

## And In Other News...

# The Slaying of Cecil: A Reflection on What the West Has Become



*by Shaun Willcock*

As the western world goes into fits of apoplexy over the killing of Cecil the lion in Zimbabwe by an American hunter, it speaks volumes about the twisted sense of moral outrage so prevalent in the west today. It is very important that Christians do not fall into the trap of viewing such things through the same distorted lens that western worldlings are using.

American hunters (and hunters from other western countries too) come to Africa all the time and pay big bucks to hunt. But unfortunately for hunter Walter Palmer, he killed a lion with a name. Cecil was off-limits to hunters because he had been fitted with a collar for research purposes. As anyone who has ever kept chickens knows, if his children give any of those birds a name it becomes almost impossible to turn it into dinner for the family, even though they readily eat other chickens all the time. Likewise with this lion. He had a name, and therefore – even though lions are hunted every year – he became the focal point for animal-rightists’ anger the world over. “Poor Cecil!” just tugs at the heart-strings so much more than “that poor animal”.

Palmer claimed that he did not know his hosts did not have the permits to shoot Cecil. Just how illegal the entire incident was, is for a court to decide, and he is supposed to be considered innocent till proven guilty; but the vicious assault on his character has meant that, as far as the “Bambi crowd” are concerned, he is already guilty of the most terrible crime.

Let me anticipate any hysterical rants from radical “Greens” by saying that I have a deep love and appreciation for African wildlife and have spent much of my leisure time, throughout my life, exploring wild places in southern Africa, observing the wildlife, etc.; and I would view it as an immense tragedy if Africa’s lion population, or for that matter the population of any species, was to disappear from the earth through man’s greed and stupidity.

Lions are not classified as endangered yet, but rather as “vulnerable”.<sup>1</sup> In this day and age, hunting an endangered species (such as the rhino) is simply unjustifiable, as each time a member of that species is killed it diminishes the gene pool, and the chances of the survival of that species are, to that extent, lessened. As I wrote in my pamphlet, *The Green Goddess: Radical Environmentalism and “Mother Earth” Idolatry*, “It is indeed a very sad thing when, for example, poachers drive a particular animal to the brink of extinction, and we *should* be concerned about it, and we *should* do what we can to prevent it (if there is anything we can do). The fact that God told Noah to preserve two of every unclean beast, and seven of every clean beast, alive on the ark, so as to repopulate the earth after the flood, shows that the Lord *does* expect man to take care of the natural world around him.” And: “These beautiful and fascinating creatures should be preserved, to fill us all with wonder and to testify to the Creator’s power. Thus... it must not be assumed we are against conservation. We are very much in favour of it.

Man must take care of the world, certainly. But taking care of it is one thing; worshipping and serving the creature more than the Creator is a very different thing altogether! (Rom. 1:25).”<sup>2</sup>

But now for some plain, hard facts, hated by radical Greens but *facts* nevertheless, which reveal just how warped the west’s sense of right and wrong has become:

Hunting is not sinful *per se*. Killing animals for food, in self-defence, and even for necessary culling purposes due to space limitations and other factors, is perfectly justifiable. Today’s western hysteria against hunting is based on emotionalism born out of radical environmentalism which views all hunting as somehow immoral. The worship of “Mother Nature” has so taken over the western world that the killing of a wild animal is viewed as a “crime” and a “sin” (even by those who do not believe there is such a thing as sin!). As it says in the margin of Rom. 1:25, they worship and serve the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever.

As I wrote in *The Green Goddess*: “It was not man who first killed an animal; it was the Lord God Himself! Yes – the very One who had created all life was the first to take life. After Adam and Eve sinned, and knew that they were naked before the all-holy One, the Lord God made coats of skins for them, to cover their bodies. He killed an animal, or more than one animal, to do that. If ‘all life is sacred’, as radical environmentalists claim, then God would not have done this.”<sup>3</sup>

And: “We may use animals for food and for various other purposes, and let no believer fall for the liberal lie that hunting is criminal and should be outlawed. Hunting has been part of man’s existence through the ages, and there is no sin in this. Man has hunted animals for food and clothing, and in self-defence.”<sup>4</sup>

After the flood, the Lord told Noah: “And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered. Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things” (Gen. 9:2,3). In fact, “commanding to abstain from meats” is a doctrine of *devils* (1 Tim. 4:3-5).

Some American Greens actually issued *death threats* against Walter Palmer, the dentist who killed Cecil the lion; and signs were taped to the door of his dental practice in Minneapolis which read, “Rot in Hell” and “Palmer, there is a deep cavity waiting for you!” One Minneapolis resident, Rachel Augusta, mentor co-ordinator at the Animal Rights Coalition, said, “Walter, you are a murderer, you are a terrorist.”<sup>5</sup>

Such threats and vitriol are absolutely shocking, and reveal a society in moral collapse. Every single day, multiplied thousands of babies are murdered in their mothers’ wombs in the United States; but although there are a few exceptions, the same radical Greens who call for the death of one lion hunter are overwhelmingly in favour of the deaths of unborn babies. They shed tears of outrage and sorrow over the death of a lion, yet claim that the death of an unborn child is a “woman’s right”.

They wish for Palmer to “Rot in Hell” for killing a lion; yet the majority of them do not believe in hell, for they do not believe in sin – at least, not in sin committed by one human being against another, but only when a human being does something to an animal. *Then*, lo and behold! They believe in hell.

And they call a lion hunter a murderer and a terrorist; yet they will murder unborn babies, and will honour and praise *real* terrorists the world over. Remember how Nelson Mandela was given a ticker-tape parade in New York after his release from prison, and is now honoured with Mandela Day internationally.

The outrage over the killing of Cecil the lion comes overwhelmingly from people in America, Europe and other First World western nations, who live half a world away from wild populations of lions anyway, and who have no understanding of the hardships of life on the ground for millions of Africans. Things have been so cosy and comfortable for westerners for so long, that they can waste time venting about the death of a single lion in far-away Africa. They are able to protest and shout slogans, and then return home to their abundant meals and safe homes.

But in that same far-away Africa, daily life is a constant struggle for survival for millions, and the plight of a single lion, shot by some wealthy American, leaves them cold – especially when so many Africans, in addition to the hardships they face from famines, droughts, wars, etc., often face the additional dangers posed by lions and other large wild creatures. “The world of Palmer, who paid \$50 000 to kill 13-year-old Cecil, is a very different one from that inhabited by millions of rural Africans. According to CrocBITE, a database, from January 2008 to October 2013, there were more than 460 recorded attacks by Nile crocodiles, most of them fatal. That tally is a massive underrepresentation.”<sup>6</sup> And crocs are by no means the only animals that kill Africans in large numbers every year: lions, elephants, hippo and others do so as well.

Notice how there is decidedly less enthusiasm for the protection of the less “cuddly”, “cute” and “furry” animals. If Palmer had shot a crocodile, one wonders if there would have been the same outcry. The same thing is seen with the “Save the Dolphins” and “Save the Whales” crowd: why no similar campaigns to “Save the Tuna” or “Save the Black Mamba”? Somehow I don’t think there would be hate-filled messages saying “murderer” and “terrorist” if Palmer had killed a boa constrictor. *Selective* outrage adds hypocrisy to stupidity.

(And once again, I would not want to see all dolphins or whales wiped out either. What an incalculable loss that would be! But let’s quit the hysteria and put things in perspective.)

The words of one Zimbabwean, Joseph Mabuwa, summarised the way millions of other Africans feel about this whole matter. “Why are the Americans more concerned than us?” he said. “We never hear them speak out when villagers are killed by lions and elephants in Hwange [Hwange National Park in Zimbabwe].”<sup>7</sup> That is because many radical Greens couldn’t care less if humans die; they only explode in anger when animals die. For another pillar of radical environmentalism is *population reduction*. Many radical activists *want* the human population to be drastically lowered, by any means possible. So if lions kill humans, well, “that’s nature’s way”; but if humans kill lions, they are murderers and terrorists.

Yes, it is certainly true that black Africans *should* be concerned about dwindling populations of African wildlife. They will be the greatest losers if such magnificent creatures disappear entirely one day. But the fact still remains that it is extremely difficult to convince rural Africans of the value of a single lion, when they struggle to find enough food to eat every day of their lives. The over-the-top reaction, in the western world, to Cecil’s death is disgusting to people facing hunger, as well as danger from wild animals. David, when he was a young shepherd, killed a lion to save his flock (1 Sam. 17:34-36), and was entirely justified in doing so; and no rural African can be expected to shed tears over the death of a lion when his livelihood, scant as it is, is threatened by one.

Radical wildlife activists think that by banning such things as lion hunting, they will be saving lions from extinction. But this is not so! Facts are stubborn things, and radical environmentalists much prefer “creating” their own “facts” than paying attention to real ones. But here are the real ones:

As pointed out by Ivo Vegter, a South African author who opposes the exaggerations and lies of extreme environmentalists, “the troubling part of this outcry is that a ban (or similar prohibitions) on trophy hunting could have exactly the opposite effect of what is intended: it could well lead to a decline in wild populations and a rise in poaching.”<sup>8</sup> How so? The answer comes from someone who has no liking for hunting, but who can see this truth. Rosie Cooney chairs the International Union for Conservation of Nature’s (IUCN’s) Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy. This organisation maintains the “Red List of Threatened Species”. Cooney wrote: “Bans on trophy hunting in Tanzania (1973-78), Kenya (1977) and Zambia (2000-03) accelerated a rapid loss of wildlife due to the removal of incentives for conservation.”<sup>9</sup> She pointed out that under a trophy hunting ban, game farms in South Africa, which cover three times the surface area under government protection and contribute increasingly to conservation objectives, would probably revert to livestock and crop farming, since few would be able to make ends meet with photo-tourism alone. “Wildlife on these lands (will be) largely gone along with its habitat,” she stated.

Vegter states: “A hunting ban will also decimate burgeoning community-based resource management projects, which are enjoying considerable success in South Africa and Namibia. If lions are to be protected, people will need to live on the land with them. Because of habitat loss due to development and farmers keeping their animals safe, local communities pose a bigger threat to lions than hunters ever will [read that last sentence again!]. Rural farmers need to see game as more than just a threat to crops, and predators as more than just a threat to livestock.”

Vegter writes, truthfully: “I’ll bet not one of those 1-million hunting ban petition signatories knows about these communal sustainability projects in southern Africa, or thinks about human-animal conflict near game farms and nature reserves. Few of them have likely heard of the correlation between hunting bans and declining wildlife numbers. Yet every one of them probably feels entitled to an opinion about how poor Africans can best lift themselves out of poverty, while conserving nature for foreign eco-tourists. (Don’t shoot animals! Make more awesome beadwork and wood carving! Here’s \$5 to pose for a photo instead of going to school!).”

The fact is, trophy hunting by foreign hunters willing to pay enormous figures does far more good for conserving Africa’s wildlife than the solutions proposed by radical environmentalist activists. “[T]he numbers speak for themselves,” writes Vegter. “Where hunting has been banned, lion populations collapsed. Where it was permitted and adequately regulated, they survived, and even thrived. In South Africa, hunting brings in billions of rands worth of revenue. Each hunter pays more to visit our country than your average eco-tourist.” Precisely. It all comes down to a matter of economics. People will preserve what is valuable to them. If rural Africans can see that preserving African wildlife provides them with much-needed revenue from hunters, they will preserve it. They will not preserve what holds no value to them, and is even a threat to their lives and livestock.

What an upside-down world this has become! A world that has lost its moorings, and is adrift on an ever-changing sea where animals have rights but unborn humans don’t; where men who advocate terrorism are feted as heroes but men who kill animals are called terrorists; and where the only hell that is said to exist is the one reserved for those who don’t bow at the shrine of the Green Goddess. *“Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things... who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than [margin: rather than] the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen”* (Rom. 1:22-25).

August 2015

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#### **ENDNOTES:**

1. According to *The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species*. [www.iucnredlist.org](http://www.iucnredlist.org).
2. *The Green Goddess: Radical Environmentalism and “Mother Earth” Idolatry*, by Shaun Willcock. Bible Based Ministries. [www.biblebasedministries.co.uk](http://www.biblebasedministries.co.uk).
3. *The Green Goddess*.
4. *The Green Goddess*.
5. *The Mercury*, July 31, 2015. Article: “Zimbabweans puzzled by fury over lion death.”
6. *The Mercury*, July 31, 2015.

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7. *The Mercury*, July 31, 2015.

8. *Daily Maverick*, 3 August 2015. Article: “Cecil the Lion: Lessons in Misplaced Outrage.”  
www.dailymaverick.co.za.

9. *International Institute for Environment and Development*, 31 July 2015. Article: “RIP Cecil the Lion – What Will be His Legacy? And Who Should Decide?” www.iied.org.

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