



conneXions

...growing God's family...

Issue 53

2010 Ladies Weekender

at Karnkendi, Nelson



other ladies for the day's program. Fish and chips on the river bank had to be abandoned after much rain, but lunch was enjoyed in the dining room at the BP Roadhouse in Nelson.

Heather Touzel, an organizing committee member, was much missed this year because of her operation. All ladies are welcome to join us next year for the weekender.
– Viv Peate

Above: Viv Peate (MGPC) along with Una Kuhl and Ruth Clements (Suttontown Christian Brethren Chapel) attended the weekender.

Right: Shirley Benn, speaker at the weekender.

The annual Ladies Weekender for 2010 was held on the weekend of the 26th & 27th March. Shirley Benn was the guest speaker and she also gave the mission talk. Shirley began her working life as a teacher, but the mission field called to her. She was a missionary in Indonesia for 25 years. Her brother, Robert, was the former APWM director and her other brother, Keith is still on the mission field. Shirley's talks were about Jesus as Redeemer, Great High Priest and Lord of the Harvest.

Although small in number this year, we were blessed by Shirley's teaching and on Saturday, we were joined by 16



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THIS MONTH'S HIGHLIGHTS

- Monday 3rd 7.30pm Board of Management
- Sunday 9th 10.00am Lord's Supper
- Monday 12th 7:30pm Board of Management
- Monday 24th 7.30pm Elders' Meeting (Session)
- Friday 28th - Sunday 30th Building Christian Worldview weekend with John Mackay
- Saturday 29th 7.30am Men's Breakfast
- Sunday 30th - Bring & Share lunch
- Sunday 30th 6.30pm Citywide service at MGPC

Our Mission Statement

– why do we exist? –

Glorifying God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit by growing His family through Biblical teaching, prayer and loving relationships locally, nationally, and internationally.

Our Vision Statement

– where are we heading? –

As a Gospel driven church we aspire to establish 15 self-replicating growth groups across the church by 2012.

Disappointment with the Church | KevinDeYoung

“No one supported me.”

“I didn’t matter to anyone.”

“You didn’t even care.”

Those are among the hardest things a pastor can hear from his congregation, whether it’s about him directly or not. These lines are also some of the most biting things a church member can say and, no doubt, one of the most painful things a church member can feel. And yet the feelings are felt, and even the thoughts expressed, quite frequently in the life of the church.

The situations which lead people to feel unloved are easy to imagine.

- ◆ A pastor fails to visit a family after their daughter is tragically killed in a car accident.
- ◆ A new couple visits the church for 6 months. They never get invited to the pastor’s home. So they start looking at other churches.
- ◆ A new graduate student feels invisible because he’s single and shy. No one makes an effort to get to know him. After a few months slipping in the service, he gives up on your church, and maybe on church altogether.
- ◆ A young man gets a call from the elders because he’s gotten a girl pregnant. He’s never met the elders before and now feels like he’s facing the inquisition. He doesn’t deny he’s sinned, but the pastoral care he’s now receiving seems unloving.
- ◆ One of your pillar families grows spotty in their attendance on Sunday morning. Eventually they drop out altogether. By the time you notice, they’ve been gone six months. Once you call, it’s too little too late.
- ◆ A new mother notices she isn’t invited to the mums’ Bible study. She’s not sure why, but she assumes it has something to do with her background. After a year of feeling isolated her family leaves the church because it is too cliquish.

The scenarios are endless and they are all painful, for the sheep and for the shepherds. So how should church members respond when they feel unloved, unsupported, or like outsiders in their church? And how should church leaders respond when they are criticized for being unconcerned or the church is faulted

for being unloving?

The easy response is to assume that the other side is always wrong. I’ve talked with Christians before (not necessarily from my congregation) who harbor a long list of grievances with their church. They never stop to consider that they might be something other than helpless victims. They might be part of the problem. On the flip side, I’ve been at pastors’ gatherings where the assumption behind all the conversations, jokes, and complaining is that they’re ministering faithfully and the church just doesn’t get it.

Both sides would be helped to ask a few questions before putting their feet together and jumping to conclusions.



Pastors and elders, the next time you are criticized for being unloving or unconcerned, ask yourselves:

1. Do we have some mechanism for personally knowing our sheep? As leaders, we will give an account for how well we watched over our people’s souls (Hebrews 13:7). The Bible doesn’t mandate only one way for doing member care, but we must work to have some process in place. If we never ask, “How is the congregation doing?” or better yet, “How are you doing?” we should not be surprised to find lots of people falling through the cracks.

2. Do we have some way of knowing when people are not showing up at church? You can eyeball it, check the friendship pads, or spy out the church mailboxes, but we need to have a general sense of who is not making faithful use of the means of grace. Our Book of Church Order stipulates we talk about it at every elders’ meeting. The first step to noticing who’s missing is to start looking and start talking about it.

3. Are we confronting cliquishness in our church? The line between com-

munity and clique is often blurry. But if there’s one central difference it’s openness. A healthy community welcomes new people in. A clique finds ways to keep new people out. Pastors need to confront the problem of “closed circles” head on—in preaching, in structural decisions, and in one on one conversations. The leaders also need to make sure they are not in a closed circle themselves. Good friends are good. Good friends to the exclusion of everyone else is very bad.

4. Are there easy, identifiable ways for the shy, the non go-getters, and the more culturally reserved to get involved and be known by others? The confident entrepreneurs will make their way in the church just fine. But well-advertised entry points and personal invitations are required for many others.

5. Is it at least possible that we are more at fault than we think? Leadership doesn’t mean saying you’re sorry every time Mr. Sensitive feels offended. But it does mean always being open to the possibility that you’ve screwed up more than you thought.

6. Have we made promises we didn’t deliver on? There’s nothing more deadly than well-publicized, poorly executed good intentions. The elders launch a family visitation program, but only make it to half the homes. A pastor agrees to follow up his lobby conversation with a phone call and then forgets all about it. The church promises every member will get a mentor, but it ends up there aren’t enough mentors to go around. Don’t set the bar so high you’re bound to crash into it.

7. Are these critics generally critical? Pastors can waste their time with divisive grumblers. When they do so they are often too worn out to listen when a loyal member offers a thoughtful critique. We shouldn’t spend a lot of time on the squeaky wheels unless it’s an unfamiliar squeak. In other words, consider the source and remember “faithful are the wounds of a friend.”

Next month: questions for disappointed members.

Financial Update & Board Report

January - March 2010

Income :	\$54,391.02
Includes:	
Offerings:	\$36,577.32
	= per week \$2,813.65
	(budget -\$2,550.00)
Donations:	\$976.00
Other receipts:	\$8,733.41
Interest	\$202.83
Transfers	\$7,900.66
Expenditure:	\$50,297.66
Includes:	
Pastors' remuneration & superannuation	\$23,660.20
Missions	\$3,807.40
Sundries	\$2,049.13
Utilities	\$1,492.36
Care ministries	\$1,420.00
Biblical training	\$1,393.41
Repairs & maintenance	\$1,363.64
Insurance	\$1,031.70
Rates & taxes	\$912.60
Pitt Bequest expenses	\$11,822.43
Surplus for year to date:	\$4,093.36
March 2010	
Income:	\$13,295.35
Offerings:	\$10,720.55
	= per week \$2,680.14
	(budget -\$2,550.00)
Expenditure:	\$12,966.82
Surplus for month:	\$328.53

Remember this church in your will.
Your bequest will assist advance gospel ministry in the years ahead.



9.00am onwards
Saturday 15th May
at Allison St.



Before the Throne of God Above

James Davidson;
Noel Cusack;
Pearl Hellyer, Hannah Thompson,

Frank Mitchell, Fred Nash, Margaret Ware, Ina Earl; Mary Jeffrey; Brian & Betty Clayfield; Albert & Perle Harvey, Gladys Jones, Elaine Harfull, Jayne Pritchard, Vi Fraser, Blake Vause, Emmie Thompson, Ned & Joan Morrison, Don Cooper, Rod Wilmot and Heather Touzel.

Continue to uphold our church mission partners:

- Matthew, serving in west Asia..
- Cameron & Carmel Mackenzie, Flynn Patrol (SA), Presbyterian Inland Mission.

- School Christian Pastoral Support Workers: especially Matt Eudy (Yahl Primary School).
- Mission Partners/APWM national office: Bill & Jenny Lutton.

Also intercede for:

- City of Mount Gambier and the District Council of Grant.
- Australian Government: Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and Leader of the Opposition Tony Abbot.
- Converge International chaplains: Heather Baker, John Deer and Ian Touzel.
- Mount Gambier Gambier Christian Centre (Pastor Nigel O'Reilly).



Not Recommended!

"I understand that this is the week for the church collection, and many of you do not want to give a thing. You ungrateful people should be ashamed of yourselves. . . . I am sorry I ever freed you from the tyrants and the papists. You ungrateful beasts, you are not worthy of the treasure of the gospel. If you don't improve, I will stop preaching rather than cast pearls before swine."

Martin Luther, exhorting his congregation, according to Roland Bainton, *Here I Stand* (New York, 1950), pages 351-352.

Building a Christian Worldview

with John Mackay
of Creation Research

Friday 28th - Sunday 30th May



Friday

7.30pm: Sharing Jesus in a World that Think Like Him

Saturday

7.30am: Men's Breakfast at Allison St
7.30pm: Dawkins and Darwin Deluded

Sunday

10.00am: Having a Christian Worldview and Living It

'Bring & Share' Lunch after worship

2.30pm: Dawkins and Darwin Deluded

6.30pm: Citywide service - Sharing Jesus with a Dawkins, Darwin World

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						1 7pm Youth Group
2 NE,AL - Alan Fox	3 9am Women's Bible study	4	5 10am Coffee & Craft	6 11am - PWA 1pm PWA Musical Afternoon	7 10.30am Bible Study @ Allison St	8 7pm Youth Group
9 10am Lords Supper	10 9am Women's Bible study 7.30pm Board of Management	11 1.30pm Care & Concern	12 10am Coffee & Craft	13	14 10.30am Bible Study @ Allison St	15 9am onwards Working Bee 7pm Youth Group
16 Allison St: Alan Fox NE,AL: Ian Touzel	17 9am Women's Bible study	18	19 10am Coffee & Craft 7.30pm Ladies Fellowship	20	21 10.30am Bible Study @ Allison St	22 7pm Youth Group
23	24 9am Women's Bible study 7.30pm Session	25	26 10am Coffee & Craft	27	28 10.30am Bible Study @ Allison St	29 7.30am Men's Breakfast <i>Building a Christian World-</i>
30 View - John Mackay	31 9am Women's Bible study	Bring & share lunch - Sunday 30th				
6.30pm Citywide service						

Book of the Month

| James Grant interviews Kevin DeYoung

Kevin DeYoung is interviewed by James Grant, pastor of Trinity Reformed Church, Roseville, TN, USA. about his new book, **The Good News We Almost Forgot: Rediscovering the Gospel in a 16th Century Catechism**, which is on the Heidelberg Catechism. [What follows is an edited version of the interview.]

James Grant: Let's start with the obvious question: what is a catechism? And isn't this some Roman Catholic thing?

Kevin DeYoung: A catechism is simply a tool for teaching the fundamentals of the faith. Unlike a creed or confession a catechism uses questions and answers. Many Protestant confessional traditions, like Lutherans, Presbyterians, and Reformed, have used catechisms for centuries. Initially, most catechisms were intended for children. Though we probably aren't as biblical or theologically astute. So our adults need them too.

James Grant: What would be the benefits of using a catechism in the life of the church?

Kevin DeYoung: I can think of a lot of benefits: 1) It's an intuitive way to learn about the faith. There's almost a conversational element to reading through a catechism. 2) When we use old confessions and catechisms were help teach our people that their faith is an old faith, shared by millions over many centuries. We also help them realize that other Christians have asked the same questions. 3) Catechisms are ready made documents for Sunday school, new members classes, or even the occasional sermon. 4) Catechisms guard us against faddishness and chronological snobbery.

...

James Grant: Regarding the Heidelberg Catechism in particular, what makes it so helpful?

Kevin DeYoung: With one or two exceptions, it is very irenic. It's warm, personal, and focused on the gospel. The theology is solidly evangelical with Reformed leanings, but broad enough to be used out-

side reformed circles. The Catechism majors on the majors: the Apostles' Creed, the Ten Commandments, and the Lord's Prayer. Also, the division of 52 Lord's Days makes Heidelberg ideal for weekly reading or study.

James Grant: Is there a particular aspect of the Heidelberg Catechism or a section that left a stronger impression on you this time?

Kevin DeYoung: I'm not a Heidelberg scholar. I'm sure I'll continue to learn more about the ins and outs of the document. But this time around I was struck by the relentless focus on the gospel. The Catechism does talk about our obligations as Christians, but the main theme is grace: how God comforts us, how the cross and resurrection benefits us, how Christ mediates for us. The Heidelberg Catechism is like a refreshing bath with cool gospel water.

James Grant: Outside the first question, have other questions made an significant impression on your study? Which ones?

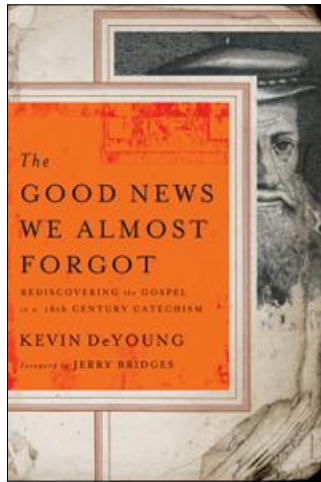
Kevin DeYoung: I've memorized several questions and answers over the years. Q. 21 on true faith is solid gold. Q. 27 on providence is my favorite. I'm also blessed every time I read the question on the Lord's Supper. I enjoyed thinking more about the ascension too from Lord's Day 18.

...

James Grant: I would like to thank Kevin for taking the time to answer these questions, and if you enjoyed the interview, you will also enjoy the book: *The Good News We Almost Forgot: Rediscovering the Gospel in a 16th Century Catechism* It's only 256 pages.

Available from:
www.monergismbooks.com for
US\$9.99 plus freight

You can also check out Kevin's blog at <http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevindeyoung/>



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Editorial deadline: 3rd Sunday of the preceding month.

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Sunday Services

Mount Gambier, Allison St.
10am—including Sunday School and crèche during school term.
5:30pm—Evening worship

1st and 3rd Sundays:

9:30am (EST)—Nelson
11am —Allendale

5th Sunday

10am—Family Service and a 'bring & share' lunch at Mount Gambier



Mission News local | national | international

God works in Kyrgyzstan

"Pray also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ..."
Colossians 4:2-3

As we have been hearing on recent news reports, Kyrgyzstan has been thrown into political and social turmoil through a revolution of the people against Government heads.

Riots began almost simultaneously in different regions of the country; this was preceded by an anti-government rally, organised by the opposition party in Naryn on March 19th, 2010. As a consequence of the authorities failing to respond to the demands of the opposition party, people took to the streets. The result was a 'small war' which left over 100 people dead and 200 people injured. Although the President gave instructions to 'crush' the rebellion,

the authorities underestimated the size of the revolt. Eventually the Government was overthrown and power passed to the Opposition. Every day, more and more people are wounded and die in hospital. Looters

praise God.

During these troubled days, Christians have continued to meet and worship services have been held. Churches have come together and announced that congregations will pray and fast for three weeks - praying that the Lord would pour out his blessings on the country.

"The request coming from the Church in Kyrgyzstan is for Christians around the world to pray that their country would be kept from civil war and that peace would return." CEO of Bible League Australia Grahame Smith said. "Their desire is for God to put in place leaders who will fear Him and deliver their country from evil."



have taken to the streets, houses and shops have been burned. However, amidst the turmoil God has protected his Church. To date, no Christians have been injured and all Church buildings remain intact –

have taken to the streets, houses and shops have been burned. However, amidst the turmoil God has protected his Church. To date, no Christians have been injured and all Church buildings remain intact –

"Kyrgyzstan is a country in great need. Non-believers need to know God and believers need the strength and comfort that comes from God's Word."

— Bible League
www.bibleleague.com.au

Sale of Gifts

The annual Sale of Gifts held on Monday 22nd March raised \$970 which was sent to help Christians in Haiti, through Operation Mobilization's Melbourne office. Thanking everyone for their support and Kevin Norman for giving up his spare time to lead the auction.



Making community work: Taking the initiative to resolve conflict

| Tim Chester

How do you respond to the idea of 'missional community'? Excitement? Idealism? Threat? Intrusive? Missional community sounds fine as an ideal. But does it bare any relation to reality?

How can community work with real people?

I want to suggest four key elements to making community work.

- ◆ taking the initiative to resolve conflict
- ◆ taking the initiative to serve others
- ◆ humility
- ◆ the centrality of the cross

First, taking the initiative to resolve conflict.

Conflict is a normal part of life. So don't suppress conflict. If you can forget about it then do so. But if it affect your attitudes then you need to take the initiative to it (Ephesians 4:26-27). Talk with the person and involve others if necessary (Matthew 18:16).

Repent

Conflict arises from the desires that battle within us – when we don't get what we want (James 4:1). Most conflicts involve fault on both sides. Where you're at fault, repent and ask for forgiveness (don't just say 'sorry' as that requires no response so can leave the issue unresolved). Where others are at fault, don't make the issue all about you, but about them and God – about how their desires matter more to them than God.

Forgive

The sign of a true gospel community is not a community without conflict (whose message is 'we're nice people'), but a community that forgives (whose message is 'God is

gracious'). Forgiveness says: 'This does matter to me, but I still forgive you'. This, in effect, is what God declared at the cross: 'Your sin matters this much, but I still forgive you.' It's an act of will that may only be the beginning of the process of healing.

Conflict Resolution Tips

Cool off. Allow time for your emotions to calm down and use this time to pray and search your own heart.

Talk direct. Don't moan to other people; talk to the person concerned. You may want to talk over the issue with a third party, but chose someone who'll challenge your behaviour and desires.

Understand their perspective. Make an effort to understand the other person's perspective. Check you've understood by repeating it back in your own words. Try to understand how you've contributed to the situation. Don't trivialise the way they feel.

Use 'I' statements instead of 'you' statements. For example, 'I felt like I was being ignored' rather than 'You were ignoring me'.

Avoid saying 'but'. In conflicts the word 'but' will cancel what you've just said. 'I appreciate your efforts, but ...' = I don't appreciate your efforts!

Do not bring up past issues. Remember: love keeps no record of wrongs (1 Corinthians 13:5).



Tim Chester founder of the Crowded House, a church planting initiative in Sheffield, UK, and has 15 years experience of church planting.

He is the author of a number of books. He is married with two daughters.

Continued from page 8

The Malthusians Strike Back

or ravage scarce resources, but he may wake up with an idea to turn worthless sand into silicon chips and explore for vast new oil reserves.

That's why Paul Ehrlich lost his famous bet with economist Julian Simon. In 1980, after Simon allowed Ehrlich to pick any five "scarce" raw materials, they both wagered whether the prices for the materials would increase or decrease in the ensuing decade. Simon won the bet easily as all five chosen metals decreased in value (some without even adjusting for inflation). Even though the metals were valuable, technological advances in discovery and refinement, not to mention unrelated advances that led other to pursue alternate commodities, drove the prices downward. In a market economy, demand spurs innovation, innovation spurs increased productivity, and increased productivity means more sustainability.

Who knows? The Duggars' 18 children may just possibly do more on the planet than knock over trees and buy Hummers. They may, to paraphrase from your graduation speech, actually make the planet a better place for having been on it. As one author puts it, "man, not matter, is the ultimate resource."

As another Author once said, "Fill the earth and subdue it" (Genesis 1:28).



Kevin DeYoung is the Senior Pastor at University Reformed Church, East Lansing, MI, USA, since August 2004. His three main responsibilities include

preaching, leadership, and administration. Kevin is married to Trisha, and they have four children. He has authored several books including *Freedom and Boundaries*, *Just Do Something* and *The Good News We Almost Forgot*.

The Malthusians Strike Back | Kevin DeYoung

It's hard to decide if this is silly or sinister, or both. But if you want to see where radical environmentalism—the kind that honors the planet by wishing a lot of people would get off it—can lead us, check out the Optimum Population Trust (OPT). The OPT is a British group concerned about “the effects of overpopulation on a plundered planet.” They argue that the United Kingdom’s optimum population is less than 30 million (not even half its current size) and possibly lower than 17 million. Likewise, good old planet earth could possibly sustain five billion people, but a safer number is around three billion, also less than half our current population.

The “leading think tank in the UK concerned with the impact of population growth on the environment” is not a fringe group. It boasts well-known “patrons” like Sir David Attenborough of the British Museum and the BBC (he narrated *Planet Earth*), Jane Goodall of chimpanzee fame, James Lovelock who pioneered

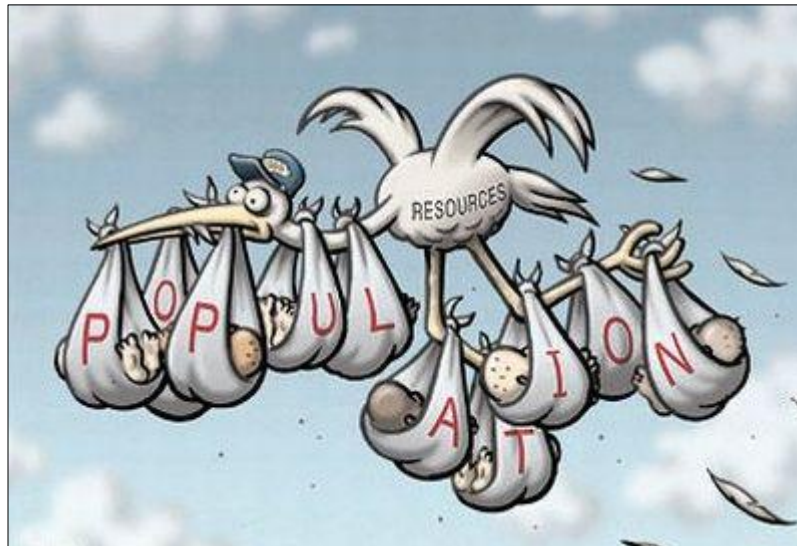
the Gaia theory that earth functions as an organism, and Paul Ehrlich whose 1968 book *The Population Bomb* predicted that the earth would soon be ravaged by the worst mass starvation in history. The OPT puts out regular news releases which range from the obvious (“Sex Drives Population Growth”), to the predictable (“Contraception is Greenest Climate Change Strategy”), to the Orwellian (“No ‘Unlimited’ Right to Have Children”).

The goal of the Trust is to see a smaller, more sustainable population on our planet. If we don't limit the size of our families (see their “Stop at Two Pledge”), then Nature, through famine, disease, and war, will wipe out our families for us. If only the planet could shed a few billion people

and reach its optimum population, we would see a better future for the environment, the nations of the world, and our children (all 0-2 of them).

What's Wrong with This Picture?

The OPT represents the reincarnation of Thomas Malthus' failed theories from two hundred years ago. Malthus was a British scholar who argued that as societies prospered they would, at first, be able to support more people. Thus, families would expand. But as the population grew, it would rather quickly overrun a country's ability to sustain itself. Population would grow



exponentially, but food supply would only grow linearly. As a result, population growth would have to be checked by massive pestilence and famine.

Enter doomsday scenarios, government-sponsored population inquiries (or worse), and pontificating from the OPT.

Besides the inherent dark side of population control (increased number of abortions, decreased personal liberties, huge imbalances in male-female populations), there are two fundamental problems with the OPT's Malthusian predictions.

First, the rate of population growth is not constant. It is true that world population is expected to swell to over 9 billion by 2050, but what the OPT

doesn't mention is that many experts think the world population may start to shrink shortly thereafter. This is because the overall global fertility rate, though still well above the replacement rate, continues to decline. Consequently, the 2050 population prediction was less in 2008 than it was in 2006 because the growth rate is slowing down. Many countries in the industrialized world, like Russia and Japan, faced with aging, declining populations, are struggling to find ways bring their fertility rates up, closer to the replacement rate of 2.1. In other

words, when the OPT warns that at the current growth rate the world population will be 134 trillion by 2300, they are guilty of freezing a fertility rate which will not remain constant. They also look silly.

The **second** problem with the dire predictions of the neo-Malthusians is that humans, creating in the image of God, have an incredible knack for, well, creating. Despite the hysterics of the chattering

humanophobes, human beings don't just create problems on the planet, they also solve them. The worst scenarios of Thomas Malthus and Paul Ehrlich have not come to pass because humans develop new ways to farm and harness new technologies so that the planet's resources can sustain more life.

For all the good that environmentalism can do—and who isn't glad for cleaner rivers and fewer polluting smokestacks?—the Achilles heel of the environmental movement has always been a tendency to see humans as only consumers, not also creators, as more parasite than producers. The average human doesn't wake up hoping to despoil pristine wilderness

Continued on page 7