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The Animal's Bible

Ian Stuart
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Animal lovers often wonder about the use of biblical quotations to justify the many ways in which people fail to be kind: confining animals in zoos and factory farms, beating or starving them, hunting, fishing, holding cockfights or dogfights, and, finally, eating them.

In the introduction to his monumental work, *The Animals' Bible,* Ian Stuart writes that even his child self found it difficult to reconcile the images of Christ as both shepherd and Lamb of God, with the very real leg of lamb on his plate. A hymn that spoke of God's concern for the sparrow conflicted with the reality Stuart knew: while God might be aware of its fall, still the sparrow did fall to earth and God did not stop its descent. And when as a boy Stuart buried a sparrow that died after colliding with a window, his mother roundly scolded him for marking its grave with crossed Popsicle sticks and saying a prayer over it: "Birds don't have *souls!"*

How does God really feel about animals? Does God truly surrender them to man to treat and mistreat as he chooses? Does God not have compassion for these other creatures He created? Such moving dilemmas set Stuart on the five-year path that resulted in this book.

In a beautiful edition that befits its compassionate purpose, this is a book animal lovers will want to own—although many passages will be difficult to read because of the suffering and death animals have endured throughout Scripture. Stuart has found in the Bible and the Apocrypha all passages relating to animals, from creation to the serpent in the Garden; from the creatures sailing with Noah on the ark to Balaam's ass, which spoke to him; and to those animals in New Testament miracles.

Stuart, determined and eloquent, interprets passages and attitudes of both Old and New Testament to argue that Christ came not only to save man, but animals as well. As Stuart reminds us: "God saw that [his creation] was good." Specifically, animals should be protected from sacrifice, brutal treatment, and the hunter's snares. "If we had to see every creature as the temple of God's spirit, it would utterly change the way we treat them…perhaps, change the way we relate to each other."

Stuart's words will be welcomed by those who seek arguments for the kind treatment of animals. And the epilogue will bring tears to readers' eyes.

MARLENE Y. SATTER (November 22, 2010)

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