

line from Albert Schweitzer — that a clean conscience is a figment of the imagination or as he actually puts it “an invention of the devil.”³⁶ Neither is it to suppose that we can easily turn to live in some Edenite harmony with other creatures. I accept that we are compromised and that we have difficult choices to make.

Nevertheless, I want to suggest that it is here we may sense the possibility of living other than we do, that we should reflect upon the fact that Christian priesthood is sacrificial, costly priesthood. It cannot be sufficient merely to have a negative vision of what we should do to prevent suffering in the world. We need positive vision of how we can take upon ourselves the suffering of the world and transform it by the power of the Holy Spirit. We need to experiment in ways of liberation rather than always assuming that human interest, narrowly conceived, always comes first. To give but one controversial example: It may be that the truly Christian view of the morality of experimentation begins not by asking how much suffering we can legitimately inflict upon animals but rather should we not elect to bear for ourselves whatever ills may flow from not experimenting upon animals rather than using our power to exploit the weak in our own favour. All this has an urgency which in previous generations we failed to appreciate. For our ruthless, un-gentle treatment of the natural world has ushered in a cognizance of certain limits to exploitation. Extinct species, like dead nature itself, can no longer be exploited. It seems to me that Christians have an opportunity in the present circumstances to show what it means to live as though we believe in a generous loving God by living that generosity towards nonhuman creatures.

V

I now turn to my fifth, and final, section and briefly consider four objections to my argument.

The first queries my whole train of argument by suggesting that I have simply overlooked the powerful “humans come first” tradition within Christianity. According to the Linzey view, it is claimed, we shall end up being more concerned about suffering hens than suffering humans.

I agree with this objection if it means that the suffering of humans — as well as the suffering of non-humans — should be the subject of the serving and sacrificial priesthood. Nothing in my argument should

weaken concern for the healing of suffering humanity. Nevertheless, it is no longer clear to me that we can make an absolute distinction between one kind of suffering and another, either that of a member of another class, race, sex or — I would add — species. Neither is it clear to me that we can in each and every situation claim that human suffering is more important than any other kind of suffering. Indeed, I want to suggest that the attempt to place human well-being in a special and absolute category of its own is one of the reasons why other earthly creatures — indeed, the earth itself — remains in a desperate state of travail, a travail so great that its destruction — in part, if not as a whole — seems inevitable. In other words, exclusive moral preoccupation with our own species is part of the problem itself rather than its solution. We should face the fact that years of Christian anthropocentricity (of a bad sort) has helped lead us to the environmental crisis we now encounter. In short, we have to redress the balance and appreciate that humans are not just linked to nature, *we are part of nature.*

GORILLA

**Behind these eyes
lies the dawn of time.
You make me a monster
or a joke.
Lock me up so you can stare and laugh.
I look back with great sadness
for I know your past
and I see your destiny.
I do not hate you.
I am gentle; I am loyal.
I have strength
beyond this giant's body.
I am strong in spirit.
My solemn gaze reveals the truth.
When you murder me
you are killing you.
When you imprison my soul
you destroy your future.**

Kathleen Malley