



Cows in the Front Yard

OVER THE YEARS THAT WE HAVE DWELT HERE, we've grown accustomed to odd occurrences. Living out in the country, one never knows what might happen along to entertain, puzzle, or downright infuriate. Whether it is waking to bats circling overhead in our bedroom, groundhogs undermining the driveway, or overgrown rattlesnakes slithering too near the house, over time one just accepts all these as sundry fibers in the tapestry that is rural life.

So we were not overly alarmed the day we rose to discover seven Black Angus heifers and one Hereford cow grazing on our front lawn. We had seen the larger cow grazing the adjacent corn field several days earlier, but figured she would remain where there was something to eat. But suddenly she was in the front yard—and had brought along a few of her young friends to keep her company.

Operating on a hunch, I jumped into the Jeep and paid a visit to one of the nearby farmers. Frank runs cattle on leased land located on a hillside across the valley, and last winter he had come calling, in search of some missing Hereford cows.

The men were working near the barns, so I laid out the situation to him and his hired hand. They threw some feed into their pickup and followed me back to our place. Frank laid claim to the older cow, but said the younger heifers belonged to a farmer grazing cattle on land next to his. He figured the Hereford, tempted by my neighbor's recently harvested corn field, had strayed through a fence badly in need of repair, and had crossed the creek into that field. The impressionable heifers had then followed, tempted by the older cow. Since there is no fence between our front property and the cornfield, voila!—cattle in the front yard.

While we stood there talking, the cows suddenly headed off down the hill, back toward the corn field.

"Yeah," Frank said, puffing on his Camel, "you get one going, the rest'll follow."

The following morning they were back (fences never get repaired right away, you see), so I simply raised a commotion to shoo them off. At first they all just stared at me with those blank, bovine stares. Cattle are not known for being terribly bright, you see. But finally the older Hereford headed off in the opposite direction, and soon the black heifers were following after—leaving behind deep hoof prints *in* the lawn and a few steaming piles *on* the lawn for Linda's compost heap.

But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or *if* you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted—you may well put up with it!

2 Corinthians 11:3-4 NKJV

People are not simple-minded bovines; we haven't that excuse to fall back on. But sometimes we can just as easily be led astray by those preaching an errant gospel, and before we know it, we're standing there grazing in the wrong field.

Because we are not ignorant cattle we have the privilege—no, *responsibility*—to seek out, learn, and know the *truth* about God and His Christ. It is up to each of us to know the difference.

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God...

1 John 4:1-3

