

## Essay: The Debate in Two Topics

## Introduction

Human-animal relationships in the Victorian era were characterised by the affectionate attachment of the Queen towards beasts and the use of fauna symbols to express the dominance over the colonies.<sup>1</sup> However, the study of Theology within the context of Catholicism delves into individual and family ties with faith, as well as through sacraments, Bible excerpts, and spiritual thoughts.<sup>2</sup> These views about animals and theology were important in history since they depict society's standards, and ethics, and change human philosophy about life.<sup>3</sup> This essay will explore different fields that formed opinions in the nineteenth century. The purpose of this essay is to untangle the entangled threads connecting the two views, highlighting similarities and differences between them as well. These different histories will be lit up by the ethical debates, cultural repercussions, and the lasting knowledge, which underlies these stories will be disclosed.

## Debate

### Victorians and Animals in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century

The elaborate matrix of interconnections between people and animals in 19th century Victoria England during the reign of Queen Victoria.<sup>4</sup> Power and wealth were somehow identified with animals because the royal love towards them transcended society. On the other hand, it was at this time that animal companionship, on the one hand, brought great benefits, while also casting a dark cloud over animal companionship being a source of material enjoyment and revenue.<sup>5</sup>

### Animal Interaction in the Perspective of Queen Victoria

Queen Victoria's affection went beyond just a companion, shaping animalism as a cultural symbol of strength in the empire. Exotic beasts became symbols of colonial power, and those nations that

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<sup>1</sup> Westwood, Benjamin. "Beastly arrangements: animals, classification, and literary form, circa 1830-1870." PhD diss., University of Oxford, 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Bantugan, Brian, Danqing Liu, Lilan Liu, Yiwen Peng, Xiaoxia Tang, Quanfeng Wu, and Zhiye Yan. "Catholic Higher Education from the Lens of Chinese Graduate Students of the College of Education of St. Paul University Manila."

<sup>3</sup> Dubbini, Alberto, Marco Gallizioli, Fabio Friso, Jaime Torres, Jacques Mabit, and Matteo Politi. "Synergism between Catholicism and indigenous spirituality within the drug addiction rehabilitation program of Takiwasi, a therapeutic community in the Peruvian High-Amazon." *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 49, no. 3 (2020): 432-448.

<sup>4</sup> Wrenn, Corey Lee. "'More of a Liability than an Asset': Victorian Women's Advocacy for Other Animals." *society & animals* 28, no. 4 (2020): 437-439.

<sup>5</sup> Hofmann, James R. "Erich Wasmann, SJ: Natural Species and Catholic Polyphyletic Evolution during the Modernist Crisis." *journal of jesuit studies* 7, no. 2 (2020): 244-262.

displayed animals were associated with increased riches and power.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, animals were appreciated for being beautiful, and they were used just like pieces on a chess board in the game for world supremacy.

### ***Symbol of Richness and Power***

Different forms of this exploitation of animals towards power and riches were seen in a private collection or museum; circus and menagerie. The prevalence of this trade is well-illustrated by the case of Charles Jamrach, a renowned exotic animal dealer in London.<sup>7</sup> People acquired many rare and exotic specimens. They possessed them as well as exhibited them sometimes by dubious means. The search for exoticism had terrible effects on the animals as they were forced into extreme situations far from their home areas.

### ***Exploitation of Animals for Profit and Human Pleasure***

Animal exploitation went beyond the world of sport and was manifested in public entertainment where various creatures were exhibited to please the eyes of the Victorians. Bestiary books were akin to mini-spectacles where animal portraits such as tigers, elephants, crocodiles, cows, bears, ostriches, giraffes, snakes, rhinos, and hippos were seen.<sup>8</sup> According to Harriet, the exhibition of animals or “virtual menagerie” was meant to demonstrate both the grandiosity of the animal world and the human pretensions of superiority and self-control.<sup>9</sup>

### ***Amusement by Displaying Animals***

People inflicted maximum pain on animals for their own pleasure time by time.<sup>10</sup> Popular entertainments comprised cock fighting, dog fighting, bull running, rat killing, and even fights with different kinds of wild beasts. Animals, which were once the symbols of colonialism power, became its victims due to human greediness, suffering cruelty just for fun. One aspect of dark

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<sup>6</sup> Kantarbaeva-Bill, Irina. "The Empire of Beasts Then and Now: Political Cartoons and New Trends in Victorian Animal Studies." *Cahiers victoriens et édouardiens* 93 Printemps (2021).

<sup>7</sup> Lee, Ji Eun. "Prowling in London: Canines in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*." *Studies in the Novel* 54, no. 4 (2022): 370-389.

<sup>8</sup> Baumbach, Sibylle, and Ulla Ratheiser. "How to Do Things with Surfaces: The Politics and Poetics of Victorian Surfaces." *Victorian Surfaces in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture: Skin, Silk, and Show* (2021): 1-23.

<sup>9</sup> Christien, Lee. "Captives of classification: unlocking the representations of animals from the Daily Occurrences, library, and cages of London Zoo." PhD diss., Birkbeck, University of London, 2021.

<sup>10</sup> Amato, Sarah. *Curiosity Killed the Cat: Animals in Nineteenth-century British Culture*. PhD diss.: University of Toronto, 2008.

Victorian culture was how it represented the paradox of a society fascinated by the grandeur of nature but mistreating animals in order to gain pleasure from them.<sup>11</sup>

Therefore, the complex equilibrium existed in humans and animals that was set ablaze during the 19th century by the view of Queen Victoria. Animal cruelty shows the ethical dilemmas that are involved in the crossroads between power, money, and amusement. The significance of this viewpoint lies in highlighting the aftermath of unrestrained human cravings and their influence on other living beings.

### **Bibliology and Theology in Catholic Faith**

Exploration of theology and the bible in the area of the catholic faith is not just an act that relates to religious beliefs individually but also to relations between family members.<sup>12</sup> One's theological views do not result from mere intellect or reading but from connecting with life experiences, culture, and family members.<sup>13</sup>

### ***Experiences, Family, and Personal Connection with Theology***

Most times, people begin their journey into theology from the crucible of personal experiences or family traditions.<sup>14</sup> The birth of a person's theological perspective starts from within a spiritually active community in childhood. Doctrines are learned and customs adhered to at home with beliefs about religious identity taking root and blossoming. Many are initiated into the Catholic faith through baptism since this is one of the key sacraments for them.<sup>15</sup> The religious notions are fused into the sense of self in such a way that goes beyond mental grasp, which happens during those significant rites of passage.

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<sup>11</sup> Tait, Peta. *Fighting Nature: Travelling Menageries, Animal Acts and War Shows*. Sydney University Press, 2015.

<sup>12</sup> Hofmann, James R. "Erich Wasmann, SJ: Natural Species and Catholic Polyphyletic Evolution during the Modernist Crisis." *journal of jesuit studies* 7, no. 2 (2020): 244-262.

<sup>13</sup> Perry, Samuel L., and Ryan P. Burge. "How religion predicts pet ownership in the United States." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 59, no. 1 (2020): 190-201.

<sup>14</sup> Beckwith, Francis J. "Separated at Baptism: What the Mortara Case Can Teach Us About the Rejection of Natural Justice by Integralists and Progressives." *BYU L. Rev.* 47 (2021): 1099.

<sup>15</sup> Kanu, Ikechukwu Anthony. "An Igwebuike approach to the study of African traditional naming ceremony and baptism." *Journal of Religion and Human Relations* 11, no. 1 (2019): 25-52.

### ***Personal Theology Development***

Baptism is one striking way in which personal theology develops as the individual participates in the sacraments.<sup>16</sup> In the Catholic faith, where it is bestowed upon infants, this ritual means much more than that – it is part of a religious identification story for an individual. In this development, grandparents are custodians of generational wisdom. They do not just tell about religion but also the life they used to live before becoming prophets. It is all about morals here and they inspire people spiritually.<sup>17</sup> Consequently, theological views are not limited to the academic but also penetrate family and personal affairs.

### ***Theological Insights and Biblical Passages Examination***

Among Catholics, a fundamental aspect of the study of theology is taking some passages from the Bible. These passages from the Inspired Word of God have become sacred, being honored historically as well as theologically.<sup>18</sup> The identification of Jesus as both God and Messiah, rooted in biblical passages such as Matthew 16: Theory of 16 serves as a foundation for Catholics that mentions “You are the Messiah, the son of the living God.”<sup>19</sup> Biblically speaking, diversity in depicting Jesus as a forgiving healer on one hand and the severe prophet on the other offers richness to the reflections about God. This provides depth and richness to their expressions as it makes them reflect on their own belief system.

### ***Jesus’ Sacrifice Contemplations***

Such theological speculations about Christ’s sacrifice make it possible to reach a higher level in the field of theology. Delving into the profound moment of Jesus' cry on the crucifixion, "My God, my God, why have you deserted me?" (Matthew 27: The fourth set of questions, 14) invites contemplation on the character of such offering and its symbolic value within the Roman Catholic sacramental viewpoint.<sup>20</sup> Other scholars such as R.B. Jamieson only take the questions a step

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<sup>16</sup> Baker, Robert. "The Ethics of Biomedical Practitioners: A Brief Historical Introduction." In *Handbook of Bioethical Decisions. Volume II: Scientific Integrity and Institutional Ethics*, pp. 183-199. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2023.

<sup>17</sup> Roussillon-Constanty, Laurence, and Sara Thornton. "Comforting Creatures: Changing Visions of Animal Otherness in the Victorian Period." *Cahiers victoriens et édouardiens* 88 Automne (2018).

<sup>18</sup> Edge, Peter W. *Religion and law: An introduction*. Routledge, 2017.

<sup>19</sup> Arweck, Elisabeth, ed. *Young people's attitudes to religious diversity*. Routledge, 2016.

<sup>20</sup> Cornelio, Jayeel Serrano. *Being Catholic in the contemporary Philippines: Young people reinterpreting religion*. Routledge, 2016.

further by pointing out that the death of Jesus was actually related to the notions of sacrifice from the biblical stories.

Therefore, the theological and biblical studies in the catholic religion go beyond an academic exercise. It includes personal family relations, sacred rites, biblical excerpts, and theological reflections – it is an ongoing event or live experience. However, this relationship is dynamic since people advance with life and pose questions about, search for, and internalize religious teachings. Hence, the Catholic dogma gives an insight into people's lives in order to find themselves on their way to the right religion, and theology that governs their beliefs, morals, and perceptions among others.

### **Comparative Analysis**

In comparison between animals in Victorian Britain and the study of Theology in the Catholic Faith, there are some similarities and others that stand out in this human-world relationship.

#### **Identifying Commonalities between the Two Perspectives**

Superficially, one may think that animal exploitation during Victorian times and theological education among Catholics had no connection with each other.<sup>21</sup> However, a closer inspection unveils a shared foundation: the blending of personal experiences and cultural origins. In both of these situations, people develop as a result of society in England through the Victorian age or due to the household and culture inside Christianity.<sup>22</sup> These influences form opinions, morals, and philosophical views of people all stem from one thing.

#### **Highlighting Differences in Exploitation and Theological Exploration**

Though there are similarities as well, the markedly noticeable disparity may be seen when observing animal usage towards people's indulgence and gain in Victorian England vis-à-vis Catholics' examination in regard to their Godliness.<sup>23</sup> Symbols of imperial strength in the late Victorian period included the trade of animals for wealth and cruelties on people for amusement. Here, it is important to note that the Catholic approach to studying theology aims at learning more about the spiritual laws, frequently implying mercy and just behavior towards any living creature.

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<sup>21</sup> Roussillon-Constanty, Laurence, and Sara Thornton. "Comforting Creatures: Changing Visions of Animal Otherness in the Victorian Period." *Cahiers victoriens et édouardiens* 88 Automne (2018).

<sup>22</sup> BATES, AWH. "and the Law in 19th-Century Britain."

<sup>23</sup> Bates, Alan WH, and A. W. H. Bates. "Vivisection, Virtue, and the Law in the Nineteenth Century." *Anti-Vivisection and the Profession of Medicine in Britain: A Social History* (2017): 13-41.

Animals, on the other hand, are exploited as a source of power and wealth in one view, and there is some theologising about life and a reflective attitude towards life in another view.<sup>24</sup>

### **Examining Broader Implications of Both Perspectives**

These perspectives, however, have wider meanings that resound across the ages and remain important in today's world. Victorian Britain's animal exploitation offers a lesson to us. It demonstrates how human greed, if not curtailed, can lead to immorality when seeking control and can leave a lasting effect on victimised animals.<sup>25</sup> However, in comparison, the theological search within the Catholic tradition paves the way to a more empathic and morally sound perspective of the universe. An appreciation for scriptures interpretation and personal spiritual meditations concerning the sacrifices of Jesus creates a deeper appreciation towards life enrichment beyond physical desires.<sup>26</sup>

When looking at the bigger picture here, we can see that the aforementioned historical outlooks still influence today's views. Animal exploitation for amusement still exists in different shapes and it prompts us to think about the ethics of the human relationship with the environment.<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, the theological exploration within the Catholic faith provides a guide on how human beings should display kindness, morality, and peaceful coexistence, which are among the most important values in society and religious communities today.<sup>28</sup>

### **Conclusion**

In line with the above debate, it has been concluded that the animals in Victorian Britain shed light on one dimension while studying theology in the Catholic faith unveiled another aspect of people's interaction with the world. This issue encompasses looking at animal abuse in late-Victorian Britain as symbols of both power and misery used for human entertainment against a backdrop of religious contemplation from a Catholic background that focuses on relationships, sacraments, and

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<sup>24</sup> Li, Chien-Hui. "Mobilizing Christianity in the antivivisection movement in Victorian Britain." *Journal of Animal Ethics* 2, no. 2 (2012): 141-161.

<sup>25</sup> Page, Tony. "From Morality to Medical Danger: Antivivisectionism in the Novels of Three Late-Victorian/Early 20th-Century Writers." *Manusya: Journal of Humanities* 18, no. 1 (2015): 93-114.

<sup>26</sup> Ademiluka, Solomon O. "Water baptism as church membership identity in Nigeria." *In die Skriflig* 56, no. 1 (2022): 1-7.

<sup>27</sup> Shaw, Rosemary. "A Case for recognizing the rights of Animals as Workers." *Journal of Animal Ethics* 8, no. 2 (2018): 182-198.

<sup>28</sup> Dreyer, Wim A., and Mogi CB Sekhejane. "Baptism of Stillborn Babies? A South African Methodist Perspective." *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 48, no. 3 (2022): 1-19.

moral reflections. Summarizing the main points, the exploitation of animals in Victorian Britain and theological research within the Catholic belief all suggest that an individual's experience/upbringing plays a huge part in shaping their own views. However, the moral implications considered greatly differ, as one stresses the dangers of unrestrained desire while the other focuses on kindness and morality. As per the discussion, it is also concluded that it is important to consider ethics while dealing with animals through the guidance of historical narratives.

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