



**THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES**

The Development of Evangelical Perspectives on Animals

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Historically Evangelicals have cared about animals, yet, over time, the cause of protecting them has disappeared from the set of concerns that have defined modern Evangelical culture. However, in the last decade there has been a remarkable re-emergence of concern for animals among Evangelicals, and fortunately this trend is likely to continue. This reawakening of compassion is a result of two simultaneous, emerging strands of awareness. The first is around the history of Evangelical compassion for animals and the strong Biblical basis for such concerns. The second is around issues of massive, systematic abuses of animals such as factory farming. As a result of these two strands, Evangelicals are re-discovering how addressing animal protection issues is not just a part of Christian life but also integral to their Biblically mandated responsibilities towards the whole of creation. Indeed, they are finding that supporting reasonable efforts to protect animals from cruelty and suffering is something the vast majority of Christians have in common.

I would like to suggest that Evangelical concern for animals has reemerged as a result of three key developments. They are: Significant moments for reflection, crucial relationships and groundbreaking responses. First, I will identify content that provided an opportunity for critical reflection on animal issues for largely Evangelical audiences. Second, I will examine evidence of the powerful relationships that were formed and their importance to this discussion. And finally, I will suggest how elements from the two previous areas led to substantive and bold responses from key leaders. While all three areas overlap, I want to look at each in turn to explore their role in the re-emergence of widespread Evangelical concern for animals.

Reflection

I want to provide an overview of five crucial pieces produced in the last decade that have had a catalytic effect on Evangelical perspectives on animals. They've served as opportunities for reflection and community dialogue, had a compounding effect on key relationships and responses among Evangelicals and ultimately led to significant insight and activity in care and concern for animals.

***Dominion* by Matthew Scully**

Matthew Scully's book, *Dominion*, published in 2002, is arguably the most significant book on animals published in the 21st century. It was written during George W. Bush's Administration by his own speechwriter. While a Catholic himself, Scully was able to frame his topic in a way both resonate and accessible to political conservatives and Evangelicals, among others. It reacquainted readers with the long-standing Christian tradition of concern for animals and reintroduced them to a language of concern and compassion that had fallen out of use. The book impacted Evangelical perspectives in particular in at least three ways. It called for a reexamination of interpretations of the concept of dominion, helped key theological themes to re-emerge, and perhaps most significantly, took discussions about animals out of the arena of rights and returned them to a more orthodox line of argument by highlighting human responsibility.

Scully begins by leaving no doubt about the way we've handled dominion, stating that, "Nobody, least of all the conservative, should be shocked or offended to be told that we are abusing dominion, the first and greatest power given to man on earth. It would be shocking if we didn't abuse our power"¹. He describes "a dominion of power" as a posture with us – and not God – at the center, "all grandeur and no grace"². He identifies a number of excuses given in the name of Dominion to help us see through them:

[W]henver we are called to decide the fate of an animal.... It means understanding that habits are not always needs, traditions are not eternal laws.... It means seeing 'the things that are' before we come marching along with our infinite agenda of appetites and designs and theories, and not covering it up with phony science or theological niceties or the unforgiving imperatives of tradition or economics or conservation (p 45).

¹ Scully, Matthew. *Dominion*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2002. P24.

² Scully, P11.

He encourages his readers to take a more holistic view of Dominion by asking, “Why, when it comes to dominion, are we always stern literalists in the subduing parts and scornful skeptics in the peace-bringing parts?”³ Scully’s hope is that we will apply a sense of fellowship, along with the principles of mercy and good stewardship, to our understanding of Dominion.

After touring an industrial pig farm he observes, “Nature has its own hardships, but its own kindnesses, too, like straw and room to sleep and the care of a mother for her young. When we take even those away, we are smothering the inmost yearnings of these creatures and the charity in our own hearts. Pigs and lambs and cows and chickens are not pieces of machinery, no matter how cost-efficient it may be to treat them as such. Machinery doesn’t cry or feel frightened or lonely. And when a man treats them this way, he might as well be a machine himself. Something dies in him, too”⁴.

The thoughtful reader begins to see animals as creatures with sentience whose experiences are, to a degree, intertwined with his/her own. Yet, while Scully highlights our sense of fellowship with animals, he never confuses their place within the created order. He describes it as an unequal relationship noting, “Human beings love animals as only the higher love the lower, the knowing love the innocent, and the strong love the vulnerable.”⁵ He portrays animals as subjects of our rule while also sharing and enhancing our experience of life.

One of the most significant contributions of *Dominion* is perhaps in its restoration of the discussion to one of human responsibility rather than animal rights. The book returned conversations about animals to a more appropriate and resonate realm for Evangelicals. In the introduction, Scully describes our relationship with animals:

Animals are more than ever a test of our character, of mankind’s capacity for empathy and for decent, honorable conduct and faithful stewardship. We are called to treat them with kindness not because they have rights or power or some claim to equality but in a sense because they don’t, because they all stand unequal and powerless before us⁶.

By establishing their unequal status, he takes the focus away from animals and places it squarely on us. How we treat animals becomes a reflection of our moral character and our ability to place limits on our conduct when dealing with creatures more vulnerable than ourselves.

³ Scully, P28.

⁴ Scully, P288.

⁵ Scully, xii

⁶ Scully, xi-xii.

He warns of the perils associated with taking animals out of their place, either by ascribing them rights or denying their intrinsic created worth:

Those who construct elaborate theories based on rights or liberation risk pulling animals out of the world where affection and creaturely goodwill are possible. People who deal harshly with animals, using them cruelly and cavalierly, pull them too far the other way, out of creation itself, as if our fellow creatures were just unfeeling raw material for commerce, human appetite, and will, to be assigned value only as we see fit, bereft of even the smallest measure of dignity or trace of their Maker's hand.⁷

For Scully, animals belong within the realm of loving dominion and proper stewardship.

Dominion restated the case for the compassionate treatment of animals not only to new audiences, but to the animal protection movement itself. It equipped participants with a more balanced perspective and altered the approach of entire segments within the movement. It helped draw clear distinctions between organizations that talk about animals' rights and those, like The Humane Society of the United States (hereafter HSUS), that instead talk about animal compassion and protection. The book also posed an inviting challenge to reexamine the Christian tradition and consider the necessary role faith plays in restraint, the cultivation of mercy and the overall acceptance of an ethic towards animals. Scully tells the story of baby monkeys who are captured in Indonesia, their brains served raw as a delicacy, directly out of their head while they are still alive. He asks what would stop trappers from doing such a thing: "There is really just one force on earth, save physical restraint, that could have stayed the captain's hand...Only conscience, perhaps only the fear of God almighty, could make such a man draw back".⁸

Dominion received glowing reviews from nearly every major newspaper in the U.S. including *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Los Angeles Times*, and *The Dallas Morning News*, as well as from numerous magazines including *Christianity Today*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, *The Weekly Standard*, and *Bloomberg News*.

William Wilberforce and C.S. Lewis

Faith groups generally, and Evangelicals in particular, have been reacquainted with concern for animals through two influential Evangelicals, William Wilberforce and C.S. Lewis. *Amazing Grace*, is a biographical drama about Wilberforce's campaign to end slavery and the

⁷ Scully, P24.

⁸ Scully, P10.

role Christianity played in inspiring his work for justice. The film opens though with a very sick Wilberforce getting out of his carriage, in the pouring rain, to stop a cart driver from beating and kicking a fallen horse. The scene powerfully portrays Wilberforce as a man who was committed to fighting cruelty in all its forms. While the issue of slavery was of primary importance to him, Wilberforce remained committed to the cause of animal protection throughout his life. Records indicate that he was involved with every parliamentary debate on animal cruelty issues that took place while he was in office. He also wrote about the “cruel and inhuman” practice of bull fighting in his popular work, *A Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System of Professed Christians* (1979).

In 1824 Wilberforce and the Reverend Arthur Broome hosted a meeting in a coffee house in London, establishing the SPCA, which would later become the RSPCA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals). They agreed that two committees would be formed; one to enforce the first animal welfare law passed two years prior in 1822, and the other to oversee, “*the publication of articles and sermons to effect a change in the moral feelings of those who had the control of animals.*” Thus, the foundation of the animal welfare movement was based on the belief that sensitivity towards animals is best awakened through faith and preaching. Wilberforce remains an inspiring figure for many Evangelicals today, and the awareness this film brought to his support of animal protection issues ushered in a key moment of reflection on Christian responsibilities towards animals.

Evangelicals have not had to look quite so far back into history to grasp the work of another well-known figure, Clive Staples Lewis. Dr. Jerry Root, one of the nation’s top C.S. Lewis scholars, Associate Professor at Wheaton College, Associate Director of the Billy Graham Institute for Strategic Evangelism, and the Director of the Wheaton Evangelism Institute, recently wrote a 23-page original essay titled, “C.S. Lewis as Advocate for Animals”.

Root’s piece demonstrates that Lewis, author of the seven *Chronicles of Narnia* books and a key figure for Evangelicals, was concerned about the welfare of animals throughout most of his life. Root concludes that Lewis, “kept working on deepening his grasp of this theme he considered so important. The matter of the mystery of animals, the matter of sharing life with them on this planet, the matter of animal pain, and human responsibility for the animals are all topics that call for serious attention; certainly Lewis thought so.”⁹

We learn from Root that Lewis “employs many literary genres to make a case of man’s responsibility for the animals. These include his letters, literary criticism, fiction, Christian apologetics, and essays (especially a specific essay written in opposition of vivisection).” Root

⁹ Root, Gerald, Ph.D. “C.S. Lewis as an Advocate for Animals.” The Humane Society of the United States, 2010. P23

also draws our attention to Lewis' "model for advocacy," which involves employing the checks of authority, reason and experience, a method that may be helpful for those of us who share his concerns. Dr. Root delivered the paper for the first time at a gathering of Christian leaders hosted by The HSUS in 2010. The HSUS has since produced and distributed thousands of copies.

The awareness generated by *Dominion* and *Amazing Grace*, and later by Root's piece on Lewis, has inspired Evangelicals to consider what the most pressing issues related to care for animals are today.

Eating Mercifully

At the Washington National Cathedral in 2008, over 200 people, including faith and community leaders, journalists and advocates, gathered for the premier of a documentary exploring Christian perspectives on factory farming. The film, *Eating Mercifully*, created by The HSUS, has since been shown at over a thousand churches and dozens of seminaries.

Eating Mercifully brought concern for farm animal welfare to the minds and hearts of Christians nationwide and encouraged a more honest look at our relationship with animals. It helped build partnerships between religious and animal protection leaders, obtain religious support for farm animal protection initiatives, establish ministries for pet owners at churches, and begin ongoing conversations about the role of food in faith.

Robert Martin, the former executive director of the nonpartisan Pew Commission on Industrial Farm Animal Production, narrates the film. Contributors include Pastor Greg Boyd of Woodland Hills Church in St. Paul, Minn.; a Southern Baptist couple, Elaine and Dale West, who run Rooterville Animal Sanctuary now in Seville, Florida; Laura Hobgood-Oster, professor of animals and religion at Southwestern University; Sister Rosemarie Greco from the Roman Catholic Religious order, Daughters of Wisdom; and Christian farmer Peter McDonald of Pasture Pride Farms in upstate New York. Yes, I did just say in this film that McDonald has a farm – that's reason enough to see it.

In the film, Martin recalls an earlier time when, he says, "the farmer was much more interactive in the lives of the animals they were raising. There was more natural setting, more grazing on grass, hogs would root out in the field." He contrasts this with what we have today: "...the new model is very sterile, very cold, industrial is a very good word for it. It's very much detached from all the husbandry that people normally think of."

Eating Mercifully takes viewers through standard factory farms and industry-standard practices. These include sow barns that confine pregnant pigs in two-foot-wide crates barely larger than their own bodies, battery cages that crowd hens in cramped wire cages where they can't even spread their wings, and veal crates that keep baby calves chained at the neck and confined so tightly they can't turn around.

Martin recalls: "We visited a chicken facility with six barns, probably about as long as a football field, with about 30,000 chickens in each barn. It was an oppressive atmosphere, choked with dust and the smell of ammonia because the chickens stand in their own litter."

While the images are difficult, they are not gratuitous. Scenes from inside factory farms — the part of our food system most people never see — flash across the screen quickly, giving viewers a glimpse without overwhelming them.

Like the book *Dominion*, the aim of the film is two-fold: To encourage Christians to think about how farm animals are treated and to reflect on our responsibilities towards them. The example of an all-powerful, yet merciful God, helps us ask the question of our role in the lives of the myriad of creatures within our control.

Eating Mercifully helped to shape the dialogue among Evangelical Christians about factory farming. In addition to being screened at major Evangelical conferences and churches, the film was screened at several Evangelical seminaries including Westmont College, Biola University, Liberty University, Wheaton College and Calvin College. At Biola University, Professor Allen Yeh addressed student concerns about giving attention to animal issues when poverty and violence against human beings are among many other pressing issues. In response, he suggested the two were not mutually exclusive, and that an analogy might be taking art classes at the university. While they may not be the most critical classes of one's education, they are important and do not necessarily prevent students from taking other primary classes.

At Liberty University, Dr. Karen Prior, ran into some resistance after showing the film, but describes the overall experience as positive. Her superiors and students showed support for the issues, and the film continues to inspire dialogue on the issue of factory farming. The screening at Westmont College had three faculty members on the panel and one moderator. Nearly 100 people attended the screening and participated in a lively discussion afterwards. Screenings of this film continue to be one of the most useful tools in sparking dialogue in Christian communities about the issue of industrial animal agriculture.

The HSUS Online Library of Religious Statements on Animals

In 2007, with the help of theologians and religious scholars, The HSUS began compiling an online library of official statements on animals issued by major religions. It includes sections on Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and Unitarian Universalism. The sections on Christianity and Judaism include numerous denominations. The resource has been continually refined and updated for the past five years and scholars working on the project have made efforts to obtain approval and recognition from denominational offices, associations and organizations affiliated with each tradition.

This library illustrates how a variety of religions are responding to animal welfare issues. It also highlights their long-standing tradition of care and concern for animals. It is full of unambiguous statements about humanity's call to be caretakers of animals. Among them, The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Catholic catechism affirm that compassion *for animals* is a matter of *human* dignity. The Episcopal Church embraces a variety of resolutions that identify the cruelty associated with puppy mills and factory farms. The United Methodist Church supports regulations that protect the life and health of animals and calls for protective measures for endangered species. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America affirms humanity's kinship with other creatures and describes human dominion as a special responsibility that should reflect God's mercy.

More conservative Protestant traditions, like the Southern Baptist Convention, also have statements on animals. While the SBC does not issue official statements that are binding on member churches, it does post confessions of faith and issues resolutions that are indicative of members' shared beliefs, options, and concerns. The SBC confessions and resolutions that pertain to animals can be summarized as follows: Humanity is the crowning work of God's creation; animals may be used to serve human needs; although we may use animals and other "natural resources" human dominion has limitations; God declared creation "good" and commanded humanity to "exercise caring stewardship" over it; caring stewardship requires us to take into consideration vulnerable species and their habitats.

In response to the 2010 explosion of the Deepwater Horizon oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico, the SBC passed a resolution reminding members to "protect what God loves" including "the teeming life of the seas" and "the eco-systems of birds, shrimp, oysters, fish, and other life-forms." The resolution goes on to state that, "God has designed us with a dependence on the natural resources around us and has assigned us a dominion of stewardship and protection of those resources for future generations."¹⁰

¹⁰ SBC Resolution, "On the Gulf of Mexico Catastrophe," June 2010.

The HSUS online library also keeps track of contemporary statements on animals issued by major leaders within each tradition. The section on the SBC includes several statements by Dr. Richard Land, President of the Ethics and Religious Liberties Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention. In a 2006 interview for *Religion and Ethics Newsweekly*, Land was asked if God allows humans to use animals for food. He responded with the following:

“The Bible is very clear that God made a covenant with every living creature, which means that while I may eat steak (and I do; as a Texan, I consider it my patriotic duty to eat steak) we should seek to treat cattle as humanely as possible, and when it is time for them to have their lives end to be used for human good that should be done as humanely as possible, and we do not have the right to deliberately mistreat or neglect any living creature.”¹¹

This catalogue of statements and resolutions illustrates the widespread support among every major Christian tradition for the humane treatment of animals. It is responsible for helping to initiate countless ministries that aim to help animals and the people who love them. It also provides assistance to any individual interested in starting dialogue among their fellow believers about animal issues.

While Scully’s *Dominion* created new opportunities for many, including Evangelicals, to reimagine the role of faith in animal protection issues, the film *Amazing Grace*, and Root’s piece on C.S. Lewis, reminded Evangelicals of their heritage, in particular the role of two well-known Christian figures in founding and developing the modern animal compassion movement. The short documentary, *Eating Mercifully*, and the online library of denominational statements, further helped generate awareness among a variety of Christians about factory farming and the long-standing Christian tradition of concern for animals, including animals in agriculture. Each of these reflection pieces set the stage for a number of important relationships to emerge.

Relationships

In the last decade, the critical relationships that formed with the aim of demonstrating compassion towards animals are largely due to the significant groundwork laid by the reflection pieces. They allowed and encouraged collaborations based on a single idea or issue. In some

¹¹ Bob Abernethy’s Interview with Richard Land,” *Religion and Ethics Newsweekly*, November 17, 2006, Episode no. 1012

cases, relationships involving The HSUS evolved to the point where each party was able to see more similarities than they had originally perceived.

An example that perhaps best illustrates this type of relationship to help animals occurred in April of 2009 when conservative radio host, Rush Limbaugh, aired a PSA about the work of HSUS's Faith Outreach and read a quote from Matthew Scully's *Dominion*. Limbaugh's fans and HSUS supporters were both likely surprised, but the sentiments expressed were understood and appreciated by both parties, showing that we don't have to agree about everything in order to agree about some things.

Faith Outreach and Senator Santorum

HSUS worked with former Republican Senator of Pennsylvania, Rick Santorum, whose reputation in the Senate and during his recent presidential campaign symbolized a rigorous faith and commitment to conservative values. Santorum supported a variety of animal welfare reforms in the Senate, including tackling puppy mills and horse slaughter. After Santorum left the Senate in 2006, HSUS continued to work with his chief of staff of 16 years, Mark Rodgers, who after leaving the Senate founded The Clapham Group. The significance of the relationship between The Clapham Group and The HSUS lies in a sincere desire, on the part of Rodgers and his team, to work on animal welfare issues. That desire stems from a belief in the universal Lordship of Christ, the future renewal of all creation, and a keen awareness of the legacy of Wilberforce and his Evangelical commitment, including the relieving of animal suffering.

Dr. Barrett Duke, Vice President, Public Policy, Ethics and Religious Liberties Commission, Southern Baptist Convention

In April 2009, Dr. Barrett Duke, VP of the Ethics and Public Policy Center of the Southern Baptist Convention met with The HSUS. This was the first of a series of meetings in which Dr. Duke would pave the way for other conservative leaders to consider animal welfare issues. He modeled for others what it looks like to collaborate on issues of mutual concern without compromising core beliefs. His cooperation was not a full-scale endorsement of The HSUS or any other animal welfare organization, but a willingness to support certain issues based on the belief that we are called to care for God's creatures. Such issues so far include strengthening cockfighting penalties in southern states, highlighting animal intelligence and co-drafting an *Evangelical Statement on Animals*. Duke's approach has set a precedent for other conservative

leaders to join efforts to help animals. As a result, The HSUS hosted a meeting with other Evangelicals to explore similar partnerships.

Religious Leader Summit Meetings and Regional Dinners hosted by The HSUS

In November 2010, twenty-five, predominantly Evangelical leaders, gathered in Washington, D.C. to meet for two days to discuss current issues regarding animal care and protection. It was at this meeting that Dr. Jerry Root delivered his paper on C.S. Lewis. The CEO of Walden Media, Michael Flaherty, shared his perspective on the power of story and how it can help animals. Walden Media has produced such films as the *Chronicles of Narnia*, *Charlotte's Web*, and *Amazing Grace*. David Kinnaman, President of the Barna Group, a research firm that specializes in trends in Evangelicalism, shed light on how faith influences our views of animals. This meeting was a milestone for the cause of animal protection. It was the first formal gathering of major Christian leaders on the specific topic of animal protection in recent times. It was also the first opportunity for executives of an animal protection organization and major Christian leaders to discuss, in-person, critical issues that affect animals.

The success of this meeting led to a second meeting the following year with forty national religious leaders in attendance. Dr. Karen Prior, chair of the English department at Liberty University, joined the previous years' speakers. During the second day of meetings, several attendees noted the absence of a single holistic statement on human responsibility towards animals from Evangelicals and agreed to collaborate on a document tentatively titled an "Evangelical Declaration on Animals."

In 2012 The HSUS hosted dinners in Atlanta, Chicago, and St. Louis that created an opportunity for HSUS staff and leadership to meet with local religious leaders. There were approximately 25 guests each evening including numerous Evangelical leaders. Since the meetings, guests have published articles, hosted local events, issued public statements, and joined councils to encourage Christian participation with animal protection issues.

Evangelical leaders publicly support and affiliate with The HSUS

In the winters of 2010 and 2011, two nationally recognized Evangelical leaders, Michael Flaherty and Andrew Palau, offered statements of support for The HSUS annual report. Michael Flaherty is the President of Walden Media and Andrew Palau is the Vice President of

the Luis Palau Association, an international association for evangelism often compared to The Billy Graham Evangelistic Association due to its size and reach,

In the 2010 report, Michael Flaherty remarked on using the story of *Charlotte's Web* to teach his children about animal protection: "They loved Charlotte's bravery and sacrifice and pledged they would have done the same," Flaherty says. "I told them that The Humane Society was full of two-legged Charlottes, people who understood the blessing of protecting animals." In 2011, Andrew Palau shared his reaction to a presentation on animal issues: "It was encouraging to be reminded of the strong Christian heritage of animal protection and care. The Q presentation challenged many Christian leaders, like myself, to continue advocating for the humane treatment of God's creation."

In March 2012, The HSUS announced a 13-member multi-faith advisory council with three conservative Christian scholars: Dr. Arand, Associate Professor of Systematic Theology at Concordia University, an institution affiliated with the Lutheran Church-Missouri; Dr. Karen Prior of Liberty University, an institution affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention, and Dr. Jerry Root of Wheaton College, an institution affiliated with Evangelical Protestantism.

Each member provides critical guidance and support for the organization. Their expertise and unique perspectives are key for future development and planning. Their roles as writers and authors are invaluable as they are able to produce thoughtful pieces on complicated issues involving animals. And their experience as teachers and mentors offer much-needed support for those seeking spiritual understanding and encouragement related to animal issues.

The endorsements in The HSUS annual report from Flaherty and Palau and the participation on the council by Drs Arand, Prior and Root, represent a growing inclination, on the part of Evangelical leaders, to publically support and partner with animal protection organizations.

HSUS Gives Key Note Presentation at Q Conference

Shortly following the 2010 summit meeting, The HSUS Faith Outreach program received an invitation to present at the annual Q ("questions") Conference where some of the most influential Evangelical Christians meet to discuss ideas and hear presentations on critical issues of the day. The event in April 2011, hosted that year in Portland, Oregon, marked an important moment for the animal protection movement as hundreds of pastors, authors, heads of faith-

based organizations, and lay leaders took a serious look at society's industrial and commercial use of animals.

Attempts in years past to exhibit and present at conferences of this kind had been rejected or ignored. This invitation marked a shift among Evangelicals towards a more interested position in animal issues. In the weeks and months following, The HSUS received invitations to meet with pastors, radio hosts, authors, Christian business executives and more. It seemed animal welfare issues were once again becoming part of the fabric of issues that make up Evangelical culture.

Responses to HSUS' partnerships with The Clapham Group, Dr. Barrett Duke, the Faith Advisory Council, and other Evangelical leaders have proliferated. As discussed in the following section, they are bold, encouraging and a promise of things to come.

Responses

This final section looks at Evangelical **responses** to animal welfare issues reflecting on the crucial earlier work and role of Christian leaders, scholars and authors in reinvigorating a movement that seems to be having a compounding effect. The responses in this section can be characterized by their audacity and the unique way in which they directly address animal welfare issues.

The American Conservative, Christianity Today, PRISM and World Magazine

Both conservative and Evangelical magazines, some for the first time, published groundbreaking pieces on the intersection of animal welfare issues with faith. Soon after, media outlets and journalists seized the opportunity to report on the reemergence of the cause among Evangelicals.

The monthly editorial magazine, *The American Conservative*, published a cover story by Matthew Scully titled, "Fear Factories," in their May 2005 issue. It was a very bold critique of industrial animal agriculture for a conservative magazine, and a disturbing photo of pigs in small gestation crates appeared on the cover.

In the article Scully speaks directly to conservatives while zeroing in on the unpleasant reality of our dependence on factory farms. He writes, "What should attune conservatives to all the problems of animal cruelty – and especially to the modern factory farm – is our worldly

side. The great virtue of conservatism is that it begins with a realistic assessment of human motivations.”¹²

In 2007, The HSUS republished a version of this piece in the form of a booklet titled, “A Religious Case for Compassion for Animals,” which is available free online. The Faith Outreach program has since distributed thousands of copies of this booklet and it remains a primary and definitive program resource.

In July of 2008, *Christianity Today* (CT) addressed a subject that often comes up when Christians consider the merits of supporting animal welfare causes when human suffering persists. The outlet published an article titled, *Not One Sparrow*, written by Ted Olsen in response to the uproar created by another blog post on the CT site. The post titled, “Puppies Aren’t People” was written by Kay Warren, the wife of evangelical preacher, Rick Warren. Warren’s piece argued that people should not give money to animal welfare charities as long as there are orphaned children without homes. It instantly received a flood of responses from both sides of the issue and became one of the site’s top three talked-about blogs that year.

Olsen, the Managing Editor of *News and Online Journalism for Christianity Today*, asserted that this was a false dichotomy. “Compassion is not a zero-sum game,” he wrote.

“Compassion begets more compassion, though channeled into different responses and for different ends. The most famous Evangelical animal activist, William Wilberforce, publicly opposed bull-baiting (a spectator sport where dogs attack bulls) and co-founded the first animal welfare group out of the same vision for Christ’s kingdom that led him to support public Sabbath observance, fund evangelism to Indians, and work to overthrow the British slave trade, among countless other initiatives.”¹³

The popular online dialogue between Olsen and Warren represented a moment in which the cause of animals had taken center stage on one of the most significant Evangelical websites. It reflected a growing interest in the subject among its readers and writers and led to a magazine feature story on industrial farming two years later!

The November 2010 issue of *Christianity Today* published a cover story titled, *A Feast Fit for the King: Returning the Growing Fields and Kitchen Table to God*, with a sidebar titled, *The Grim Realities of Factory Farms*, by Leslie Leyland Fields. Fields observes, “Nowhere are religion and morality more on display—or the voices more hortatory—than in discussions on the killing

¹² Scully, Matthew. *The American Conservative*: “Fear Factories.” May 2005. P11.

¹³ Olsen, Ted. *Christianity Today*: “Not One Sparrow.” July 2009.

fields of the factory farms.”¹⁴ This article was the first-ever full-length feature published in *Christianity Today* that substantially addressed animal welfare issues and was a response to a growing awareness among the media outlet’s staff and readership.

In July 2011, PRISM Magazine, a publication of Evangelicals for Social Action, published a four-page cover story titled, *Evangelicals Rediscover their Legacy of Compassion*, written by Kendra Langdon Juskus. Juskus reflects on the confusing trajectory of Christian support for animal protection issues: “Certainly [animal suffering] hasn’t been high on the list of social concerns that Evangelicals have reclaimed in recent years. It’s absence is puzzling given that animal welfare, among other injustices Evangelical condemn, is marked by a long legacy of Christian thinking and leadership”.¹⁵ Juskus interviewed a number of Evangelical leaders to illustrate the reemergence of concern for the issues and effectively called on readers to join them.

World Magazine published its first extensive article on animal welfare in May 2012. *God’s Chickens*, written by reporter, Emily Belz, highlights the efforts of Dr. Richard Land and Dr. Oran Smith to end cockfighting in the southern states and highlights a video they made to draw attention to the issue. Belz also gives readers a look into cockfighting culture by visiting pits in Tennessee and speaking with a number of people involved on both sides of the issue. She quotes Tom Farrow, a former FBI agent, as he describes the mentality of those involved: “It’s illegal, but it’s not really illegal.” That thinking, he said, “is like rust — a slow, insidious eating away of ethics and law enforcement.”¹⁶ This article did much to raise the profile of the Evangelical campaign against cockfighting and to encourage dialogue about animal welfare among *World’s* readers.

As Evangelical outlets published more and more articles on animal issues, their leaders were also speaking out in support of animal welfare policies.

Rev. Dr. Jack Hayford and Rev. Dr. Richard Mouw Endorse Prop 2, a 2008 Measure to Protect Farm Animals in California

During 2008, The HSUS led one of the most significant efforts to protect farm animals in the history of the modern animal welfare movement. The HSUS and several other organizations collected 800,000 signatures to place a measure on the ballot which would

¹⁴ Fields, Leslie Leyland. *Christianity Today*: “A Feast Fit for the King: Returning the Growing Fields and Kitchen Table to God.” November 2010.

¹⁵ Juskus, Kendra Langdon. *PRISM*: “Evangelicals Rediscover their Legacy of Compassion.” July 2011. P20.

¹⁶ Belz, Emily. *World Magazine*: “God’s Chickens.” May 2012. P49.

require that egg-laying hens, pregnant pigs, and veal calves have enough room to, “stand up, lie down, turn around, and extend their limbs and wings for the majority of the day.” Every major animal agriculture group and corporation in the state fought the measure, including the USDA, which was found guilty of illegally funneling three million dollars to the opposition.

The HSUS worked with Rev. Dr. Michael Bruner, a professor at Azusa Pacific, an Evangelical university in southern California, to attract the support of religious leaders in the state. Among mainline protestant bishops and pastors, Rev. Dr. Jack Hayford and Rev. Dr. Richard Mouw, publicly endorsed the measure.

Rev. Dr. Hayford proclaimed, “As an Evangelical Christian, I not only seek to steward the Gospel of Christ to all humankind, but seek to influence the stewardship of God’s Creation unto the benefit of every creature. Proposition 2 is an opportunity for thoughtful believers in Christ to demonstrate this Biblical responsibility.” Hayford is an author, Pentecostal minister, and the Chancellor of The King’s University in Los Angeles. He was the president of the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel for four years as well as a prominent board member and speaker for Promise Keepers.

Rev. Dr. Richard Mouw, president of Fuller Seminary, located in Pasadena, CA, echoed Hayford’s sentiments with a twist: “I am supporting Proposition 2 as a way of advocating responsible stewardship of God’s creation. It is a modest measure that simply seeks to alleviate the unnecessary suffering of millions of farm animals in California. I have often said that chickens (and other animals!) have a God-given right to strut their stuff.”

The involvement and public support of Bruner, Hayford and Mouw is another example of the growing awareness among Evangelicals of the systematic abuses on factory farms and a willingness to stand up for reform.

Palmetto Family Council

In April 2009, The Palmetto Family Council, an affiliate of Focus on the Family, based in Columbia, South Carolina, published a 53-page booklet titled, *Dominion Stewardship: A Biblical View of Animals*, with an introduction written by Republican Senator Larry K. Grooms. The booklet focuses primarily on the issue of cockfighting. This is important given that the state of South Carolina has one of the weakest cockfighting laws in the country.

Subsequently, the Palmetto Family Council released a three-minute video with Dr. Richard Land exposing the cruelties of cockfighting while giving a Biblical perspective on caring

for animals. Land describes cockfighting as a, “pornography of violence” and dares anyone to say they would bring Jesus to a cockfight. Smith comments, “People betting on the outcome of some cruel, ugly scene speaks volumes in a lot of different ways to what children are witnessing.” A few months later, the video was turned into a commercial to support a bill in the Alabama legislature calling for felony penalties for those who bring children to cockfights and misdemeanor penalties for spectators. The bill did not pass but there is resolve on the part of Land, Smith and others to keep fighting for passage.

As The Palmetto Family Council addressed animal issues through booklets and films, the Reverend Billy Graham posted an important message about animals on his association’s website which was picked up by a number of outlets including *The Christian Post*.

Reverend Billy Graham

In May 2010, the Reverend Billy Graham responded to a question posed by a mother whose daughter had developed a concern for animals. She asked if, “God was really interested in things like this?” to which Graham answers, “Yes, let me assure you that God is concerned about our care of every part of His creation -- including the animals. After all, He made them, and ultimately they belong to Him.... And what your daughter is doing is a good thing in God's eyes, for He is concerned about the way we treat animals (especially those that depend on us).”¹⁷ Graham’s response includes several references to Biblical passages and further examples of why we are called to be kind to animals.

Shortly after Graham issued this response, The HSUS hired Barna Research Group to poll American pastors on the whether Graham’s statement made them more or less likely to teach their congregation about the care of animals. One out of every four pastors said they were more likely to address the subject of animals within their church.

This post appears to be the most extensive statement from Graham addressing animal advocacy on record and is likely a result of a growing number of inquiries on the subject. The potential impact of the statement revealed by Barna Research Group illustrates the significance influence Evangelical leaders have on their communities’ attitudes towards animals.

¹⁷ Graham, Billy. *Billy Graham Evangelistic Association: “Does God Care About Animals?”* May 2010.

Conclusion: An Evangelical Declaration on Animals

These reflections, relationships and responses illustrate how Evangelical perspectives on animals have evolved in the past decade. In 2010, Barna Research Group found that 80% of Evangelicals were interested in “Biblical teachings about animals.” When Evangelical clergy were surveyed, 31% responded that they had preached on creation, which referenced animals. None had preached on the subject of animals exclusively.¹⁸ In 2011, Barna Group found that 76% of Evangelical pastors polled agreed that “Christians should support the humane treatment of animals,” and 73% of Evangelical pastors agreed that “farms raising animals confined to small cages and crates is cruel.”¹⁹ In a survey taken of 600 mostly Evangelical pastors and church leaders at the 2012 Q Conference, 73% of them agreed that “pastors and church leaders should address animal cruelty,” and 86% agreed that “animals deserve our moral consideration.”

Thus, data indicates that Evangelicals overwhelmingly support ideas of compassion for animals and believe Christians have a responsibility to consider their welfare. While most pastors have yet to directly address the issue with their congregations, the majority indicate a willingness to consider doing so in the future.

Such significant evidence of Evangelical concern and engagement in animal issues points to a growing opportunity for theologians, leaders and scholars to provide a Biblical basis for moving forward. A group of leaders from theologically conservative backgrounds are heeding this call and collaborating on a document tentatively titled *An Evangelical Declaration on Animals*. Dr. Barrett Duke, Vice President of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Michael Cromartie, Vice President of the Ethics and Public Policy Center, and Mark Rogers of The Clapham Group are in the process of co-drafting the document.

The statement focuses on a holistic Biblical framework for animal compassion that is rooted in the meta-narrative of Scripture. The document is expected to conclude with resolutions exploring how Evangelicals can demonstrate compassion for the living creatures under their rule in addition to greatly reducing animal suffering. It is currently in draft form and in the process of being circulated for review and feedback. The anticipated release of the document in 2013 promises to be a significant opportunity for Evangelicals to reengage an issue that in the past has been an integral part of the Christian worldview.

¹⁸ Barna Group. “How Americans’ Faith Influences Views on Animals.” The Humane Society of the United States, 2010.

¹⁹ Barna Group. “The Humane Treatment of Animals.” The Humane Society of the United States, 2011.

