Andrew Fuller
CENTER for BAPTIST STUDIES
at THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Andrew Fuller and Charles Spurgeon

A THEOLOGY OF ANIMAL LIFE: REFLECTIONS IN THE EIGHTEENTH AND NINETEENTH CENTURIES

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FOREWORD

As both of the essays in this Occasional Publication bear witness, concern for the animal creation has been an historic part of the Christian Faith. The words of Genesis 1:26 in which our Creator clearly gives a mandate of dominion over the animals of this world was not understood in a rapacious way, as this command has sometimes been represented in the past century by critics of Christianity. Rather, it was clearly interpreted as a call to responsible stewardship. This latter understanding of the rôle of the humanity in relation to the created realm was especially prominent in the minds of certain Evangelical leaders and thinkers in the long eighteenth and in the nineteenth centuries. Evangelicals such as William Cowper, William Wilberforce, and Robert Murray McCheyne were deeply conscious that being a Christian entailed, among other things, a concern for the welfare of animals.

These two essays in this Occasional Publication were originally presented as part of an online conference hosted by The Andrew Fuller Center for Baptist Studies on May 1 of this year. A third paper, by Dr Corneliu Simuț, was on "Augustine's Theological Perspective on Animals." It is the hope of the publisher of these two essays by Mr C. Anthony Neel and Dr Geoffrey Chang that they will serve in a small way to retrieve a valuable perspective on the part that humanity is called to play in this world regarding the animal creation.

ANIMALS IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY AND THE THOUGHT OF ANDREW FULLER

In the 1815 publication of *The Baptist Magazine*, the miscellanies section included a prisoner's solicitation for help in securing his liberation. After recounting the dark, cramped, and isolated living conditions in which he found himself, he lamented the cruel death that he was facing. In return for advocacy of his case for freedom, he acknowledged that all he could offer was gratitude to those who took up his cause. Such a request might seem peculiar enough to appear in a magazine for Baptist affairs. The real peculiarity, however, lay in the identity of the captive. The prisoner was no defaulter, thief, or criminal of any kind. Identified simply by the mononym "Dama," the petitioner was guilty of but one offense—being a deer. This letter on behalf of the deer had been composed by the Baptist minister and hymn-writer Daniel Turner (1710–1798) and was entitled "Cruelty to Animals Exposed". His aim had been to critique the barbarity of the Abingdon Hunt from the perspective of the incarcerated Dama and the practice of intentionally subjecting animals to prolonged states of distress for the sake of sport and entertainment.[1] In it, he offered a word of caution for these hunters (and readers) to consider—how they will be "accountable to that Being [i.e. God] for [their] treatment of his creatures."[2]

This short essay by Turner may be taken as typical of a larger movement happening the eighteenth century that bled into the early decades of the following century—namely, a re-evaluation of the ontological status of animals and humanity's relationship thereto. Lucinda Cole ties the challenges of this task back to the fact that those so engaged "did not inherit a world

1 The fourth Earl of Abingdon, Willoughby Bertie (1740–1799), who inherited the title in 1760, established the hunt on Oxfordshire land between Thame and Tetsworth. See *Thame Conservation Area Character Appraisal* (South Oxfordshire District Council, 2006), 12 (https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/09/Thame_CACA.pdf; accessed April 28, 2021).

2 Daniel Turner, "Cruelty to Animals Exposed," *The Baptist Magazine* 7 (1815): 420–421.

neatly divided into humans, animals, and things" and that they were also fundamentally committed to a rejection of an *anima mundi*. The latter intellectual move had "[ushered] in one of modernity's most characteristic, if contradictory, practices: using nonhuman animals to render the reality of humans, a practice through which the nonhuman animals are completely transformed."[3] The body of literature produced on this thinking about the animal world has been increasing, and this essay will seek to contribute to this discussion by examining the thought of the influential Baptist minister, Andrew Fuller (1754–1815). As Andrew Fuller never developed an exclusive treatise on the matter, this essay will first provide an overview of the larger shifts in the eighteenth century concerning animals. The thought of three earlier theologians within the Augustinian tradition will be noted to provide a general idea of the tradition that Fuller inherited. Finally, attention will be turned to Fuller himself.

Eighteenth-century changes in thought and law regarding animal life

The long eighteenth century was an age of significant transition for Western attitudes toward animals. In the philosophical realm, Rene Descartes (1596–1650) a century earlier, had famously proposed the view that animals were nothing more than biological automata, thus absolving humanity from any ethical considerations of their treatment of animals. While Erica Fudge, an expert in early modern English conceptions of animals, questions whether or not this Cartesian assertion of the "beast-machine" was really the de facto framework of English thought prior to the eighteenth century, she concludes that the underlying emphasis on humanity as a universally reasoning creature from the Cartesian point of view had gained enough momentum to eclipse animalic considerations in the course of formulating human identity.[4] The first clear challenge to Descartes' thoughts on animals, according to Gary Steiner, emerged from the utilitarian thought of Jeremy Bentham (1748–1842). Bentham had been dissatisfied with both the Cartesian and earlier medieval theories regarding animals, and proposed a counter: instead of the sharp, qualitative division between animal and human reasoning as being of a different kind, he proposed that the distinction between the two was

3 Lucinda Cole, "Introduction: Human-Animal Studies and the Eighteenth Century," *Eighteenth Century: Theory & Interpretation* 52, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 4. The theme to which Cole seems to be pointing is one that emerges quickly among authors of the historical study of animals—that is, the inability to think of animals qua animals, and thus making these creatures little more than an instrument for understanding human ontology, culture, economics, etc.

4 Erica Fudge, *Brutal Reasoning: Animals, Rationality, and Humanity in Early Modern England*. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 174–175.

one of degree.[5] Higher capacities, sentience, and reason are not exclusive to humanity alone, and any superiority that humans have is only relative. Bentham demonstrated his utilitarianism by concluding that humans thus owe consideration to animals qua animals because of the bona fide pain they felt as fellow creatures.[6]

This counter to Cartesian thinking was not isolated to the philosophical realm, however, but can also be found in that of science. In a case study written by Janie Hind, Dr. Rush and Mr. Peale, the article's title figures, Benjamin Rush and Charles Wilson Peale, are presented as foils to one another as they navigated the "bio-politics" of their day at the end of the eighteenth century in the United States. The former of these was said to be a trained scientist and physician, while the other was a participant in so-call "democratic science" through public lectures and even the keeping of a private zoo. The article is a fascinating story, but here there is only room to bring out two observations germane to this essay. First, there was the prominent idea in medical thought that tied these two men together—the study of iatromechanics, namely, the belief that the movement of fluids in the human body produced health and anything that promoted this must be beneficial (including opium).[7] In this way, Hinds notes, animals acted as a synecdoche for the ideal natural state of activity and against idleness. It is worth noting that such a belief did not lead to theriophily (the belief that animals are superior to humanity). It did, however, give support to the paradigm of the human as an animal. The other point of interest in this essay is a conviction on the part of men that animals were moral agents. Speaking from a Christian milieu, Rush plainly declared his opinion that animals were moral agents and as such responsible for their actions and that they would be participants in the resurrection—though he later retracted these comments in response to a backlash of criticism.[8] With less social capital to lose in the "guild," Peale was considerably less shy about his high regard for animals, to which he happily ascribed reason and personality. Hinds comments:

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5 Gary Steiner, *Anthropocentrism and Its Discontents: The Moral Status of Animals in the History of Western Philosophy.* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010), 153.

6 Steiner, *Anthropocentrism and Its Discontents,* 154. Steiner acknowledges that the empiricist Thomas Hobbes (a contemporary of Descartes) had been the first to oppose this view of animals on the basis of shared corporeality between animals and humans, and that this thinking served as a basis for that of Bentham.

7 Janie Hinds, "Dr. Rush and Mr. Peale: The Figure of the Animal in Late Eighteenth-Century Medical Discourse," *Early American Literature* 48, no. 3 (November 2013): 647.

8 Hinds, "Dr. Rush and Mr. Peale," 660.

> Peale, more aligned with the emergent physiological discourses of sensibility than his better-trained compatriot Rush, rejected the mechanistic view for one that ascribed feeling, thought, and intentionality to animals, and in so doing, crossed the line between human and animal that bolstered the professional, abstracting position of official medical science.[9]

A similar framework is also catalogued by Richard Nash in his guide to this historical era, Joy and Pity, when he introduces a work called Pity's Gift (1798) by the English poet Samuel Jackson Pratt (1749–1814), a collection of poems and short stories to foster in young school children a compassionate treatment of animals. Nash identifies the posture of the book as presupposing the error of Cartesian mechanics in favor of what he identifies as "doggerel sentiment" that advocated for "cross-species sympathy."[10] The call for such sympathies were not purely sentimental, however, and were tied to deeper economic reasons.

In his survey of violence against animals in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Carl F. Griffin traces the increased legal protection for animals during this period. The application of Enlightenment principles to economic life had created a "dramatic intensification of agrarian capitalism [that] led to a heightening of the politics of shared life [with animals]."[11] Animal capital increased as the demand for pork and beef products exploded along with urban populations. According to Griffin, the role of animals symbolizing the invested wealth of the ownership class was heightened. This symbolism, he argues, made them natural targets for disgruntled workers who resented the better living conditions and even diets of the livestock whom they tended and who often lived alongside them.[12] This resentment boiled over into workers exacting revenge upon their employers by vicariously abusing the animals physically, lethally, and even sexually. The transitions that Griffin notes during this period were not concerned about the mistreatment of animals in principle, but were primarily out of a concern for the animals as property.[13]

9 Hinds, "Dr. Rush and Mr. Peale," 657.

10 Richard Nash, "Pity and Joy: Reading Animals Bodies in Late 18th Century Culture." *Eighteenth Century: Theory & Interpretation* 52, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 58.

11 Carl F. Griffin, "Animal Maiming, Intimacy and the Politics of Shared Life: The Bestial and the Beastly in Eighteenth- and Early Nineteenth-Century England," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 37, no. 2 (April 2012): 302.

12 Griffin, "Animal Maiming, Intimacy and the Politics of Shared Life," 305.

13 Griffin notes that some general "defence of the realm" laws had been applied to cruelty to animals as early as the sixteenth century. Griffin, "Animal Maiming, Intimacy and the Politics of

This foundation of laws specific to animal treatment, however, culminated in the watershed English Cruel Treatment of Cattle Act, sometimes known as Martin's Act, in 1822 and the trial of Bill Burns, who was convicted for beating his donkey—the first prosecution solely on the basis of an animal's welfare.[14]

This section has provided a few cursory highlights of the paradigmatic shifts in the eighteenth century and the tensions surrounding the larger issue of animal life. The next two sections are theological in nature: we first look at three influential thinkers in the Augustinian tradition and finally Andrew Fuller.

The Augustinian tradition

Christian reflection upon creation began with such second- and third-century authors as Theophilus of Antioch, who produced the earliest intact Hexameron extant, and Origen of Alexandria. Reformation authors continued this line of reflection. In fact, Susan E. Schreiner notes the presence of inter-Reformational debates with regard to the essence of the cosmos and its intersections with the nature of the soul, providence, and the divine presence in the universe—perhaps most consequentially as it related to the Eucharist.[15] The French Reformer John Calvin (1509–1564), for example, reflected upon the natural world at great length in his theological exposition.

Ernst M. Conradie highlights Calvin's interest in nature in the opening chapter of the Institutes, which inseparably linked the knowledge of God with the knowledge of self.[16] From Calvin's perspective, both the divinely revealed and sensorially-perceived knowledges, Conradie avers, were not discordant adversaries but harmonic interplays for natural-divine comprehension. Just as nature serves as a demonstration of the divine, it is correct perception of the divine that provides the ability to understand nature correctly. Conradie states, "Calvin uses the often-discussed image of 'spectacles' to argue that Scripture is needed as guide and teacher in order to come to the knowledge of God as Creator … we do not need spectacles to read Scripture; we need the spectacles of Scripture to detect God's presence in nature."[17] For Calvin, nature itself

Shared Life," 308.

14 The Martin's Act of 1822 made it a crime to treat domesticated animals harmfully or with unnecessary cruelty. It did not give the animals legal status *per se*. See Stephen M. Wise, *Animal Rights* in Encyclopedia Britannica, August 18, 2016.

15 Susan E. Schreiner, *The Theater of His Glory: Nature and the Natural Order in the Thought of John Calvin.* (1991; repr., Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 2.

16 Ernst M. Conradie, "The Necessity of Natural Theology? In Conversation with John Calvin on the Human Sense," *Gereformeerde Teologiese Tydskrif Nederduitse* 52, no. 1 (September 2011): 67.

17 Conradie, "The Necessity of Natural Theology?," 69.

pulsated with never-ending pictures that pointed to God, and yet it was only through God that nature itself may be understood properly. The presence of such vivid imagery leads Peter Huff to comment:

> Raging winds and churning seas shape the landscape of [Calvin's] thought, while growling beasts and twittering birds render his work a veritable bestiary of Christian doctrine. The power and variety of creation, including the beautiful, the violent, the charming, and the grotesque, are regularly set before the reader of his theology. In Calvin's mind, the world of nature is never separated from the realm of divine revelation.[18]

Huff continues to explain that although Calvin's conception of animals was ultimately anthropocentric, the Reformer sought to preserve the dignity of the animals by virtue of their divine origin and protect them from "unjust domination."[19] Here, Calvin's interpretation of animals in the creation narrative of Genesis and in Romans can serve as a guide.

In exegeting the cosmogeny of Scripture, Calvin placed the emergence of animals along a progressive trajectory. Animals surpass plants by means of generation over germination,[20] and also by divine blessing:

> What is the force of this benediction he soon declares. For God does not, after the manner of men, pray that we may be blessed; but, by the bare imitation of his purpose, effects what men seek by earnest entreaty. He therefore blesses his creatures when he commands them to increase and grow; that is, he infuses into them fecundity by his word.[21]

This progression is continued in human creation. Calvin understood the language of Genesis 1 as indicative of a clear distinction between humanity and the animal world: "Hitherto God has been introduced simply as commanding;

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18 Peter Huff, "Calvin and the Beasts: Animals in John Calvin's Theological Discourse," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society,* 42, no. 1 (March 1999), 68.

19 Huff's use of the term here is particular of note, since the notion of "justice" concerning animal welfare is a perennial point of contention, including the eighteenth century. Huff, "Calvin and the Beasts," 70.

20 "Here is a different kind of propagation from that in herbs and trees: for there the power of fructifying is in the plants, and that of germinating is in the seed; but here generation takes place." John Calvin, *Genesis*, trans. John King, Calvin's Commentaries (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2009), 88.

21 Calvin, *Genesis*, 90. An interesting note here is that Calvin does not believe that this blessing extends to fish and reptiles, calling such an address "futile."

now, when he approaches the most excellent of all his works, he enters into consultation" with himself.[22] Calvin further demarcated humans from the realm of animals as the "preeminent specimen of Divine wisdom, justice, and goodness, so that he is deservedly called by the ancients μικρίκοσμος, 'a world in miniature.'"[23]

What remains unclear is whether Calvin believed that the progression in dignity translates to progression in dietary provision. In commenting on the original nomenclature in the creation of land animals, he rejected the attempt by some to distinguish "cattle" and "beasts" along the lines of carnivorism. He affirmed the view that all animals shared a common herbivore diet, thus removing potential for animal consuming animals in the original order.[24] This statement and his ultimate silence on paradisiacal carnivorism indicate a solidarity of the animals with humans on this point.

One further observation made be made from a comment in Romans 8:21. Calvin had recognized that animal suffering was a result of human sin, stating: "it is indeed meet for us to consider what a dreadful curse we have deserved, since all created things in themselves blameless, both on earth and in the visible heaven, undergo punishment for our sins; for it has not happened through their own fault, that they are liable to corruption."[25] Their redemption would be in degrees according to their own nature, and thus animals would not participate in the same glory as humanity. He continued: "God will restore to a perfect state the world, now fallen, together with mankind. But what that perfection will be, as to beasts as well as plants and metals, it is not meet nor right in us to inquire more curiously; for the chief effect of corruption is decay."[26] Yet, while Calvin asserts that Paul in Romans does not ascribe a "mutual anxiety" to the groaning creatures who are in a state of dissatisfaction as they

22 Calvin, *Genesis,* 91. Italics part of original translation.

23 Calvin, *Genesis,* 92.

24 Calvin, *Genesis,* 91. This selection was brought to my attention in Andrew Linzey's reader on animals in Christian thought. See Andrew Linzey and Tom Regan, *Animals and Christianity: A Book of Readings* (New York, NY: Crossroads, 1988). A noteworthy aspect of Calvin's interpretation is that he believed the Noahic permittance for human carnivorism was not the beginning of such practice: "For I hold to this principle; that God here does not bestow on men more than he had previously given, but only restores what had been taken away, that they might again enter on the possession of those good things from which they had been excluded. But since it is of little consequence what opinion is held, I affirm nothing on the subject." See Calvin, *Genesis,* 292.

25 John Calvin, *Romans*, trans John King, Calvin's Commentaries (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2009), 305.

26 Calvin, *Romans*, 305.

await something better, Paul did "[join] them as companions" to humanity."[27] Admittedly, it is difficult to envision a schema in which corruption and decay of animal life may be separated from their death and suffering, but even with this possibility there are three conclusions about Calvin's thoughts on animals. First, they have a place of dignity in creation. Second, they share in the ill effects of humanity's sin. Third, and finally, they are beneficiaries in the redemption of humanity. Such views by Calvin make Andrew Linzey's statement that the Reformer viewed animals "like plants and vegetables … created solely for the use of humans"[28] to be quite inaccurate.

Like Calvin, the eighteenth-century divine Jonathan Edwards' (1703–1758) understanding of the natural world has also been a significant point of interest for scholarship. Belden Lane describes Edwards' view of nature as "almost sacramental" and notes that the theologian's emphasis on beauty and delight in the world of nature are prominent throughout his works.[29] Gerald R. McDermott has argued that Edwards advanced the conception of natural theology to center around typology. That is to say, Edwards as a "master typologist" who saw more than analogies in nature, viewing nature itself as containing intentional depictions of higher realities veiled to human eyes.[30] McDermott proposes that Edwards appropriated the concept of nature as revelation and "[viewed] it as a perception that illuminated the truths of Scripture and the magnificence of the natural world in a common apprehension of God's glory."[31]

Early in Edwards' life a fascination with animals for the purpose of theological reflection may be observed. In The Spider Letter (1723), for example, he marveled at "the wisdom of the Creator in providing the spider with a wonderful liquor with which their bottle tail is filled … [to] so excellently serve to all their purpose " and the "exuberant goodness of the Creator, who hath not only provided for all the necessities, but also for the pleasure and recreation of all sorts of creatures, even the insects."[32] Edwards further noted that despite environmental and predatory dangers "they do no

27 Calvin, *Romans*, 306.

28 Linzey and Regan, *Animals and Christianity,* 4.

29 Belden C. Lane, Jonathan Edwards on Beauty, Desire, and the Sensory World," *Theological Studies* 65 (2004): 44–45.

30 Gerald R. McDermott, "Types in Nature: Jonathan Edwards on Typology," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 175, no.699 (2018): 271–283.

31 McDermott, "Types in Nature: Jonathan Edwards on Typology," 273.

32 Jonathan Edwards, "The Spider Letter" in *A Jonathan Edwards Reader*, ed. John E. Smith, Harry S. Stout, and Kenneth P. Minkema (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 1995), 5.

decease and so by little and little come to nothing, and in so adjusting their destruction to their multiplication they do neither increase, but taking one year with another, there is always an equal number of them."[33] The world, and by extension animal life, are held in equilibrium and point to God's handiwork.

The typology of creation is even more evident in Edwards' reflections on the Beauty of the World (1725). Here, McDermott's proposal for understanding Edwards becomes clear:

> The beauty of the world consists wholly of sweet mutual consents, either within itself or with the Supreme Being. As to the corporeal world, though there are many other sorts of consents, yet the sweetest and most charming beauty of it is its resemblance of spiritual beauties. The reason is that spiritual beauties are infinitely the greatest, and bodies being but the shadows of beings, they must be so much more charming as they shadow forth spiritual beauties.[34]

Edwards continued to reflect on the various ways in which color, light, bodily organs, and planetary activities all point to a higher but hidden beauty for which the soul longs. They themselves are a veil meant to communicate otherworldly realities presently incomprehensible to the senses of humanity. They are not less than prompts for reflecting of the mind of God and pointing to his attributes, but are certainly more—serving as analogues for things unseen. And as with Calvin a few conclusions may be drawn. First, Jonathan Edwards saw animal life as a testament to God's character. Second, God cares for all that he has created, no matter how big, small, or "despicable" and equips these creatures with the needed tools for their prosperity. Third, the mind of God was the source of governance over the world and this maintained a balance for animal life. Finally, observing animals as part of the universe provides humanity with sensory images for understanding deeper truths.

One final figure to consider before looking at Andrew Fuller is John Gill (1697–1771), who himself cast a long shadow over Particular Baptists in the eighteenth century. Here Gill's commentaries on Genesis are of particular interest. Compared to Calvin, Gill is noticeably more verbose in describing animal beings in the creation narrative and is willing to draw conclusions Calvin seems to have intentionally avoided. Much like the Reformer, the animal in Gill's exposition is understood in terms of the human-animal relationship, but Gill is distinctly more anthropocentric than Calvin. An example of this is

33 Jonathan Edwards, "The Spider Letter," 7.

34 Edwards, "Beauty of the World" in *A Jonathan Edwards Reader*, 14.

his willingness to affirm the consumption of meat in the antediluvian period after the Fall, saying:

> Some think, and it is a general opinion, that this was a new grant, that man had no right before to eat flesh, nor did he; and it is certain it is not before expressed, but it may be included in the general grant of power and dominion over the creatures made to Adam; and since what is before observed is only a renewal of former grants, this may be considered in the same light; or otherwise the dominion over the creatures first granted to Adam will be reduced to a small matter, if he had no right nor power to kill and eat them; besides, in so large a space of time as 1600 years and upwards, the world must have been overstocked with creatures, if they were not used for such a purpose…[35]

Calvin had made room for a similar conclusion, noting that animals must have been used for sacrifice and thus intimated that they were probably used for food as well. Gill acknowledged that the original source of food for humanity excluded the mention of animals. His rationale for the exclusion, however, was that the herbs were to be the food for man and woman "until [the animals] were multiplied and increased, lest their species be destroyed; though here is no prohibition of eating flesh."[36] Gill appears to have had no issue in principle with paradisiacal carnivorism, saying:

> [Dominion is] to catch them, and eat them; though in the after-grant of food to man, no mention as yet is made of any other meat than the herbs and fruits of the earth; yet what can this dominion over fish and fowl signify, unless it be a power to feed upon them? … [Dominion] over the tame creatures, either for food, or clothing, or carriage, …some of them for one thing, and some for another … to make use of it as should seem convenient for them.[37]

The conception of there being no permission to eat animal flesh prior to Noah, Gill attributed to the Jews.[38] Thus, the "renewal of former grants" for Gill noted above is not in the silent period between the Fall and Flood, but is

35 John Gill, *Expositions of the Old & New Testaments* (1809, Paris, AR: The Baptist Standard Bearer, Inc., 2006), 1:64

36 Gill, *Expositions of the Old & New Testaments,* 1:11

37 Gill, *Expositions of the Old & New Testaments,* 1:10–11.

38 Gill, *Expositions of the Old & New Testaments,* 1:11.

built into the original structure of creation itself. To put it more explicitly, Gill conceived the renewal given to Noah to be the original commission given to Adam and his wife in their dominion over all creatures to eat them.

This is relevant for the discussion at hand for two reasons. First, Gill's view of animals as a type of utility or tool might point to an influence of the Cartesian orientation, though this is certainly not definite. Second, a certain irony appears in one additional contrast between Gill and Calvin. Calvin, who otherwise seemed to dignify animals, understood the covering of skins as emphasizing humanity's shame, stating that the reason God gave Adam and Eve clothing of skins over and against material that did not demand death (wool or linen) was to "behold their own vileness,—just as they had before seen it in their nudity,—and should thus be reminded of their sin."[39] Yet, while Gill agreed that it was to be a reminder of sin and their new mortality like the beasts, he took a more positive approach, claiming that the skins were as "emblems of the robe of Christ's righteousness and the garments of salvation."[40] Having established a general overview of this historical tradition of thought concerning animals, the present study will now turn to Andrew Fuller.

Andrew Fuller on animals

Andrew Fuller has been remembered chiefly for his contribution to the advancement of the Baptist missionary movement as well as being the most influential Baptist theologian of his era. While his comments on nature and animal life are not as focused or extensive as those of Calvin and Edwards, his reflections do not seem to be quite as anthropocentric as those of Gill. When taken in full, a few key themes worthy of note are found in Fuller's conception of animal life.

To begin with, throughout his works Fuller makes several references to human persons in terms of their being animals. Baser human desires he refers to as "animal appetites,"[41] energy as "animal spirits"[42] and on one occasion noted of his prayer life: "Many times I concluded prayer, but, when rising from my knees, communion with God was so desirable that I was sweetly drawn to it again and again, till my animal strength was almost exhausted. Then I thought it would be pleasure to burn for God!"[43] When the psalmist

39 Calvin, *Genesis,* 181–182.

40 Gill, *Expositions of the Old & New Testaments,* 1:30.

41 Andrew Fuller, "Commendation" in *The Complete Works of Andrew Fuller* (1845, Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 1988), 3:811.

42 Fuller, "To Dr. Ryland, Dec. 9, 1798" in *Complete Works of Andrew Fuller,* 3:424.

43 Fuller, "To Sarah, Nov. 13, 1794" in *Complete Works of Andrew Fuller,* 3:391.

reflected on being "fearfully made" Fuller first related that to the "animal frame" before advancing to the higher categories, and even referred to humans as being "like other animals."[44] He recorded an exchange between two friends in which one referred to the adverse effects of sin as being upon the "animal frame" when referring to the human body.[45] Of particular interest to this essay is this inclusion with respect to one's health: "Brethren, consider what we say, and the Lord give you understanding in all things! The free circulation of the blood, and the proper discharge of all the animal functions, are not more necessary to the health of the body, than good discipline is to the prosperity of a community."[46] These references evidence Fuller's vernacular as being influenced by the systems of thought of his day. Some type of solidarity existed between the human body and the animal body.

This solidarity between the animal and human body did not mean solidarity of being for Fuller. Even in the physiology of the human body there is pictured a distinction from the animals. Humanity as image bearers walk upright as an indication of their mind (what Fuller called the "natural image" of God) that Fuller simultaneously linked with the "moral image" of righteousness.[47] He further underscored this difference between humanity and animals in his depiction of the nature of sin. Holiness is not mere restraint from doing evil or in loving one's own, as this may be said of animals, yet they are not commended for it.[48] The honors of uprightness and righteousness, Fuller wryly continued, are in actuality a source of jealousy for the other animals. For Fuller, a third and a fourth aspect between animals and human beings is the former's lack of rationality and immortality. Fuller noted that while animals "received" the breath of life, they were not granted a "living soul," saying "God hath stamped rationality and immortality upon men's souls, so as to render them capable of a separate state of being, even when their bodies are dead. Hence the soul of a beast, when it dies, is said to go downwards; but the soul of man upwards, Eccles. xii. 7."[49] This conception of the difference between animals and humanity raises questions that ultimately remain unanswered as to the effects of the Fall upon animal life and subsequently how (or whether)

44 Fuller, "Mysterious Nature of Man" in *Complete Works of Andrew Fuller*, 1:452.

45 Fuller, "Nature of the Virtue" in *Complete Works of Andrew Fuller*, 3:818.

46 Fuller, "The Discipline of the Primitive Churches Illustrated and Enforced" in *Complete Works of Andrew Fuller*, 3:338.

47 Fuller, "Exposition of Genesis: Discourse II" in *Complete Works of Andrew Fuller*, 3:6.

48 Fuller, "Appendix: On the Question Whether the Existence of a Holy Disposition of Heart Be Necessary to Believing" in *Complete Works of Andrew Fuller*, 2:396.

49 Fuller, "Exposition of Genesis: Discourse III" in *Complete Works of Andrew Fuller*, 3:8.

animal life is in any way a beneficiary of the redemption wrought by Christ. Nevertheless, the four-fold bifurcation between animals and humanity found in body, rationality, morality, and eternality are plain in Fuller.

Fuller did not limit his understanding of animals simply to what they were not or as they related to humanity. For instance, when identifying the dignity of the animals he said: "In one view, the smallest animal has a property belonging to it which renders it superior to the sun. It has life, and some degree of knowledge."[50] Animals, by virtue of God's breathing life into them, have a special dignity that even the smallest of them surpasses the sun and renders it of special consideration. Also note that Fuller here grants the capacity of knowledge to animals. In another place he reflected on man's intuitive respect for animals, according to the level of intelligence they display:

> Every being commands our affection in proportion to the degree of intellect which he possesses, provided that his goodness be equal to his intelligence. We feel a respect towards an animal, and a concern at its death, which we do not feel towards a vegetable; towards those animals which are very sagacious, more than to those which are otherwise; towards man, more than to mere animals.[51]

Even in commenting on the provision of animals for food (which Fuller believed did not occur until after the Noahic covenant) there was dignity contained within the lifeblood and led him to conclude that the "prohibition might be in part the prevention of cruelty; for the eating of blood implies and cherishes a ferocious disposition. None but the most ferocious of animals will eat it in one another … But there may be a higher reason. Blood is the life, and God seems to claim it as sacred to himself."[52]

A few tentative conclusions can be reached concerning Andrew Fuller's understanding of animal life. First, his language connecting the shared bodily experience between animals and humanity may be indicative of the larger shifts taking place in the eighteenth century—humans are a type of animal. At the same time, animal beings are used as a point of contrast for humans to better understand the latter as bearers of the image of God, which Fuller linked to higher qualitative capacities of rationality and morality. Additionally, his commitment to drawing clear distinctions between animals and humans did

50 Fuller, "Exposition of Genesis: Discourse IX" in *Complete Works of Andrew Fuller*, 3:25.

51 Fuller, "Letter XI: The Systems Compared As to Their Influence Promoting the Love of Christ" in *Complete Works of Andrew Fuller*, 2:189.

52 Fuller, "Exposition of Genesis: Discourse XIV" in *Complete Works of Andrew Fuller*, 3:38.

not result in a disregard for them but formed a prompt for affection for animals of higher intellect and a basis for probably addressing matters of animal cruelty. The challenge, of course, is that Fuller's comments were themselves set in letters and sermons and notes with intentions other than developing a full-throated zoology. Animal welfare was simply not his focal point, and much of thinking regarding animal life remains hidden.

Conclusion

The historic study of animals has experienced a renewed interest in the past few decades, particularly in relation to the historical period in view in this essay. The body of literature both in journals and published books is ever-growing and shows no indication of slowing down. This essay has attempted to contribute to this conversation by intersecting some of the contextual aspects of the eighteenth century with prominent theologians in the Augustinian tradition, and ultimately with the sentiments of Andrew Fuller concerning animals. More study on this topic is needed, particularly among Baptists of this era. During research for this project no secondary sources about this topic could be found examining either John Gill or Andrew Fuller while sources on John Calvin and Jonathan Edwards abound. Without further detail, it might seem that Daniel Turner might be a rarity in his expression of concern for Dama and other animals, but perhaps there are similar expressions waiting to be unearthed.

A SYMBOL OF THE INVISIBLE: SPURGEON AND THE ANIMAL WORLD

The nineteenth century was an age of empire for the Victorians, not only over the kingdoms of men but also over the animal kingdom. Animals were an indispensable part of everyday life. Even as people left the countryside for the city, animals continued to play an integral role in society. As cities expanded and the city population grew, more horses and other beasts of burden were needed to transport goods and passengers.[1] It would not have been unusual to find cows, goats, and other farm animals in urban areas, bringing unsanitary conditions with them.

Beyond these more common relationships, Victorians also viewed animals with fascination. Domestic pets grew fashionable among all classes, including birds, dogs, cats, and even more exotic animals like monkeys and ferrets. As Britain's empire expanded, animals from all over the world were brought back to England for public entertainment, leading to the rise of zoos and circuses. The first live hippopotamus in Europe arrived in London in 1850 and became the star attraction of the Surrey Zoological Gardens.[2] By the early 20th century, rather than simply locking animals in an iron cage, they were placed in exhibits that mimicked their original landscapes. These landscapes were still made out of painted concrete, wood, and metal, but the Victorians much preferred to "see captive animals and believe that they [were] somehow happy."[3]

1 W. J. Gordon, *The Horse World of London* (London: Religious Tract Society, 1893), 102.

2 Cornish, C. J. *Life at the Zoo; Notes and Traditions of the Regent's Park Gardens* (London: Seeley & Co., 1895), 215–216.

3 Kathleen Kete, ed., *A Cultural History of Animals in the Age of Empire* (New York: Berg, 2011), 95. This innovation would not happen until after Spurgeon's death. As a result, he found zoos oppressive for the animals. "Each of these creatures looks most beautiful at home. Go into the Zoological Gardens, and see the poor animals there under artificial conditions, and you can little guess what they are at home. A lion in a cage is a very different creature from a lion in the wilderness. The stork looks wretched in his wire pen, and you would hardly know him as the same creature if you saw him on the housetops or on the fir trees. Each creature looks best in its own place." The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit: Sermons Preached and Revised by C.H. Spurgeon. 56 volumes (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publi-

Animals played an important part in the Victorian economy. Birds, for example, became a booming industry. Even as hunters and collectors pursued exotic specimens for study and sale among the upper-class, the rearing of canaries and nightingales became a domestic industry that could generate a significant income for a lower-class family. This trend spilled over into the world of fashion, where bird feathers and animal skins in women's hats and clothing became all the rage. Some estimate nearly 40 million pounds of plumage and bird skins imported into the U.K. between 1870 and 1920, an industry worth more than £20m a year at its peak.[4]

Victorian dominance over the animal world was also expressed in animal cruelty. With the rise of modernization, working animals were treated less as living creatures and more as machines to be driven to the ground.[5] Scientific and medical experimentation on animals grew without regard to their suffering.[6] In the entertainment industry, animals continued to be used in all kinds of violent competitions, including shooting matches and cage fights. Such attitudes towards animals filtered down to the general population. From the cab driver who flogged his horses, to the farmer who starved his oxen, to children torturing small creatures for entertainment in an alleyway, cruelty towards animals was widespread in Victorian society.

Alongside these instances of dominion over the animal kingdom, Victorians also developed a concern for animal welfare. With the publication of *The Origin of Species* in 1859 and *The Descent of Man* in 1871, Charles Darwin presented an indissoluble link between humanity and the animal world, claiming that "there is no fundamental difference between man and the higher mammals in their mental faculties."[7] With this new understanding

cations, 1970–2006), 17:450. Hereafter, this work will be referred to as MTP.

4 Malcolm Smith, "A Hatful of Horror: the Victorian Headwear Craze that Led to Mass Slaughter" (https://www.historyextra.com/period/victorian/victorian-hats-birds-feathered-hat-fashion/; accessed April 29, 2021).

5 One example of this cruelty is the treatment of pit ponies, who worked underground all their lives. "I've known ponies go all day without a bite or a drink. And working in hot places you know. They used to come into the stables after coal-turning [on the] morning shift. They would have half-an hour's walk, be put into the stables for a drink and a bit of corn, then out again on the afternoon shift." (http://miningheritage.co.uk/pit-pony/; accessed April 29, 2021.)

6 "There is a certain class of exquisitely painful experiments to which these noble and intelligent animals seem particularly exposed." These included both "the prolonged tortures of the veterinary schools… where sixty operations, lasting ten hours, were habitually performed on the same animal" and "some strictly physiological experiments upon horses and asses… [without] the use of any anesthetic whatever." *Statement of the Society for the Protection of Animals Liable to Vivisection* (Wesminster: Report of the Royal Commission on Vivisection, 1876), 80–81.

7 Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* (New York: Appleton &

of humanity's origins came a growing concern for the humane treatment of animals. Legislation and various societies were established to protest and work against animal cruelty. Literary works like *Black Beauty* presented animals as heroic and noble, even human, under terrible suffering.[8] Beginning in 1860 with the Battersea Dogs' and Cats' Home, the first animal shelter was established to care for the large population of stray dogs and cats. Eventually, Battersea would have the support of Queen Victoria as its patron.[9]

Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892) ministered in the heart of the Victorian empire amid the complexities of his society's relationship with animals. As one historian observed, though Spurgeon was "a man behind his time" in his theology, he was also "a man of his time," as a Victorian shaped by his cultural context.[10] This dynamic can be seen in Spurgeon's teaching on animals throughout his life. This paper will demonstrate that, while reflecting his Victorian values, Spurgeon viewed the animal world (and all of nature) as a "symbol of the invisible," working alongside Scriptural revelation to illustrate and reinforce biblical truths.[11] It will first explore Spurgeon's personal interaction with animals, then consider his teaching on the animal world.

Spurgeon and the animal world

Growing up in the village of Stambourne in his grandfather's manse, animals were a part of everyday life. The family owned a small dairy at the back of the house, which "was by no means a bad place for a cheesecake, or for a drink of cool milk."[12] Next to the house was a small garden, where Spurgeon would often see his grandfather walking in preparation for his sermons. Though Spurgeon grew up around horses, his favorite was the one in his grandfather's house. "In the hall stood the child's rocking-horse… This was the only horse

Co., 1871), 34.

8 Anna Sewell, *Black Beauty: His Grooms and Companions. The Autobiography of a Horse* (London: Jarrold, 1877).

9 For more on the history of the Battersea Dogs' and Cats' Home, see Garry A. Jenkins, *A Home of Their Own: The Heartwarming 150-year History of Battersea Dogs' and Cats' Home* (London: Bantam, 2011).

10 Christian George, *The Lost Sermons of C. H. Spurgeon: His Earliest Outlines and Sermons Between 1851 and 1854* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2016), 1:10–21.

11 C. H. Spurgeon, *The Art of Illustration: Being Addresses Delivered to the Students of the Pastors' College, Metropolitan Tabernacle* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1894), 63.

12 C.H. Spurgeon, C.H. Spurgeon's Autobiography: Compiled from His Diary, Letters, and Records, by His Wife, and His Private Secretary, 4 volumes (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1897–1900), 1:20. Henceforth, this work will be referred to as Autobiography.

that I ever enjoyed riding."[13] Even at a young age, Spurgeon was not much of an athlete. He preferred studying books to playing sports and riding horses. However, growing up in the countryside, he loved nature and the outdoors.

As a teenage student, his education involved the study of the animal world. Among the early sermon notebooks kept at Spurgeon's College, U.K. is a notebook entitled "Notes on the Vertebrate Animals Class Aves." This incomplete notebook contains Spurgeon's research, likely as a teenager, on 32 species of birds.[14] He repeatedly cites Georges Cuvier, whose theory of animal development based on natural cataclysms would provide an alternative to Darwin's theory of natural selection.[15] The notebook is not limited to domestic birds but contains research on birds from all over the British empire, including peacocks, parrots, and penguins. As discoveries were being made in the animal world, these discoveries were published back home, and they shaped the imagination of young students all over England.

After a short but successful pastorate in the agricultural village of Waterbeach, Spurgeon moved to London to be the pastor of the New Park Street Chapel in 1854. The church was located in Southwark, "near the enormous breweries of Messrs. Barclay and Perkins, the vinegar factories of Mr. Potts, and several large boiler works… the region was dim, dirty, and destitute, and frequently flooded by the river at high tides."[16] The industrial revolution was in full swing in London. Coming from Waterbeach, the pollution and the pressures of city life would have been a difficult adjustment.

Like other busy Londoners, Spurgeon owned a horse and carriage, which he considered "almost absolute necessaries" given his many preaching engagements.[17] However, his interaction with the animal world in London extended beyond mere transportation. In 1857, Spurgeon and his wife, Susannah, purchased a home on Nightingale Lane, Clapham. At that time, it was still "a pretty and rural, but comparatively unknown region." Amid the growing pressures of pastoral ministry and public attention, his home became a place of seclusion and rest. Susannah recalls, "we could walk abroad, too,

13 *Autobiography,* 1:14.

14 George, *Lost Sermons*, 1:xxxvi.

15 Other sources that Spurgeon cites are "Penny Cyclopedia," "Penny Magazine," and "Print by S.P.C.K."

16 *Autobiography*, 1:315.

17 *Autobiography*, 3:138. When sale of Spurgeon's sermons declined in the American South due to his outspoken condemnation of slavery, he considered selling his carriage to continue funding the Pastors' College, but his deacons and elders refused to allow him to do so. For a humorous account of Spurgeon once cutting off a friend in traffic, see "The Mission to Scavengers," *The London City Magazine* 85, no. 1002 (September 1920): 104.

in those days, in the leafy lanes, without fear of being accosted by too many people."[18]

Though the house itself was awkwardly configured, it came with a large garden that made up for any inconveniences. The couple "had the happy task of bringing it gradually into accord with our ideas of what a garden should be."[19] In addition to cultivating flowers and plants, the Spurgeons turned their yard into a bird sanctuary. On summer afternoons, Susannah would lay out a blanket in the yard filled with birdseed so that the birds might come feast.[20] Amid the busyness of his ministry, Spurgeon found refreshment and renewal in his garden.

> When I go into my garden I have a choir around me in the trees. They do not wear surplices, for their song is not artificial and official. Some of them are clothed in glossy black, but they sing like little angels; they sing the sun up, and wake me at break of day; and they warble on till the last red ray of the sun has departed, still singing out from bush and tree the praises of their God.[21]

Though he appreciated the attractions and exhibits of the city, Spurgeon found consistent refreshment in the pleasures of nature. His delight in these birds was not driven by scientific curiosity but a spiritual enjoyment, leading him in praise to God like a church choir. Visitors also noted his fondness for animals. When the Jubilee Singers visited the Spurgeons in 1874, they observed, "We had no sooner entered than he called our attention to the exploits of an enormous cat which sprang through his arms with the agility of a trained athlete; we found, also, that his grounds were rich in birds and domestic animals, for which he and Mrs. Spurgeon have great fondness."[22]

18 *Autobiography*, 2:284.

19 *Autobiography*, 2:286.

20 "We do not allow a gun in our garden, feeling that we can afford to pay a few cherries for a great deal of music, and we now have quite a lordly party of thrushes, blackbirds, and starlings upon the lawn, with a parliament of sparrows, chaffinches, robins, and other minor prophets. Our summer-house is occupied by a pair of bluemartens, which chase our big cat out of the garden by dashing swiftly across his head one after the other, till he is utterly bewildered, and makes a bolt of it. In the winter the balcony of our study is sacred to a gathering of all the tribes; they have heard that there is corn in Egypt, and therefore they hasten to partake of it and keep their souls alive in famine. On summer evenings the queen of our little kingdom spreads a banquet in our great green saloon which the vulgar call a lawn; it is opposite the parlor window, and her guests punctually arrive and cheerfully partake, while their hostess rejoices to gaze upon them." *S&T* (1873):244–245.

21 *MTP*, 24:288.

22 Gustavus D. Pike, *The Singing Campaign for Ten Thousand Pounds; or, The Jubilee Singers*

These animals were Spurgeon's companions in his home, and he introduced them to his guests as one would introduce any other family member.

As the years wore on in London, the pollution worsened. Nightingale Lane soon grew more crowded, and the smoke and fog of London settled there for much of the year, making his garden less of a retreat. As Spurgeon's health declined, he had to take longer and longer trips to Mentone, France, to recover his health in the warm climate and fresh air. So, in the summer of 1880, when the opportunity arose to purchase the Westwood estate, situated on Beulah Hill above the fog, Spurgeon saw this as God's kind providence. The large, nine-acre residence came complete with "grass-bordered walks around the house,… a winding pathway sheltered by overhanging trees,… a little rustic bridge, and… a miniature lake."[23] This estate became a place for ministry, where Spurgeon could gather with his students and meet with visitors.

Like his previous home, he continued to own domestic animals like dogs, cats, and birds. But now, with the larger property, they occasionally had geese in the pond, and Spurgeon even tried his hand at beekeeping.[24] As before, all these animals found their way into his sermons and lectures. Spurgeon's growing personal library, now housed adequately in his larger study, reflected his broad interest in animals, containing many books on animals and their care.[25] As he grew older, it appears that Spurgeon grew fonder of his pets, especially his dog "Punch."[26] On one occasion, Spurgeon wrote a letter from Mentone expressing how much he missed Punch and was concerned for him because he heard that he was sick.[27] As one who was often ill himself, Spurgeon expressed sympathy for and found comfort in his pets.

When one reads Spurgeon's story, it's clear his divine calling was not to the animal world but to humanity. His ministry involved preaching the gospel to lost men and women. Therefore, it was strategic for Spurgeon to pastor a church in

in Great Britain (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1874), 86.

23 *Autobiography*, 4:57.

24 *Autobiography*, 4:59–60.

25 In the Spurgeon Library in Kansas City, MO, there nearly 40 volumes on the topic of animals that once belonged to Spurgeon.

26 A photocard of Punch can be found in the Metropolitan Tabernacle archives in London.

27 "I wonder whether Punchie thinks of his master. When we drove from the station here, a certain doggie barked at the horses in true Punchistic style, and reminded me of my old friend Punchie sending me his love pleased me very much… Poor doggie, pat him for me, and give him a tit-bit for my sake… I dreamed of old Punch; I hope the poor dog is better… Kind memories to all, including Punch. How is he getting on? I rejoice that his life is prolonged, and hope he will live till my return. May his afflictions be a blessing to him in the sweetening of his temper!… Tell Punchie, `Master is coming!" *Autobiography*, 4:61.

the most populous city of the world in the heart of the British empire, polluted and crowded as it was. At the same time, Spurgeon was not a cosmopolitan city-dweller. Instead, as his love of animals reveals, he was, at heart, a man of the country who loved nature. Though he had been transplanted into the city, Spurgeon looked for ways to create separation from city life so he could find refreshment and encouragement. Far from a utilitarian view of the animal world, these creatures were Spurgeon's companions, pointing him to their Creator.

"A symbol of the invisible": Spurgeon's teaching on animals

Perhaps the primary feature of Spurgeon's thinking on animals is in using the animal world to illustrate spiritual truths. This can be seen particularly in his sermons. During a lecture to his students on preaching, Spurgeon once provided this basis for using sermon illustrations from nature:

> There is a certain type of thought which God has followed in all things. What he made with his Word has a similarity to the Word itself by which he made it; and the visible is the symbol of the invisible, because the same thought of God runs through it all. There is a touch of the divine finger in all that God has made; so that the things which are apparent to our senses have certain resemblances to the things which do not appear. That which can be seen, and tasted, and touched, and handled, is meant to be to us the outward and visible sign of a something which we find in the Word of God, and in our spiritual experience, which is the inward and the spiritual grace; so that there is nothing forced and unnatural in bringing nature to illustrate grace; it was ordained of God for that very purpose. Range over the whole of creation for your similes; do not confine yourself to any particular branch of natural history… vary the instruction by stories, and anecdotes, and similes, and metaphors drawn from geology, astronomy, botany, or any of the other sciences which will help to shed a side light upon the Scriptures.
>
> If you keep your eyes open, you will not see even a dog following his master, nor a mouse peeping up from his hole, nor will you hear even a gentle scratching behind the wainscot without getting something to weave into your sermons if your faculties are all on the alert.[28]

During a time when preaching tended to be intellectual and dry, Spurgeon was famous for his memorable and down-to-earth illustrations. As one biographer observed, "Mr. Spurgeon abounds in illustrations – illustrations

28 Spurgeon, *The Art of Illustration*, 63.

gathered chiefly from nature."[29] However, Spurgeon's use of these illustrations was not merely pragmatic. Rather, in the quote above, Spurgeon gives a theological basis for using these illustrations from nature.

Spurgeon believed that the natural world was particularly suited for illustrating the spiritual world because both came from God. "The same thought of God runs through it all." In other words, the visible, physical world is a reflection or an expression of God's character and will. Therefore, "there is nothing forced and unnatural in bringing nature to illustrate grace; it was ordained of God for that very purpose."

Now, to be clear, Spurgeon held to the inspiration and sole authority of the Holy Scriptures. These outward, visible signs did not illustrate a truth separate from or contrary to Scripture, but only that "which we find in the Word of God." If someone were to interpret the natural world as proclaiming a message different from Scripture, Spurgeon would reject this as a misinterpretation. Natural revelation was ultimately not sufficient to replace special revelation. But for those whose minds have been regenerated by the Spirit and the gospel, natural revelation can serve as an aide to Scripture, shedding a "side light" to help illuminate its teaching.[30]

Animals revealing something about God

Spurgeon often used the animal world to teach his people about the nature and character of God. Though God is infinite and unknowable, the Creator can be partially revealed by contrasting him with his finite creatures. For example, regarding God's aseity, Spurgeon declares, "God is the only self-existent Being… All else of nature is continually borrowing; vegetables draw their nourishment from the soil, animals from them, or from one another, [and] man from all."[31] Even as man observes the dependence of animals on the world around them, he is reminded that God alone is self-existent, and therefore, He alone is worthy of praise.

Likewise, the animal world reveals the sovereign wisdom of the Creator. As Victorian scientists made advances in their study of the animal world, this opened whole new vistas into God's wisdom. One example of this was in the study of ecosystems.

> So beautiful is the order of nature, that we cannot want only destroy

29 William Walters, *Life and Ministry of the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon* (London: Walter Scott, 1882), 261.

30 "The works of creation are pictures to the children of God of the secret mysteries of grace. God's truths are the apples of gold, and the visible creatures are the baskets of silver," *MTP*, 8:109.

31 *Autobiography*, 1:322.

> a race of little birds without suffering from their removal. When the small birds were killed in France, by the peasantry, who supposed that they ate the corn, the caterpillars came and devoured the crops. Man made a defect in an otherwise perfect circle; he took away one of the wheels which God had made, and the machine did not work perfectly; but let it alone, and no jars or grindings will occur, for all animals know their time and place, and fulfill the end of their being.[32]

As science has revealed, all the intricate details of the natural world are intentional, from small birds to caterpillars, and all function in their place according to God's wisdom. Spurgeon uses this point to illustrate God's sovereignty not only in nature but over our lives. For the Christian, God's wisdom and sovereignty should inspire great hope and patience even "when you thought it was all confusion."

The animal world also reveals something of God's wisdom and patience in teaching his creatures all of their varied skills and instincts.

> God not only teaches beasts, he also teaches fish, and I never heard of any man who could teach a fish as God does. The fishes of the sea know exactly the day of the month when they ought to begin to go round the English coast; and the herrings and the mackerel come exactly to the time, though nobody rings the bell to say to them, "It is such a day of the week, and such a month of the year; and you ought to swim away." When the time comes for them to go back again, away they go, and they seem to understand everything that they should do. If God can teach even the fish of the sea, what a wise Teacher he must be![33]

Spurgeon refuses to attribute animal behaviors simply to natural, evolutionary forces. Instead, he envisions a God closely involved with his creatures, instructing them in everything they do. And if this is true for herrings and mackerel and all the other creatures, how much more should people made in the image of God be taught by Him? Spurgeon's point in this illustration was to encourage his hearers to go to God as the great Teacher of their souls.[34]

Finally, the animal world also reveals God's powerful and gracious beneficence toward his creatures. Reflecting on Psalm 104:28, Spurgeon

32 *MTP*, 52:98-99.

33 *MTP*, 57:484.

34 "God is a needful Teacher. It is really necessary that every one of us should be taught of God; for, if we are not, somebody else will teach us, and that somebody else will so teach us that we shall lose our souls for ever." *MTP*, 57:484.

writes,

> This sentence describes the commissariat of creation. The problem is the feeding of "the creeping things innumerable, both small and great beasts," which swarm the sea, the armies of birds which fill the air, and the vast hordes of animals which people the dry land; and in this sentence we have the problem solved, "That thou givest them they gather." The work is stupendous, but it is done with ease because the Worker is infinite; if he were not at the head of it, the task would never be accomplished. Blessed be God for the great Thou- of the text. It is every way our sweetest consolation that the personal God is still at work in the world: leviathan in the ocean, and the sparrow on the bough, may be alike glad of this, and we, the children of the great Father, much more.[35]

Once again, he marvels at God's intimate involvement with the animal world, feeding "the vast hordes" of creatures in every part of the world. For any human to attempt such a task would be impossible. But God does it day after day, as a comforting reminder to His children that "the personal God is still at work in the world." As those who are prone to worry and to doubt God's goodness, we must remember that "He who cares for birds and insects will surely care for men."[36] In these and many other examples, Spurgeon turns to the animal world to reveal something of the power and goodness of God.

The animal world and mankind: the question of evolution

In contrast to Spurgeon's wonder at the Creator whose glory shines in all that He has made, Charles Darwin popularized a new theory in the nineteenth century that argued for the evolution of simpler life forms into more advanced ones through the process of natural selection. In his work, *The Origin of Species,* Darwin concludes with these words,

> There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed into a few forms or into one; and that, whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being, evolved.[37]

35 *MTP*, 55:289.

36 *MTP*, 17:392.

37 Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation*

For Darwin, the grandeur of this world was not in the Creator but in the "several powers" of life that has produced so much variety out of a simple beginning.[38] While it does not discuss human origins explicitly, *The Origin of Species* hinted about the link between humanity and the animal world enough to create a stir. The response towards Darwin's theory was mixed. Some rejected it as entirely incompatible with biblical revelation.[39] Others sought to reconcile natural selection with creationism, interpreting it as God's secondary means for creation.[40] Yet others saw Darwin's theory as supplanting primitive and miraculous readings of Genesis 1-2 in favor of a more naturalistic understanding of the universe. As people listened to these debates, many observed a growing rift between religion and science.

Where was Spurgeon in all this? On one occasion, while spending time with his students at Westwood, one of them asked him, "Are we justified in receiving Mr. Darwin's or any other theory of evolution?" Spurgeon replied,

> Does Revelation teach us evolution? It never has struck me, and it does not strike now, that the theory of evolution can, by any process of argument, be reconciled with the inspired record of the Creation. You remember how it is distinctly stated, again and again, that the Lord made each creature 'after his kind.'… Besides, brethren, I would remind you that, after all these years in which so many people have been hunting up and down the world for 'the missing link' between animals and men, among all the monkeys that the wise men have examined, they have never discovered one who has rubbed his tail off, and ascended in the scale of creation so far as to take his place as the equal of our brothers and sisters of the great family of mankind. Mr. Darwin has never been able to find the germs of an Archbishop of Canterbury in the body of a tomcat or a billy goat, and I venture to prophesy that he will never accomplish such a feat as that. There are abundant evidences

of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life (London: John Murray, 1859), 492.

38 Darwin did not consider himself an atheist but tended more towards agnosticism. He did not explicitly deny the person of Christ, but he rejected the idea of divine revelation. See Charles Darwin, Francis Darwin, ed., *The Life and Letters of Charles Darwin, including an Autobiographical Chapter* (London: John Murray, 1887), 304–307.

39 One example of this is Charles Hodge, who argued that Darwinism is fundamentally an atheistic worldview. Charles Hodge, *What is Darwinism?* (New York: Scribner, Armstrong, and Company, 1874).

40 For one pamphlet defending theistic evolution, see Asa Gray, *Natural Selection Is Not Inconsistent with Natural Theology* (London: Trubner & Co., 1861).

> that one creature inclines towards another in certain respects, for all are bound together in a wondrous way which indicates that they are all the product of God's creative will; but what the advocates of evolution appear to forget is, that there is nowhere to be discovered an actual chain of growth from one creature to another, — there are breaks here and there, and so many missing links that the chain cannot be made complete. There are, naturally enough, many resemblances between them, because they have all been wrought by the one great master-mind of God, yet each one has its own peculiarities… Even where one species very closely resembles another, there is a speciality about each which distinguishes it from all others.[41]

A few things can be noted from Spurgeon's answer regarding his position on evolution. First, Spurgeon believed that the claims of evolution were incompatible with biblical revelation. The text he cites comes from Genesis 1. Spurgeon believed that God created all the various creatures individually, each "after his kind," rather than by any process of evolution. At the same time, Spurgeon demonstrates a measure of humility in his answer. He prefaces it by saying, "it never has struck me, and it does not strike me now." Does this mean that Spurgeon was open to a possible change of view at a future time? His sermons certainly do not give any such indication of ever embracing anything like theistic evolution. Rather, he consistently speaks against Darwinism. For example, preaching in 1865, Spurgeon decried evolution as one of the many "new systems of philosophy and infidelity which are constantly springing up."[42] In 1861, when delivering a lectured entitled "The Gorilla and the Land he Inhabits," Spurgeon declared,

> I, for my own part, believe there is a great gulf fixed between us, so that they who would pass from us to you (again turning to the gorilla) cannot; neither can they come to us who would pass from thence. At the same time, I do not wish to hold an argument with the philosopher who thinks himself related to a gorilla; I do not care to claim the honour for myself, but anyone else is perfectly welcome to it.[43]

As a preacher, Spurgeon spoke with certainty that the theory of evolution

41 *Autobiography*, 4:132.

42 *MTP*, 11:32.

43 C. H. Spurgeon, *The Gorilla and the Land he Inhabits: A Lectured Delivered by the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon in the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington, on Tuesday, October 1st, 1861*. ([London, 1861]), 9.

was incompatible with Christian teaching. And yet, among his students, especially those who were wrestling with this question, Spurgeon spoke with humility and was careful not to alienate them over this debated issue.

Second, Spurgeon did not view science and religion as being at odds. Instead, he believed that science rightly practiced, supported the claims of religion. As Spurgeon considered the theory of evolution, part of his rejection of it came from the fact that scientists had not discovered any "missing links" between the species. Instead, by the standards of scientific observation, the animal world continued to maintain clear lines of distinction. Here, Spurgeon's answer shows that he did not believe evolutionary theory to be supported by the science of his day. At the same time, he did not believe that science could ever overturn the teaching of Scripture. Spurgeon imagined a young man explaining to his believing grandmother the theory of evolution and asking her,

> 'Do you not feel alarmed about your faith?' 'No,' she says, 'if they were to discover fifty thousand things, it would not trouble me, for 'I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.'' You think her a simpleton, perhaps she might far more properly think you the same.[44]

For the Christian, the truth of Scripture is unshakeable, even against fifty thousand new scientific discoveries. When it appears that science contradicts the teaching of Scripture, Spurgeon taught his people to hold fast to the truths of Scripture.

Finally, we see Spurgeon's rejection of evolution because it fails to account for man's unique position among the creatures. While evolution taught a link between the animal world and humanity, Spurgeon believed Scripture's teaching on man being made uniquely in the image of God. No animal has ever "ascended in the scale of creation so far as to take his place as the equal of our brothers and sisters of the great family of mankind." His anthropology required a clear separation between animals and humanity.

Now, Spurgeon affirmed that humans share in creatureliness along with their fellow animals. In his sermons and writings, Spurgeon often

44 *MTP*, 11:32.

illustrated human stubbornness,[45] ingratitude,[46] suffering,[47] dependence,[48] ignorance (demonstrated in man's belief in evolution!),[49] and other such finite characteristics by likening them to animals. Nevertheless, Spurgeon affirmed that "there [was] a great distinction between mere animals and men, because man hath a soul, and the mere animal hath none."[50] As those made in the image of God, humanity alone has the promise of immortality,[51] authority to rule over Creation,[52] and the privilege of knowing God and his great love.[53] In other words, while evolution diminished the position of man

45 "Some men are like dull animals that will not go without the whip." *MTP*, 43:467.

46 "Men are more brutish than the beasts that perish. The lower animals, as men contemptuously call them, acknowledge the hand that feeds them; but men receive the bounty of God through long years, and yet live as if there were no God at all, and feel no gratitude to him whatsoever." *MTP*, 40:154-55.

47 "Our bodies humble us; and that is about the best thing they do for us. Oh, that we were duly lowly, because our bodies ally us with animals, and even link us with the dust!" C. H. Spurgeon, *The Cheque Book of the Bank of Faith* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1888), 104.

48 "Animals are often taught through their food. When they could not be reached in any other way, they have been instructed by their hunger, and by their thirst, and by their feeding. And the Lord, who knew of what a coarse nature Israel was composed… also taught them by their hunger and by their thirst, by the supply of water from the rock, and by the manna which He rained from heaven." *MTP*, 39:517.

49 "Of course, I know that nowadays men are so wonderfully intelligent, that they have discovered that human life has been 'evolved' from lower life. We are the heirs of oysters, and the near descendants of apes. It has taken some time to compass the evolution; and yet I will grant that very hard shells are still to be met with, and some men are not much above animals — especially such men as can be duped by this hypothesis." *MTP*, 36:369.

50 C.H. Spurgeon, *The New Park Street Pulpit: Containing Sermons Preached and Revised by the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon, Minister of the Chapel*, 8 volumes (repr. Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 2006), 4:22.

51 "If man be a creature, if he only be first among animals, though the most highly organized of all the vertebrate creatures; and if, when he dies, there is an end of him, as there might be of a sheep or a dog, then, looking up to the stars and thinking of man as a mere beast, you need not say with David, 'Lord, what is man?' You know what he is. You have got your answer, and a gloomy and a melancholy answer it is. But if man is to live forever and ever, what a noble creature he becomes!" *MTP*, 59:135.

52 "MAN was made to rule. In the divine original he was intended for a king, who should have dominion over the beasts of the field, and the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea. He was designed to be the lord-lieutenant of this part of creation, and the form of his body and the dignity of his countenance betoken it. He walks erect among the animals, while they move upon all-fours; he subjugates and tames them to perform his will, and the fear and dread of him is upon all creatures, for they know their sovereign." *MTP*, 25:373.

53 "I have sometimes looked at the happiest animals, and I have said to myself, 'Ah, but yonder poor creature does not know the love of God, and how thankful I am to God that he has given me the capacity to know himself.'" *MTP*, 19:94.

in relation to animals, Spurgeon affirmed the elevated place of humanity over the animal world as revealed in God's work of creation and redemption.

The animal world and mankind: the challenge of animal cruelty

Darwinism produced in Victorian society an increased concern for animal cruelty. But Spurgeon believed that Christianity presented an even greater basis for the care of God's creatures.[54] While animal cruelty was a common part of Victorian society, Spurgeon refused to participate in it. A former church member once provided this account of a hunting trip with the pastor:

> Provided with the most perfect of breech-loaders, he started forth to bang and blaze away his powder at a prodigal rate, though from morn to dusk he did not even ruffle the feathers of a single coveted bird. Any stray rambler at whom this amateur might have directly aimed would have risked no bodily harm, the general opinion, as Mr. Toller explained, being that the marksman would not have hit the house had he levelled and fired with that intention…. Such is the account Mr. Toller gave of his sporting guest, who it scarce need to be said, was not that ready marksman… Mr. Spurgeon himself.[55]

Apparently, in addition to not being an athlete, Spurgeon was also not much of a hunter! Mr. Toller ascribes his failure to kill any birds that day to his poor marksmanship. However, given his professed love of birds, it's also likely that Spurgeon did not want to kill any birds. Once when traveling to a resort town, Spurgeon grieved to see pigeons caged up for the sport of pigeon-shooting.[56] As one who believed in the dominion of mankind over the animal world, Spurgeon saw this dominion as a stewardship to care for animals, not

54 "A famous saint was wont to call birds and beasts his brothers and sisters, and Mr. Darwin apparently goes in for that relationship most literally: we do not contend for anything so high as that, but we do ask to have them viewed as our Father's creatures, to be treated well for his sake, and to be regarded as our friends." *S&T* (1873):243.

55 Anon., *The Rev. C. H. Spurgeon: Twelve Realistic Sketches Taken at Home and one the Road* (London: James Clarke & Co., 1877), 24–25.

56 "While we were enjoying the loveliness of land and sea we heard the cooing of pigeons, and saw that vast numbers of the pretty creatures were preserved in elegant houses, and were kept in readiness for pigeon-shooting. On the outside of the houses were poor wounded birds wanting to get in and associate with their old companions. We were sick at heart to see them suffering. What sport our countrymen find in shooting these innocent creatures we cannot tell! It is an amusement only worthy of savages, and yet the aristocracy are the chief patrons of it. It is sad that it should pollute so lovely a scene." *S&T* (1875):55.

to treat them with cruelty or violence. Even though Spurgeon rejected any human evolutionary link to the animal world, he still believed that humanity had a responsibility to care for their fellow-creatures.

In a society where animals were a normal part of everyday life, Christian discipleship meant teaching his church members to treat their animals well. As those made in the image of God, humanity is to reflect God's rule in their treatment of animals. Preaching to his people, Spurgeon declared,

> What a king man is! Let him not be cruel to the beasts of the field; let him not be a tyrant; God did not make him for that purpose. Let his reign be generous and kind; and if the animals must suffer, yet spare them as much suffering as possible. O man, be thou a generous viceroy, for thou art under a most generous King, who is himself the happy God, and who delights in the happiness of all his creatures![57]

This was an important point for Spurgeon. The humane care of animals came not because of a higher view of animals or a lower view of man, but rather a holy fear and love of God. He illustrates this point with a conversation he had with a fellow pastor.

> This last week an esteemed brother minister was telling me that, in speaking to a man who professed to have been converted, he asked him which sin remained as a load upon his mind. 'Well,' said the man, 'I have to see after cows, and I have often beaten the cows very badly.' 'What do you do now?' 'Oh, I coax them instead of beating them.' Now, I have no doubt, that in his peculiar calling, cruelty to animals would be most strikingly laid upon his conscience, but the pastor had to say to him, 'Yes, quite so; but the great sin in your fault is that the cows are God's creatures, and that he is angry if we treat his creatures unmercifully.'[58]

Spurgeon's goal was not only to teach his people to treat animals kindly, but to grow in their fear of God so that they would treat their Father's world with the care that it deserved. The proper fear of God produced the appropriate stewardship of his creation.

Spurgeon never organized an effort to promote the care of animals. But he used his preaching and writing platform to address the issue from time to time.

57 *MTP*, 39:312.

58 *MTP*, 14:291.

Writing under his pseudonym of John Ploughman, Spurgeon declared, "Poor dumb animals cannot speak for themselves, and therefore every one who has his speech should plead for them."[59] We find Spurgeon's concern for his animals reflected in many areas of his ministry. Lecturing to his students, he advised them not to preach too long so that farmers can get back home to milk their cows.[60] In his monthly magazine, he recommended books about insects to children to teach them to appreciate insects rather than torture them.[61] In his many publications, he urged owners to care well for their animals.[62]

His most direct attack on the mistreatment of animals came in the article, "A Word for Brutes Against Brutes," published in *The Sword and the Trowel* in June 1873. Spurgeon opens the piece with grim accounts of animal cruelty in his day.

> The newspapers for the last few weeks have been a source of grievous affliction to humane minds. The brutalities which they have recorded have shown a diabolical refinement of cruelty which makes us blush to belong to the race of man. When we read of a wretch driving a poor horse for miles with its feet broken, bleeding at every step it took upon its poor stumps, we shudder and our blood runs cold… Close upon the heels of this torturing of a horse comes the case of a man who, as a matter of business, picks little birds' eyes out with a pin to make them sing better.[63]

59 C. H. Spurgeon, *John Ploughman's Pictures; or, More of His Plain Talk for Plain People* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1885), 50.

60 "In some country places, in the afternoon especially, the farmers have to milk their cows, and one farmer bitterly complained to me about a young man — I think from this College, 'Sir, he ought to have given over at four o'clock, but he kept on till half-past, and there were all my cows waiting to be milked! How would he have liked it if he had been a cow?' There was a great deal of sense in that question. The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals ought to have prosecuted that young sinner. How can farmers hear to profit when they have cows-on-the-brain?" C.H. Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students.* (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1990), 1:144–145.

61 "The subject is one which needs to be made familiar to children, for they know so little about insects that boys torture them, and girls scream when one of them comes within a yard. Anything is good which teaches our savage race to love all things that live." *S&T (*1880):623.

62 "I hate cruelty, and above all things the cruelty which starves the laboring beast. Is not a man better than a beast? Then, depend upon it, what is good for the ploughing horse is good for the ploughing boy: a belly full of plain food is a wonderful help to a laboring man. A starving workman is a dear servant. If you don't pay your men, they pay themselves, or else they shirk their work. He who labors well should be fed well, especially a ploughman." C. H. Spurgeon, *John Ploughman's Pictures*, 50. "He who beats a donkey is worse than a donkey. Cruelty to animals is utterly senseless." C. H. Spurgeon, *The Salt Cellars: Being a Collection of Proverbs Together with Homely Notes Thereon* (New York: A. C. Armstrong & Son, 1889), 1:219.

63 *S&T* (1873):241–242.

Against such acts, Spurgeon believed that the government should act swiftly to outlaw and punish, suggesting that even capital punishment might not be unreasonable.[64] He urges all people not simply to speak but to take legal action against animal cruelty.

> Since it is useless to be indignant and declamatory, if we are nothing more, let every humane person bestir himself to put down the reign of terror towards the animate creation, wherever it comes under his notice. Cruelty to animals must be stamped out. Each case must be earnestly dealt with. Where the laws are violated humane persons must undertake the unpleasant duty of prosecuting the offenders, or must at least report them to the proper authorities: and where no law exists to protect the unhappy victims, instances of cruelty should be reported by the press, that shame may be aroused and a right public sentiment treated.[65]

At its heart, Spurgeon believed that these acts of animal cruelty were not merely criminal but spiritual. Such behavior revealed the condition of the heart. "The man of dead heart towards God has a heart of stone towards the Lord's creatures, and cares for them only so far as he can make them minister to his own wealth or pleasure."[66] Even as Spurgeon called for legal measures by the authorities and for Christians to set a high example in their treatment of animals,[67] he believed the ultimate solution to the problem of animal cruelty was found in the gospel, and the life-changing work of God in the human heart. This was the work to which Spurgeon devoted his life.

Conclusion

This paper has demonstrated Spurgeon's high view of the animal world, rooted in his conviction that all of nature is a "symbol of the invisible." Spurgeon's love and care for the animal world can be seen in the biographical details of his life and his teaching and advocacy for the proper treatment of animals.

64 "If there be no law which would award the lash to such a fiend incarnate an Act ought to be passed at once, or Mr. Justice Lynch might for once be invoked to give the demon his reward in an irregular manner… whipcord is too good a thing for this being; and if we were not averse to all capital punishment we should suggest that nothing short of a rope with a noose in it would give him his deserts." *S&T* (1873):241–242.

65 *S&T* (1873):242.

66 *S&T* (1873):243.

67 *S&T* (1873):243–245.

Spurgeon rejected Darwin's theory of evolution and upheld the unique place of man in all Creation as those made in the image of God. At the same time, Spurgeon believed that man had a responsibility not to abuse his dominion but to use it to care for God's creatures.

Though Spurgeon never established an organization devoted to the care of animals, his ministry at the Metropolitan Tabernacle included not only the preaching of the gospel but also discipling Christians about the proper care of animals. In a society where animals were a normal part of everyday life, Spurgeon taught his people to live out the fear of God by caring well for His creatures. In that sense, Spurgeon's church did promote the care of animals, speaking up for those who could not speak for themselves and reflecting God's kind rule to the watching world.

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