

PRISM

July/August 2011

PRISMmagazine.org

Plant a Tree, Save a Life

Caring for the poor by caring
for the earth

Farming for
justice in the
inner city

Evangelicals rediscover
their legacy of animal
protection



Electric!
Solar
grandmothers
illuminate the
developing world



July/August 2011

"What kind of land do they live in? Is it good or bad? ... How is the soil? Is it fertile or poor? Are there trees in it or not? Do your best to bring back some of the fruit of the land."
Numbers 13: 19, 20

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A Call to Compassion from Our Brothers the Animals

by Kendra Langdon Juskus

"Oh God, enlarge within us the sense of fellowship with all living things, our brothers the animals to whom Thou gavest the earth in common with us. ... May we realize that they love the sweetness of life even as we..."
 - Basil of Caesarea

Before Stella was Stella, she was a nameless "production unit" at a factory farm, and her time was almost up. A breeding sow valued only for birthing pigs for slaughter, Stella had reached an age where her utility to the industrial meat system had peaked. She was likely on her way to a slaughterhouse when an accident—perhaps a crash involving the truck transporting her—released her into the Florida suburbs instead. A man watering his lawn was shocked when Stella, emaciated and covered in wounds, staggered into his driveway and collapsed.

"Stella's wonderful," says Elaine West, the president of Rooterville, a Melrose, Fla., sanctuary for rescued animals, where Stella now lives. "If you're out[side], she's going to be there with you, checking out what you're doing and rubbing up on you and wanting to get her back scratched...You call her name and she comes running."

West and her husband, Dale, have named most of the 110 pigs who have been rescued from abuse or neglect to live peacefully on Rooterville's 20 acres. Unlike Stella, whose ear tags and docked tail (cut off at its tender base to prevent other distressed pigs from chewing it) identify her as a factory farm pig, most of the pigs at Rooterville are pot-bellied pigs purchased as house pets and then abandoned when they grew too large or had too many litters. Shelters, rather than saving the pigs, often give them away to be slaughtered or killed as training bait for hunting dogs.

behind fencing; and the routine bludgeoning of weak calves unable to stand. We like to think such cruelty occurs only in isolated incidents and at the hands of disturbed individuals, but the 2007 legal charges against NFL quarterback Michael Vick taught us otherwise. When Vick was sentenced to 23 months in prison for financing the popular but illegal blood sport of dog fighting and participating in the killing of underperforming dogs, the pervasiveness of animal abuse in American society was exposed.

Most of us are implicated in the brutality. For example, many well-intentioned pet owners unwittingly participate in the abuse of dogs by "puppy mill" breeders. Puppy mills confine dogs without access to exercise or medical care and breed them until they can no longer reproduce (at which point they are killed, along with unsellable offspring) to provide millions of adorable, but often behaviorally and physically challenged, puppies to local pet stores.

But we are perhaps most complicit in animal suffering at the dinner table.

"The sad statistic about meat consumption," says Christine Gutleben, director of faith outreach for the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), "is that in the US it has increased by nearly 78 pounds per person per year from just 60 years ago."

To meet and encourage this demand, the agricultural industry, in a gross departure from the family farms of a generation ago, crams millions of "production units" (cows, chickens, and pigs like Stella) into "confined agricultural feeding operations" (CAFOs). Animals in CAFOs, sometimes literally living on top of one another, are deprived of space, light, and exercise and slaughtered in sloppy, violent processes.

"Whoever is righteous has regard for the life of his beast, but the mercy of the wicked is cruel."
-Proverbs 12:10

"God has given us a calling," West explains of her work. "It has not been easy. But I know that God's there, and if we're doing what he wants us to do, he's going to make a way."

Dominion betrayed

Expressions of cruelty toward animals are legion: pet overpopulation (from insufficient spaying and neutering) that brings abandoned pigs to Rooterville and necessitates the euthanizing of 4 million cats and dogs each year; baby seals clubbed, cats strangled, and dogs skinned alive for their fur; captive hunts, where hunters pay to shoot animals trapped

Matthew Scully, a conservative Catholic and onetime speechwriter for former President George W. Bush, describes the system in his book *Dominion: The Power of Man, the Suffering of Animals, and the Call to Mercy*:

Four companies now produce 81 percent of cows brought to market, 73 percent of sheep, half our chickens, and some 60 percent of hogs... In 1967 there were more than a million hog farms in the country; today there are about 114,000, all of them producing more, more, more to meet market demand. About 80 million of the 95 million hogs slaughtered each year in America, according to the

Animal welfare—like the education of girls, child labor laws, and disapproval of all that was lewd, violent, and debasing—fell into what William Wilberforce called the “reformation of manners”—a call for the moral regeneration of an entire society.

National Pork Producers Council, are intensively reared in mass confinement farms, never once in their time on earth feeling soil or sunshine. Genetically designed by machines, inseminated by machines, fed by machines, monitored, herded, electrocuted, stabbed, cleaned, cut, and packaged by machines—themselves treated like machines “from birth to bacon”—these creatures, when eaten, have hardly ever been touched by human hands.

Still, animal suffering isn't on the average Christian's radar. Certainly it hasn't been high on the list of social concerns that evangelicals have reclaimed in recent years. Its absence is puzzling given that animal welfare, among other injustices evangelicals condemn, is marked by a long legacy of Christian thinking and leadership.

Our place in a peaceable kingdom

Dr. Barrett Duke, vice president for public policy and research for the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics and

Religious Liberty Commission, recognized his own compassion toward animals at the age of 10, when a peer opened a lizard's jaw to the point of its cracking, and then let the creature go. Today Duke helps the SBC's state affiliates fight evils like cockfighting, an initiative that might surprise some but that Duke insists makes sense for Southern Baptists because of animal welfare's biblical foundations.

“You read the Bible,” he says, “and it's very clear that humans are to engage in compassionate care for creation, which of course would include the animal world.” That mandate starts in Genesis 1:28, where God gives us “dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

Some pervert the meaning of “dominion” to justify the wanton abuse of animals. But this is not a biblical understanding of stewardship. Proverbs 12:10 asserts, “Whoever is righteous has regard for the life of his beast, but the mercy of the wicked is cruel.” The Bible is replete with instructions for Israel's responsible consideration of animals, awe

for God's creatures, and depictions of a peaceable kingdom where things are set right: “The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them.”

Then there is God: the sacrificial Lamb, the hen longing to gather in her brood, the baby born among barnyard animals, and the King establishing his gentle rule from the back of a donkey's colt.

Although animal welfare is hardly a common sermon topic today, Christians throughout the centuries have taken these biblical foundations for animal welfare seriously, often considering mercy toward animals indicative of strong Christian character and submission to God's will over our own.

In the early centuries of Christianity, Basil of Caesarea and Irenaeus of Lyons encouraged mercy toward animals. “These creatures minister to our needs every day,” Irenaeus wrote. “Without them we could not live, and through them the human race greatly offends the Creator.” Francis of Assisi, the Catholic patron saint of animals, is renowned for his gentleness toward animals and his occasional efforts to communicate with them and encourage them to worship God.

Known less for their animal-whispering skills than for their theological leadership, John Calvin and John Wesley both affirmed the preeminence of humanity and its deliverance into God's kingdom, while also considering the possibility of a respective

Dig Deeper

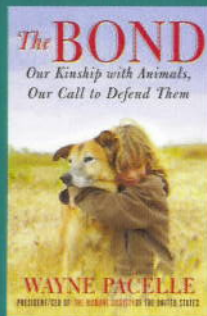
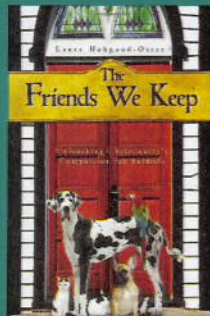
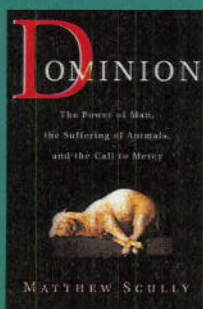
Dominion: The Power of Man, the Suffering of Animals, and the Call to Mercy by Matthew Scully (St. Martin's Griffin, 2003)

The Bond: Our Kinship with Animals, Our Call to Defend Them by Wayne Pacelle (William Morrow, 2011)

The Friends We Keep: Unleashing Christianity's Compassion for Animals (Baylor University Press, 2010)

Visit NotOneSparrow.com for information and inspiration from a Christian perspective.

Visit HumaneSociety.org (> About > Departments > Faith Outreach) to learn more about the issues facing animals and what people of faith can do.



restoration for animals. For both acknowledged that "creation waits with eager expectation for the revealing of the sons of God" and that God has mercy on what he has made.

C.S. Lewis' books clearly display his affection for animals. His fictional villains are easily identifiable by their cruelty toward animals, and in his nonfiction he wrestled with the question of animal pain and argued against the practice of vivisection. Practicing what he preached, he once directed a foxhunting party in the opposite direction of where the fox had run.

William Wilberforce, in addition to his contribution to the abolition of the slave trade, supported a Parliamentary bill against the sport of bullbaiting—setting dogs to attack an angry, tethered bull—declaring, "Wretched indeed must be the condition of the people of England, if their whole happiness consists in the practice of such barbarity."

William Wilberforce and his Clapham community "understood that [animal cruelty] was a reflection of the general coarsening of society," explains Mark Rodgers, principal of the Clapham Group (named after the original) in Virginia. "They thought of that as a continuum: If you can beat your dog, you can also turn a blind eye towards slavery... It was a Christian obligation to treat life humanely."

Christians' role in animal welfare has always come down to this obligation and the virtues of a Christlike life that support it: humility, sacrifice, submission to God, responsible dominion, respect for and awe of God's creatures, and compassion for those at our mercy.

Animals' best advocates gone missing

Unfortunately, advocacy for the care of animals has often diverged from the source of such virtues, alienating Christians in the process.

Explains Duke, "You've got some people arguing that animals deserve the same level of rights that human beings

deserve. Part of...evangelicals' concern is simply that we don't want to be part of that camp. We think those folks have gone to extremes and have blown it all out of proportion.... That's probably affected some willingness...to be involved."

That animal rights conversation drives much of the public impression of animal protection issues today. Although animals are, at minimum, sentient beings capable of anticipating, feeling, and remembering pain, equating them with human beings and demanding their equivalent treatment denies the God-given exceptionalism of humans and can even counteract the demands of dominion. Writes Scully, "Those who construct elaborate theories based on rights or liberation risk pulling animals out of the world where affection and creaturely goodwill are possible."

Wayne Pacelle, CEO and president of the HSUS, explains why it encourages animal welfare instead of animal rights: "I think it's a recognition that we are special and exceptional," he says. "All these creatures are at our mercy... The rights language suggests that there's something inherent in them, and I think it's more about us."

Charity toward animals cannot be justified by a system of right or merit, and, for Christians, should need no such justification. The command to it, and the example of God's own charity toward us, is sufficient.

Still, it is challenging to be charitable, especially when suffering is hidden in CAFOs or puppy mills and when the busyness of daily life distracts us from the pain of those who can't speak for themselves. It is particularly difficult to acknowledge their suffering when it is repeatedly excused and justified by an economic system and cultural ethos that demand it and demand we accept it, all the while obscuring the ethical implications of our participation in it.

Karen Swallow Prior, associate professor of English

In the church

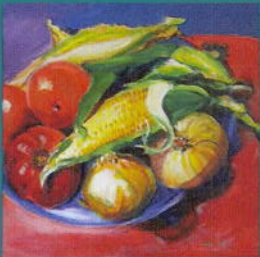


Low-income community members will often go without food in order to feed their pets. Include a request for pet food in your next food drive and hold free pet vaccination clinics both to assist your community's poorest residents and show mercy to their pets.

A church is also a great location for a pet adoption event—an easy way to increase opportunities for compassion and decrease pet euthanizations. Visit FlourishOnline.org (at tinyurl.com/3jnsvjv) for a how-to.

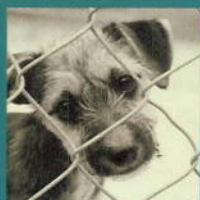
Download or request "Animal Protection Ministry: A Guide for Churches" at the [Humane Society HumaneSociety.org](http://HumaneSociety.org).

At the table



"Everybody—everybody—can have one vegetarian meal a week," says Christine Gutleben. Even this small step, can impact the way the industrial agriculture system does business and treats animals.

If you are able to go a step further in altering your eating habits out of mercy for farm animals, consider purchasing only eggs labeled as "cage-free," grass-fed beef, or meat from a local farmer who can vouch for the integrity and ethics with which animals were raised and slaughtered. Visit LocalHarvest.org to find humanely raised meat near you.



Among the animals

"There are plenty of rescues out there that need help," says Elaine West of Rooterville. "People need to help their local organizations. The local rescues are really struggling in this economy."

Contact your local animal shelter, animal control, or humane society, and ask how you can get involved. You may be able to play with and care for shelter pets, bring animals to convalescent centers as part of a pet therapy program, or adopt a pet into your home.

In *Dominion*, Scully's condemnation of the animal-dependent excesses of our age chastens believers who should know better than to indulge them: "A regard for animals requires actually giving up a few things, be it a fine fur, a trophy-hunting safari, a coveted building site, or a pristine lawn unsoiled by noisy geese... Maybe the problem here is that too many people have made too many compromises, so many that we can hardly tell the compromises we make from the principles we hold."

More than just a cause

In one important respect, insisting that animals not be beaten, broken, and abandoned at our whim is distinct from other worthy calls to compassion.

"The one unique aspect of animal welfare," says Rodgers, is "that it touches most Americans."

Pet ownership crosses racial, ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic lines. Even those of us who don't own pets still eat, and most of us eat meat. The issues touch us directly and without discrimination, providing the opportunity to address them just as directly across the board.

And yet, animal welfare is more than just a cause. Wilberforce didn't support the anti-bullbaiting bill because

and chair of the department of English and modern languages at Liberty University in Virginia, has written about animal cruelty for evangelical publications. She says, "I think we have, as a culture, become accustomed to living a certain lifestyle and having easy, cheap access to lots of things such that we consume and shop to the point that we really don't consider the implications of the choices we make."

An economic system ready and willing to provide any kind and number of widgets at any cost, accompanied by a cultural ethos that encourages demand for those widgets, necessarily capitulates the Christian virtues fundamental to animal welfare to a quite different set of values: the immediate gratification of lust, gluttony, and vanity; submission to one's own will and desire; the reduction of life to possessions and beings to "production units."

advocates convinced him it was a worthwhile cause. Animal welfare—like the education of girls, child labor laws, and disapproval of all that was lewd, violent, and debasing—fell into what Wilberforce called the "reformation of manners"—a call for the moral regeneration of an entire society.

A concern for animal welfare is a natural outgrowth of a life governed by Christian virtues and may, because it touches so many, be capable of multiplying those virtues across society in a similar sort of "reformation."

"On a basic level, we would be reflecting God's vision for the world and all that he created and in that sense be a witness to society for the world God intended and the world he hopes to restore." So says Ben DeVries, founder of Not One Sparrow, which encourages Christ-driven mercy towards animals and is, as a relatively young organization, a bellwether for evangelical participation in the animal welfare movement.

Christians have a unique testimony in exhibiting compassion for animals. It doesn't result from the demands of animals' rights or from an arbitrarily constructed morality. It results from faithfulness to the first and most fundamental privilege we are called to by the Creator. That is why it spreads.

Elaine West marvels, "[People] say, 'You care more about animals. Why aren't you helping children?'" But having compassion for animals definitely makes you more compassionate all around. And that compassion extends to people, too. Compassion is not a finite quality."

At Rooterville, West's days are filled with compassionate stewardship and our other calling: to name the creatures delivered into her care and to call the most emaciated and wounded, the ones who struggle back into right relationship with their caretakers, beautiful names like Stella, star.

Kendra Langdon Juskus writes and edits from Illinois. She is the managing editor of Flourish, an online publication that explores issues of faith and environmental stewardship (Flourishonline.org), and poetry editor for A Prairie Journal (APrairieJournal.com).



In the public square

Adopt instead of buying puppies. Tell local lawmakers you oppose efforts to restrict the recording of what goes on inside factory farms. Sign petitions against baby seal clubbing and puppy mills. Don't buy fur.

You can play an important role in reprioritizing the concerns of politicians and corporations by advocating against animal suffering with your voice, your votes, and your purchasing power. To stay up to date on current issues and find out how you can impact them, visit HumaneSociety.org (> Issues > Campaigns).