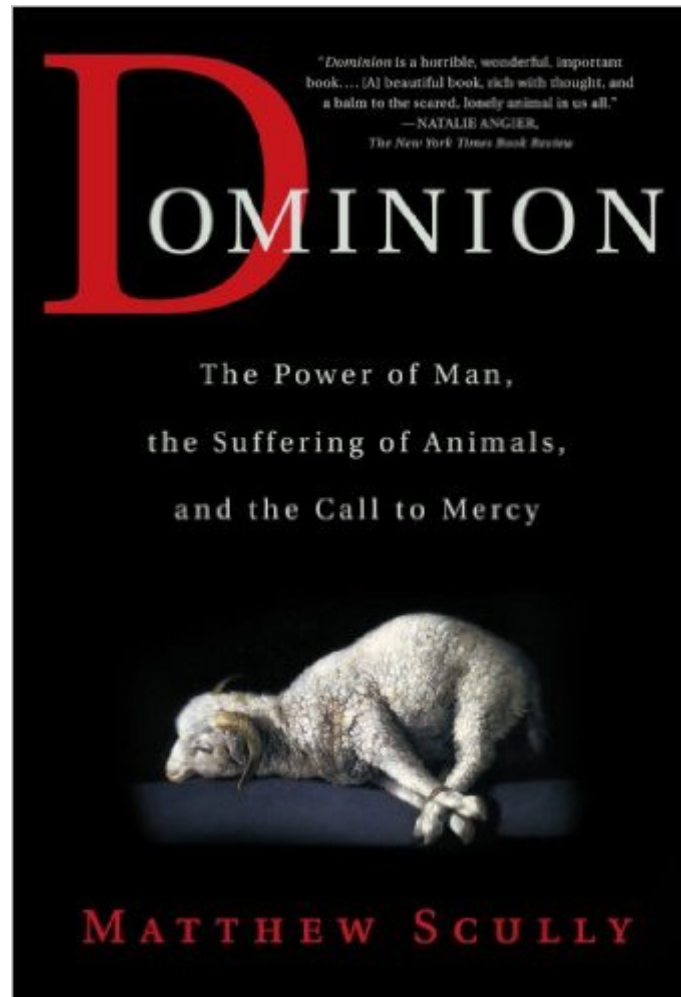


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Dominion: The Power Of Man, The Suffering Of Animals, And The Call To Mercy



Synopsis

"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth."--Genesis 1:24-26 In this crucial passage from the Old Testament, God grants mankind power over animals. But with this privilege comes the grave responsibility to respect life, to treat animals with simple dignity and compassion. Somewhere along the way, something has gone wrong. In *Dominion*, we witness the annual convention of Safari Club International, an organization whose wealthier members will pay up to \$20,000 to hunt an elephant, a lion or another animal, either abroad or in American "safari ranches," where the animals are fenced in pens. We attend the annual International Whaling Commission conference, where the skewed politics of the whaling industry come to light, and the focus is on developing more lethal, but not more merciful, methods of harvesting "living marine resources." And we visit a gargantuan American "factory farm," where animals are treated as mere product and raised in conditions of mass confinement, bred for passivity and bulk, inseminated and fed with machines, kept in tightly confined stalls for the entirety of their lives, and slaughtered in a way that maximizes profits and minimizes decency. Throughout *Dominion*, Scully counters the hypocritical arguments that attempt to excuse animal abuse: from those who argue that the Bible's message permits mankind to use animals as it pleases, to the hunter's argument that through hunting animal populations are controlled, to the popular and "scientifically proven" notions that animals cannot feel pain, experience no emotions, and are not conscious of their own lives. The result is eye opening, painful and infuriating, insightful and rewarding. *Dominion* is a plea for human benevolence and mercy, a scathing attack on those who would dismiss animal activists as mere sentimentalists, and a demand for reform from the government down to the individual. Matthew Scully has created a groundbreaking work, a book of lasting power and importance for all of us.

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Customer Reviews

Matthew Scully has written a beautiful book in which he bases his argument for animal protection not on rights, liberation, or ethics, but on mercy. He tells us, "We are called to treat them with kindness, not because they have rights or power or some claim to equality, but in a sense because they don't; because they all stand unequal and powerless before us. Animals are so easily overlooked, their interests so easily brushed aside. Whenever we humans enter the world, from our farms, to the local animal shelter to the African savanna, we enter as lords of the earth bearing strange powers of terror and mercy alike." His argument is compelling. Scully takes us into the world of Safari Club where his disgust is apparent to us and likely to be shared by all decent people reading his description. He includes a chapter on the impotent, sad, joke that is the International Whaling Commission. His chapter on factory farming and slaughterhouses is no less hard-hitting; he describes a state of the art farm where he found sows wounded, sickly, and some dead, housed in tiny gestation crates, unable to move. He writes about slaughterhouses where production speeds make the stunning of all animals impossible to achieve; the result is that many animals, every day, are hacked up or dropped into scalding water kicking and screaming. Though other areas of abuse may not receive whole chapters, most get some attention. We read about a horrifying mass dolphin slaughter and learn that a few animals, rather than being killed, are allowed "to live out their days at a place called Izumito Sea Paradise, delighting crowds with their tricks and play." We are told that baby elephants used in circuses and other exotic animals found in the pet trade are acquired in a similar fashion.

I had been avoiding reading Matthew Scully's *Dominion* for months. Avoiding it because I knew it would enrage, upset and embarrass me. And once I did pick up the book and commit to reading it, my predictions were dead on. This powerful, emotionally draining and gut-wrenching book about the systematic abuse and widespread slaughter of animals enraged me as a compassionate person, upset me as a lover of animals, and embarrassed me as a human being who has blindly taken part in the chain of abuse. Scully, a former Special Assistant and speech writer to President George W. Bush, surprises me first and foremost in that his background as a Republican is not something I

would immediately associate with animal rights. Yet he clearly feels deeply about the subject, and that comes through loud and clear in this intricately detailed, impassioned examination of the ways we humans have abused our guardianship position and made animals into virtual slaves of our own needs, desires, passions and greed. From the horrors of factory farming, where massive numbers of cows, sheep, pigs and veal calves are treated like machines to produce our food, to the disgusting antics of the wealthy hunters who pay tens of thousands of dollars to kill exotic wildlife, to the brutal slaughter of seal pups, lab animals, precious and rare elephants, and whales (called "living marine resources" by the men who clamor for more lethal means to kill them with), this book leaves no stone unturned in its unflinching look at the myriad ways humans mistreat other life forms. Scully also spends a lot of time countering the ridiculous arguments of religious leaders, scientists and even sportsmen that animals do not feel pain, have no souls, and therefore are ours to do with as we please.

Matthew Scully's *Dominion* is not to be quickly perused and immediately forgotten. I have already read this seminal work from cover to cover--and take it for granted that I must reacquaint myself with its powerful arguments at least every other month. Scully is definitely not your typical bleeding heart Liberal. On the contrary, the author's conservative credentials are solidly established. He has served as both a speech writer for President George W. Bush and contributing editor to the *National Review*. Scully's vegetarianism, however, places him in an awkward predicament within this cultural milieu. Even neo-conservative animal lovers such as myself have no intention whatsoever in ceasing to eat meat. He knows this to be the case but hopes to persuade us to alleviate the suffering of these animals as much as possible. Perhaps more troubling is the moral dilemma of animals enduring pain and death in medical research projects. Where should we draw the line? Moreover, must an animal suffer merely to assist humankind in the development of a better shampoo or other beauty products? Matthew Scully fortunately is not in the same camp as the secularist philosopher, Peter Singer. Animals are not equal to us. The theistic contention that humans have dominion over the animal kingdom is also the author's position. They lack our intelligence and therefore find themselves unable to sufficiently thwart our will. Yet, isn't this a reason why we should go out of our way to be kind to these mostly helpless creatures? Why do so many religious adherents seem so indifferent to the unnecessary harm caused to these sentient members of the animal kingdom? Have many people loyal to the wisdom of the Old Testament misunderstood God's will in this matter?

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