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Chapter 28

The Bible and Animal Theology

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Abstract

Attention to the place of animals in the Bible has been significant in provoking new Christian theological understandings of the place of animals. Theologians bringing the question of the animal to biblical texts have found a wide range of resources for discussing Christian belief about animals, with significant implications for Christian ethics. This article provides a survey of key themes and texts at the interface between the Bible and animal theology, including biblical understandings of animal life, the relationship between human and non-human animals, the place of animals in visions of redemption, and biblical accounts of human responsibilities for other animals.

Introduction

Attention to the place of animals in the Bible has been significant in provoking new Christian theological understandings of the place of animals. Theologians bringing the question of the animal to biblical texts have found a wide range of resources for discussing Christian belief about animals, with significant implications for Christian ethics. This article provides a survey of key themes at the interface between the Bible and animal theology, including biblical understandings of animal life, the relationship between human and non-human animals, the

place of animals in visions of redemption, and biblical accounts of human responsibilities for other animals.

Animal theology

Asking theological questions about animals is not a modern phenomenon. The Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria wrote a treatise *On Animals* around AD 50, in which he considered many examples of non-human animal intelligence, before concluding that rationality is unique to human beings (Philo of Alexandria, 1981). Basil of Caesarea preached a series of sermons in AD 378 extolling the wonders of God's animal creatures with striking enthusiasm and detail (Basil of Caesarea, 1963). While Basil believed that fish did not possess memory, Augustine of Hippo argued to the contrary, on the basis of his observations of the behaviour of fish in a fountain at Bulla Regia in modern Tunisia, following people walking beside the fountain in the hope of receiving food (Augustine, 2002). Augustine nonetheless argued that other animals 'have no society with us in reason' (Augustine, 1998) and Thomas Aquinas drew on this judgement to argue that they should be excluded from considerations of justice and charity (Aquinas, 1963, II-I, qu. 102, a. 6, II-II, qu. 25, a. 3}. An early fifteenth-century English commentary on the Ten Commandments argues instead that Christians 'sin very grievously' if they treat God's animal creatures with cruelty or wickedness (Barnum, 1976). In the sixteenth century, the reformer John Calvin observed that laws against maltreatment of animals in Deuteronomy indicated that 'God will condemn us for cruel and unkind folk if we pity not the brute beast' (Calvin, 1987, p. 804). Christian concern about cruelty towards animals was taken up by John Hildrop and John Wesley in the eighteenth century (Hildrop, 1742; Wesley, 1806), and by the Christians who campaigned for legislation against animal cruelty and vivisection in the nineteenth century (Li, 2000; Li, 2012). In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, concern for animals has been espoused with

renewed vigour by Christian theologians keen to trace the implications of Christian faith commitments for attitudes and practice towards animals (see references, below, for examples).

The Bible has inevitably been a key theme in the development of theological perspectives on animals. Discussions of Old Testament texts have focussed on the place of animals in the creation narratives in Genesis (Gen. 1–3); the dominion over other creatures granted to humans (Gen. 1.26–8); the original plant-based diet shared by both human and non-human animals (Gen. 1.29–30); Noah’s protection of animals during the flood (Gen. 7); God’s permission for humans to eat meat after the flood and the Noahide covenant made with all creatures (Gen. 9); Israelite laws protecting animals in Exodus, Deuteronomy, and Leviticus; God’s gracious provision for animals (e. g. Ps. 104; Job 38–41); and prophetic visions of peaceful coexistence between humans and other animals (Isa. 11.6–9, 65.25–6; Hos. 2.18). The New Testament texts that have been of most interest include Jesus’ teaching that the humblest of creatures is not forgotten by God (Mt. 10.31; Lk. 12.6–7), the affirmation of the reconciliation of all things in Christ (Eph. 1.10; Col. 1.15–20), the liberation of groaning creation from bondage (Rom. 8.21), and the visions of humans and other creatures gathered in worship of the Lamb (Rev. 4.6–10). Animals are much more widely present than this in biblical texts, however, as domesticated animals living alongside Israel and sharing times of blessing and judgement, and as wild animals, given their own places by God, prohibited as food for Israel (Lev. 11, Deut. 14.1–20), and sometimes participating in God’s judgement of humans (e.g. Ezek 39.17–20).

Animals in the Old Testament

In the Genesis 1 creation narrative, God called a new kind of creature into existence on the fifth day of creation: living creatures (*nephesh hayyah*) to swarm in the water and fly above

the earth (Gen. 1.20). God saw that they were good and blessed them to be fruitful and multiply (Gen. 1.21–22). Then on the sixth day God called on the earth also to bring forth living creatures: cattle, creeping things, and wild animals, and saw that they, too, were good (Gen. 1.24–25). God gave plants with seeds and fruits for humans to eat, and ‘everything that has the breath of life’ (*nephesh hayyah*) is given green plants to eat (Gen. 1.29–30). When God breathed the breath of life into Adam’s nostrils in the second chapter, he also became a living creature (*nephesh hayyah*, Gen. 2.7), and the creatures God brought to Adam for naming later in the chapter are also identified as living creatures (*nephesh hayyah*, Gen. 2.19), though this is often obscured by the use of different terms for humans and the other animals in English translations. Humans and other animals have in common that they are God-breathed, living creatures, and the *nephesh* that they share is a fundamental aspect of what it means to be an alive self, often rendered as ‘soul’ or ‘life’ (c.f. Gen. 35.3, 9.5). When God took stock of what has become of creation in Genesis 6, God saw that the earth was filled with violence and that all flesh (*kol basar*) had corrupted its ways on the earth (Gen. 6.11–12). After the flood, when God made a covenant never to repeat it, the covenant was with ‘every living creature of all flesh’ (*kol basar* Gen. 9.15), indicating that all living creatures, including humans, are characterized by possessing both the breath of life and flesh. Blood is also a common possession of humans and animals, identified with their life, and for that reason it is prohibited for humans to consume the blood of animals (Gen. 9.4, Lev. 17.14). The fundamental biblical understanding of animal life, therefore, is that animals are fleshy creatures with the breath of life, and it is striking that both of these characteristics, together with their life-blood, are also fundamental to a biblical understanding of human life. We can differentiate between humans and animals (*adam* and *behemah*, e.g. Eccl. 3.19), but they share these fundamental characteristics.

Animals are differentiated in different ways in the Bible. Genesis 1 divides them between those creatures that swarm in the waters, fly in the sky, and walk or creep on the ground (Gen. 1.20–24), but also divides land animals between wild animals (*hayat*), cattle (*behemah*), and creeping things (*remes*) (Gen. 1.25). Levitical legislation concerning the land Sabbath declares that the land will feed livestock (*behemah*) and wild animals (*hayat*) in the land (Lev. 25.7). Animals are also divided according to dietary rules between those that are clean and unclean: Leviticus specifies that animals that are cleft-footed and chew the cud can be eaten, together with everything in the waters with fins and scales; birds, with particular named exceptions mostly for birds of prey; and locusts and crickets, but not other insects, and not weasels, mice, or particular named reptiles (Lev. 11.3–31). Scholars have advanced a wide range of differing views about the rationale for the division between clean and unclean animals (see survey in (Grumett & Muers, 2010, ch.5), but it seems plausible that animals that consumed flesh contrary to the ordering of Genesis 1 noted above were considered unclean, together with those that did not fit clearly into the Genesis categories, such as the ostrich as a bird that walked on the earth. It is notable that in identifying most wild animals as not to be eaten, these food laws protected them from hunting by Israel.

The human consumption of animals was closely related to the sacrificial system: Levitical rules stipulate that no ox, lamb, or goat, may be killed without bringing it as an offering to the Lord (Lev. 17.3–5). Consumption of animals was only permissible on the condition that they were not eaten with their blood, which is the life of living creatures, common to humans and animals (Gen. 9.3–4). The voluminous regulations for how sacrifices were to be offered (Lev. 1, 3–5, 6–9, 14–16, 22–3; Num. 6–8, 15, 18–19, 28–9) make clear that only particular animals may be killed in particular ways, by particular persons, in particular places. The animals sacrificed by Israel were members of the Israelite community, holy and of high status, and

ritually effective only on this basis (Morgan, 2010). Other texts present opposition to sacrificial killing: Psalm 51 declares ‘you have no delight in sacrifice’ (Ps. 51.16), and in Isaiah God declares this directly: ‘What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? says the Lord; I have had enough of the burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts; I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or of goats’ (Isa. 1.11). Even more strikingly, later in Isaiah, we find a radical concern for animal killing: ‘Whoever slaughters an ox is like one who kills a human being; whoever sacrifices a lamb, like one who breaks a dog’s neck’ (Is. 66.3).

Throughout the Old Testament God is recognized as graciously making provision for the wellbeing of animals: the life of every living thing is in God’s hands (Job 12.10), and God acts to save both humans and animals alike (Ps. 36.6). Psalm 104 praises God as the one who makes springs to gush in the valleys to provide drink for the wild animals and causes grass to grow for the cattle, alongside plants for people to use. The psalmist declares that all creatures look to God for their food and ‘when you open your hand, they are filled with good things’ (Ps. 104.10–15; 27–28). Psalm 145 affirms God’s compassion for all creatures (Ps. 145.9). God reminds Job that God provides food for young lions and ravens, has given the wild goats the steppe for their home, strengthens the horse, hawk, and eagle, and celebrates the might of Behemoth and Leviathan (Job 38–40). Animals share with humans in divine blessing. They are covenant partners with humans in the Noahide covenant: that this includes every living creature is repeated six times in God’s announcement of the covenant to Noah (Gen. 9.9–17). They are also part of the covenant prophesied in Hosea, when there will be peace between humans and other animals and peace in the land (Hos. 2.18). In a similar strain, Isaiah prophesies that the Messianic reign will bring peace not just to humans, but among all creatures, including wolves, lambs, leopards, kids, calves, failings, and lions (Isa. 11.6–9; 65.25–6).

In addition to enjoying God's blessing, the prophets see God's judgement as falling on animals as well as human beings. Jeremiah pictures a time when God's anger will be poured out on humans and animals, and observes that the birds and beasts are being swept away because of the wickedness of the people (Jer. 7.20; 21.6; 12.4). Ezekiel gives a similar warning (Ezek. 14.13–21, 38.19–20), and in Joel, God's judgement is already impacting on animals (Joel 1.18, 20).

In response to God's blessing, animals participate with other creatures in praising God: the psalms call all the earth to offer praise and thanksgiving to God and affirms that all the earth worships God (Ps. 66.1–4; 98.7–8; 145.9–16; 148.7, 10). Isaiah also calls on the earth to offer praise, and prophesies that the wild animals will honour God for providing water in the wilderness (Isa. 42.10–12; 43.20; see Bauckham, 2002). In the story of Jonah, animals also participate in repentance in the face of judgement, fasting from food and water and being dressed in sackcloth, just like the human inhabitants of Nineveh (Jon. 3.7–8). This solidarity is a strong theme in the book: God explains to Jonah the decision to show mercy by reminding him that Nineveh contained 120,000 people and also many animals (Jon. 4.11).

Perhaps the most striking affirmation of commonality between humans and animals in the Bible is found in the book of Ecclesiastes, where the Teacher observes that the fate of humans and animals is the same, that they have the same breath, and they all turn to dust (Eccl. 3.18–20). Other Old Testament texts emphasize human status above animals: they are uniquely made in the image of God and are granted dominion over other creatures (Gen. 1.26–8; Ps. 8.4–8), though given the stipulation in Genesis 1.29 that humans should eat seeds and fruit, the

original vision of human dominion does not include permission to take the lives of animals for food.

Occasionally, animals are recognized as possessing wisdom and knowledge of God that is beyond that given to humans. The story of Balaam and his donkey is the most vivid example, where the donkey sees the angel of God standing in the middle of a narrow path, of which Balaam is unaware. Balaam beats the donkey for refusing to go forward, at which the donkey complains ‘What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times?’ Balaam is unmoved and says he would kill the donkey if he had a sword, but his eyes are then opened and the Lord tells him that the donkey has saved his life (Num. 22.21–34, recalled in 2 Pet. 2.15–16). Proverbs instructs lazy children to learn wisdom from the ant, which prepares its food in summer to last it through the winter, and identifies as ‘exceedingly wise’ the ants, the badgers who make homes in the rock, the locusts who march in rank, and the lizards that can be found in kings’ palaces (Prov. 30.24–28).

The New Testament and animals

The difference in status between humans and animals is a recurrent theme in the teaching of Jesus. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus reminds his hearers that God makes provision for the birds of the air and the lilies of the field, before asking rhetorically ‘Are you not of more value than they?’ (Mt. 6.25–30). In another saying, Jesus notes that not a single sparrow is forgotten by God, which means that those he is addressing should not be afraid, because ‘you are of more value than many sparrows’ (Mt. 10.29; Lk. 12.6). The same comparison is used to similar effect in his teaching about healing on the Sabbath. Jesus notes that if someone has only one sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, they will lift it out, before exclaiming ‘How much more valuable is a human being than a sheep!’ and concluding that it is lawful to

do good on the Sabbath (Mt. 12.11–12). The force of such passages depend on it being recognized as obvious that care for human beings should have a higher priority than care for animals, but they also recognize that God cares for all creatures, and that we expect humans to act to protect animals in their care, too.

New Testament accounts of the significance of Jesus Christ make clear that he stands in fundamental relationship not just to human beings, but to all creation. The prologue to John's gospel affirms that through him all things came into being (Jn 1.3), and summarizes the doctrine of the incarnation in the formula 'the Word became flesh (*sarx*) and dwelt among us'. *Sarx* is also used in other New Testament descriptions of the incarnation (Eph. 2.14; 1 Tim. 3.16; 1 Jn 4.2). Like the Hebrew term *basar*, discussed above, *sarx* names the fleshy physicality common to human and animal life, so this understanding of the incarnation is an affirmation that Jesus enters into the fleshy realm of life shared by humans and animals (Cunningham, 2009). John's description of the crucifixion continues this theme by making clear links between Israelite rituals of animal sacrifice and the death of Jesus, and this association is reinforced in other New Testament texts (1 Pet. 1.19; Rev. 5.6–14; c.f. Clough, 2012, pp. 127–129). The Christological statements in the opening of the letters to the Colossians and Ephesians emphasize that the work of Christ encompasses all creatures, with all things in heaven and on earth gathered up and reconciled in him (Eph. 1.10; Col. 1.20).

Irenaeus developed his doctrine of *anakephalaiosis* (recapitulation) on the basis of Ephesians 1.10, in which he saw Christ as redeeming the whole creation (Irenaeus, 1997, pp. bk. 5, ch. 33, §4). Origen developed the related doctrine of *apokatastasis* on the basis of Peter's words in his Pentecost sermon that Jesus would remain in heaven until the time of universal restoration (Acts 3.21), when Origen believed all things would be returned to their state in

Paradise (Greggs, 2011). These Patristic visions of redemption may have been influential on John Wesley, who in 1781 preached a sermon called ‘The General Deliverance’ on Romans 8.19–22 in which he argues that nothing could be more express than this passage in affirming that animals will be redeemed by God (Wesley, 1806, p. 127). Calvin’s commentary on Romans 8 also affirms that all creatures will share in the new creation (Calvin, 1961, pp. 173–174). A few years before Wesley, in 1765, John Hildrop cited both Acts 3.21 and Romans 8.21 in support of his position that every individual creature will have a place in immortality, arguing that what God had reason to create, God has reason to preserve, since any reason for their annihilation or extinction would also be a reason that they should not have been created (Hildrop, 1742, p. 53). The vision in the Book of Revelation of heavenly worship also seems to demand a more-than-human vision of redemption. Standing around the throne, and around a lamb standing as if it had been slaughtered, are the four creatures from Ezekiel’s vision: ‘the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with a face like a human, and the fourth living creature like an eagle’ (Rev. 4.7, 5.6, c.f. Ezek. 1.5–10). Wesley’s sermon also draws on the final chapter of Revelation: God’s words that ‘I am making all things new’ and the promise that ‘he will wipe every tear from their eyes’ and that death, mourning, and crying will be no more (Rev. 21.4–5), noting that these promises are not limited to humans alone (Wesley, 1806, p. 128).

The Bible and animal ethics

The Bible contains explicit instruction concerning care for animals. Sabbath regulations include protection for domesticated animals alongside sons and daughters, male and female slaves, and alien residents (Exod. 20.8–11, 23.12, Deut. 5.14). The Sabbath for the land is to provide food even for wild animals, together with slaves and labourers (Lev. 25.6). First-born male livestock must remain with their mothers for seven days before being sacrificed (Exod.

22.30), donkeys trapped under burdens must be set free even if they belong to an enemy (Exod. 23.4–5; Deut. 22.1–4), kids may not be boiled in their mother’s milk (Exod. 23.19, Deut. 14.21), a mother bird must not be taken with her fledglings or eggs (Deut. 22.6–7), a cow or ewe may not be slaughtered on the same day as her offspring (Lev. 22.28) and oxen should not be muzzled while treading grain (Deut. 25.4). The regulation prohibiting the yoking of an ox and donkey together (Deut. 22.10) may relate to a concern about mixing kinds, but would also have been uncomfortable for both animals. A concern for purity may also lie behind the prohibition on cross-breeding livestock (Lev. 19.19), but the regulation also sets a boundary to the human manipulation of domestic animals.

Paul’s rhetorical question in commentary on the prohibition of muzzling the ox is frequently referred to as a Christian repudiation for care for animals. After citing the law he asks ‘Is it for oxen that God is concerned? Or does he not speak entirely for our sake?’ Paul answers that the text was written for our sake, apparently implying that God has no concern for oxen (1 Cor. 9.9–10). It is important to recognize, however, that to interpret Paul here as stating that God does not care for oxen would be contrary to the fundamental Jewish affirmation that God cares for all God’s creatures, repeatedly affirmed in the texts from the Old Testament reviewed above, as well as in Jesus’s teaching about God’s care even for a single sparrow. It is much more plausible to follow David Instone-Brewer in recognizing that Paul is referring here to the concern among rabbinic Jews not to speculate about God’s motives in commanding, because this detracts from the faithful observance of God’s decrees (Instone-Brewer, 1992). Christians have not shared this rabbinic reticence about considering what lay behind such laws, and given that the conclusion Paul resists here is so frequently affirmed in the Old and New Testaments, we should avoid concluding that this text puts any check on Christian concern for animals.

Another New Testament text frequently cited as evidence that Christians should not be concerned about animals is the story told in each of the synoptic gospels in which Jesus expels demons from a possessed man (or two in Matthew's version) and gives the demons permission to enter a herd of pigs, after which the pigs rush into the sea and are drowned (Matt. 8.28–33; Mk 5.1–18; Lk. 8.26–37). The story is an odd one: as unclean animals, the pigs were clearly not being raised for Jewish consumption, and therefore were probably kept to supply food to the Roman army. The Roman connection to the story is emphasized in Mark and Luke's tellings, where the possessed man gives his name as 'Legion', a Latin term with obvious military associations. Whatever the political dimensions of the story, the fate of the pigs is clearly not its focus, and they are often judged to be unfortunate collateral damage to the main event of exorcism. Michael Gilmour has recently made the intriguing proposal that the pigs could be seen as willing agents in the destruction of the demons, as it would have been contrary to the interests of the demons to drown the pigs (Gilmour, 2014, pp. 83–86). As in the case of Paul's comment about muzzling the ox, we do not have grounds in this story to contradict Jesus's teaching, in continuity with the Old Testament, that God is concerned for every creature.

Many stories of Christian saints and their relationships with animals clearly draw on biblical stories and extend them to include responsibilities towards animals. For example, in a story told of St Macarius, a hermit in Egypt in the 4th century, a hyena brought him her pup, weeping. Macarius took the pup from her and saw that it was blind. Then 'he took it, he groaned, he spat on its face, he signed it on the eyes with his finger: straightaway the whelp saw' (Waddell, 1995, pp. 13–15). The story clearly includes elements of Jesus's healings, such as the man born blind in John's gospel (John 9.6–7), and suggests that it belongs to a

Christian holiness tradition to extend compassion beyond the human sphere. Later in the story, the hyena agrees never again to kill animals for food, anticipating the peace between all creatures prophesied as part of the Messianic reign in Isaiah. In other stories, saints show hospitality to an injured lion visitor to their monastery, bring back to life a sow nursing piglets and a goose killed for food, and call a hawk to give back a bird taken from a nest, restoring the bird to health (Waddell, 1995). These are Christian stories of compassion towards animals inspired both by biblical teaching about animals and by a wider understanding of Christian responsibility for others. A similar extension of Christian sympathy for the other is evident in Daniel Miller's discussion of the implications of the parable of the Good Samaritan for Christian treatment of animals (Miller, 2012), or Andrew Linzey's claim that the liberation theology inspired by the story of Israel being led out of Egypt should be extended to consider the liberation of animals, too (Linzey, 1994, pp. 62–65).

The question of the permissibility of killing of animals for human food clearly has biblical resonances. The creation narratives in Genesis 1 and 2 portray peaceable relationships between all creatures, with humans assigned seeds and fruit to eat, and animals green plants, and humans making use of animals, as Luther put it, 'only for the admiration of God and for a holy joy which is unknown to us in this corrupt state of nature' (Gen. 1.29–30; Gen. 2.18–20; Luther, 1958, p. 71). After the flood, God issues a new instruction 'Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you; and just as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything' (Gen. 9.3). This new permission is quickly limited: no flesh may be consumed with its blood (Gen. 9.4), and many animals are identified as unclean, as discussed above. As also noted above, Isaiah looks forward to the Messianic reign when peace between creatures will be reestablished (Isa. 11.6–9; 65.25–6), and also gives voice to God's weariness with killing animals for sacrifice (Is. 11.1; 66.3). Theologians have therefore seen the Genesis 9

dispensation to eat meat as a second-best option: taking Luther as an example again, he observes in his lectures on Genesis that humans would have been much healthier if the consumption of meat had not been introduced (Luther, 1958, p. 36).

Meat-eating is also a contentious issue in the New Testament. Paul states that only those weak in conscience are concerned about eating meat offered to idols, and that eating or not eating is irrelevant to our relationship to God (1 Cor. 8.4–8; cf. Rom. 14.2), suggesting that the issue was a contentious one among the churches in Corinth and Rome. Peter receives a shocking vision in which he is told to kill and eat all kinds of animals, because God has made them all clean, though this is explicitly interpreted as referring to the admission of the Gentiles to the church, rather than teaching about diet (Acts 10.9–16; 11.1–17). Early traditions suggest that James, the brother of Jesus, was a vegetarian, and the Ebionites, a Jewish Christian group, also claimed that Peter and Jesus ate no meat (Webb, 2001, pp. 110-120). In the light of these claims, it is intriguing that there are gospel stories of Jesus eating fish after the resurrection (Luke 24.43–3; Jn 21.13), but no mention of him eating meat. Some scholars assume that Jesus would have eaten lamb at the Last Supper, but Stephen Webb notes both that there is doubt concerning whether the Last Supper was a Passover meal, and that it would have been odd for Jesus not to have chosen lamb, rather than bread, as a symbol of his body if it had been on the table (Webb, 2001, pp. 148–154). There are, therefore, a diverse range of texts concerning the eating of meat in the Bible, which allow both for permission to kill animals for food and to be flexible in dietary choice, and for the suggestion that Christian vegetarianism could be seen as an anticipation of Isaiah’s vision of the Messianic reign.

Key issues at the interface between the Bible and animal theology

Alongside the pressing ethical questions raised by reflecting on the place of animals in the Bible, there are also important questions for Christian doctrine. Foremost among these is how we should understand the relationship between, and relative status of, humans and other animals. Christian theology has tended to prefer those biblical passages that affirm human superiority and dignity, such as the declaration that humans are uniquely made in the image of God in Genesis 1.26–7, and the affirmation of human dominion over other creatures in Genesis 1.26–8 and Psalm 8.5–8. This is unsurprising, because it is a way of providing humans with comfort and reassurance in the face of a wider world that often seems vast, chaotic, and frightening. In Psalm 8 this context is particularly clear: the Psalmist expresses confidence in the majestic name of God and the mighty work of God in creating the moon and stars, but is anxious that humans seem too insignificant in comparison to merit God’s concern. A similar theme is evident in Luther’s commentary on Genesis: he notes that animals ‘greatly resemble’ human beings, needing food, water, sleep and rest like us, having bodies like ours that need nourishment and perish without it, deriving energy from digesting food like us, procreating like us, and even dwelling, being fed, eating, sleeping, and resting among human beings (Luther, 1958, pp. 56, 85, 121, 230). In these passages, however, Luther is not celebrating this commonality between humans and other animals, but lamenting it, and offers in response the good news that Genesis tells us that humans have a different origin and fate from these other creatures to which we seem so similar. The anxiety in Psalm 8 was that humans seem insignificant in relation to creatures like the moon and stars that are superior; Luther’s anxiety is that humans seem lost among numerous other similar creatures; in both cases, the affirmation of a superior human status is offered as remedy to the concern that humans are not sufficiently significant in the context of God’s other creatures.

As the survey of biblical material about humans and other animals in the sections above makes clear, alongside the affirmations of human superiority and dominance in Genesis 1 and Psalm 8, there are many other places where biblical texts affirm instead the commonality between humans and other animals. Karl Barth expresses surprise that humans are not seen more frequently and emphatically as the centre of creation beyond Genesis 1 and 2, noting that in the great psalm of creation, Psalm 104, they are mentioned only incidentally and are 'completely lost in a host of other creatures', while in Job 38–41, humans are ignored in an unforgettable celebration of the wonders of other creatures (Barth, 1958, 20). Perhaps Barth's surprise derives from the selective theological appropriation of texts that emphasize human difference from and superiority over other creatures, in preference to those that position humans as one among many of God's good creatures. A more balanced reception of biblical texts concerning the relationship between humans and other animals should recognize humans as particular creatures with distinctive attributes that make them capable of serving God in particular ways. In the exercise of these capacities God calls humans to image God in their dealings with other creatures, but to interpret this responsibility as a status symbol seems already to have failed in the task of what it would mean to image the God who in the Word through whom all things were made (Jn 1.3) and who becomes incarnate as a frail fleshy creature in order to gather up all things in heaven and earth (Eph. 1.10). God's ordered care for creatures, as expressed in Psalm 104, makes clear that humans do not need to escape their anxieties about insignificance through a competitive logic in which they elevate themselves by diminishing the status of God's other creatures. Instead, humans could celebrate their particular place in the magnificent expanse of God's creative and providential activity laid out in Psalm 104, where humans, together with all other creatures, have their own particular place in God's purposes and glorify God in their own particular way (see Clough, 2012, pp. 26–77).

A second key theological issue raised by surveying where animals feature in biblical texts concerns whether animals share in the corruption caused by the human disobedience in Genesis 3, and the implications of this for the Christian doctrine of reconciliation, and engagement with evolutionary biology. Christian theology has often assumed that humans are the only creatures affected by sin, and the only creatures in need of reconciliation. The biblical survey above should already indicate that this assumption is not well-grounded: the serpent's mode of life is clearly impacted by the curse in Genesis 3 (Gen. 3.14–5), God's anger before the flood is kindled not merely by human violence but also violence between non-human animals (Gen. 6.11–12), animals are explicitly included both in repentance and in God's mercy in the story of Jonah (Jon. 3.7–8; 4.11), livestock belonging to Israel are frequently the recipients with human beings of God's judgement (e.g. Jer. 7.20). Animals are also explicitly included in visions of what redemption will mean: peaceable relationships with animals is given by Isaiah as the first sign of the Messianic reign (Isa. 11.6–9), Paul's magnificent vision of liberation from groaning bondage includes the whole of creation (Rom. 8.21), and all things in heaven and earth are gathered up and reconciled in the work of Jesus Christ according to the letters to the Ephesians and Colossians (Eph. 1.10; Col. 1.20). On this basis, it would seem strange to construct Christian doctrines of reconciliation and redemption that are exclusively human (see discussion in Clough, 2012, ch. 5).

This matters for theological engagement with evolutionary theory, because if violence and predation between non-human creatures is interpreted as departure from the peaceable kingdom of Genesis 1 and 2, a peace that is to be restored according to the prophecies of Isaiah and Paul, then predator/prey relationships fail to reflect God's original and final will for creaturely existence. If this is the case, we seem to have to reckon both with the idea that creation manifested fallenness a long time before humans came on the scene, and with the

idea that predators would have be radically transformed in order to participate in God's redemption. In order to avoid both of these consequences, some theologians argue that we should understand God's work of creation as deliberately incorporating predators and prey, and evolutionary processes where the fittest survive, and that Christian visions of redemption must allow predators to continue in the hunting of prey for which they are best fitted (see Southgate, 2008). This move achieves congruence with evolutionary biology at the significant cost of the fundamental affirmations that God is a God of peace who desires peace between creatures. The alternative is to hold onto these affirmations about God and God's will for creaturely life and to rework doctrines of the fall to allow for creation to depart from God's purposes even in advance of human rebellion (see Clough, 2012, pp. 104–130).

Conclusion

Animals have often been overlooked by biblical interpreters restricting their interest to the human, but once we become ready to notice where animals feature in biblical texts, we find them everywhere, as fellow fleshy creatures of God with the breath of life, recipients alongside humans of God's grace in creation and providence, and, together with humans, part of the groaning from which prophetic texts anticipate liberation into a peaceable new creation. Theologians taking up the topic of animals have drawn broadly on biblical texts in these and other areas to draw attention to the animal subjects of the Bible, but there is much territory left unexplored, and much of interest to investigate.

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