

Co-operation – Learning from Nature

David Attenborough, on *Green Planet* (BBC 1) has shown that plants and animals work together for the benefit of each other. Plants allow insects and small animals to eat their leaves, seeds and nectar, with the result that the plants are spread more widely and successfully. Plants get a positive result from sharing their advantages: small or vulnerable plants use the protection offered by larger plants and both benefit. Working as partners and sharing each other's knowledge and powers also benefits the world around them. It has been proven that monocultures are more vulnerable.

Why do many humans not freely share their success and gifts with other humans who need help? Plants and animals successfully do so, why not follow their example? Co-operation between different cultures and backgrounds does not have to be destructive of either, it could, just as easily, be profitable to both. Some say that immigrants should learn to live just like us. In that case the Pilgrim Fathers should have become like the First Nation Americans, members of the 19th century British Raj in India should not have been dressing for dinner in formal European dinner dress — and so on. To be more like me, immigrants should follow English cricket, but ignore football!

We do hear about non-native plants and animals becoming invasive and destroying similar native species, but that only happens when they are introduced without proper concern for the needs and surroundings of both. We all have different needs, skills, and interests, but that does not divide us, it makes us valuable to each other.

I have been heartened by the response of the British people to the plight of the refugees from the war in Ukraine. The public has shown that their generosity towards those in need can never be denied. Over the centuries Britain has learned to accommodate incomers of all types — from refugees to invaders. It has never been an easy acceptance, nor has it been uncontroversial.

Modern political government can lead to a divided nation. That is the nature of democratic, political government. It does not matter which political party is in power,

governmental response to any situation will be acceptable to some but not all. The recent governmental responses to different refugees has demonstrated that the general public can, and always will, apply their own personal ideas of “doing the right thing”.

Why does the British government discriminate between refugees from different conflicts? Is a political refugee any different to an economic refugee? Is a person seeking refuge from poverty any different to one seeking refuge from fear for reasons of personal safety?

At the beginning of our Bible (Genesis chapter 1) we see that the success of each act of creation relies upon the success of what has come before. The rest of our Bible reminds us that we are all, individually and collectively, responsible for each other. We can only gain from mingling and co-operating with others. As David Attenborough says: plants that “were one-time rivals become better-off by working together.” Can we? We are supposed to be the most intelligent creatures in creation.

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