the human relationship to the rest of creation in an entirely 'vertical' way. It sets humans above the rest of creation, sharply differentiated from it, in God-given charge of it. As far as the resources of Christian history goes, it needs at least to be supplemented by the medieval Christian awareness, vividly expressed in many of the stories of saints and animals and never more fully realized than by Francis of Assisi, of mutuality, interdependence, friendliness and confraternity between human beings and the other creatures of God.⁷⁹⁵

Conclusion

In this thesis' first chapter, the question was asked: *how should the church live and eat as a community which attends seriously to the all-pervasiveness of sin in creation, in the hope of sanctification by grace and*

⁷⁹⁵ Richard Bauckham, *Living With Other Creatures: Green Exegesis and Theology* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2011), 62.

the ultimate hope of the kingdom? In concluding this chapter – and, therefore, this thesis – I hope to answer this question. Throughout this work, I have attempted to apply relational theology beyond the narrow constraints of inter-human relational networks – with a particular view to nonhuman animals and how we relate to them – and to explore the theological, ethical, and ecclesiological implications that arise from doing so. Key to this exploration is the theological claim that our relationships with our fellow humans (both inside and outside the church) and our relationships with other relational creatures (that is, nonhuman animals) are intimately bound up together. This has been the case since the first human took the time to look at each animal, consider his relationship to them, and gift them with names (Gen. 2:19). And, just as it was in Eden, our relationships with each other and with other animals are themselves caught up in, subservient to, and shaped by our relationship with our common Creator.

Throughout this thesis, I have argued that humanity's (church and world) most common ways of thinking about and relating to animals are problematically anthropocentric, if not anthropomomist. Systematic theology has largely avoided thinking about nonhuman animals, and what reflection there has been has too often been corrupted by the acceptance of sociocultural presumptions as theologically normative – acceptance which continues whenever church communities refuse or reject casuistry on animal and/or dietary matters. Being created alongside animals (Gen. 1:20-27), who praise and cry out to God now and at the end of days (Isa. 43:20; Joel 1:20; Rev. 5:21); being brought into relationship with them (Gen. 2:18-20, 9:8-17; Hos. 2:18); knowing they are subject to sin and death (Rom. 8:20-23), but have the same hope of the kingdom we receive in Christ's Incarnation and resurrection (Jn. 3:16; Col. 1:15-20) – all these call us to see that, whatever the difference between humans and other animals, there is sufficient commonality, and sufficient scriptural cause, to admit them to our theological and ethical thinking. My flourishing as a human being is coincident with the animal's as an animal: if I ignore this theological truth, and so treat the animal other as a means to my ends only, I refuse the power of grace to transform my willing and relationality, and remain wholly beholden to sin in this aspect of my creaturely life.

Once hope for redeemed human-animal relationality has been accepted, there is a strong theological argument in favour of extending

pacifist ethics to other animals; something Hauerwas and Berkman accepted, when they wrote that the ethical burden of proof lies on Christians who wish to eat animal flesh.⁷⁹⁶ The discussion and reflection necessary for truthful ethical decision-making may not be things all churches are open or resourced for, but they should be – and the need for deeper and more sustained engagement with dietary and/or animal ethics is clear. In short, I have argued in this thesis that the church needs to think seriously and prayerfully, with eyes and hearts open to change, about what it means to live and worship and *eat* together, as a community of fallen individuals called to live sanctified lives in the world.

In this chapter, I first summarised and brought together the work of the thesis: the theology of human-animal relationality constructed over chapters 2-3; the dietary pacifism of chapters 4-5; and the exploration of church casuistry on animal and dietary ethics in chapters 6-8. Second, I have attempted to develop the thesis' conclusions and put them into practice: I have done this by opening further avenues of exploration, and offering some preliminary observations and suggestions for further development. The end goal of this attempt, beyond highlighting areas where further research would be productive, is to resource church communities to think anew about other animals, and to bring animal ethics and dietary ethics into their acts of communal discernment. Through this, I hope that situated church communities might be able to better think through and discern God's will in answer to the question, "How should we live and practice, as a community of human animals in the wider community of creation?"

In conversation with Furnal's "Theology of the Table", I proposed that, just as Christian table fellowship witnesses to the radical inclusivity of the *eschaton* – revealed and inaugurated in Jesus' life and ministry – so might we think of Christian fellowship around a *vegetarian* table as witnessing to the same. This vegetarian witness makes explicit the end to violence, exploitation, and death prophesied by Isaiah:

The wolf shall live with the lamb,
the leopard shall lie down with the kid,
the calf and the lion and the fatling together,
and a little child shall lead them.

⁷⁹⁶ Hauerwas and Berkman, "The Chief End of All Flesh", 208.

The cow and the bear shall graze,
their young shall lie down together;
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp,
and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den.

They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain;
for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters
cover the sea.

(Isa. 11:6-9)

Table fellowship understood in this way is not a direct act of *relationship with* nonhuman animals – it does not bring pigs to the table so much as ensure they never get near it! – but it does affirm their particularity, and value. It also acknowledges our commonality with them: we are human, and at the same time animal; and we are elected, but at the same time as infinitely far from our Creator as the fruit fly. This commonality, this blurring of constructed species boundaries, witnesses to the reality that the work of the Spirit in the world is never done; that what is assumed to be normal and above question by one generation is questionable to the next; and that this is not a *rejection* of tradition but an *affirmation* of the worldly nature of the church.

Considering Helen Waddell's *Beasts and Saints* and Andrew Linzey's *Animal Rites* in conversation with the work of this thesis, a conclusion was drawn which parallels Linzey's own contention that

the bringing of animals into church has a deep symbolic importance – one that is seldom lost on the human participants. It symbolizes the inclusion of the animal world into the very place where so much theology has excluded them. It also provides a practical glimpse of creation in praise.⁷⁹⁷

Eucharistic prayers which acknowledge the commonality of creation, looking ahead to the *eschaton* “to regain an appreciation of the eucharist as a foretaste of the realized kingdom,”⁷⁹⁸ neatly mirror my extension of Furnal's “Theology of the Table” to other animals. In this way, the interrelation of church and animal creation is shown to be more than an appropriate outliving of the transformed relationality which grace can bring.

⁷⁹⁷ Linzey, *Animal Rites*, 33.

⁷⁹⁸ Linzey, *Animal Rites*, 45.

Such interrelation witnesses to our commonality in the world as it is; to the myriad ways in which our human relational networks are bound up with the larger relational networks of creation, all of which are warped by sin; and beyond this, to God's kingdom, as we work and pray for the future to shape the present. For Christians, animal liturgy *is* animal ethics.

Given the precedent for the church relating with nonhuman animals, it becomes clear that stewardship does not need to be problematically anthropomorphist – neither does it need to be discarded as such. Rather, recognising other animals as relational individuals, recognising the power of grace and Spirit in creation, and admitting that we (and all our relationships) are compromised by sin and in need of grace, we have seen how a *relational* stewardship is scripturally faithful and relevant for discipleship today.

Being transformed by God means being transformed in relationship; a reality which is true between humans (perhaps the *most* true between humans), but also in our relationships with other animals. This transformation, then, impacts upon how we think about other animals; from there, to how we think about food; and from there to how we eat as a community – which includes how we deal with ecclesiological and casuistical issues arising from divergent dietary practices. In this way, relational theology leads to *radical inclusivity*; a way of living in creation that might look strange to those inside and outside the church. But, to return to a predominant theme in Hauerwas' work, the church is supposed to look to strange to the world.⁷⁹⁹ In its exhortation to individualism and selfishness – grounded in the sinful myth that we are self-made people who are only determined by that which we allow to determine us – the world already finds the Christian message of sin and grace to be weird and unpleasant. The call to recognise one's own sinfulness, and resultant dependence on grace which we do not deserve, is both uncomfortable and scandalous.

The church, if it is living as the body of Christ in the world, should already look strange to those outside its walls; for it is through the radical inclusivity of Christian fellowship that we witness to the world that the inversion of power dynamics inaugurated by Christ will be fulfilled for all time come the *eschaton*. Naturally, as a fallen institution made up of sinful individuals, the church is not always this radically inclusive in practice – the

⁷⁹⁹ See for example Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, chapter 6.

experiences of my Christian vegetarian conversation partners testify to that much, if nothing else. But in the spirit of compromised idealism (see chapter 5), the reality that we will fall short should never be a reason to lower our standards: to do so would be to tacitly admit that there are areas of our lives which grace either does not need to, or cannot, transform. This is not the case; and so the radical inclusivity I have argued for should be considered joyful witness *because of*, not *despite*, its weirdness.

Karen V. Guth's analysis of Martin Luther King Jr's political theology casts an interesting light on the calling of the church in relation to nonhuman animals. Referencing King's Nobel Prize acceptance speech, Guth writes that, "King describes nonviolent direct action as creative because it participates in the creating, sustaining, and redeeming capacities of God that seek to lead creation to its proper fulfilment."⁸⁰⁰ She is interested in "future reflection on what might constitute such practices of creativity and how churches might go about their roles as communities of creativity called to give birth to ever new forms of relationship rooted in love and justice."⁸⁰¹ The new relationships, "rooted in love and justice," that King worked for through nonviolent resistance are certainly part of the church's remit in the world. But the creative relational role of the church in *creation* – and the reality that today's weird and unfamiliar is tomorrow's normal and expected – should not be forgotten. The church is called to be supernaturally relational in its embodied existence; a community of character and of difference; and, in the words of Guth, a community of creativity. I have attempted to demonstrate that, in the same way, it is called to be a community of human animals, concerned for other humans and other animals, in and for the whole world because it is in and for God.

⁸⁰⁰ Karen V. Guth, "Reconstructing Nonviolence: The Political Theology of Martin Luther King Jr. after Feminism and Womanism," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 32.1 (2012), 75-92 at 87.

⁸⁰¹ Guth, "Reconstructing Nonviolence", 88. Rachel Muers' criticism of King's theological and ecclesiological sexism suggests that his own church context was as much in need of "ever new forms of relationship" as any other community. See Rachel Muers, "Bonhoeffer, King, and Feminism: Problems and Possibilities", in Willis Jenkins and Jennifer M. McBride (ed), *Bonhoeffer and King: Their Legacies and Import for Christian Social Thought* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2010), 33-42.

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