

CVVUK NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the Christian Vegetarians and Vegans UK newsletter, Spring 2024



Website: <http://www.christian-vegetariansvegans.org.uk/>

We hope you enjoy this newsletter. As always we would be pleased to receive any of the following from our supporters for future newsletters:

- interesting (short) articles;
- news of any local activities you have been involved in to promote the values of CVVUK;
- information about events that might interest other CVVUK supporters; and
- miscellaneous items such as book reviews, recipes and information about useful resources

If you have anything that you would like to contribute to the next newsletter please e-mail it to us at sampsons@dsl.pipex.com by the end of June 2024.

Miriam and Philip Sampson

Disclaimer: The information in this newsletter comes from a variety of sources and reasonable care has been taken to convey it accurately. Please note that opinions or statements may not reflect the views held by all members of CVAUK, and we accept no responsibility for any errors which may have occurred. Content is produced for information only and is not advice.

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Veganuary breaks all records in 2024!

The team behind Veganuary has announced that their research shows **around 25 million people across the world adopted a plant-based diet for January this year**. More than 1.8 million people chose to actively receive the campaigns resources through one or more of the official channels this year.



It is not only individuals who now take the pledge. This year more than 100 UK workplaces urged their staff to sign up. Many popular food outlets, including Pizza Hut and Wetherspoon's, now feature new plant-based dishes on their menus, making it ever easier for people to try plant-based food without making major lifestyle changes.

There could now be 2.5 million vegans in the UK.

Read more here: [Veganuary 'Reaches 25 Million People' In 2024 \(plantbasednews.org\)](https://plantbasednews.org)

A correction and an apology

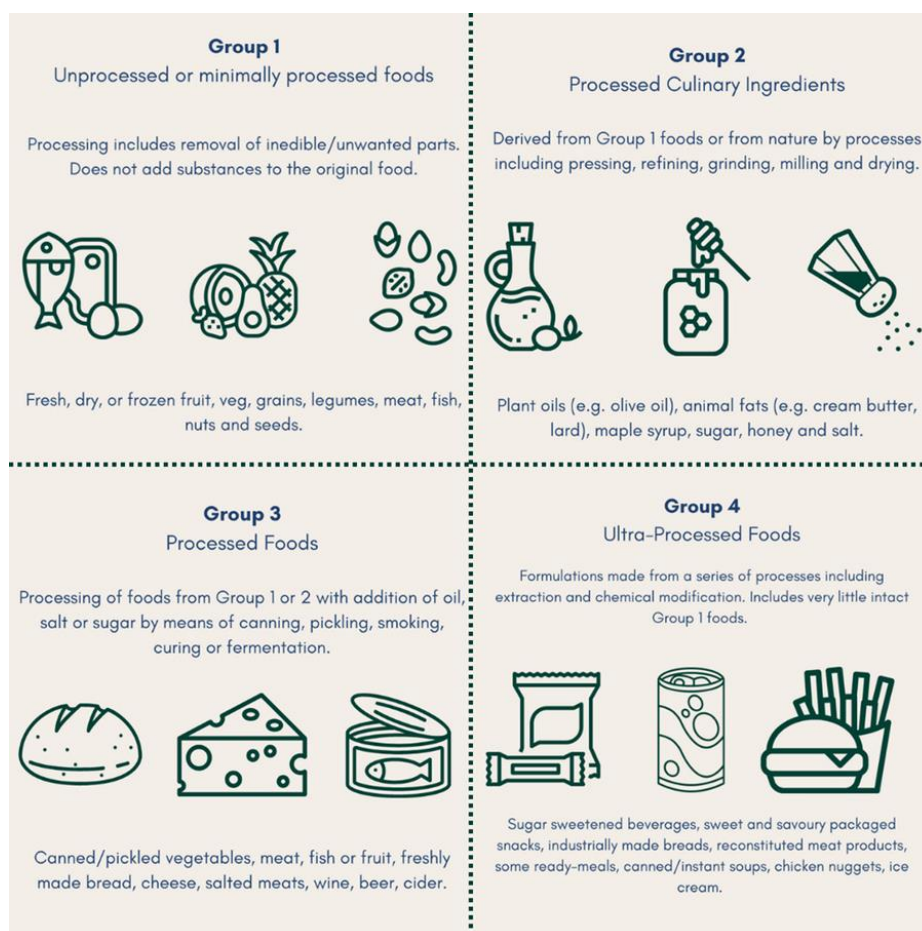
In our last newsletter we included an item about new videos from SARX, featuring interviews with ‘vegan vicars’. It has been pointed out to us that while all the interviewees were vegan clergy, they are not all vicars; they hold a number of different posts and one is, in fact, a Catholic priest. We apologise for mis-describing these clergy and misleading our readers.

The videos are well worth watching and can be found here <https://sarx.org.uk/multimedia/vegan-vicars-video-series/> . They are also available on YouTube.

Plant-based meat and dairy replacement products and ultra-processed foods

Many vegans include plant-based sausages, burgers and “bacon” and plant-based ‘cheese’ in their diets, and we all consume plant-based ‘milk’, but recently questions have been raised about these products because they meet the definition of “ultra- processed foods”.

This graphic sets out the four classifications of food under the ‘Nova’ classification system by level of processing:



Plant-based meat replacement products, and most dairy replacement products, are classified as ultra-processed foods according to this system. Nutritionists have been raising questions about the link between high levels of ultra-processed foods in the modern Western diet and levels of obesity.

They are also thought to contribute to diet-related diseases that are becoming increasingly prevalent in modern life, such as type-2 diabetes. Many ultra-processed foods are high in salt, fat and sugar, and low in fibre. This is largely not the case in plant-based meat replacement products, which tend to be lower in fat and much higher in fibre than the typical meat equivalents. However, concern has been raised about the use of soy and pea protein isolates in these products.



Plant-based milks, unless they are specifically designated as “unsweetened”, do contain added sugar, and some recent research by ‘Action on Salt’ (an expert research group based at Queen Mary College London) found that plant-based “cheese” was also high in salt and saturated fat. Salt is a major contributor to high blood pressure, and in their survey they found that the cheeses with the highest level of salt were plant-based, averaging 1.91g/100g. That’s nearly 10% saltier than Cheddar.

This is a minefield for the lay person, without specialised scientific knowledge, to negotiate. Clearly the healthiest diet is a plant-based one consisting of fresh and frozen fruit and vegetables, whole grains, legumes, nuts and seeds, and low in added sugar, salt and saturated fat. However there are times when we all need to produce a quick, tasty meal and we may turn to a vegan ‘burger’ or ‘sausage’ in those circumstances. And we will be using plant-based milk on our breakfast cereal and in our tea and coffee, and maybe plant-based cheese in a sandwich. There is currently no evidence that moderate consumption of such products is detrimental to health.

There is also some evidence that the meat industry is using anxiety around ultra-processed foods to discourage consumers from buying meat replacement products. More information here: [Meat Industry Using ‘Misinformation’ to Block Dietary Change, Report Finds - DeSmog](#)

An interesting detailed discussion of the issues around plant-based meat replacements can be found here: <https://www.greenqueen.com.hk/ultra-processed-foods-plant-based-meat-guide-research-faq/>

However it must be noted that the people who have compiled this guide do have links to a company producing plant-based “meats”.

When it comes to choosing a healthy plant-based milk, this article is informative: [The Healthiest Plant-Based Milk: A Plant-Based Doctor's Thoughts \(foodrevolution.org\)](#)

A report on the survey by ‘Action on Salt’ of salt levels in dairy cheeses and plant-based cheeses can be found here: <https://www.actiononsalt.org.uk/salt-surveys/2024/cheese/>

Going Vegan is healthier: even for Acne.

John Ryder writes:

Not often suggested, I fear, by consultant dermatologists, but in an article published by **Medscape** on the 2nd February, “*A Look at the Evidence Linking Diet to Skin Conditions*” there is clear evidence linking some foods to various skin conditions. Most of these conditions are rare, but

acne affects a large proportion of the population at some time in their lives, for a smaller group of people for a much longer time of their lives, causing much misery.

Vivian Shi, MD, associate professor of dermatology at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, Little Rock states: "We've all heard sugar and dairy are bad, and the Western diet is high in sugar and dairy."

Dairy, red meat, and carbohydrates break down into an amino acid which, with sugar can produce insulin and insulin-like growth factor 1 (IGF-1), which in turn can reach the androgen receptors throughout the body, including the skin. This can result in malfunction, which triggers follicular inflammation and results in more of the acne-causing bacteria *Cutibacterium acnes*.

Milk and other dairy products also can increase IGF-1 levels, which can alter our hormonal mediators, thus also increasing acne.

While avoidance of cow's milk is best, if as a vegetarian you still consume it, not all types of dairy milk are equally bad when it comes to acne. Shi discovered that when milk manufacturers remove the fat, they often add whey proteins to restore some nutrients. Whey protein can increase acne, Shi added. "So, if you're going to choose any milk to drink, I think from an acne perspective, it's better to use whole milk. If you can get it organic, even better." Skimmed milk is by far the worst.

This reminded me of the proprietor of the health food shop my mother used to go to. She never tired of telling people that if you want to lose weight eat less, don't go for the low-fat options, they're bad for you.

While on the topic of milk, here's a letter one of our supporters wrote to their local newspaper some while ago:

If Someone Took Your Baby

Dear Sir,

If someone took your baby. If you saw them take it, and the baby cried out for you to help. If your baby struggled, but they were too brutal, and dragged it away. How would you live? You would be screaming inside, dying inside. You have loved and nurtured your baby.

This is just too awful to think about, and I do not want to upset anyone. However, this is done on a daily basis, to cows, whose maternal instinct is equally as strong as ours. Why then do we choose to ignore their pain, when we know how painful this would be to any mother? The calves are taken so that we can then steal their milk from their distraught mother. Why?

Pam Ward



Why indeed, especially now as there are so many delicious plant-based milks available?

(Photo credit – Ilona Ilyes – from Pixabay)

1. by Damian McNamara, written January 22, 2024
2. sebogenesis, lipogenesis, and keratinization

Could a vegan diet save the NHS?

A new study by the Office of Health Economics, funded by the Vegan Society, suggests that 100% adoption of plant-based diets in England could save the NHS around £6.7 billion over a year! There could be 2.1 million fewer cases of disease, including cancer, cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, diverticular disease and obesity. They predict a gain of more than 170,000 quality-adjusted life years across England. For every 1 million people who switch to a vegan diet an estimated £121 million of health care cost savings would be generated. The potential impact of these savings is huge, with enough money saved to cover the full yearly budget of up to seven of England's hospitals, or to cover the annual salaries of 64,990 consultants or 184,920 nurses [1].

The uptake of vegan diets has increased dramatically in recent years, with those making the switch citing various reasons, including perceived health benefits, reduced environmental impact, and improved animal welfare. For many, the transition to a vegan diet is an opportunity to consume more health-promoting plant foods, such as whole grains, nuts, legumes, fruits and vegetables whilst excluding the saturated fat and cholesterol found in meat, milk and eggs. Research suggests that plant-based diets may improve health outcomes relating to diseases including cardiovascular disease and cancer, but before this study there had been little research into the monetary value this could present to health services.

The huge cost-savings and potential benefits laid out in the report provide a basis from which policymakers can consider the potential for interventions that support healthy dietary changes that contribute to population health.

Head of Campaigns, Policy and Research for the Vegan Society, Claire Ogley, commented: *“It’s encouraging to see increasing evidence that plant-based diets can be not only beneficial to individual health but could also benefit the NHS on a bigger scale. As the report illustrates, wider uptake of plant-based diets could free up billions of pounds of funding to invest back into England’s hospitals and services. Policymakers should consider supporting and encouraging plant-based diets as part of public health campaigns to realise these benefits to the health service in the UK.”*

The report is published on medRxiv in advance of peer review here: [“The impact of higher uptake of plant-based diets in England”](#)

[1] SOURCE: <https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/audio-video/key-facts-figures-nhs#what-does-the-money-buy>

Diet and its impact on the environment

Young people switching to a vegan diet today are as likely to cite environmental issues and reducing their carbon footprint, as animal rights or nutritional benefits, as a reason for their choice. Numerous reports have spelt out the environmental benefits of a vegan diet, but this is another area in which the meat industry is now “fighting back” with misinformation. Robin Struber, a PhD researcher at Birmingham University, has recently compiled a report quantifying the environmental impact of various sources of protein in a vegan diet for the Vegan Society.

He writes:

The food and drinks industry accounts for more than a third (34%) of global greenhouse gas emissions through food production, logistics and waste,^[2] so continuing the increasing trend towards vegan nutrition and reducing consumption of animal products is an important step for change. How then can veganism go the distance in maximising environmental gains?

The good news is that making the switch to any form of plant-based diet has a demonstrable positive effect! Even the most resource intensive plant-based protein consumes less water, energy and produces fewer carbon emissions than animal products.^[3] On average plant-based options have half the carbon impact of products with animal origin: 4,963 TgCO₂eq. compared to 9,923 TgCO₂eq.³ However, there are significant differences in ecological footprint between vegan protein sources, from wholefoods to minimally processed products such as tempeh and tofu, all the way to ultra-processed plant-based meat analogues. ...

It is helpful to not just consider greenhouse gases, but also how much water and energy are consumed since most is still generated by unsustainable sources, thus contributing towards environmental degradation. Across these three dimensions, 71% of the carbon impact and more than 90% of water usage is directly attributed to land use and land change activity while processing consumes most of the energy.^[4] Considering airmiles and packaging is definitely important, but the biggest impact can be had by understanding the ingredients and processing involved in the products we put in our supermarket baskets. Of these, the most common vegan protein sources are legumes (soy, peas or lupine), grains such as oats or wheat, mycoprotein (a form of fungi) and nuts.

Legumes, especially peas, have the lowest carbon impact on average ranging from 0.2-0.6 kgCO₂eq. while cereals are in the range of 0.3-1.0 kgCO₂eq.^[5] Furthermore, legumes need less area to grow so have a low land use impact.



For mock meats the less processing involved the better. As a result, sausages and burger patties have the highest environmental impact with an average of 2.79 kg CO₂eq.kg⁻¹, while dried mince has the lowest among analogues with only 1.33 kgCO₂eq.kg⁻¹.⁴ Furthermore, frozen products have a higher impact due to the energy intensity of nitrogen or other freezing processes. Thus, heading to the fresh food and refrigerated section instead of the frozen food aisle is preferable. Processing roughly adds 9-23% of carbon emissions onto ingredients so while wholefoods generally have less of an ecological footprint, using vegan mince or burgers to make your recipes work can still significantly reduce your carbon footprint compared to conventional diets. It is also important to recognise that the plant-based market is still in its early stages of innovation with great potential to further improve efficiency and environmental gains through more efficient processing.

In summary, the most important step you can take is to throw out traditional meat products for vegan alternatives. Our diets will always come with a carbon price tag so focussing on products whose processing and growth is efficient is the easiest path to minimise our impact on the environment.Importantly, remember that exploring different vegan alternatives is meant to be an enjoyable process!

The whole article, which also includes a discussion of the environmental impact of mycoprotein, nuts, seeds and 'pseudocereals' (chia and quinoa) can be found here: [Making Veganism go the Distance in Environmentalism | The Vegan Society](#)

Campaigning

In our last newsletter we encouraged our readers to raise issues related to animal welfare with their MPs and parliamentary candidates in a year when we are expecting a general election. We have since heard from Compassion in World Farming about their volunteer letter writing group, 'Campaigner's Corner'. Volunteers in this group write letters to politicians, policy makers and influential organisations to ask them to take action against animal suffering.

CiWF supplies regular packs with specific campaign information and key points to raise in letters. They can also provide the names and addresses of the relevant politicians or other decision-makers, so all you'd need to do is put the letters in your own words and send them off. Apart from the time involved, the only other cost to you would be the stationery and stamps for any letters that you write – and by taking action you can have a real impact for farm animals.

COMPASSION
in world farming



Letters such as these are beneficial in two ways: Firstly, they raise awareness amongst MPs and other influential decision-makers of farming issues that they can take action to address. And secondly, the responses help the CiWF campaigns team to gain an insight into the attitudes of an individual before they contact them directly. This enables them to tailor their communications and increase the opportunity for positive engagement.

To get involved, contact CiWF. You can also find their advice on writing letters here: <http://www.ciwf.org.uk/get-involved/get-campaigning/letter-writing/>.

A 'PETA' campaign to outlaw animal testing of ingredients used in cosmetics in the UK has recently been successful - tests for ingredients used *exclusively* in cosmetics are finally over! Last May, the government stopped issuing new licences for such tests, and in November the Home Office confirmed that testing has also ended under all remaining legacy licences.

However the EU is moving backwards on this issue. In the same month, the Court of Justice of the European Union announced [a decision that has destroyed the existing ban on animal testing for cosmetics](#). Animals in the UK and the EU deserve to live free from painful experiments. You can take action on this issue here: [Save the Ban: Take Action Against Cosmetics Tests on Animals | People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals \(peta.org.uk\)](#)

The Moral Maze looks at Veganism

The long-running BBC Radio 4 programme *The Moral Maze* recently debated the moral case for veganism, but all the panel members were meat eaters. Since then they have received a number of complaints from vegans who felt that the subject was not taken seriously. On the *Feedback* programme this week listeners complained that the vegan witnesses were constantly interrupted

and that important issues such as animal suffering and the environmental impact of the meat industry were taken lightly. In contrast, a farmer raising animals for meat was not interrupted and was allowed to make statements that were factually wrong without being challenged. The producers of the programme were invited to come on to *Feedback* to respond to these claims, but declined to do so, sending a written statement instead.

The presenter of *Feedback* invited more listeners to respond, so if you did not hear the original programme on February 21st you might like to catch up with it online on *BBC Sounds*.

New films

'*Christspiracy*' is the latest film from Kip Andersen, who made '*Cowspiracy*' and '*Seaspiracy*'.

Christspiracy: The Spirituality Secret explores veganism and its links to spirituality. It examines the link between the vegan lifestyle and various religions, and aims to answer one question: "Is there a spiritual way to kill an animal?" This question was put to Andersen by an audience member named Kameron Waters at a Q&A session a few years ago, and he followed up with the question "How would Jesus kill an animal?". They subsequently teamed up and set off on a six-year investigation together to answer it through the lens of religion, philosophy, spirituality, sociology, and psychology.



Waters grew up in Georgia in the US, and spent much of his life in the church. He even attended a Christian hunting and fishing club, and he didn't initially question the treatment of animals by his fellow believers. But after a while he started to think seriously about his relationship with animals, leading him, eventually, to the Q&A session with Andersen.

Due to the name, some people have assumed that *Christspiracy* would focus wholly on Christianity. In response to whether *Christspiracy* is a "Christian or Christian-bashing film," Waters and Andersen wrote: "*Absolutely not. In fact, this film explores more than the Christian faith and includes Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, and even philosophy, sociology, and history to deeply explore how faiths around the world answer the question: 'Is there a spiritual way to kill an animal?'*"

Your editors attended the premiere in London this week, and it was really interesting to see how different religious leaders interviewed in the film, who ate meat, responded to the question. Everyone was really disconcerted to be asked "How would Jesus kill an animal?" There are some disturbing scenes, so it is not easy viewing, but they do not show any animals actually being slaughtered. Prof. Andrew Linzey features as one of their interviewees, putting a strong Christian case against slaughter and for a compassionate diet, and the filmmakers conclude that Jesus strongly opposed the slaughter of animals.

'*Christspiracy*' will be shown in cinemas across the country on 20th March. You can find a showing near you here: <https://www.christspiracy.com/?booknow> The trailer can be viewed here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=17lo7W_ulPM

'Pignorant' is a feature length documentary from the Australia-born animal rights activist, and ex-gang member, Joey Carbstrong. It investigates the use of gas chambers to kill pigs in the UK, and how these animals are kept before they are sent to die horribly in slaughterhouses. It sheds light on these intelligent creatures, how cruelly are they treated, how inhumane using CO2 to kill animals is, and even how psychologically damaging the work for slaughterhouse workers can be.



It includes testimony from Philip Lymbery (CEO of Compassion in World Farming), Juliet Gellatley (founder and director of the vegan organisation [Viva!](#)), and many others.

'Pignorant' is available now on Amazon Prime. The trailer can be viewed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VI9xxu17pM8>

Recipe - Cannellini bean and pea stew

Since we are experiencing a cost of living crisis at the moment, our recipe this time is designed to be a nutritious and cheap meal coming out at less than £1 per person.

This tasty vegan stew is simple to throw together and packed with flavour. In November 2023, this recipe was costed at an average of £0.88 per portion when checking prices at four UK supermarkets. Serve with rice or crusty bread.

Preparation time - less than 30 mins
Cooking time = 10 to 30 mins

Serves 4

Ingredients

- 2 tbsp olive oil, plus extra to garnish
- 200g/7oz red onion, finely diced
- 200g/7oz celery, finely diced and leaves reserved for garnish
- 200g/7oz red pepper, finely diced
- 3 garlic cloves, grated
- 2 tsp paprika
- 2 tsp dried mixed herbs
- 1 vegetable stock cube
- 1 tbsp cornflour or plain flour
- 400g tin cannellini beans, drained and rinsed
- 2 tbsp tomato purée
- 300g/10½oz frozen peas
- salt and freshly ground black pepper



Method

1. Heat the oil in a large saucepan or casserole over a medium heat and add the onion, celery and red pepper. Season well with salt and pepper and fry for around 7–8 minutes or until softened. Add the garlic, paprika and herbs and stir for another 2 minutes.

- 2. Measure out 600ml/20fl oz hot water in a jug and crumble in the stock cube. Add the cornflour and stir to combine. Pour into the pan along with the beans and tomato purée. Bring to a gentle simmer for 5 minutes. Add the peas and simmer over a low heat for another 5 minutes.
- 3. Serve the stew in warmed bowls and garnish with a little of the reserved celery leaf, a drizzle of olive oil and a sprinkle of black pepper.

Recipe by [Dr Rupy Aujla](#) - [Cannellini bean and pea stew recipe - BBC Food](#)

And finally.....

During Lent we recall the 40 days that Jesus spent in the desert, being tempted by the devil. Mark’s gospel tells us that he was “with the wild animals”.



The Desert Fathers in early Christian history also lived with the wild animals in that context. What can we learn from them?

These extracts from an article on the SARX website by the Greek Orthodox theologian, Revd Dr John Chryssavgis, explore that topic:

In the early third to the late fourth centuries, the dry desert of Egypt became a testing ground for exploring hidden truths not only about heaven but also about earth. More precisely, it served as a forging ground for drawing connections between the two. The hermits who lived in that harsh spiritual laboratory analyzed what it means to be human in a natural world—with all the tensions and temptations, all the struggle and survival, all the contacts with good and conflicts with evil. These men and women dared to push the limits, to challenge the norms.

Their questions and responses are found in collections of aphorisms—or apophthegmata (“sayings”)—preserved in Greek, Latin, Syriac, and Coptic..... These stories from the deserts of Egypt, Palestine, and Sinai are more than just a part of the Christian past. They are a part of our human heritage; they communicate eternal values, spiritual truths.

.....

So did these early desert hermits recognize or overlook the natural and aesthetic beauty of creation through their austere life and harsh discipline? What is the relationship of the desert dwellers who filled this region with their environment and with animals? In renouncing the world, did the Desert Fathers and Mothers overlook the world, or did they enjoy a new awareness of everything in the world—human, animal, and natural?

..... In the desert, holiness was part and parcel of wholeness. If at-one-ment with their neighbour was of the essence in the spirituality of the desert, so too was at-tune-ment to their environment, to the world, and to God. Abba John said: “My children, let us not pollute this place, since our Fathers have previously cleansed it.” (Saying 5)

The same worldview and conviction informs the attitude of the desert hermits to animals.

Abba Anthony... said: "Reverence with moderation allows people to become stewards even over wild animals." (Anthony, Saying 1)

Anthony certainly grasped the truth of this statement. He had, after all, persuaded the animals of his region to live at peace with him without disturbing him. In fact, the notion of resembling Adam and Eve before their Fall from the condition of grace, is the ideal to which the desert hermits aspired.

.....

However, what is at stake here is much more than mere emotional attachment to animals. The connection of the early monks and of the later mystics with their natural surroundings as well as with the native animals is neither superficial nor sentimental; it is, in fact, deeply sacred and spiritual. It stems from an inner conviction that God created this world out of love, which further implies that God cares for the world and for all that exists in the world, both animate and inanimate.

Through this lens, then, the desert hermits are revealed to be—in a most intense and most intimate manner—"materialists." In the desert, everything—including the smallest form of life and the slightest speck of dust—really mattered! In God's eyes, the wild animals and the sand dunes are of sacred importance and have their unique place alongside humanity. In their understanding of heaven, birds and trees could never be eliminated or excluded.

For the early fathers and mothers of Egypt, the purpose of fleeing to the desert was precisely in order to restore a lost order, to re-establish a reconciliation with all creation, to reaffirm a connection between the natural world and God. The world becomes a wasteland unless it comes alive in an authentic human being, who in turn becomes the eyes, the conscience, and the heart of the world. So if we miss the story of the desert, we create an alienation between the world and ourselves, ultimately causing a division within ourselves. When we neglect the world of the spirit, we also neglect the spirit of the world. And when we disregard the world of the soul, we definitely overlook the living mystery of all God's creation.

You can read the whole article here: <https://sarx.org.uk/articles/the-natural-world/the-desert-tradition-and-the-natural-environment-john-chryssavgis/>

The Revd Dr John Chryssavgis is a Greek Orthodox theologian and author of numerous books on the Church Fathers and Orthodox Spirituality, most recently [Creation as Sacrament: Reflections on Ecology and Spirituality](#)

Illustration, Christ in the Wilderness painted by Moretto de Bescia