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# Heavenly Creatures? Visions of Animal Afterlife in Seventeenth-Century England

In recent decades, the idea of an animal afterlife has started to become, if not a mainstream Christian view, then at least one that has achieved a degree of intellectual, academic, and theological respectability, with a number of theologians and philosophers defending the idea in the scholarly literature.<sup>1</sup> Over the same time, intellectual historians have taken an increasing interest in the history of the idea of a future life for beasts,<sup>2</sup> especially in seventeenth-century England, where it found its greatest purchase. However, to date this has resulted in a number of historical surveys that are short and fragmentary, in each case consisting of a handful of pages in broader surveys about early modern attitudes to animals or

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<sup>1</sup> For example, J. B. McDaniel, *Of God and Pelicans: A Theology of Reverence for Life* (Louisville, 1989), pp. 44–7; J. Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, trans. M. Kohl (London, 1996), pp. 69–70, 132; J. Polkinghorne, *The God of Hope and the End of the World* (New Haven, 2002), pp. 122–3; C. Southgate, *Groaning of Creation: God, Evolution, and the Problem of Evil* (Louisville, 2008), pp. 78–91; D. Edwards, ‘The redemption of animals in an incarnational theology’, in C. Deane-Drummond and D. Clough (eds.), *Creaturely Theology: On God, Humans and Other Animals* (London, 2009), pp. 81–99; T. Dougherty, *The Problem of Animal Pain: A Theodicy for All Creatures Great and Small* (Basingstoke, 2014); E. Johnson, *Ask the Beasts: Darwin and the God of Love* (London, 2014), pp. 181–210; D. B. Hart, ‘Romans 8:19–22’, in *First Things: A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life* 254 (1 June 2015), 71–2; S. Graves, B. Hereth, and T. M. John, ‘In defense of animal universalism’, in T. R. Byerly and E. J. Silverman (eds.), *Paradise Understood: New Philosophical Essays about Heaven* (Oxford, 2017), pp. 161–92; B. N. Sollereeder, *God, Evolution, and Animal Suffering: Theodicy Without a Fall* (New York, 2019). I use the phrase ‘animal afterlife’ rather than ‘animal eschatology’ as the latter has sometimes been used to mean ‘a path toward [human] salvation using animals’, as one author puts it. See P. Sahlin, *1668: The Year of the Animal in France* (Brooklyn, 2017), p. 38.

<sup>2</sup> Throughout this paper I use ‘animal’ and ‘beast’ interchangeably to refer to non-human animals.

the natural world.<sup>3</sup> There is thus both scope and need for a more extensive historical study of the idea of an animal afterlife in seventeenth-century England to better understand its roots and contours and the constraints under which it was entertained.

Undertaking such a study will also provide a good opportunity to correct a number of misconceptions in the scholarly literature about seventeenth-century motivations for endorsing a future life for beasts. For example, Keith Thomas has claimed that the idea of an animal afterlife was driven by increased awareness of animals' mental abilities in early modernity,<sup>4</sup> while other scholars, most notably Peter Harrison, have suggested it was due to the greater sensitivity to animal suffering that developed in early modernity and the perceived need to square it with divine justice.<sup>5</sup> As we shall see, both suggestions are very much wide of the mark, telling us more about contemporary motivations for acknowledging a future life for animals than they do about the motivations of seventeenth-century English divines, whose concerns were much more cosmic in scope than these commentators have supposed. For seventeenth-century thinking about an animal afterlife was first and foremost grounded in, and shaped by, speculations about end times and the restored creation based on a literal reading of a key passage in Paul's letter to the Romans (8:19–22), which thus served as the *sedes doctrinae* throughout the seventeenth century. Precedents for interpreting this passage literally, and thus for construing the restored creation to include (some or all) animals, were

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<sup>3</sup> See K. Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: A History of Modern Sensibility* (New York, 1983), pp. 138–41; P. Harrison, 'Animal Souls, Metempsychosis, and Theodicy in Seventeenth Century English Thought', in *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 31/4 (1993), 519–44, especially 521–31; D. L. Clough, *On Animals. Volume 1: Systematic Theology* (London, 2012), pp. 133–45; J. Morillo, *The Rise of Animals and Descent of Man, 1660–1800* (Newark, 2018), pp. 86–93.

<sup>4</sup> See Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, pp. 138–41.

<sup>5</sup> See Harrison, 'Animal Souls', pp. 521, 529–30; D. Perkins, *Romanticism and Animal Rights 1790–1830* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 28; Morillo, *The Rise of Animals and Descent of Man, 1660–1800*, pp. 86–93.

in fact set by the sixteenth-century Protestant reformers. This line of thinking was dramatically enriched and broadened in seventeenth-century England by the willingness of a number of divines to ruminate on the kinds and numbers of animals that would be in the afterlife and the nature of their state there. Such thinking was of course at odds with other, more dominant strands of Christian thought about the state and fate of animals, which flatly rejected any suggestion of animals surviving death. I shall briefly sketch out these strands in section I, to better help us understand traditional Christian thinking about animals and their prospects for post-mortem survival. Section II is concerned with the different lines of interpretation of the restoration of creation described in Romans 8:19–22, from one of which the idea of an animal afterlife emerged. The remainder of the paper focuses on the seventeenth century: section III examines the various ways in which English divines understood the place of animals in the restored world, while section IV focuses on the one instance in which a English non-theologian envisaged a future life for beasts. Lastly, section V briefly examines seventeenth-century discussions about the role of animals in the life to come.

### **I: Christian Thinking on the State and Fate of Animals**

It has been a long-established view within Christianity that all other things were made for human beings.<sup>6</sup> This anthropocentric understanding of the ends of creation was grounded in the Genesis narrative, which tells of God creating humans in his own image and then granting them dominion over all other creatures. Confirmation that all was made for humans was found in respected pagan sources such as Aristotle<sup>7</sup> and the Stoics.<sup>8</sup> The doctrine that humans

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<sup>6</sup> See for example Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*, trans. A. Bowen and P. Garnsey (Liverpool, 2004), p. 397.

<sup>7</sup> Aristotle, *Politics* 1256b20–3, in Aristotle, *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, trans. J. Barnes, 2 vols. (Princeton, 1984), II: p. 1993.

were created in God's image was later fused with the Aristotelian idea that humans are unique by virtue of having a rational soul, which Christian thinkers took to be a requirement for an afterlife. Augustine, for example, drew a sharp distinction between rational humans and irrational animals, and insisted that without a divinely sparked intellect that humans possessed and animals did not, there could be no life after death.<sup>9</sup> Such thinking licensed an entirely anthropocentric eschatology in which, as the fifth-century priest Gennadius of Massilia put it, 'the souls of animals end and perish with the death of their bodies',<sup>10</sup> while human beings could look forward to a future resurrection and eternity in the presence of God. Medieval Christians adopted and developed these ideas. Hence Aquinas argued thus:

Man is incorruptible in part – namely, in his rational soul – but not as a whole because the composite is dissolved by death. Animals and plants and all mixed bodies are incorruptible neither in whole nor in part. In the final state of incorruption, therefore, men and the elements and the heavenly bodies will fittingly remain, but not other animals or plants or mixed bodies.<sup>11</sup>

Hence animals were denied a future life not because they were thought to be non-living or insentient (indeed, the traditional Christian view was that animals were living, sentient beings), but because of their lack of a rational soul.

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<sup>8</sup> See for example Cicero, *The Nature of the Gods*, trans. H. C. P. McGregor (Penguin: London, 1972), 184. For more details of the traditional belief that all was created for human beings, see Clough, *On Animals*, 3–25.

<sup>9</sup> Augustine, *Soliloquies*, II.22–4 in P. Schaff (ed.), *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: First Series, Volume VII - St. Augustine: Gospel of John, First Epistle of John, and Soliloquies* (Edinburgh, 1888), pp. 554–5.

<sup>10</sup> Gennadius, *De Ecclesiasticis dogmatibus liber Gennadio Tribitus* in J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus tomus XLII* (Paris, 1841), p. 1216. Unless otherwise stated, all translations in this paper are my own.

<sup>11</sup> T. Aquinas, *Aquinas's Shorter Summa*, trans. C. Vollert (Manchester, NH, 2002), p. 192 (§170).

There were, then, longstanding theological arguments for denying beasts a future life, and no shortage of thinkers who used them to do just that. In spite of this, in seventeenth-century England, numerous thinkers did envisage a future life for beasts, and in most cases they did so without challenging the entrenched beliefs that human beings are unique among creatures and that all else was made for them. We turn now to the source of their conviction of a future life for beasts.

## **II: The Restoration of Creation**

In seventeenth-century England, thinking about animals in the afterlife developed out of speculations about end times that were centred around Romans 8:19–22:

For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected *the same* in hope, because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. (KJV)

Here Paul speaks of the general restoration of the whole of creation which thus far had been groaning and travailing in pain. Although not explicitly referring to a new heaven and a new earth, it has been common practice among theologians to treat this passage alongside those that do, namely Isaiah 65:17 and 66:22, 2 Peter 3:13, and Revelation 21:1, and indeed to see it as providing further clues as to what exactly would be restored. By the time of the seventeenth century, the passage had been subject to four main lines of interpretation, which we might term the millenarian, the transformationist, the literal, and the annihilationist.

Probably the earliest line of interpretation connected the notion of a restored creation with millenarian thinking, which envisaged Christ's return initiating a thousand-year reign of the just over a glorious kingdom on earth. Both Irenaeus (2nd century) and Tertullian (c.160–220) understood Paul's remarks in Romans 8:19–22 in this context, with both also supposing that animals, restored to their original natures, would be present for the duration of Christ's millennial reign (but presumably not beyond).<sup>12</sup> A second line of interpretation, the transformationist, held that at the Last Day creation would be restored and transformed but would not contain animals. This was the view of Augustine and Aquinas; the latter, for example, envisaged the qualities of the world and its human inhabitants changing dramatically when the world is renewed, these changes ensuring that humans will no longer need any of the things animals provide for us in this life, like food, clothing, and transport; as such, there would be no plants and animals in the restored world.<sup>13</sup> A third line of interpretation, the literal, envisaged a restoration (and transformation) of all of creation, animals included. This was the view of both Martin Luther (1483–1546) and John Calvin (1509–64). In a sermon on Romans 8:8–22, Luther looked forward to the restoration of 'all creation', in which 'sun and moon, fire, air, water, heaven and earth with all they contain' could expect to be 'changed and renewed' (though he stressed that 'thistles and thorns' would not be present, these not being part of the original creation but rather the result of the curse of

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<sup>12</sup> See Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, V.33.4, in A. Roberts, J. Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe (eds.), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Volume I* (New York, 1885), p. 563; Tertullian, 'Against Hermogenes', XI, in A. Roberts, J. Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe (eds.), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume III: Latin Christianity* (New York, 1885), p. 483.

<sup>13</sup> Aquinas, *Aquinas's Shorter Summa*, p. 192 (§170); see also T. Aquinas, *The Power of God*, trans. R. J. Regan (Oxford, 2012), p. 157 (Q5 A9). For Augustine, see Augustine, *The City of God Against the Pagans*, trans. R. W. Dyson (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 1001–3 (XX.16).

man's sins).<sup>14</sup> Calvin offered a similar interpretation, arguing that the fates of humans and other creatures were inextricably bound together; just as the world and all of its creatures now bear 'part of the punishment deserved by man for whose use they were created',<sup>15</sup> the entire non-human world would also be restored with man. When unpacking Romans 8:21, however, he stated:

Paul does not mean that all creatures will be partakers of the same glory with the sons of God, but that they will share in their own manner in the better state, because God will restore the present fallen world to perfect condition at the same time as the human race.<sup>16</sup>

A fourth line of interpretation of Romans 8:19–22, the annihilationist, had it that in the end times the world and everything in it, besides humans and angels, would simply be annihilated. This view was introduced early in the seventeenth century by Lutheran

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<sup>14</sup> M. Luther, 'Fourth Sunday after Trinity', in J. N. Lenker (ed.), *Luther's Epistle Sermons, Vol. III. Trinity Sunday to Advent* (Minneapolis, 1909), pp. 82–92, at p. 90. When asked whether his pet dog Tölpel would have a place in heaven, Luther is reported to have replied 'Certainly, for there the earth will not be without form and void. Peter said that the last day would be the restitution of all things. God will create a new heaven and a new earth and new Tölpels with hide of gold and silver. God will be all in all; and snakes, now poisonous because of original sin, will then be so harmless that we shall be able to play with them.' Quoted from R. H. Bainton, 'Luther on birds, dogs, and babies', in R. H. Bainton (ed.), *Studies in the Reformation* (Boston, 1963), pp. 71–2.

<sup>15</sup> J. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. J. T. Mitchell, trans. F. L. Battles, 2 vols. (Louisville, 2006), I: p. 246, cf. II: p. 989; see also J. Calvin, *Commentary of the First Book of Moses called Genesis: Volumes I & II*, ed. A. Uyl, trans. J. King (Woodstock, 2018), p. 103.

<sup>16</sup> J. Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries: The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Romans and to the Thessalonians*, eds. D. W. Torrance and T. F. Torrance (London, 1961), p. 174.



theologian Johann Gerhard (1582–1637),<sup>17</sup> and endorsed by a number of later Lutherans, such as Johannes Andreas Quenstedt (1617–1688) and David Hollaz (1648–1713).<sup>18</sup>

Seventeenth-century English divines were thus confronted with a variety of conflicting interpretations of the restored creation spoken of in Romans 8, each boasting heavyweight support of church fathers or other theological luminaries. And these interpretations were important, because for many of these divines, unpicking Romans 8:19–22 became key to revealing details of the general restitution that was eagerly awaited and often imminently expected. Any writing of the time concerned with the world to come, whether a sermon, tract, or treatise, invariably discussed this passage at great length, and its meaning was also dwelled upon and teased out in many of the full or partial commentaries on Romans that abounded in the seventeenth century. Some theologians even wrote eschatological works focusing specifically on Romans 8:19–22. In this flurry of eschatological speculation, each of the four aforementioned interpretations found their adherents among English divines. In what follows, our focus will be on those who adopted a literal interpretation of Romans 8 in the manner of Luther and Calvin, and in so doing reached the conclusion that animals would be present in the restored creation. As we shall see, this was not a monolithic conjecture, but rather one that differed quite considerably in its

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<sup>17</sup> ‘The consummation of the age or destruction of the world is an act of God, wherein by means of fire he will reduce to nothing the heavens, the earth, the sea and all the creatures that are in them, with angels and men alone excepted.’ J. Gerhard, *Ioannis Gerhardi Loci Theologici cum pro adstruenda veritate tum pro destruenda quorumvis contradicentium falsitate per theses nervose solide et copiose explicati*, ed. E. Preuss, 9 vols. (Leipzig, 1863–75), IX: p. 204. The work was originally published 1610–22.

<sup>18</sup> See J. A. Quenstedt, *Theologia didactico-polemica sive systema* (Wittenberg, 1696), IV: p. 638; D. Hollaz, *Examen theologicum acroamaticum universam theologiam thetico-polemicam complectens* (Stargard, 1707), p. 413.

details from one divine to the next. Let us now turn to the first work published in seventeenth-century England that advocated an animal afterlife.

### **III. Visions of Animal Afterlife in Seventeenth-Century England**

The work in question is *The Earnest of Our Inheritance* (1613), by the Puritan Thomas Draxe (d. 1618), in which he outlined what we could expect from the promised restoration of the world. While Draxe envisaged no general resurrection of animals alongside the general resurrection of humans, he did see a place for animals in the restored world, if only for a small number. He claimed that only those non-human creatures still alive on the Last Day would be granted eternal life, and even then not all of them; he excluded certain noxious kinds, such as thistles, briars, brambles, weeds, nettles, frogs, flies, worms, bats etc., supposing on the basis of Genesis 3:18 that as these creatures existed now only as a result of God cursing the earth in response to Adam's sin they would not be represented in a world restored to its original, pre-fallen state. Draxe also saw no place in the afterlife for any sea-creatures, since in the new heaven and new Earth described in Revelation 21:1, there would no longer be any sea.<sup>19</sup> Draxe explained that while resurrected humans would have no further need for animals, the preservation of those that do survive into the afterlife would nevertheless serve certain spiritual ends, namely 'the setting forth of God's glorie; the matter of man's delight, and the exercise of his meditation and thankfulness'.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, the dominion over animals that God had granted humans at creation would be extended for all eternity. Those creatures alive on the Last Day 'shall be restored to their first and originall integritie (if not to a better condition)' in line with Christ's aim of repairing the world and

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<sup>19</sup> T. Draxe, *The Earnest of Ovr Inheritance* (London, 1613), pp. 5–6.

<sup>20</sup> Draxe, *The Earnest of Ovr Inheritance*, p. 10.

making all things new.<sup>21</sup> The fate of these creatures is thus the same as that of the Sun, Moon, and stars, which will likewise be restored to a glorified state free from all corruption, not because we will have any use for them in the afterlife, but solely to serve as monuments of God's power, wisdom, and goodness, inspiring the elect to praise God. On this account, animals, like the celestial bodies, are restored and preserved as a sort of spiritual ornamentation.

Anticipating the objection that plants, birds, and beasts had not groaned and travailed in pain and would therefore not qualify for restitution in accordance with Paul's remarks in Romans 8, Draxe claimed that

It may be sufficient, that Christ our Lord finde one generation of them groaning and travelling in paine together, at his comming; and then he may, or will ... renew and continue all the particulars, or (at least) the generalls of everie speciall, plant, beast, foule: as shall seeme good to his heavenly wisdom.<sup>22</sup>

To say anything more on the matter, he averred, would be to enter the realm of wild speculation about something that God would only reveal to us on the Last Day.

Draxe's discussion contains a number of tropes that we will meet again in other divines, such as that only those animals alive at the Last Day would exist in the restored creation, that certain 'noxious kinds' would be excluded, and that restored animals would

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<sup>21</sup> Draxe, *The Earnest of Ovr Inheritance*, p. 12. Those animals so preserved thus fare better than reprobate humans, who are raised in 'shame and disglorie' and excluded from regeneration, being condemned to eternal torment. Draxe, *The Earnest of Ovr Inheritance*, p. 48.

<sup>22</sup> Draxe, *The Earnest of Ovr Inheritance*, p. 11. On the other hand, the inanimate things of the world can be said to groan and travail only by prosopopeia, where they are treated as if they had life and sensation, and so in a position to complain about their corruption. Draxe, *The Earnest of Ovr Inheritance*, pp. 15–16.

serve as monuments of God's power, wisdom, and goodness. Two of these tropes reappear in the middle of a commentary on Romans 8 by William Cowper (1568–1619), Bishop of Galloway. Cowper interpreted Paul's remark about the creature's deliverance from corruption in Romans 8:21 as meaning that all of God's creation will be restored to its original glory in the life to come, bar 'those excrements of Nature ... bred of dung and corruption' such as 'thornes, thistles' and the like, 'which are the fruits of Gods curse upon the creature for our sinne'.<sup>23</sup> Although Cowper conceded that humans would have no need for the rest of creation in the afterlife, he insisted that this did not make its restoration pointless, conjecturing that the Sun, the elements, and animals, would serve as 'everlasting monuments of his [God's] goodnesse, and witnesses in their kinde of his glory'.<sup>24</sup>

In addition to recurring tropes, two broad strands of interpretation of Romans 8:19–22 can also be discerned in the writings of those who acknowledged a future existence for animals. According to one, the restored creation would feature every single species, but not every individual of every species, while according to the second, the restored creation would feature all creatures, though as we shall see, this rarely meant exactly that.

The first of these two broad strands, which held that every species but not every individual would be present in the restored world, may have been inspired by the Reformer John Bradford (1510–55). In a short letter about Romans 8:19–21, Bradford addressed the question of what Paul meant by 'the creature' that would be freed from corruption, quickly concluding that it referred to 'the whole worlde, and everye creature both heavenly and earthly' aside from 'flees, vermyne, and such like', which are born of corruption. Bradford, however, refused to countenance that every single creature would be restored, for while 'it

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<sup>23</sup> W. Cowper, *Heaven Opened. Wherein the Counsell of God, concerning Mans Salvation is Further Manifested* (London, 1623) in *The Workes of Mr William Cowper, Late Bishop of Galloway* (London, 1623), p. 116.

<sup>24</sup> Cowper, *The Workes of Mr William Cowper*, p. 117.

not to pertayne to a godly man, to denye the beastes and plātes [plants] to be restored ... the holy ghost spake of the creature generally, and not particularly'.<sup>25</sup> While Bradford declined to elaborate or indicate any scriptural passage to support his claim, a number of seventeenth-century divines developed what looks to be his underlying point, that in the restoration of creation God would favour the general (i.e. the species) over the individuals thereof. The first such divine to state such an idea explicitly was Elnathan Parr (1577–1632), an Anglican rector in Suffolk, in his lengthy verse-by-verse commentary on five of the sixteen chapters of Paul's letter to the Romans. Parr explained that Paul's remark about the creature's deliverance from corruption in Romans 8:21 could mean one of three things: (1) that the earth and heavens will be annihilated; (2) that the heavens and the elements will be restored, with everything else perishing; or (3) that all creatures will be restored. The first two options were quickly rejected (the second on the grounds that 'it is uncomely to build a faire house, not to be inhabited: So to have these Heavens and Earths to remaine without any Inhabitants'),<sup>26</sup> leaving only the third, which thus gained Parr's approval, but not without qualification. For he insisted that while God would resurrect animals to serve as monuments of his power, this

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<sup>25</sup> J. Bradford, 'To a faythefull and deare frende of hys, entreating of this place of S. Paule to the Romaynes: The fervente desyre of the creature wayteth, when the children of God shalbe delyuered', in M. Coverdale (ed.), *Certain Most Godly, Fruitful, and Comfortable Letters of Such True Saintes and Holy Martyrs of God, as in the Late Bloodye Persecution Here Within this Realme, Gaue Their Lyues for the Defence of Christes Holy Gospel: Written in the Tyme of Theyr Affliction and Cruell Imprysonment* (London, 1564), pp. 478–89, at pp. 479, 483, and 486.

<sup>26</sup> E. Parr, *A Plaine Exposition vpon the Whole Eighth, Ninth, Tenth, Eleventh, Twelfth Chapters of the Epistle of Saint Paul to the Romanes* (London, 1620), p. 89.

would apply only to a number of individuals from each species, just as a small number of each kind was preserved on Noah's ark.<sup>27</sup>

Also taking his inspiration from God's privileging of all species over all individuals at the time of the flood, the Puritan John Waite (fl. 1645–66) supposed, in a lengthy treatise on Romans 8:21–22 published in 1650, that God would ensure that every species would be present in the restored creation but not every individual thereof. But Waite's preference for species over individuals did not rest entirely on a parallel with what happened with the flood; he also noted that if one were to insist that all individual creatures would be restored, 'Who can conceive that the Earth should contain them? their number amount as *in infinitum*, or what use for so many of them?'<sup>28</sup> In thus construing Romans 8:21–22 as referring not to *singula generum* but *genera singulorum*,<sup>29</sup> that is, not to all individuals but to some of all kinds, Waite supposed that only those non-human creatures 'as shall remain at Christs comming to judgement' would be present in the restored world.<sup>30</sup>

A further variation of this theme later emerged in a sermon on Romans 8:21 by the Presbyterian-leaning Thomas Horton (d.1673), who supposed, like Draxe and Cowper before him, that it was only those animals alive at the Last Day that would be preserved, and this to ensure that every species would be represented in the life hereafter as monuments of God's power, wisdom, and goodness. Horton reached this conclusion via a number of steps; first he

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<sup>27</sup> Parr, *A Plaine Exposition*, pp. 89–90: 'I take the third opinion to bee the most probable [sc. that all Creatures shall bee restored]; if the restoring bee onely to some singulars of all kinds. And whereas it may be objected why these of the kinds, rather then other? I would aske them also, why at the Deluge, these of the kinds rather then other, were preserved in the Arke?'

<sup>28</sup> J. Waite, *Of the Creatures Liberation from the Bondage of Corruption* (York, 1650), p. 249.

<sup>29</sup> Waite, *Of the Creatures Liberation from the Bondage of Corruption*, p. 251.

<sup>30</sup> Waite, *Of the Creatures Liberation from the Bondage of Corruption*, p. 249.

claimed that there would be ‘*analogy and proportion*’ between the future changing (restoration) of the world by fire and the previous changing of the world by water:

In the World, chang’d by *water*, there was a preservation of all kind of Creatures in *Noah’s Ark*. The same may be conceived as probable in the Restitution of all things hereafter at the Day of Judgment.<sup>31</sup>

To secure the point that the restored world would contain every species of animal but not every individual, Horton insisted that there would be no need or use for the restored creation to contain all the animals that had ever lived anyway. For while God had irresistible reasons for ensuring all human beings would be present in the world to come, namely for judgement and the subsequent bestowing of rewards or punishments, these did not apply in the case of non-human creatures. Lastly, Horton deduced that only those creatures alive at the Last Day could feature in the restored creation because there would be no ‘*Resurrection of Beasts*’, such an idea not being licensed by scripture or resting on ‘any other good foundation’.<sup>32</sup>

Horton’s overall position is perhaps best seen as a more polished version of that found in a lengthy commentary on Romans 8 published in 1623 by the Puritan Edward Elton (c.1569–1624). To the question of whether animals would be delivered from corruption and be made part of the restored world, as Romans 8:21 seemed to imply, Elton proposed that the ‘most likely and probable’ answer was that ‘those creatures in their kinds, namely, some singulars of all kinds, shall be freed from corruption’.<sup>33</sup> His sole basis for preferring every

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<sup>31</sup> T. Horton, *Forty Six Sermons upon the Whole Eighth Chapter of the Epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Romans* (London, 1674), p. 369, cf. p. 370.

<sup>32</sup> Horton, *Forty Six Sermons*, p. 370.

<sup>33</sup> E. Elton, *The Triumph of a True Christian Described: or, an Explication of the Eight Chapter of the Epistle of Saint Paul to the Romans* (London, 1623), p. 496.

species over every individual was that as resurrection was proper only to humans, no birds, beasts, or fowls would be resurrected. Elton thus left his reader to infer that the restored world would contain only those animals that were alive at the Day of Judgement, or rather only a selection from every species alive at that time. On the question of what use these animals might have after the Last Judgement, Elton declined to offer a definitive answer, cautioning against curiosity in the matter, before ignoring his own advice and tentatively suggesting that the restored parts of creation might serve as monuments of God's power, wisdom, and goodness towards man.<sup>34</sup>

Somewhat more unconventionally, while musing on Romans 8:22, the Anglican Bishop of Gloucester, Godfrey Goodman (1583–1656), allowed that 'all the Creatures in general shall partake with us, in our future intended renovation', but only insofar as they have now entered into man's body, and are become parts of man's flesh!<sup>35</sup> Since Goodman is clear that 'all the Creatures in general' will be restored this way, the implication seems to be that humans between them have eaten every single species that has ever existed, as only if this is so could each species be represented in the restored world as parts of human bodies. If the prospect of being smuggled into the afterlife as morsels of digested food might blunt the appeal of post-mortem existence for any creature, even less comforting was the eschatological vision of John Seager (d. 1656), minister of Broadclyst in Devon. For while he allowed that 'There shall be other creatures in the World to come beside mankind',<sup>36</sup> he also insisted that these would not be the same individuals that have lived before because resurrection is 'proper only unto mankind',<sup>37</sup> and this for two reasons: first, because Paul (in

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<sup>34</sup> See Elton, *The Triumph of a True Christian Described*, p. 497.

<sup>35</sup> G. Goodman, *The Creatures Praying God* (London, 1622), p. 29.

<sup>36</sup> J. Seager, *A Discoverie of the World to Come According to the Scriptures* (London, 1650), p. 106.

<sup>37</sup> Seager, *A Discoverie*, p. 105.



1 Corinthians 15:39) drew a distinction between the flesh of human beings and that of other animals, which Seager took to be a reference to the different fates of humans and non-humans in the resurrection, and second, because humans have rational souls that live on even when their bodies are dead whereas animals do not; hence their souls die with their bodies. So while Seager insisted that human beings would rise again at the last day ‘yet we may not think, that dead birds, beasts, and fishes, shall rise again with them’.<sup>38</sup> Instead, those creatures that will be present in the restored creation shall be those that God has created expressly for the next world. Needless to say, the suggestions of Goodman and Seager that animals would be present in the world to come either as digested chunks or as newly-created simulacra were rather idiosyncratic variations on the broad idea that the restored world would contain all species but not all individuals.

According to the second broad strand of interpretation of Romans 8:19–22 one finds in the work of seventeenth-century theologians, when Paul referred to ‘the creature’ in Romans 8 he meant *all* non-rational beings, living and otherwise.<sup>39</sup> The only divine to take this line without qualification was the Puritan John Downname (1571–1652), who insisted that in Romans 8:19–22 Paul was referring to ‘*the whole Creation, that is, to all the things created, exempting nothing, Heaven and Earth, Beasts, Plants, Metals, and whatsoever*

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<sup>38</sup> Seager, *A Discoverie*, p. 104.

<sup>39</sup> Note that some divines who favoured this line did not automatically envisage an afterlife for animals. Thomas Wilson (1563–1622), a minister in Canterbury, argued that the promised deliverance of creatures from corruption could mean either annihilating them outright (this being an effective way of delivering them from their corruptions) or it could mean elevating them to a better state. While Wilson thought the latter option more likely to obtain, being more consistent with scriptural talk of the world’s renewal, Oxfordshire vicar William Day (c. 1605–84) remained neutral, simply describing the two options without cleaving to either. See T. Wilson, *A Commentary on the Most Divine Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans* (London, 1653, 3rd ed.), pp. 290–1; W. Day, *A Paraphrase and Commentary upon the Epistle of Saint Paul to the Romans* (London, 1666), p. 159.

else'.<sup>40</sup> Downname was unusual in supposing that literally all creatures would feature in the restored creation. Others who ostensibly made the same claim invariably understood 'all creatures' in a more restricted sense. For example, when ruminating on what might have been meant by 'the creature' in Romans 8:21, William Gearing (1625–90), a Puritan preacher in Surrey, asserted that it referred to 'the whole Creation, or *omnis Creatura*',<sup>41</sup> inclusive of fowls, beasts, and plants, though it quickly becomes clear that by 'the whole Creation' Gearing meant not everything that had ever been created but rather the whole creation as it has been at the end of the sixth day. For like some others before him, he excluded 'Thornes, Thistles, Briars, and such like', these being the effects of God's curse on creation for the fall of man and so not proper to be restored.<sup>42</sup> But as all other creatures had been subject to corruption, rather than being the effect of it like thorns and thistles, Gearing was adamant that all these others would be restored.

Gearing's view is quite naturally interpreted as requiring a resurrection of animals (and indeed, plants, aside from the noxious kinds), though he declined to state this explicitly, perhaps because the idea of animals being resurrected was even more unorthodox than the idea of their having a future existence. Much more explicit in this regard was Richard Overton (fl. 1640s), a one-time Puritan turned General Baptist sympathizer if not convert,<sup>43</sup> who in *Mans Mortallitie* (1644) sought to defend the General Baptist heresy of the natural mortality of the human soul.<sup>44</sup> Overton claimed that since the wages of sin are death, Adam's

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<sup>40</sup> J. Downname, *The Summe of Sacred Diuinitie First Briefly & Methodically Propounded and Then More Largely & Cleerely Handled and Explained* (London, [1620?]), p. 549.

<sup>41</sup> W. Gearing, *A Prospect of Heaven* (London, 1673), p. 99.

<sup>42</sup> Gearing, *A Prospect of Heaven*, p. 98.

<sup>43</sup> See M. R. Bell, *Apocalypse How? Baptist Movements During the English Revolution* (Macon, GA, 2000), p. 101.

<sup>44</sup> R. Overton, *Mans Mortallitie* (Amsterdam [London], 1643), pp. 1–19.

disobedience stripped not just his own soul of its natural immortality but also those of his posterity and every other living creature. Death, he argued, would eventually be conquered by the resurrection, but only if all creatures that had fallen under its grip were subsequently released from it and resurrected. But this did not mean that all non-human creatures would be resurrected. Like many others before him, Overton claimed that ‘Thornes, Briers, and all manner of Virmin’ would ultimately be done away with at the time of restoration (as would the unnatural products of inter-species breeding), these being the products of man’s curse, but in a departure from the teaching of other divines he supposed that ‘all other *Creatures* as well as man shall be raised and delivered from Death at the Resurrection’.<sup>45</sup> Overton defended his view with a slew of scriptural passages,<sup>46</sup> or misinterpretations thereof, according to his opponents.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Overton, *Mans Mortallitie*, p. 50.

<sup>46</sup> Such as 1 Corinthians 15:22–23, Mark 16:15, Revelation 21:5, Romans 8:19–21, Psalms 102 and 104.

<sup>47</sup> See [Anon.], *The Prerogative of Man: or, The Immortality of Humane Soules Asserted Against the Vain Cavils of a Late Worthlesse Pamphlet, Entituled, Mans Mortality, &c. Whereunto is Added the Said Pamphlet it selfe* (Oxford, 1645), p. 42. A later edition of the book identifies the author as G. H. Gent; see *The Grand Prerogative of Humane Nature* (London, 1653), p. 110. Erica Fudge has suggested that the claims of *Mans Mortallitie* should be read in light of Overton’s Leveller views, in particular his desire to end the unnatural political order in England represented by royal and priestly dominion. She claims

The declaration that beasts partake in the afterlife is a political gesture: mortalist beliefs and Leveller principles are united in the animal... In politics the governors enact dominion and reduce the governed to the status of beasts. It is Overton’s argument that to change one we must change the other: governmental order cannot be separated from natural order. (E. Fudge, *Perceiving Animals: Humans and Beasts in Early Modern English Culture* (Basingstoke, 2000), p. 156.)

The suggestion is intriguing, if a little strained; after all, other Levellers did not feel their political commitments extended to recognition of an animal afterlife, meaning Overton’s views about animal resurrection were as

Although Overton was silent as to what would happen to resurrected animals after their restoration, his insistence that the restoration marks the defeat of death once and for all implies that all resurrected creatures would be immortal thereafter. However, this does not imply that resurrected animals would experience any of the joys of the world to come, and Overton says nothing to suggest that they would. So while Overton was certainly more generous than most in terms of the number of animals he envisaged in the afterlife, he doesn't seem to have departed from the thinking of the other divines discussed above, for whom animals were envisaged as being present in the afterlife but not participating in its joys. Indeed, while all of these theologians entertained very different views about which and how many animals will be present in the afterlife, the common thread that connects them all is the idea that certain animals will be restored as ornamentation or furniture rather than as true beneficiaries of the restored creation. Whereas humans could look forward to eternal bliss, the beatific vision, and perhaps taking their place among the saints, animals would simply be restored to their original state, and only then to serve some particular spiritual end. Given this, Peter Harrison's suggestion that seventeenth-century divines granted animals a place in the afterlife in order to exonerate divine justice in the face of animal suffering in this life is far from plausible.<sup>48</sup> That these divines were not so motivated should be clear enough from

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unorthodox within Leveller circles as they were outside. In any case, if Overton's recognition of an animal afterlife was intended as a political gesture, it was one entirely lost on his contemporaries, who took his claims about an animal resurrection at face value rather than as a natural extension of Leveller politics.

<sup>48</sup> Harrison, 'Animal Souls', p. 521 and pp. 529–30. A number of other scholars (e.g. Perkins, *Romanticism and Animal Rights*, p. 28; Morillo, *The Rise of Animals and Descent of Man*, pp. 86–93) have supposed that considerations of divine justice lay behind the willingness of certain seventeenth-century Englishmen to entertain an animal afterlife, but in fact it was it rarely was, with only one, Richard Sault (who we shall meet in section IV), prepared to make such a connection, though he seems to have restricted recompense to Christ's thousand-year reign, not after. Such thinking was rare, in part no doubt because there was almost a conspiracy in

the fact that the vast majority of them were prepared to envisage a very limited number of animals having a future life, which would hardly exonerate divine justice for the suffering of those animals excluded therefrom. And indeed, in their eschatological writings, not one of these divines showed any concern for or interest in animal suffering.<sup>49</sup> Nor did they consider the restoration of animals to be a matter of divine justice. Rather, what binds the seventeenth century divines' willingness to consider animals in the afterlife is their shared belief in a

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early modernity not to consider animal pain a theological problem, or at any rate a problem for divine justice. For example, in his lengthy book on the origin of evil, William King (1650–1729) declined to consider animal pain as impugning divine justice since every animal took whatever steps it could to preserve its own life, which indicated that it was pleased with its existence. W. King, *De origine mali* (London, 1702), pp. 38–9. Even Leibniz (1646–1716), who more than anyone put the project of theodicy front and centre, did not consider animal pain a problem for his project: while he acknowledged that animals experience pain, he routinely downplayed it, insisting that as animals lacked self-consciousness, their pains lack the intensity of those experienced by humans, which are often accompanied by grief and mental torment. As animals' pain is not great enough to constitute true suffering or misery, Leibniz declared that there is no question of any injustice having been done to them. See Leibniz to Arnauld, 19 October 1687, in S. Voss (ed.), *The Leibniz-Arnauld Correspondence* (New Haven, 2016), p. 265. Thus even those who took the project of defending God's justice very seriously found ways to avoid taking animal pain into consideration. That Leibniz did not take animal pain as a serious threat to divine justice has been noted before. See for example P. Phemister, 'Malebranche and Leibniz on the animals', in A. Blank (ed.), *Animals. New Essays* (Munich, 2016), pp. 161–79, especially pp. 173–7.

<sup>49</sup> At one point Draxe acknowledges that animals do in fact experience pain, and that on account of the fall of man, but he otherwise sees no theological significance in it, and certainly does not take such pain to be in any way inconsistent with God's justice or something that God will need to redress. See Draxe, *The Earnest of Ovr Inheritance*, p. 26.

literal restoration of the world in line with Romans 8:19–22 and their shared desire to reason out – in their various ways – what this might involve.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> It is worth noting that there were many divines who, in their own commentaries on Romans 8, did not interpret Paul as extending restoration to the animal kingdom or any part thereof. In a magisterial 900-page commentary on Romans, the Reformed theologian Peter Martyr (1499–1562) opted to remain agnostic as to whether animals would feature in the restored world: ‘we have nothinge on nether side, that is thoroughly and certaynly defined. Howbeit this I dare affirme, that of those creatures which have perished, onely men shalbe raysed up from the dead. But as touching the preservation of other creatures, after the day of judgement, except the heaven and earth, whereof the scripture have made menton, I suppose there is nothing to be sayd.’ Reformed clergyman Andrew Willet (1562–1621) claimed that by ‘creature’ Paul could not have meant beasts since they would have no purpose in the renewed world: ‘because the bruit creatures which now onely serve for our necessariae use shall not be partakers of the glorie of the Sonnes of God, there shall then be no use of them, probabile est abolendas esse, it is probable, that they shall be abolished’. Anglican churchman Henry Hammond (1605–60) and Puritan John Lightfoot (1602–75) supposed that by ‘the creature’ Paul meant ‘the Gentile world’; Anglican priest Daniel Whitby (1638–1726) ventured that Paul meant human beings; and the Puritan clergyman Thomas Manton (1620–77) argued that Paul could not have been referring to beasts ‘for they are uncapable of a prospect of futurity, and are made to be taken and destroyed’. See P. Martyr, *Most Learned and Fruitfull Commentaries of D. Peter Martir Vermilius Florentine, Professor of Divinitie in the Schole of Tigre, upon the Epistle of S. Paul to the Romanes* (London, 1568), p. 220; A. Willet, *Hexapla: that is, A six-fold Commentarie vpon the most Diuine Epistle of the Holy Apostle S. Paul to the Romanes* (Cambridge, 1611), p. 367; H. Hammond, *A Paraphrase and Annotations upon the New Testament* (London, 1659, 2nd ed.), p. 474; J. Lightfoot, ‘Hebrew and Talmudical exercitations upon some few chapters of the epistle to the Romans’, in *The Works of the Reverend & Learned John Lightfoot D.D.*, 2 vols. (London, 1684), II: p. 708; D. Whitby, *A Paraphrase and Commentary upon All the Epistles of the New Testament* (London, 1700), p. 45; T. Manton, *A Second Volume of Sermons* (London, 1684), p. 187. For an illuminating discussion of some of the various ways seventeenth-century thinkers interpreted Paul’s reference to ‘the creature’ in Romans 8, see J. H. Duff, “A Knot Worth Unloosing”: *The Interpretation of the New Heavens and Earth in Seventeenth-Century England* (Gottingen, 2019), pp. 128–37.

It is no coincidence that all of these divines offered their eschatological visions between 1613 and 1674, the height of the Puritan era in which ‘Protestant eschatological optimism deriving from the Reformation achieved its most lucid expression’, as one scholar notes.<sup>51</sup> Not that speculation about the eschaton was restricted to Puritans, with followers of other Protestant denominations sometimes not immune, as we have seen. Needless to say, such thinking went well beyond the creedal statements of the various branches of Protestantism to which they belonged, none of which even mentioned the restored creation, let alone animals being present therein. The sort of detailed eschatologies that abounded in the seventeenth century, whether featuring animals or not, were very much the preserve of individual theologians, who felt free to elaborate upon the traditional Christian eschatology of resurrection and judgement of all humankind typically found in confessional statements. Understandably, as enthusiasm for working out the details of the world to come waned in the last quarter of the seventeenth century, so depictions of animals in the future life tailed off. Or at least they did amongst theologians; the idea of an animal afterlife was to make one final appearance in an English publication before the century reached its conclusion, in a short article by Richard Sault (d. 1702), a non-conformist layman, mathematician, and translator of Malebranche. The article in question appeared in 1693 in the pages of the *Athenian Mercury*, to which we now turn.

#### **IV. Animal Souls, the Millennium, and the *Athenian Mercury***

The *Athenian Mercury* was the brainchild of entrepreneurial bookseller John Dunton (1659–1733), who envisaged a periodical with an entirely new format consisting of expert answers

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<sup>51</sup> B. W. Ball, *A Great Expectation: Eschatological Thought in English Protestantism to 1660* (Leiden, 1975), p.

to questions submitted by his readers.<sup>52</sup> On 11 February 1693, Dunton obliged an anonymous request that he publish details of a private dispute between one of the contributors to the *Athenian Mercury* and a ‘Gentleman at St. James’s’, namely a certain ‘T.B.’,<sup>53</sup> about ‘the rationality and operations of brutes’.<sup>54</sup> Dunton obliged, and ‘T.B.’ submitted a short letter in which he argued the Cartesian line that animals are mere machines without souls. Were this not the case, T.B. claimed, it would speak against God’s justice, since it would mean animals having been punished with pain despite not having done anything to deserve it, a clear violation of Augustine’s dictum that under a just God there can be no wretchedness without desert.<sup>55</sup> Printed immediately after T.B.’s short letter was the first part of a rejoinder credited

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<sup>52</sup> See J. Dunton, *The Life and Errors of John Dunton, Citizen of London* (London, 1818), p. 188.

<sup>53</sup> Peter Harrison has suggested that ‘T.B.’ may have been philosopher and clergyman John Norris (1657–1712); see Harrison, ‘Animal Souls’, p. 526n35. The position adopted by ‘T.B.’ in the *Athenian Mercury* was certainly one that was later to be found in Norris’ own work, for example in his *An Essay towards the Theory of the Ideal or Intelligible World*, 2 vols. (London, 1704), II: p. 67. Harrison concedes, however, that Norris may simply have appropriated his view of animals from ‘T.B.’ Even more plausible is that ‘T.B.’ and Norris drew their position from a common source, as both deploy arguments found in the work of Nicolas Malebranche (1638–1715); see note 55 for further details. In any case, ‘T.B.’ is likely to be Sir Thomas Blount (1649–97), who occasionally submitted questions to the journal; Norris occasionally joined the small group of experts whose task it was to answer them. Moreover, Blount better fits the description of ‘T.B.’ as a ‘Gentleman at St. James’s’ than does Norris, who at the time was Rector at Bemerton, near Salisbury. Blount’s initials are a better fit than Norris’s too.

<sup>54</sup> *The Athenian Mercury* 9/18 (11 February 1693), p. 1.

<sup>55</sup> T. B[lount], ‘That Brutes have no Souls, but are pure Machines, or a sort of Clock-work, devoid of any sense of Pain, Pleasure, Desire, Hope, Fear, &c.’, in *The Athenian Mercury* 9/18 (11 February 1693), p. 1. The argument is reminiscent of, and clearly indebted to, one offered by Nicolas Malebranche in favour of thinking that animals do not feel pain; see N. Malebranche, *Defense de l’auteur de la Recherche de la verité, contre l’accusation de Mr. de la Ville* (Rotterdam, 1684), p. 13. For further details of this argument and its popularity in early modernity, see L. Strickland, ‘God’s creatures? Divine nature and the status of animals in the early



to one ‘R.S.’, namely Richard Sault, who was Dunton’s partner in the *Athenian Mercury* (the second part of Sault’s reply appeared on 14 February 1693). Sault began his reply by stressing the traditional line that ‘Brutes were made for the service and use of man’, and that the pains and evils they labour under are the result of Adam’s sin, it being punishment for humans that the animals created to serve them should lose much of their powers, happiness, and dignity. Sault then insisted that a Hebraic textual analysis of the Genesis account of creation reveals that animals are described as ‘soul of life’ or ‘living soul’ (נפש: nefesh/nepesh), which in true seventeenth-century fashion he assumed must mean that they are endowed with immaterial souls. Since he held that the immaterial souls of humans are naturally immortal, he cheerfully accepted that the immaterial souls of animals must be immortal also. In confronting the question of what happens to the souls of animals once their normal lives were over, Sault considered three possibilities: they are annihilated, they transmigrate into other animal bodies, or (this being his preferred view)

they wander up and down these lower regions, ’till the time spoken of by St. Paul, Rom. 8.21. *Because the Creature shall be deliver’d from the Bondage of Corruption, (the State that Adam brought ’em into by his transgression) into the glorious liberty of the Children of God; (a Text by many suppos’d to have relation to the Millennium) and that then all Creatures which by Adam’s sin have been subject to vanity, (to use the Apostle’s phrase) that is, lyable to Pain, Sickness and Death, shall rise again, and for the thousand Years Reign shall be partakers of the same Happiness and Vigour that*

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modern beast-machine controversy’, in *International Journal of Philosophy and Theology* 74/4 (2013), 291–309. For Augustine’s dictum, see his *Contra secundam Juliani responsionem imperfectum opus*, in J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus tomus XLV* (Paris, 1845), p. 1065.

they had before *Adam* fell: If this be so, 'twill be a Recompense for their Sufferings now.<sup>56</sup>

In determining what will happen to animals after the thousand year reign, Sault sided with an unnamed 'very Pious, Learned Divine'<sup>57</sup> who had conjectured that '*God Almighty may for his own Glory make some use or other of all Creatures in another Life, perhaps for the Service of Glorified Bodies, since he sees no reason for the annihilation of their Souls*'.<sup>58</sup> Apparently Sault did not envisage animals as being true beneficiaries of the restored world any more than did the divines before him, their presence instead serving some other purpose. Yet Sault's vision departs from that of any of the divines before him in two crucial ways. First is his assertion that animals have immortal souls. Second is his linking an animal afterlife to divine justice, using the former to undercut any suggestion of divine injustice towards animals for the evils they suffer in this life. The latter innovation would later reappear, in much more forthright form, in a sermon on Romans 8:19–22 delivered in 1781 by the Methodist John Wesley (1703–91).<sup>59</sup> As for the former innovation, namely Sault's recognition of immortal souls in animals, this requires further comment. It is noteworthy that Sault did not take the immortality of animal souls to automatically entail an animal afterlife, which indicates that he implicitly recognized a distinction between granting animals an immortal soul and granting them an afterlife. Underwriting this distinction was Sault's awareness of the possibility that

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<sup>56</sup> R. S[ault], 'That Brutes have immaterial Souls, and are rational thinking Creatures, sensible of pleasure, pain, desire, hope, fear, &c.', in *The Athenian Mercury* 9/18 (11 February 1693), p. 1.

<sup>57</sup> Peter Harrison has speculated that this may have been Samuel Wesley (1662–1735), who was, like Sault, Dunton's partner in the *Athenian Mercury* venture. See Harrison, 'Animal Souls', p. 528n40.

<sup>58</sup> S[ault], 'That Brutes have immaterial Souls', p. 2.

<sup>59</sup> J. Wesley, 'Sermon LXV. The Great Deliverance. Romans viii. 19–22', in J. Benson (ed.), *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley*, 17 vols. (London, 1811), IX: pp. 189–203.

even if animals do have an immortal soul, God may simply annihilate it at the end of an animal's normal life. After all, such an outcome could not be ruled out definitively since even the best arguments for the soul's immortality were thought to show that the soul was only *naturally* immortal, that is, immune from destruction by natural processes, not supernatural ones. Thus in a sense the recognition of immortal animal souls did little to no eschatological work in Sault's account, as he still had to appeal to Romans 8:19–22 to establish that animals would likely continue in existence after death. In this he would be followed by a number of eighteenth-century clerics, such as John Hildrop (1682–1756),<sup>60</sup> Richard Dean (1726/7–78),<sup>61</sup> and Augustus Toplady (1740–78),<sup>62</sup> all of whom granted animals immortal souls for the same reason Sault did, but nevertheless based their conviction of a future life for beasts not on the immortality of their souls, but on a literal reading of Romans 8:19–22, as indeed did Sault. Whether such thinkers took inspiration from Sault is unclear; none of Hildrop, Dean, or Toplady mention him, and his article appeared in a periodical that had ceased publication many decades before all three of them flourished as writers. On the matter of animal souls and animal afterlife, Sault's article was probably more prescient than influential.

As little more can be said about Sault's influence, there remains only the question of his sincerity. The *Athenian Mercury* was essentially a speculative publication, a 'popular coffee-house periodical' in the words of one modern historian,<sup>63</sup> and one which sometimes had its tongue firmly in its cheek. This raises the question of whether Sault's novel and

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<sup>60</sup> J. Hildrop, *Free Thoughts upon the Brute-Creation*, 2 vols. (London, 1742), II.

<sup>61</sup> R. Dean, *An Essay on the Future Life of Brutes*, 2 vols. (Manchester, 1767), II.

<sup>62</sup> A. Toplady, 'Speech Delivered at the Queen's Arms, Newgate-Street, on the Following Question: Whether Unnecessary Cruelty to the Brute Creation, is not Criminal?', in *The Works of Augustus M. Toplady, A.B.*, 6 vols. (London, 1825, new ed.), III: pp. 459–66.

<sup>63</sup> U. Bhowmik, 'Facts and norms in the marketplace of print: John Dunton's *Athenian Mercury*', in *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 36/3 (2003), 345–65, at p. 345.

prescient position about the animal afterlife may have been the product of irreverence rather than sincerity.<sup>64</sup> That the contributors to the *Athenian Mercury* were occasionally prone to lightheartedness in their responses is beyond question. But this was not the rule by any means, with most of the responses being informed, informative, and serious in tone. This is the case also of Sault's article which, while employing a journalistic style, engages with some heavyweight material, such as whether matter is self-moving, the Cartesian doctrine of body, and biblical examples of animal sagacity, with no hint or irony or insincerity. The internal evidence suggests that if Sault was in any way being ungentle in writing his article, he hid it well.

However, there is also some external evidence that has the potential to unsettle this confidence in Sault's sincerity. Early in 1693, shortly before Sault's article appeared in the *Athenian Mercury*, Dunton published a short book entitled *The Second Spira, being a fearful example of an Atheist who had apostatized from the Christian religion, and died in despair at Westminster, Dec. 8, 1692*. The book, credited to one 'J.S. a minister of church of England',<sup>65</sup> is presented as the true story of an unnamed man, well-educated and deeply religious in his youth, who abandoned his religion after reading Hobbes and Spinoza and as a result fell into wickedness and debauchery; some time later, when his friends convince him of the immortality of the soul, he is plunged into despair at the prospect of damnation for his apostasy.<sup>66</sup> The book was a great success, selling 30,000 copies in just six weeks, according

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<sup>64</sup> I owe this suggestion to an anonymous reviewer.

<sup>65</sup> J. S. [pseudonym for R. Sault?], *The Second Spira, Being a Fearful Example of an Atheist who had Apostatized from the Christian Religion, and Died in Despair at Westminster, Dec. 8, 1692* (London, 1693).

<sup>66</sup> The book was licensed for publication on 6 January 1693, and its immediate success prompted a hastily-written 'Part the Second' to appear soon after, with further details of the apostate's wretchedness and despair. This second part was licensed on 14 March 1693 and appended to a short book by Sault, a dialogue in which a

to Dunton,<sup>67</sup> and was frequently used by preachers in their sermons as a warning against the pitfalls of irreligion. About a decade later, Dunton revealed that he had published the work at the request of Sault, who had assured him that he knew the author personally. Dunton also explained that he had come to suspect that the author was Sault himself, and that in writing the book Sault had in fact been describing his own state of mind, which at the time matched that of the unnamed ‘Second Spira’. Dunton revealed that

a little before he [Sault] wrote the Narrative [*The Second Spira*], he was under the severest terrors of his own conscience; his despair and his melancholy made him look like some walking ghost; and I heard several such broken speeches as these fall from him, “I am damned! I am damned!”<sup>68</sup>

Dunton provided further evidence of Sault’s authorship: the manuscript for the book appeared to have been written in Sault’s own hand, only a modest attempt having been made to disguise it. He also printed a letter from Sault’s wife detailing Sault’s infidelities,<sup>69</sup> which Dunton speculated may have been the cause of Sault’s melancholy and troubled mind.<sup>70</sup> If

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theist convinces an atheist of the existence of God and the immortality of the soul, namely [R. Sault], *A Conference Betwixt a Modern Atheist and His Friend, by the Methodizer of the Second Spira* (London, 1693).

<sup>67</sup> See Dunton, *The Life and Errors of John Dunton*, p. 157. The book’s sales were such that the 4 February 1693 issue of *The Athenian Mercury* carried an advertisement for the fourth edition (probably meaning fourth reprinting) of *The Second Spira*, just weeks after its initial publication.

<sup>68</sup> Dunton, *The Life and Errors of John Dunton*, p. 155.

<sup>69</sup> See Dunton, *The Life and Errors of John Dunton*, p. 156.

<sup>70</sup> Samuel Wesley, who was Dunton and Sault’s partner in the *Athenian Mercury*, later revealed that he too had suspected Sault to be the author of *The Second Spira*. See A. Clarke, *Memoirs of The Wesley Family; Collected Principally from Original Documents* (New York, 1846, 2nd ed.), pp. 108–10.

Dunton's suspicion is correct, it becomes plausible to read *The Second Spira* as essentially Sault's own autobiographical confession, which in turn suggests that he had descended into atheism for a time, though it would also suggest that by the time he wrote that book – and the coetaneous article for the *Athenian Mercury* in which he envisaged an afterlife for animals – he had regained his faith, albeit tinged with despair over his former apostasy. In which case, his novel vision of beasts in the future life may well have corresponded to his own belief, though Sault's apparent dissimulation, even if on a different matter, ought not to be overlooked.

### **V: Animals in the Afterlife: What's the Point?**

Before we conclude our study, let us dwell briefly on an issue we have touched upon at various points, namely the purpose of animals in the restored world. It is surely striking that all of the seventeenth-century figures we have encountered felt compelled to give some explanation as to what animals in a restored creation would be *for*. The most popular suggestion, made by Draxe, Cowper, Parr, Horton, and Elton, was that animals would (or at least might) serve as monuments to God's glory, or power, or wisdom. Waite identified two uses: to display God's wisdom and to enhance the beauty and harmony of creation.<sup>71</sup>

Downname likewise gestured at aesthetic reasons for the restoration of animals when he claimed that this restoration would be for the sake of righteous humans,<sup>72</sup> there being no suggestion that at that time these humans would have any practical need for animals. Sault conjectured that God would use animals for his own glory. Even Gearing, the most hesitant on this matter, supposed that creatures would have some use after the Last Day, though he declined to speculate as to what that could be, leaving it for God to reveal at the appointed

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<sup>71</sup> See Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, pp. 332–3.

<sup>72</sup> Downname, *The Summe of Sacred Diuinitie*, p. 549.

time.<sup>73</sup> It is revealing that none of the figures held that animals would be present in the restored world for their own sake, and none appeared to have thought of animals as true beneficiaries of an afterlife in anything like the rich and rewarding way they thought humans would be. While a good many of these figures seem to have shrugged off the traditional anthropocentric view that animals were made solely for the use of man in this life, a residue of this view clearly survived, conditioning many seventeenth-century minds into thinking of animals as merely *functional*, as having to have some purpose or other, both in the next life as well as in this one.

Our investigation has shown that those seventeenth-century thinkers who envisaged animals in the afterlife did so not out of any concern for animal sentience or animal suffering, but purely as a result of adopting the literal strand of interpretation of a key passage from Romans 8 in their eschatological speculations, with such speculations fuelled by the peculiar religious ferment that prevailed in England for a good part of that century. But might there have been another factor that made the English more prone to entertain the idea? As England has long had the reputation of being a nation of animal lovers, and the practice of keeping pets was widespread amongst all classes of English society in early modernity,<sup>74</sup> it might be tempting to suppose that the English attitude towards animals in some way contributed to the development of the theories of an animal afterlife we have seen. In this vein, Keith Thomas has suggested that the proximity of household pets fuelled the belief in animal sentience in early modern England,<sup>75</sup> which itself served to underwrite the belief in an animal afterlife.<sup>76</sup> As superficially plausible as this might appear, we ought not to forget that not a single one of

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<sup>73</sup> Gearing, *A Prospect of Heaven*, p. 109.

<sup>74</sup> See L. Kalof, *Looking at Animals in Human History* (London, 2007), pp. 117–18.

<sup>75</sup> Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, p. 121.

<sup>76</sup> Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, p. 140.

those who recognized an animal afterlife in seventeenth-century England gave any indication they were drawn to such a view out of any sentimentality towards animals. As we have seen, all of these thinkers saw animals as mere furniture or ornamentation of a restored creation, not as human companions or true beneficiaries in their own right. England may well have been a nation of animal lovers even in the seventeenth century, but it would be contrary to all available evidence to suppose that those of its citizens who proposed a future life for beasts did so primarily out of any love or concern for animals.<sup>77</sup>

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