

Compassionate Eating as Distortion of Scripture: Using Religion to Serve Food Morality

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ABSTRACT:

Calvin College professor, Matthew C. Halteman, argues that Christians should embrace vegetarianism as part of embracing Christ's redemptive work to restore creation. After summarizing his reasoning, we evaluate the validity of his use of Scripture, logic, St. Basil, and other secondary sources to support his position. We identify several areas where his argument's use of evidence was misleading. We suggest that this topic requires more substantive and objective attention.

The issue of human treatment of animals generally has been ignored by Christian theologians¹. The traditional understanding of humanity's dominion over creation has remained essentially unchanged since Aquinas.² Since the publication of *Animal Rights* by Andrew Lindsey in 1975,³ interest has increased in revising the traditional understanding of dominion over creation (including animals), including but not limited to, the adoption of vegetarianism.⁴ For the most part, interest on redefining dominion (including the extent of our power over animals) has remained in liberal and mainline churches⁵, which are more flexible on the role and interpretation of Scripture.

Recently, however, Evangelicals have become involved in this issue. Some

1. Palmer, C. (2003). 'Animals in Christian Ethics: Developing a Relational Approach,' in, *Ecotheology* 7(2), 163-185.

2. Aquinas, Thomas. *Summa Theologica*. Question 96.

3. Linzey, A. (1976). *Animal Rights: A Christian Assessment of Man's Treatment of Animals*. London: SCM Press, LTD.

4. Vantassel, S. M. (2009). *Dominion over Wildlife? An Environmental-Theology of Human-Wildlife Relations*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock.

5. This assessment is largely borne by personal experience. However the following journal articles will give some voice to our view: c.f. Eckberg, D. L. and T. J. Blocker, 'Christianity, Environmentalism, and the Theoretical Problem of Fundamentalism,' in, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 35/4 (1996), 343-355; Williams, C. D., 'Liberation the Enlightenment: How a Transformed Relationship with Animals Can Help Us Transcend Modernity,' in, *Religious Education* 98/1 (2003), 107.

have added their support for the reduction in meat consumption, as well as adopting vegetarianism as the dietary practice most consistent with the values of the Christian faith⁶. This essay discusses the arguments made by Matthew C. Halteman in a brochure entitled *Compassionate Eating as Care of Creation: Living Toward the Peaceable Kingdom*.⁷

INTRODUCTION: WHY HALTEMAN AND COMPASSIONATE EATING?

Readers may properly wonder why an article dealing with a broad and complex subject like the ethics of animal food production would be restricted to the consideration of but one author, and his presentation in but one brochure.

Here is why we consider this important. Matthew Halteman is Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Calvin College, a denominational evangelical college in Western Michigan. Though he was himself raised in the Mennonite tradition, Halteman is teaching at a reputedly Calvinist institution as a prominent advocate of the new animal food ethic. He is a fellow at the Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics, whose most recent journal, *Journal of Animal Ethics*, contained Halteman's essay, "Varieties of Harm to Animals in Industrial Farming." In addition, Halteman has collaborated with the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), one of several national organizations advocating on behalf of animal welfare in opposition to all forms of industrial farming, and on behalf of vegetarianism as the new food morality. Collaborating with the HSUS Animals and Religion department, Halteman contributed the essay that serves as the basis of this article, and in 2008 was honored by HSUS for his teaching at Calvin College.

Readers who are familiar with the North American religious landscape will recognize, then, that the combination of this particular spokesperson from this particular college collaborating with this particular organization constitutes a significant religious-cultural phenomenon. Putting religion in service to the agenda of the vegetarian/animal food ethic has penetrated the fabric of Evangelicalism. This co-opting of religion, theology, and Bible-quoting in service to animal food morality is no longer restricted to some

6. Humane Society of the United States, 'Faith Outreach,' (2011) Retrieved November 5, 2011, from: <http://www.humanesociety.org/about/departments/faith/>.

7. Halteman, M. C., *Compassionate Eating as Care of Creation*. Washington, D.C., Humane Society of the United States, 2008. Available at: http://www.humanesociety.org/about/departments/faith/compassionate_eating_as_care_.html.

faddish cleric blessing pets in church and composing the associated litany. It has now acquired a semblance of intellectual and institutional endorsement among those presenting themselves as Bible-believing Evangelicals. It is no exaggeration to suggest that Halteman and his essay have become very useful to HSUS in its concentrated effort to infuse its message into the cultural bloodstream by means of education and religion. The target audience includes the younger generations—the Millennials, or Generation Y, the Echo Boomers, and now the Internet Generation. But the target audience has also expanded to include certain Evangelicals who have become disillusioned by the cultural failures and irrelevance of Christianity in Western society as a whole. Halteman and his essay represent a new kind of relevance, a new form of religious-cultural engagement—every bit as moralistic as the Puritanism of old, eager to replace the moribund sexual morality of the latter with the new food morality of the former.

HALTEMAN'S VIEWS

Though the subject of human-animal relations covers a broad spectrum of activities such as trapping and animal testing, Halteman focuses on the practical issue of meat and its production, specifically “industrial agriculture” (p. 1). Though failing to define the nature of industrial agriculture, Halteman condemns the production method because it treats animals as commodities rather than sentient beings created by God.

Halteman’s argument to Christians and the wider public encompasses three core ideas: 1) our treatment of animals merits moral concern, 2) why the practices of industrial agriculture are inconsistent with Christian value of love, service, and compassion, and 3) a call to action to help correct the errors created by society’s use of industrial agriculture as part of our call to follow Christ and be ministers of reconciliation.

Animal Treatment as a Moral Issue

Halteman provides two reasons why food and its production require moral reflection. First, the issue of animal welfare falls within the purview of the dominion mandate in Genesis because God commanded humanity to care for and protect His creation (p. 1). The logic is quite straightforward. Since food touches all aspects of our lives, and God placed the planet and all that it contains in humanity’s responsibility, therefore, humanity’s use of animals for food production also must fall within the Scriptural command to care and

protect God's creation.

As the first argument hearkens us to reflect on the moral significance of the dominion mandate, Halteman's second argument directs our gaze ahead to God's future plan. If the first argument calls Christians to consider God's original vision for creation, the eschatological argument exhorts us to ponder God's destiny for creation. Halteman contends that Christ's redemptive work encompassed the task of restoring creation toward achieving the peaceable kingdom spotlighted in Isaiah 11. The peaceable kingdom is where animal suffering and human and humanity's role in that suffering are limited. While recognizing that such a kingdom awaits Christ's return, Halteman argues that as Christ-followers, we must be about the task of working toward achieving this kingdom.

Argument from Scripture

After establishing the broader theological basis for human care for creation, Halteman uses Scripture and the consequences of industrial agriculture to show why Christians should oppose industrial meat production. As hinted in the theological basis mentioned above, Halteman explains that the treatment of animals in industrial agriculture is inconsistent with humanity's place in the world. Though conceding that scripture is silent on industrial agriculture, Halteman asks readers whether access to unlimited quantities of inexpensive animal products provided by industrial agriculture is consistent with the Christian virtues of love, joy, peace, generosity, etc. (p. 22). Halteman answers, "no", asserting that industrial agriculture: 1. forgets that God, as creator and owner, demands respectful treatment of his creation (p. 7), 2. disregards our identity as fellow creatures, 3. denies our dominion call to facilitate kinship with all species, and 4. ignores the fact that our dominion mandate is fundamentally incompatible with cruelty (p. 7).

Argument from the Consequences of Industrial Agriculture

Halteman discusses the consequences of industrial agricultural in order to provide substance to his claims that industry practices are incompatible with Christian virtues. He says "the truth is that the way we eat is making a terrible mess of things, and it's not the sort of mess that stronger paper towels or half-hearted lip service can clean up." (p. 20). Halteman's indictment against industrial agricultural consists of three main charges (p. 19). First, industrial agriculture harms individual health and societal and well-being by allowing Americans to increase their meat consumption by 73 pounds over a 40 year

period, resulting in increased incidence of heart disease, cancer, and diabetes (p.24). In dollar terms, Halteman claims eating meat costs the US \$28.6 to \$61.4 billion a year in increased health costs (p.24). Nor is the production of animals without human costs. Halteman says that the workers in livestock facilities suffer from some of the highest rates of injuries in the US. Beyond the individual harms, industrial livestock production damages the fabric of society both in the US and abroad. The large scale of industrial agriculture outcompetes the family farm as well as traditional agriculture overseas leading to job losses in both.

The second charge focuses on the negative impact on environmental quality by industrial agriculture. Lots of cows need lots of food, which in turn requires massive amounts of land and energy inputs to sustain the livestock and bring them to market. Halteman says, 303,906.887 metric tons (670,000,000 pounds) of grain are required just to feed 56 billion land animals. When one adds the pesticides needed to grow those feed crops, the impacts become truly monumental. Halteman continues chemicals also must be used to maintain the animal side of the production. He notes that medications are necessary to prevent infectious outbreaks and their use adds even further concerns as the long-term effects of these medications on the food chain are unknown.

Finally, Halteman focuses on the suffering and deaths of billions of sentient animals each year to supply our demand for meat (p. 29). He notes that the animals suffer from birth to death through common husbandry practices such as de-beaking, tail docking, de-horning, and branding. He bemoans how these animals have no room to roam (p. 29), are fed grain which their bodies are ill-suited to eat, and then unceremoniously packed in trailers to meet their fate. Halteman also draws attention to the emotional suffering of food production animals by claiming that they form lasting bonds with other animals (p. 31) and suffer terribly when faced with death. Halteman hopes the animals receive a quick death but complains that is not always the case (p. 30).

While most of Halteman's focus is on the impact industrial agriculture has upon the environment and production animals, he does mention how industrial agriculture negatively impacts human wellbeing. Here Halteman's approach is on firmer ground of the Golden Rule which requires Christians to think about how our actions affect other people, or in Scriptural terms, our neighbors (Lk 10:29ff). For example, Halteman claims that industrial farming increases food insecurity because the high energy inputs required by industrial farming practices (p. 27) raises costs to a point that the poor are priced out of the market (p. 28). Second, he believes that our excessive consumption of meat contributes to the exploitation of agricultural workers (pp. 19-20).

HALTEMAN'S CALL TO ACTION

Against the backdrop of this litany of alleged evils and misuse of God's dominion mandate, how should Christians respond? What practical steps can Christians take, both individually and collectively, to correct these problems?

Haltzman suggests the solution needs to be grounded in what it means to be a Christian. Quoting Wolterstorff, Haltzman explains that to be a Christian is to be a Christ follower. Just as Christ did not just proclaim the gospel – he embodied it – so also Christ-followers should practice Christianity rather than just verbalize its message. How should Christians accomplish this? Haltzman answers by adopting spiritual disciplines centered on the imitation of Christ (p. 14). Spiritual disciplines such as prayer and church attendance help us reconnect to our brokenness and dependence on God as well as help us progressively and incrementally improve our character and behavior. Haltzman defines spiritual disciplines as "...a repetitive daily practice that is undertaken in a faithful, albeit fallen, attempt to narrow the gap between who we are at the moment and who we are called to be." (p. 15). He describes the importance of spiritual disciplines as calling the disciple to repentance and propelling them to redemption (p. 16). The discipline is to limit and/or eliminate one's meat consumption for in this way the disciple recognizes how individual decisions lead to the unnecessary suffering of God's creation (p.19).

Given that the impacts of industrial agriculture are incompatible with the compassionate stewardship demanded by Christian values, Haltzman exhorts readers to consider dietary changes (that is, reduction and/or elimination of meat eating) as part of the spiritual disciplines of discipleship (pp. 14ff). By eating less meat, (that is, adopting the spiritual discipline of compassionate eating) Haltzman claims we take up God's call to the redemptive work of being witnesses, agents, and evidences of God's loving kingdom. In other words compassionate eating provides Christians a way to demonstrate to the world a down-payment of the world to come.

Haltzman does not believe that spiritual disciplines save us or get us into heaven. Rather, spiritual disciplines help us to think more about others and God's commands and be less centered on ourselves. Spiritual disciplines help us mature in helping us make the internal reality of salvation match the outward behavior. Nor is Haltzman a utopian: he does not believe the peaceable kingdom can be established solely by human effort. He recognizes that our fallenness is too great an obstacle to allow that to occur. Nevertheless,

he believes with some simple changes in our behavior, we can begin the process to show the world a glimpse of what the future kingdom will look like. By calling for a reduction of meat consumption rather than an outright ban, Halteman avoids the ethical conflicts between veganism, ovo-vegetarianism, lacto-vegetarianism. The modesty of the proposal also makes the process more palatable because potential adherents can start incrementally. By encouraging people to start small, Halteman hopes they can become more open to bigger changes as time progresses as these minor changes also change us (p. 19). Halteman's hope is based on his belief that the power of compassionate eating reminds us how our decisions cause unnecessary suffering of animals and the depth in the degradation of creation. Simultaneously, the practice of compassionate eating envisions a better world to, one where suffering is abolished and death is no more. The logic of Halteman's argument for compassionate eating seems ultimately to require a vegan approach to food morality. It remains puzzling why he failed to identify this conclusion explicitly.

EVALUATION

We affirm a number of helpful and significant emphases that Halteman's brochure contains. These include a proper stress on:

- the goodness of the original creation
- the original assignment to humanity to exercise stewardly dominion over all creation, including animals
- the comprehensive creation-wrenching effects of human sin that require redress and repair
- the integral unity of creation and redemption, such that the effects of divine grace are as wide and deep as the effects of human sin, including those effects on and within creation
- the divine intention to include the entire cosmos in the final consummation of redemption and history

We can warmly welcome these emphases, without needing to endorse the use to which the author puts them in his defense of vegetarianism as the dietary practice most consistent with the values of the Christian faith (p.33). Nonetheless, these positive emphases aside, we suggest Halteman's approach yields several problematic aspects.

1. Misappropriation of Scripture

Since Halteman employs Isaiah 11:6-9 as a programmatic outline for this version of the new food morality, specifically in condemning so-called “factory farming” as immoral, we will offer some comments on its interpretation.

Isaiah 11:6-9 reads (ESV):

- 6 The wolf shall dwell with the lamb,
and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat,
and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together;
and a little child shall lead them.
- 7 The cow and the bear shall graze;
their young shall lie down together;
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.
- 8 The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra,
and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder’s den.
- 9 They shall not hurt or destroy
in all my holy mountain;
for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD
as the waters cover the sea.

The twofold characterization of this passage as poetic prophecy contains important clues for properly interpreting these verses. As poetry, it is highly figurative and metaphorical, conveying associational images relating to a future utopia. As prophecy, it describes this future utopia in terms relating to an end-times increased worldwide knowledge of the LORD, the God of Israel and the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In fact, as the wider context of Isaiah 11 indicates, this knowledge of the LORD that undergirds life in the peaceable kingdom will spread through the good news of the suffering, death, resurrection, and rule of this Servant of the LORD, even the Son of God himself, Jesus Christ. This is a Christ-centered prophecy, and its fulfillment will be enjoyed only by those believing in the Lord Jesus Christ and thereby belonging to his peaceable kingdom at its eschatological establishment.

While assuming that Halteman would agree with the above statement, we wish to point out that he has overlooked the anthropocentric blessing contained in the passage. We would suggest the passage is not about the cessation of animal death (i.e., a time when sheep would no longer be eaten by humans), it is about the cessation of predation and animal attacks that

harm human interests⁸. In other words, in the messianic age, shepherds will be liberated from the burden of having to guard their sheep at night (Lk 2:8). The reason this observation is overlooked is likely due to the urban context of most biblical interpreters. When one is not familiar with the challenges of raising livestock where hungry predators roam, it is difficult for readers to appreciate how great a blessing the conversion of predators to grass eaters would be. Nevertheless, the scripture does provide further hints to the threat in David's account of his encounters with a bear and a lion (1 Sam 13:34).

2. Arbitrarily Selective Use of the Bible

This poetic portrait, however, is by no means all that the Christian Bible teaches about the morality of eating meat. Space permits only a very brief specification of some (by no means all) evidence within the Christian Bible that significantly qualifies, and even contradicts, the implications that the author draws from this single poetic portrait. This contrary evidence calls into serious question the accuracy of Halteman's interpretation and use of the Isaiah passage as the cornerstone of his new food morality.

We read nowhere in Halteman's essay, for example, of the fact that after humanity's fall into sin, God himself was involved with animal death and suffering often for human benefit (Gen 3:21; Mk 5:13; Lk 5:6;). Nor do we read his acknowledgement of God's repeated and explicit permission to eat meat, permission given to the human race (Gen 9:3), to the Old Testament people of Israel (Deut 12:15-18, 20), and to the New Testament Church. If Christ was so concerned about the suffering of animals in food production then why didn't He condemn the sacrificial system as immoral⁹ and add further restrictions to the laws of kashrut regarding clean meat (Mk 7:19). Even the resurrected Lord reiterated his earlier admonition about all foods being clean when he commanded Peter to "rise, kill, and eat!" (Acts 10:12-15). Apparently the risen and ascended Leader of the coming peaceable kingdom did not see killing animals for food as morally blameworthy or inferior. Especially noteworthy is the permission taught by the apostle Paul

8. Marlow, H., *Biblical Prophets & Contemporary Ethics*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009. Though failing to appreciate fully the human benefits (see, 238-242), she recognizes that obedience to God has environmental consequences (268). See also Vantassel, S.M., *Dominion over Wildlife? An Environmental-Theology of Human-Wildlife Relations*. Eugene, OR, Wipf and Stock, 2009, 176f.

9. Josephus, F., *The Works of Josephus : Complete and Unabridged*, trans. William Whiston. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Press, 1996. In 'Wars 6:423-424,' Josephus says, the number of sacrifices for Passover numbered 254,500, suggesting a first century equivalent of industrial agriculture.

in the New Testament, in the context of warning against people who “forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer” (1 Tim 4:3-5).

All of these examples come from the Christian Bible, and together with other passages from the Scripture, they teach a clear divine permission for humans living on this side of the eschaton to eat with delight the meat of animals, as they await the coming of the peaceable kingdom. Anyone thinking that a “speciest” interpretation of the Bible (whereby humanity is viewed as higher than animals, and animals may serve the needs of humanity) is simply an article of a fundamentalist reading should consider the analysis of Peter Waldau.¹⁰ Moreover, it is a treacherous enterprise indeed to suggest that God himself, and his Son Jesus Christ, would have acted or taught inconsistently with the “morality” being advocated today with the rhetoric of the coming utopia of a harmonious creation. So the challenge for Halteman is to explain how Christ’s teaching and behavior is consistent with Halteman’s understanding of compassionate eating. For if Halteman is unable to, then the only available conclusions are: 1. Jesus was not perfect, 2. the biblical testimony has been corrupted, or 3. Halteman’s vision of the peaceable kingdom and proclamation of compassionate eating should be considered as fundamentally wrong. We will respectfully ask readers to come to their own conclusions.

3. Faulty Logic

Besides failing exegetically, Halteman’s argument fails logically as well. If he is correct that industrial livestock production is morally inadequate, then the appropriate response would be to avoid meat produced by industrial livestock farms altogether or alternatively to enact procedures more respectful of animal life, human-health and safety, as well as the broader environment. Unfortunately, Halteman launches into an argument against meat. This approach is the moral equivalent of saying that the solution to blood diamonds (also known as conflict diamonds) is to not wear diamonds at all, regardless of where or how they were mined. This kind of extremist argumentation suggests that Halteman’s real complaint is not about the

10. Waldau, P., *The Specter of Speciesism : Buddhist and Christian Views of Animals*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

treatment of livestock animals, but that they are eaten at all. If this suspicion is true, then for Halteman to advocate vegetarianism while condemning factory farming is disingenuous, since the real problem is not factory farming at all, but simply eating animals for food.

In contrast to Halteman's "all or nothing" approach, one need only look to the research and advocacy of Temple Grandin.¹¹ She has worked with the animal agriculture industry for decades to improve the entire process of raising food animals from birth to death. She clearly believes that animals can be raised for food and other purposes (e.g. zoos) that are both practical and humane in the sense of providing the animal with a good life (see pp. 295-302).

4. Abusing Secondary Sources

Among the abuses of secondary sources are three, one lacking context, one mildly annoying, and the last astonishingly incriminating.

Let's begin with the one that lacked context. On page 26, Halteman launches into a litany of allegations regarding the abuses sustained by slaughter house workers. One of the claims is that these workers suffer the highest injury rates of any industry in the U.S. He says, "When you add these high production speeds to an inherently perilous job that involves "close-quarters cutting, heavy lifting, sullied work conditions, and long hours," you get the most dangerous job in America according to federal injury statistics."

Undoubtedly, slaughterhouse workers have a dangerous job. A three-year longitudinal study of traumatic injuries to workers at a Midwestern meatpacking plant revealed that 1,655 workers out of 5,410 were injured. In other words, after 6 months, a worker had a 33% chance of being injured (overall injury rate was 22.76 per 100 full-time employees per year.¹² However, what Halteman explicitly failed to provide was that his data came from Human Rights Watch published in 2004, four years before his own document. Why didn't Halteman check data with the government agencies responsible for oversight of these business, such as the Occupational Health and Safety Administration (<http://osha.gov>) or confirm data with the Bureau of Labor Statistics (<http://www.bls.gov>)? If he had done so he might have found what the General Accounting Office in its 2005 report¹³ which stated "According to

11. Grandin, T. and C. Johnson, *Animals Make Us Human: Creating the Best Life for Animals*. Boston: Mariner Books, 2009.

12. Culp, K., M. Brooks, *et al.*, "Traumatic Injury Rates in Meatpacking Plant Workers," in, *Journal of Agromedicine* 13/1 (2008), 7-16. Info taken from the abstract.

13. GAO, *Workplace Safety and Health: Safety in the Meat and Poultry Industry, while Improving, Could Be*

BLS (Bureau of Labor Statistics), the injury and illness rate for the industry has declined from an estimated 29.5 injuries and illnesses per 100 full-time workers in 1992 to 14.7 in 2001 (parenthesis ours).” By failing to provide more context, Halteman placed the industry in a more negative light than it probably deserves. Make no mistake, slaughterhouse work is dangerous and remains among the most dangerous occupations in the country. It has also been accused of underreporting injuries so the situation may have been worse and remain worse than government statistics reveal. However, while the data can be skewed, it is more difficult to skew the trend of the data. So Halteman should have noted that the GAO found the workplace conditions in the slaughterhouse to be improving.

The second abuse of sources was mildly annoying. Amid the flurry of statistics and alleged costs associated with so-called factory farming, Halteman says and we quote:

“A controversial study published in 1995 in the peer-reviewed journal *Preventive Medicine* estimated the medical costs associated with U.S. meat consumption to be in the range of \$28.6 billion to \$61.4 billion a year, according to its authors, “The combined medical costs attributable to smoking and meat consumption exceed the predicted costs of providing health coverage for all currently uninsured Americans.11” (p.24; The reference 11 cites N. D. Barnard, A. Nicholson, & J. L. Howard, “The Medical Costs Attributable to Meat Consumption,” *Preventive Medicine* 24(6), 1995, 646-655).

Our question is this: How are the costs of smoking relevant to this discussion of the alleged costs of so-called factory farming—except to provide an inflated number designed to impress the unsuspecting reader?

But the larger error is far more misleading. Near the beginning of his essay, Halteman sets out with some evangelistic fervor to exposit and apply a prayer that he believes undergirds his call to the new food morality. This prayer is introduced and cited on pages 6-7 this way: “Perhaps, then, you’ll be as surprised as I was to hear this call heralded so explicitly and so passionately in the following prayer by St. Basil of Caesarea, the fourth century church father whose influential teachings on church reform and social justice earned him the veneration of the Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant traditions alike.” The reader is being invited to join virtually the entire Christian tradition in identifying animals as our brothers, in blaming ourselves for all of earth’s travail, and in renouncing all human use of animals altogether. At least that seems to be the altar call invitation most consistent with “St. Basil’s prayer”:

The earth is the Lord's and the fullness
 Thereof. Oh, God, enlarge within us the
 Sense of fellowship with all living
 Things, our brethren the animals to
 Whom Thou gavest the earth as
 Their home in common with us.
 We remember with shame that
 In the past we have exercised the
 High dominion of man with ruthless
 Cruelty so that the voice of the earth,
 Which should have gone up to Thee in
 Song, has been a groan of travail.
 May we realize that they live not
 For us alone but for themselves and
 For Thee, and that they love the sweetness
 Of life even as we, and serve Thee in their
 Place better than we in ours."

The problem, however, is that this prayer cannot be found anywhere in the writings of St. Basil of Caesarea, although several have mistakenly ascribed it to the Liturgy of St. Basil. This appeal to St. Basil attempts to place historic Christianity in service to the new food morality, but is little more than a vegetarian legend. It has no basis in historical fact, and yet has migrated even into *The Encyclopedia of Applied Animal Behaviour and Welfare*, based solely on a secondary source (C. W Hume, *The Status of Animals in the Christian Religion*).

But readers should compare Halteman's "St. Basil's prayer" with the following prayer, which is based on historical fact:

Enlarge within us the sense of fellowship with all living things, our little brothers, to whom thou hast given this earth as their home in common with us. We remember with shame that in the past we have exercised the high dominion of man with ruthless cruelty, so that the voice of the Earth, which should have gone up to thee in song, has been a groan of travail. May we realize that they live, not for us alone, but for themselves and for thee, and that they love the sweetness of life even as we, and serve thee in their place better than we in ours. . . ."

This one was, indeed, an original composition, included with other prayers

composed and published in 1910 by the father of the social gospel in America, Walter Rauschenbusch. It can be found in *Prayers of the Social Awakening* (Chicago: The Pilgrim Press, 1910, 47-48).

CONCLUSION

As the new food morality movement grows, and as otherwise secular and anti-religious social-political activist groups attempt to blend religion into their mix of advocacy and ideology, people, including Christians, need to analyze carefully the appeals that are being made to any religious tradition, tenets, and writings. As *Compassionate Eating* illustrates, selective use of the Christian Bible, faulty and incomplete logic, and careless appeals to secondary sources result in distortion and deception. We hope that Christians and non-Christians alike will look at the evidence more carefully as the issue of human use of livestock animals deserves a more fair, balanced, and open treatment.

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