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**A Christian Approach to the Consumption of Animals**

A Thesis Submitted

To the Teacher and Students of Advanced Apologetics

By

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**December 2018**

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### Introduction

Human selfishness, an evident cause of the fall, has not only affected humanity but also the rest creation, which includes nature and its inhabitants. The destruction that humanity has put upon creation is a mere reflection of a prideful nature that has driven society into making choices that give temporary pleasure, but produce long-term harm on the planet. Animals are a specific part of creation that suffer due to a Biblically incorrect mindset that has become a normality as a result of people's misunderstanding of the natural progression of dietary changes throughout the Bible and its present effect on the treatment of animals. In light of this issue, the church has sat idly by, failing to provide knowledge and understanding to Christians struggling with the topic, causing them to be unresponsive to an issue that is especially meaningful for them because it goes hand in hand with their role as stewards of creation. Given this role, Christians must decide if caring for creation extends to animals consumption, especially considering the plethora of resources that the United States possesses. This presents the question that if animal products are simply not a necessity for survival today, is continuing to use animals for food acceptable? If the answer is no, then why do Christians continue to consume animal derived foods? The answer is simple: for pleasure.

## Walking Through Scripture

### ***God's Purpose for Animals***

Before the conversation of diet is introduced, it is critical for Christians to understand God's purpose for mankind and animals alike, which is made clear in Genesis. Creation was not written in the familiar “storytelling” structure that modern readers are accustomed to; instead, it follows an order-and-function pattern rather than a chronological pattern. For example, the Scriptures read that God created light and dark before He created the Sun, Moon, and stars. This does not imply that Creation literally followed the order in which it was written, but shows that materials are not functional without a ruler. Take Day Three for example, which consisted of God creating the earth containing plants, trees, and vegetation to be ruled by the animals formed in Day Six, meaning that what was created in Day Three were the “materials” and all that was created in Day Six were the “rulers” of those materials which supports that the role of animals was to rule and inhabit the Earth.<sup>1</sup>

The creation of animals reads as follows:

“And God said,

‘Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds—livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds.’ And it was so. And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Walton, John. *The Lost World of Adam and Eve*. 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 1:24-27

As mentioned, the creation of land and vegetation on Day Three corresponded with the creation of land animals in Day Six which were categorized into three groups: cattle, wild animals, and creeping things. God did not articulate the purpose for the animals, nor did he give them the blessing of fecundity that he gave the birds, fish, and people,<sup>3</sup> but land animals were given many different functions and God gave humans the job of recognizing their functions, assigning their functions, and naming them according to their functions.

The following verse describes the creation of man:

“Then God said,  
‘Let us make man in our image,  
after our likeness.’”

This verse is significant because it describes what differentiates man from the other animals: he is made in God’s image which gives him reason, personality, free-will, self-consciousness, intelligence and the ability to relate and communicate with God.<sup>4</sup> Being made in God’s image also means that man is God’s representative on earth. This would have made sense in Biblical context because both the ancient Egyptian and Assyrian texts show that they believed that kings were the image of gods.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, images of god or kings were used to represent the kings and it was thought that the divine spirit resided within the image,

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<sup>3</sup> Genesis 1:22-23: “And God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.”

Genesis 1:27-28a: “ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it...”

<sup>4</sup> Wenham, Gordon. *World Biblical Commentary*: Genesis 1-15.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

creating an intimacy between them.<sup>6</sup> In this case, people were made in the image of God and were thus his representatives on earth.

Verse 28 then says,

“So God created man in his own image,

in the image of God he created him male and female he created them.

And God blessed them. And God said to them,

‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it,

and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’<sup>7</sup>

The first command God gives to people is to reproduce and fill the earth, which is the divine purpose for marriage. God then tells man their purpose: to subdue the earth and have dominion over the animal world.<sup>8</sup> Being created in his image, man was to rule nature on God’s behalf, and would be held accountable to God for how he carried out this job. The expectation was that he would rule nature as a benevolent king, treating it as God treated him.<sup>9</sup>

Genesis 2 expands on the fifth and sixth days of Creation and can also help the reader understand God's specific purpose for people and the rest of the animals. This retelling of Creation describes God creating man and with the intention of giving him a companion, creating the rest of the animals. "Then the Lord God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.’”<sup>10</sup> The Hebrew word used for helper is *ezer*, which is found many times in the Old Testament, commonly referring to God as the *ezer* to his people.

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Genesis 1:27-28

<sup>8</sup> Refer to pages 29-30 for further analysis of the meanings of subdue and dominion.

<sup>9</sup> Wenham, Gordon. *World Biblical Commentary*. Genesis 1-15.

<sup>10</sup> Genesis 2:18

Animals, however, did not suffice as helpers suitable for man, as God realized in the following verses:

"Now out of the ground the Lord God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them.

And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him."

All of the animals were brought before Adam, but none seemed to complement him.

Nevertheless, as the animals were brought to him, Adam named them, which demonstrated his authority over them.<sup>11</sup> Man was identifying functions and assigning roles to animals, but not finding completeness from them.

### ***Man's Original Diet***

From the beginning, God had a plan for the needs of his people.

Genesis 1:29 says,

"I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food."

God spoke in this verse to man, giving them plants and fruits to nourish them. The very fact the creation story was written in such a way that God first made food for his people prior to their existence was significant because it not only showed that food was not an afterthought, but that God was more powerful than the other gods. Ancient Mesopotamian gods created people to serve them and supply them with food; the God of the Jews was the contrary to this and would

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<sup>11</sup> Wenham, Gordon. *World Biblical Commentary*. Genesis 1-15.

have stood out because he did not create nor expect his people to give him food, instead he prepared food for them, even prior to their existence.<sup>12</sup> God prepared plants and fruit for man while the rest of the animals were given just plants, intending for both live off of plant based diet. The reader is not provided with the specifics of which plants and trees were on earth at this time, but it is certain that there was variety.<sup>13</sup> The humans and animals were to enjoy this variety of vegetation and live in harmony, people serving as authoritative figures over the rest of the animals, but not in a harsh way, in a way that resulted in the people and animals having a companion type relationship.

The last verse of Genesis 1 says, “And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.”<sup>14</sup> God was not only pleased with his completed work, it was very good in his eyes.

### ***The Fall***

The harmonious companionship between people and the rest of the animals in the Garden was how God intended it to be, but it did not last forever. Adam and Eve ate from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, directly disobeying their creator and allowing sin to enter the Garden. The consequences of their failure to carry out God’s intentions not only affected them, but their relationship with God and the rest of creation. In banishing them from the Garden, God

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Genesis 1:11-12 “And God said, “Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth.” And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind.”

<sup>14</sup> Genesis 1:31



established the punishments that were upon creation due to their sin, one of them being a curse on the land:

“cursed is the ground because of you;  
in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life;  
thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you;  
and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread.”<sup>15</sup>

God made it clear that sin had infiltrated all parts of creation. The land, specifically, would no longer be covered by God’s blessing that made it well-watered and fertile but be cursed, lacking such benefits.<sup>16</sup> Though before sin was present on earth, man was commanded to cultivate the land, “thorns and thistles”—which represented the struggle that man would have against nature—would make this task difficult and frustrating, and place a burden on man to provide food for his family.

The consequences of the fall can all be driven back to the idea that death was introduced after sin entered the world. After the fall, Adam and Eve experienced a spiritual death, an alienation from the presence of God. A physical death also occurred following the fall of man: an animal experienced a physical death when God made clothing for Adam and Eve to cover their nakedness. The Scriptures do not *explicitly* say that an animal was killed to make clothing for people, but assuming that they were, and knowing that the penalty for sin was death, this would represent that an animal died to compensate for the sins that Adam and Eve committed, which would match God’s plan for the near future that would begin to require for an animal to be killed and sacrificed to pay for a person’s sins.<sup>17</sup> Not only that, but if an animal was killed

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<sup>15</sup> Genesis 3:17b-19a

<sup>16</sup> Wenham, Gordon. *Genesis 1-15*.

<sup>17</sup> Refer to page 16 for further discussion of animal sacrifice.

directly after sin entered the world, it would represent a symbolic shift in the man-animal relationship. Man no longer relied on animals for sole companionship, they now also relied on them for materials. Scripture, however, does not give implications that this meant that people necessarily had permission to kill animals for their needs, especially food.

### ***The Flood***

Following the progression of dietary changes throughout the Bible, the next event to be discussed is the flood. God, in wrath against man and wickedness, flooded the earth in hopes that evil would be diminished.<sup>18</sup> Flooding the earth was a punishment for man, but animals also had to experience it because they depended on man for order as established earlier. God planned to destroy man and animals, but saw one man, Noah, as righteous so he preserved him and his family along with some animals. There could be a few explanations for why God would save animals, one being that they had a symbiotic relationship with people, depending on them for order and people depending on them for companionship. Another reason would be because at this point, animal sacrifices had been practiced. It is in Genesis 4 that animal sacrifice is first introduced.<sup>19</sup> This affirms that since the very moment that sin entered the world, there was an understanding that man had to give sacrifices to God to atone for their sins. More support as to why people began giving animal sacrifices to God directly after the fall is that God commanded Noah to "Take with you seven pairs of all clean animals, the male and his mate, and a pair of the animals that are not clean, the male and his mate."<sup>20</sup> God told Noah to find clean animals which

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<sup>18</sup> Genesis 6:7: "So the Lord said, 'I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them.'"

<sup>19</sup> Genesis 4:3-4: "In the course of time Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground, and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions."

<sup>20</sup>Genesis 7:2

implies that people had an understanding of clean and unclean animals because they sacrificed them to God. This does not, however, mean that people necessarily ate animals, but it does mean that they killed and sacrificed them to pay for their sins because the death was the penalty for sin and that God had made it clear to them which animals he deemed clean and which ones he did not.

Permission for people to eat animals was granted following the flood. This was established when Noah performed a sacrifice with clean animals after he came off of the ark to form a covenant with God.<sup>21</sup>

Genesis 9:3-4 says,

“The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth and upon every bird of the heavens, upon everything that creeps on the ground and all the fish of the sea. Into your hand they are delivered. Everything that lives and moves will be food for you,

just as I gave you the green plants,

I now give you everything. But you must not eat meat that has its lifeblood still in it.”

In these verses, God reinstated the roles he assigned to man: to fill the earth, and to rule over the earth and her creatures, except now the man-animal dynamic changed because God gave people permission to use animals for food as long as they did not drink their blood which was sacred and represented life.<sup>22</sup> Also, man originally had power over the animals because it was in love and their relationship was companion-like, but now it was established that though man still had power over other animals, but the animals were under their control because they were in fear

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<sup>21</sup> Genesis 8:20: “Then Noah built an altar to the Lord and took some of every clean animal and some of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar.”

<sup>22</sup> Wenham, Gordon. *World Biblical Commentary*. Genesis 1-15.

which was not how the relationship was in the beginning. A more obvious observation from these verses is that animal consumption was not permitted by God before the flood, but God allowed it at this point, leaving it up for people to eat what they pleased for the time being because eventually there were laws established to separate clean and unclean animals.

### ***Dietary Laws***

In order to understand the basis of beliefs encompassing Christian stances on diet, it is important to read the text of verses in Leviticus which could paint a clearer picture of the truth in Bible how that correlates with the acuity of how the Christians and Jews response in the past. The Levitical laws governing the use of approved are found in Leviticus 11 and repeated in Deuteronomy 14:3-21.

The laws found in Leviticus provided a clear distinction for the Jewish people between which animals were *tahor* (clean) and which animals were *tamel* (unclean) to eat. The *kashrut*<sup>23</sup> were a part of the Mosaic Law, which God commanded that the Israelites follow so that they would be instructed in righteousness and holiness and set apart from the Gentiles. Holiness was the aim of the law; God called his people to be holy and “Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy... For I am the Lord who brought you up out of the land of Egypt to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy (Lev 20:7.)” The concept of holiness was that God wanted a group of people that were devoted to him to be set apart from the other groups; the Mosaic Law would be the wall that would separate them from other groups temporarily. God knew the laws He gave the Israelites were unattainable—to be considered unrighteous, you would only have to break 1 out of the 613—but that is why he made them

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<sup>23</sup> Another name for the Levitical Dietary Laws.

temporary. The laws still established his standard, but people would not live to that standard; and once that happened, they would then recognize that they were bound by sin, thus also bound by death, emphasizing the need for a savior. Eventually, there would be someone who would fulfill the law and defeat sin and death. While circumcision and keeping the Sabbath could be kept as private matters, diet was a Jewish practice that could not be hidden and made them stand out among their neighbors.

The Torah separated the clean and unclean animals listed in the kashrut into four groups: (1) domesticated animals and beasts; (2) birds; (3) fish and (4) insects and reptiles. The first group, domesticated animals and beasts, contained animals that had split hooves and chewed the cud. These animals were considered clean. Animals that only had one characteristic out of split hooves and chewing cud, such as the camel, rock badger, hare, ox, sheep, goat, hart, gazelle, roebuck, wild goat, pygarg, antelope and mountain sheep also were included this group and thus considered clean.

The second group, birds, included the following unclean animals: the eagle, bearded vulture, black vulture, kite, falcon, raven, ostrich, nighthawk, seagull, hawk, little owl, cormorant, short-eared owl, barn owl, tawny owl, carrion vulture, stork, heron, hoopoe and the bat, with all others being clean.

Fish that were clean had to have fins and scales while in the water, thus any shellfish were not clean.

Insects and reptiles that were clean were four winged insects that had four hopping legs which included locust, bald locust and crickets. Any other swarming creature was not permitted.

Animals that were clean, or *tahor* included: split hooves and chewed the cud<sup>24</sup>, everything in the waters that had fins and scales<sup>25</sup>, winged insects that went on all fours with jointed legs above their feet that hopped, locust, bald locust of any kind, crickets, but not any other winged insects that had four feet and animals that were unclean or *tamel* included: the camel, the rock badger, the hare, the pig,<sup>26</sup> anything from the sea or rivers that did not have fins and scales, the eagle, the bearded vulture, the black vulture, the kite, the falcon, the raven, the ostrich, the nighthawk, the seagull, the hawk, the little owl, the cormorant, the short-eared owl, the barn owl, the tawny owl, the carrion vulture, the stork, the heron, the hoopoe, the bat, all winged insects that went on all fours, every animal that parted the hoof but was not cloven-footed or did not chew the cud, all animals that went on all fours, the mole rat, the mouse, the great lizard, the gecko, the monitor lizard, the lizard, the sand lizard, and the chameleon, and any swarming thing from the ground including whatever went on its belly.<sup>27</sup>

Another important part of dietary law was that they were not to consume the blood<sup>28</sup> or fat<sup>29</sup> of an animal or “...boil a young goat in its mother's milk”<sup>30</sup> Many Jews interpreted this strictly and did not mix meat with milk, but also even kept from eating meat and then drinking

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<sup>24</sup> They could not eat the camel, rock badger, hare, or pig.

<sup>25</sup> From either rivers or the sea.

<sup>26</sup> There was an emphasis on pigs with several verses dedicated how detestable they were, commanding Jews not to eat any swine flesh or touch their dead bodies because they were unclean.

<sup>27</sup> Eating an animal while it was alive was also prohibited, but this a Noahide law given to Noah so it did not only apply to Jews, it applied to mankind.

<sup>28</sup> Leviticus 19:26: “Do not eat any meat with the blood still in it”

<sup>29</sup> Leviticus 7:22-27: “Do not eat any of the fat of cattle, sheep or goats. The fat of an animal found dead may be used for any other purpose, but you must not eat it. Anyone who eats the fat of an animal from which an offering by fire may be made to the Lord must be cut off from his people. And wherever you live, you must not eat the blood of any bird or animal. If anyone eats blood, that person must be cut off from his people.”

<sup>30</sup> Exodus 23:19b: ““You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk.”

milk up to six hours apart.<sup>31</sup> The *Kashrut* even required separate utensils and dishes for meat and dairy foods and that they be washed and stored away in separate places. The consequences for eating fat were severe and someone and their family could be killed for doing so.<sup>32</sup>

An obvious question to ask after reading the kashrut would be “why were certain animals considered clean while others were considered unclean?” Many scholars believe that the dietary laws existed for a hygienic purpose and that the Ancient Israelites could not have possibly been aware of the dangers of the unclean animals and that God wanted to protect them from those dangers. Pigs, for example, contain more moisture and matter than necessary in their meat and their fat makes people full, interrupts normal digestion and produces thick and cold blood.<sup>33</sup> Fish without fin and scales, another forbidden type of meat, have meat that is dangerous because they always dwell in lower waters thus contain harmful substances in their meat. Birds of prey were another forbidden animal and their blood is dark and thick which produces a dark, bitter fluid in humans that could potentially damage the heart. These three examples would support that God gave the Israelites dietary laws to protect them biologically, but there are other beliefs as to why the laws were given. Another reason that scholars believe that dietary laws existed was for aesthetic purposes which simply means that God did not allow his people to eat certain animals because they were detestable. This concept is simple and using pigs as an example is a useful way to explain it. It was no secret that pigs were loathsome, dirty and gluttonous so perhaps that is why God did not allow his people to eat them. The last reason why people believe that the dietary laws were in place was for the purpose of moral symbolism which means that people

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<sup>31</sup> If dairy is consumed first, however, one does not have to wait as long because the taste of dairy does not linger as milk does.

<sup>32</sup> Andrews Study Bible, 2010 p. 135

<sup>33</sup> Purity and Monotheism (69)

were not allowed to eat animals that ate human flesh because they might then they might start to possess the bloodthirsty moral lacking instincts of those animals. God would have made the laws because he recognized that man could not be perfect and live in a utopia where they were vegetarian, but he could restrict them enough to where they were still considered holy. These three explanations are just opinions and all have flaws, but are worth considering when discussing why God did not allow for certain animals to be eaten.

### ***Animal Sacrifice***

As mentioned earlier, the presence of sin caused a spiritual separation between humanity and God because he is altogether so perfect and holy and that he will not be in the presence of sin. This separation was not God's intention because he desired a relationship with man which could only truly be made possible if there was a way to deal with the barrier of sin between them. God had a divine plan for this, in which he would eventually fully restore his relationship with man. This plan started with the nation of Israel, which God blessed and promised to bless other nations through. This promise required God to not destroy Israel, even in the midst of her sin. The sin of Israel still had to be dealt with though, which presents the practice of animal sacrifice.

<sup>34</sup> Prior to the establishment of animal sacrifice in the Bible, the requirements to the Tabernacle were fixed. The Tabernacle was a temple where God would dwell, but like in the Garden, God resisted dwelling in the presence of sin but because he promised to bless the Israelites, he had to do so; there had to a way for Israelites sin to be covered so that they could appear blameless before God and have a relationship with him.

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<sup>34</sup> "Animals in Ancient Near Eastern Art." *The Met's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*, Feb. 2014, [www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/anah/hd\\_anah.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/anah/hd_anah.htm).



Animal sacrifice was practiced by most ancient near east religions and was common during the time when animal sacrifice was introduced to Judaism. Ancient Mesopotamian gods, for example, required their followers to feed them twice a day which kept them appeased and ensured the people would not experience punishments from the gods. The Israelite practice of animal sacrifice differed from other religions of the time because the purpose of it was to pay for the debt they owed to God for their sins<sup>35</sup>, ensure God's presence with them, and help them turn away from and be cleansed of sin. These sacrifices most of all, served as reminders to people that separating from God, who wills life, ultimately leads to death. Another symbolic aspect to animal sacrifice was their blood, which was thought to contain life, would eliminate the presence of sin (or death) temporarily in the temple in God's presence. In other words, the very moment that Adam and Eve sinned, death became inevitable for the rest of mankind, for the wages of sin is death.<sup>36</sup> The only way to give life to someone deserving of death was for someone to die in their place. Sacrificing a human for another (unless they were sinless) would not work because each sinner is already destined to die due to their sin. The only life then that could be sacrificed to cover the sins of someone would be that of an animal. The Levitical Law, however, said that unless a man could redeem himself, only a kinsman could redeem what he had lost.<sup>37</sup> This is why in order for God to pay for the sins of man, he had to come in the form of man. Animals, then, were the only option of sacrifice until Jesus came to permanently eradicate sin and death.

Animal sacrifice was not a part of God's original design of creation, but was necessary to temporarily reconcile man with God until a perfect sacrifice could permanently do so. It also must be understood that animal sacrifice existed because of man. Due to his continual act of

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<sup>35</sup> Romans 6:23 - "For the wages of sin is death..."

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> Leviticus 25:25-26

sinning, man brought it upon himself to need a savior; someone to eliminate the wall between him and God so that he could have hope to be reunited with God.

On top of that, sacrificing animals was not a “cheap” task. Animals were economically valued in Biblical times, so much that the elite members of society always had an abundance of land and livestock. One’s social status could be determined by how many animals they had. Therefore, giving up these valuable animals required a sense of seriousness and commitment from those who participated in animal sacrifice and meant much more than giving up just another animal; it was risking social status and wealth.<sup>38</sup>

### ***Daniel***

The story of Daniel plays an important role in the study of diet in Bible. Daniel and his friends, prisoners to the Babylonians, were taken to live in the king’s palace and were placed under a prince for instruction. They were provided with the food and wine of the kings, Daniel and his friends would not defile themselves with the king’s food and wine and riskily asked the chief of the eunuchs for permission to eat only vegetables and water.<sup>39</sup> The king’s food contained the meat of animals that were forbidden in the Torah, along with wine and food offered to idols which could have even included clean meats, eggs, or food that he was not familiar with<sup>40</sup> and more than that, Daniel did not want to become any more connected with the Babylonian culture than he had to. The chief allowed Daniel and the other men allowed to do

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<sup>38</sup> Howe, Tim. “Value Economics: Animals, Wealth, and the Market.” *Academia.edu*, Aug. 2014, [www.academia.edu/8199678/Value\\_Economics\\_Animals\\_Wealth\\_and\\_the\\_Market](http://www.academia.edu/8199678/Value_Economics_Animals_Wealth_and_the_Market).

<sup>39</sup> Daniel 1:8

<sup>40</sup> Snyder, Elizabeth. *Biblical Foundations for Nutrition*. (2016).

this, somewhat challenging them. After going days eating solely plant food and drinking water, Daniel and the others looked healthier and more fit than those who ate the king's meals.<sup>41</sup> They stayed true to God's commands and remained physically and spiritually pure, and He gave them favor with the chief and blessed them by providing them with good health and vitality.

### ***Jewish Method of Slaughter***

Appearing in the Talmud, the Jews believed in the *shechita*, which was considered the humane way to slaughter permitted animals for food as they believe was divinely instructed to Moses in Deuteronomy 12:22-24. To violate the laws of shechita would make the food unclean and impermissible for Jews to eat.<sup>42</sup> A *shochet*<sup>43</sup> would execute shechita and would quickly cut an animal across neck with a *chalaf*<sup>44</sup> which would slice the major parts and vessels of the neck which would almost immediately cause the brain pressure of the animal to drop to the point where an animal was unconscious and could not feel pain. There were five rules for shechita which included: no interruption were allowed in the incision, no pressing the chalaf against the neck, the hide or feathers of the animal were not to be covered by the chalaf, the cut must be made at the correct spot in the neck so that the blood vessels were immediately split, and that vessels were not to be torn before or after the process.<sup>45</sup> Jews believed and to this day, still

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<sup>41</sup> Dan. 1:15: At the end of ten days it was seen that they were better in appearance and fatter in flesh than all the youths who ate the king's food.

<sup>42</sup> Shechita UK. *A Guide to Shechita*. (2009).

<sup>43</sup> A certified Jewish animal slaughterer.

<sup>44</sup> The knife-like instrument shochets would use to slaughter animals.

<sup>45</sup> Shechita UK. *A Guide to Shechita*. (2009).

believe that this is the only humane way to kill animals for food and do not believe in stunning methods.

### ***The Early Church and Paul's Response***

Members of the early church struggled with the concept of what was expected of them in respect to diet but were able to get a perspective from both Peter and Paul. Peter himself had a vision where a large sheet was being lowered down from Heaven by its four corners that held four-footed animals, reptiles, and birds. A voice then commanded him to eat the animals, but Peter refused, saying he had never eaten anything unclean before and to eat something unclean would be crossing the line that separated him from Gentiles, which was actually God's intention. The voice replied, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean (Acts 10:15.)" This happened three times and the vision was over. This vision was actually not addressing food, but was using examples from the Levitical Dietary Laws to explain to Peter that there need not be boundaries that separate Jews and Gentiles any longer, but also carried literal meaning, as God did not expect his followers to adhere to the dietary laws any longer.

Members of the early church saw the law in the way that Peter did before God revealed the truth to him. The topic on what kinds of food were Christians allowed to eat became a serious issue and caused division in the church, as Paul addressed it in a number of his letters. The matter first arose in Acts, when the council of the early church was discussing whether recently Christian converts should have had to adhere to Jewish laws or not because the Pharisees believed that they had to get circumcised and take part in other tradition Jewish practices. It was decided, however, that Gentile believers now living amongst Jews did not need

to follow the Mosaic law, become circumcised, or keep the Sabbath, but they did have to abstain from things polluted by idols, sexual immorality, eating from anything that had been strangled, and consuming blood.<sup>46</sup> Abstaining from things that were offered to idols had to do with whether or not if eating food that was offered to idols in other religions was sinful and it was concluded that it was not, as long as they did not eat the food in an idolatrous way. Paul's response to the disputes concerning Gentiles and food offered to idols was, "Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters. One man's faith allows him to eat everything, but another man, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. The man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not, and the man who does not eat everything must not condemn the man who does, for God has accepted him. Who are you to judge someone else's servant?" (Romans 14:1-4.) Paul's response here was dealing with meat offered to idols rather than herbivore vs. carnivore, but the importance of his words were that if one chooses to not eat meat, in this case because it was being offered to idols, then they could and should, but they should not condemn others if they chose not to. This was important because he did not say that it was right or wrong to restrict one's diet if they felt convicted to do so, but he did have a problem with those who judged others for not doing it. Either way, the dietary laws that the council decided on were not necessarily a large barrier for Jews and Gentile believers as the Jews did not eat pork and shellfish, food offered to idols, meat from a strangled animal, and blood, while Gentile believers did the same except for not eating pork and shellfish. Meat was not an everyday item on the menu for people of the time because it took so long for animals to be raised

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<sup>46</sup> Jews were commanded by God in Leviticus to not consume blood, but this was not exclusive for Jews. Many cultures during this time period believed that the blood of an animal contained its soul, and one must not consume the blood.

and there was no refrigeration to keep the meat fresh.<sup>47</sup> In fact, meat was such a rarity that about 70% of people's caloric intake came from grains and most of the protein in their diets came from legumes.<sup>48</sup> The most common types of meat consumed were chicken, lamb, beef and goat, but it was on rare occasion that meat was prepared for a meal in a household during the Biblical times of Jesus and the in early church. This portrays the dietary restrictions of Jews and Gentiles as minimal and would not cause division between the two groups. In summary, there were active members of the early church who were vegetarian and concerned about diet in relation to the law.

### ***Post Early Church***

Clement of Alexandria, who was born in 150 AD, was not an immediate member of the the church established in Acts but taught and defended Christianity in Alexandria, Greece. As a vegetarian, his opinion on food was that, "Some men live that they may eat, as the irrational beings' whose life is their belly and nothing else.' But the Instructor enjoins us to eat that we may live. For neither is food our business, nor is pleasure our aim."<sup>49</sup> The main point of his message was that God created food to sustain us and not for us to take pleasure in.

Clement also said,

For they have not yet learned that God has provided for his creature (man I mean) food and drink, for *sustenance*, not for pleasure : since the body derives no advantage from extravagance in viands. On the contrary, those *who use the most frugal fare are the strongest and the healthiest, and the noblest* : as domestics are healthier and stronger than

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<sup>47</sup> <http://www.jewishrootsofchristianity.ca/new-testament-dietary-laws-different-for-jews-and-gentiles/>

<sup>48</sup> <http://www.jewishrootsofchristianity.ca/new-testament-dietary-laws-different-for-jews-and-gentiles/>

<sup>49</sup> <https://ivu.org/history/williams/clement.html>

their masters, and agricultural labourers than proprietors, and not only more vigorous but wiser than rich men. For they have not buried the mind beneath food... We must guard against those sorts of food which persuade us to eat when we are not hungry bewitching the appetite.<sup>50</sup>

Clement was a believer in that there was connection between food and morality. He shot down the rich and gluttonous, saying that the most careful with what they ate were the healthiest and wisest men, also believing that meat specifically could damage one's morality, exposing beast-like characteristics in them and make them uncivilized and gluttonous.<sup>51</sup> It is very likely, though, that this notion was not entirely based on scripture but the culture that he was surrounded by. His ideas of diet and those of the Pythagoreans lined up fairly closely; they both believed in a connection between morality and meat and practicing vegetarianism. The Pythagoras were not Christians, but they did have a major influence on Greek society and people like Clement. They believed in the transmigration of the soul, even into animals bodies which is why they were strictly forbidden to eat meat. They were also the first to introduce that using milk, wool, and honey might also be unjust actions.<sup>52</sup> Their beliefs likely could have made members of early churches, especially residing in Greece, believe that they were called to be vegetarian. In one of his texts, Clement said that the apostles Matthew and John had plant-based diets.<sup>53</sup> Clement would have received this information from Pantæus, who converted him to Christianity. Pantæus became a Christian when he went to India to feed his hunger for the gospel. There, he found the met people who were involved in the early churches who had manuscripts of the book

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid

<sup>51</sup> <https://foodanddining.omeka.net/exhibits/show/vegetarianism-in-antiquity/moral-religious/clement-of-alexandria>

<sup>52</sup> <https://classicalwisdom.com/cult-of-pythagoras/>

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

of Matthew in Hebrew left by Bartholomew who had preached to their churches in the past,<sup>54</sup> proving Clement's claims highly probable to be true. Clement's teachings and texts were embraced by the Ebionites which were the Jewish Christians. They rejected meat and their texts contained no descriptions of Jesus eating meat, only accounts of him condemning meat. They also believed that John the Baptist and the apostles did not eat meat.

The Essenes were another group that practiced vegetarianism for religious reasons and existed during the life of Jesus. In fact, many people believe that Jesus was a Nazarene Essene<sup>55</sup> and thus practiced practiced vegetarianism. There are still people today who identify as Essenes.

The Gnostics were also generally vegetarian, but there is little explanation as to why. Gnosticism was a group that was embraced the Greek influence of philosophy and religion and combined those concepts with Christian beliefs. A 4th Century Christian document says that "Heretical Gnostic Christians were still so common, and there were so many Gnostic Heretics among the clergy and monks in Egypt that in the region of Theodosius Egypt, the Patriarch Timothy made eating meat compulsory on Sundays, as a way to flush out the vegetarian Gnostics."<sup>56</sup> When Paul addressed vegetarians in his letters, it is very likely that he was addressing Gnostics along with traditional Jews who were caught up in the laws. The Manichaeen Gnostics were branch of the Gnostics were also known for their vegetarianism. The prophet who was the head of this branch was raised by parents who were followers of the

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<sup>54</sup> Schaff, Philip. Wace, Henry. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, Vol. 1.* (1890).

<sup>55</sup> Because many of his New Testament teachings reflected the Essene beliefs that had existed before he was alive which meant that he could have been raised on the principles of the Essenes.

<sup>56</sup> Luke Meyers, "Gnostic Visions."



Elkasites, which was a Jewish-Christian sect that came after the Ebionites but was closely related to them and they were vegetarians.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> "Uncovering A Vegetarian Jesus at the Beginning of Christianity." Medium.com. March 31, 2013.  
<https://medium.com/sant-mat-meditation-and-spirituality/uncovering-a-vegetarian-jesus-at-the-beginning-of-christianity-9279741be7c4>.

### Modern Christian Vegetarianism

As mentioned, the church is not particularly vocal about issues relating to diet and even animal cruelty, but nevertheless, there are still Christians that are vegetarian due to Biblical beliefs; there are even denominations of the church that are characterized by their adherence to dietary laws.

One of these denominations is Seventh Day Adventists, who believe that being vegetarian is a win-win because it produces a healthier body and shows God their appreciation for their lives and bodies. They do not require that their followers be vegetarian, but promote it. Adventists some of the original kashrut and believe that because are bodies are temples, keeping them clean by refraining from unclean animals will glorify God. Ellen White, who started the Adventist movement was a strong believer in not consuming any animal products because she thought there was a direct spiritual and moral connection with diet and that eating flesh and other animal products would stimulate animal instincts within people and cause them to stumble spiritually.<sup>58</sup> This abstention from animal products carried on to members of the church today, but the foundations of the beliefs have changed since the beginning because the reason why Seventh Day Adventists pay special attention to their diets is more for physical wellness rather than spiritual wellness.

Besides Seventh Day Adventists, there are many modern Christians who are vegetarians or vegans and use scripture to back up their lifestyle and beliefs. Groups like the Christian Vegetarian Association (CVA), push for Christians to become vegetarians based on their

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<sup>58</sup> White, Ellen. *Counsels on Diets and Foods*. (1938).

interpretation of scripture. Different people use different scriptures and logical explanations to back-up why they believe that Christians should or should not eat animals or animal products.

## Thesis Proof

### ***God's Command to Man***

The first part of the argument that needs to be proved is that it is the responsibility of man to take care of creation which is based on Genesis 1:28 which says “And God blessed them. And God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’” These commands—filling and subduing the earth and having dominion over the other animals—are given to people before any others, which emphasizes their importance. God first commands his people to populate the earth and then gives them permission to exercise power over the earth and her creatures. The type of power that he gives man over the earth and animals, however, is described in the verse with the words subdue and dominion which further specify the type of relationship God intends for man to have with nature. Subdue, the more gentle of the terms, is the word used to describe how God intends for man to treat the earth as a whole and means to overcome, quieten, or bring land under cultivation. Dominion, the word used to describe how God intends for man to treat the creatures of the earth, means to have complete sovereignty or control of something.<sup>59</sup> The word dominion has an aggressive connotation, but the Hebrew root word of dominion, *radah*, as it appears in Genesis 1:28, suggests otherwise. When *radah* is used in scripture, it does not translate to force, but instead means caring authority. In the Bible, when discussing a concept that has to do with harsh ruling,

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<sup>59</sup> Noah Webster, *New Collegiate Dictionary*. A Merriam-Webster (Springfield, Massachusetts: G. & C. Merriam Co., 1963).

the Hebrew word *radah* is used, which refers to the action and result of ruling with force, while *radah* refers to strong authority that is not forceful.<sup>60</sup> This means that when the word *dominion* is used in Genesis 1:28, it means authority that is effectively firm but never harsh or oppressive. That being so, when God commands man to have dominion over animals, he means for them to care for creation and maintain order in a way that is not cruel or oppressive. The Hebrew root word of subdue is *abad* which means to serve, till, and cultivate the earth. Together, to subdue and have dominion over the earth means that people are meant to be the stewards of God's creation. This does not mean that people are above the rest of creation, but that they are the overseers of creation and have been assigned the role to take care of it, bearing God's image. This role is intended to be a blessing for both humanity and creation, the earth benefitting from the care and cultivation that people are to give it, and people benefitting from what the earth will produce—clean air, water, and vegetation—because of the care it is given by people. This job helps people also accomplish loving their neighbor as caring for creation will bring forth positive effects like clean air and water for example, that will benefit everyone. As mentioned, the entirety of mankind's job means to have stewardship over creation, which is how they exercise their authority over it. By definition, a steward is a person employed to manage another's property,<sup>61</sup> which means the earth does not belong to man, it belongs to God which means that man is accountable to God of how they take care of it. Taking care of creation is essentially restoring it, undoing the damage that mankind has been caused. The definition of restore is to

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<sup>60</sup> Basden, Andrew. *On the Interpretation of Four Hebrew Words: Radah, Kabash, Abad, Shamar*.

<sup>61</sup> Noah Webster, *New Collegiate Dictionary*. A Merriam-Webster (Springfield, Massachusetts: G. & C. Merriam Co., 1963).

bring back to or put back into a former or original state,<sup>62</sup> so as the stewards of God's creation, man is called to not only maintain it, but to clean up the mess that they have made and bring back what God once called "very good" which includes harmony between man and the rest of creation.

Some might not see how man's role in restoring creation and diet connect, but the two go hand in hand. To understand this, two concepts must be understood: what man was meant to eat and God's intended relationship for man and the other animals. The historical review went into more detail about God's plan for man's diet, but to restate the major ideas that can be taken away from the opening chapter of Genesis, it is clear that before he even created man, God had a plan for the needs of his people.

Genesis 1:29 says,

"I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food."

In this verse, God tells man that every fruit and seed bearing plant are acceptable for them to eat. He is making clear that he has provided plants and fruits to sustain them and gives them permission to eat these foods. This means that if Christians today are truly aiming to fully restore the kingdom, then they will eventually have to stop eating animals because that is how it was in the beginning and that is how it will be in Heaven.

Isaiah 11: 6-9 says,

"The wolf shall dwell with the lamb,  
and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat,

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together;  
and a little child shall lead them.

The cow and the bear shall graze;  
their young shall lie down together;  
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra,  
and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den.

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 prophet Isaiah writes the entire book of Isaiah to give the Israelites hope and insight to details concerning the coming kingdom. This collection of verses specifically addresses the perfect peace that will be in Heaven, using examples of animals to illustrate the concept. The example of the wolf and the lamb would have specifically been understood by the Israelites, as many of them were shepherds whose primary job was to protect the sheep from predators like wolves. The other examples of animals used in this collection of verses further emphasizes that conflict will be non-existent in the Heaven. Along with describing the harmony that will be present in Heaven, these verses also imply that animals will be a part of the new earth, sharing the blessings of redemption with people. More than that, the animals will only eat vegetation. While describing the absence of conflict in Heaven, Isaiah says, "The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox," which is

significant because it specifically mentions that typically carnivorous or omnivorous animals - bears and lions - will “graze” and “eat straw” in Heaven. This is important because it signifies that animals in the restored kingdom will not prey after one another, but instead eat plants, which was God’s original plan for their diets in the first place. In their entirety, this collection of verses from Isaiah serve as hope for Heaven; that it will be a place of peace that will not include killing of any kind, even in the animal kingdom which is important because it signifies killing animals, even if it is animals killing each other, is not a part of God’s perfect dwelling place; it never was. This reveals that God truly intended for animals to eat plants in the Garden and desires the same for Heaven.

### ***The Words and Actions of God Towards Animals***

Strong reasons to abstain from factory farmed animal are evident in the heart of God in scripture. Genesis makes it clear that God created animals to inhabit the earth and serve as companions to man and with the breath of life, they praise him. Psalms 148:7-10 states that creatures glorify God.

It says,

“Praise the LORD from the earth,

you great sea creatures and all deeps,

fire and hail, snow and mist,

stormy wind fulfilling his word!

Mountains and all hills,

fruit trees and all cedars!



Beasts and all livestock,  
creeping things and flying birds!”

The theme of Psalms 148 is praise and according to the quoted verses, all parts of creation, the living and the non-living alike are to offer praises to God. When the Psalmist says “sea creatures” and “all deeps,” they are describing that sea life - including the mysterious creatures that lie in the depths of the ocean that are unknown to man - declare God’s praise. Fire hail, snow, mist, and stormy winds obey him as well. The text continues on to say that the mountains, hills, and trees also praise him by simply existing. Beasts, livestock, creeping things, and flying birds are also listed as animals that are to bring praise to the Lord which supports that not only are animals able to praise God, but they are commanded to. They serve a vital role in creation praising God.

There are countless stories in the Bible displaying animals obeying God. In 1 Kings, the Israelites turn to worshipping Baal along with other false gods so God causes a famine in their land but spares his prophet Elijah, telling him to flee to a desolate area near a brook. Elijah obeys God and spends his time in isolation in deep prayer but lacks provisions so God says in 1 Kings 17:4, “You shall drink from the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there.” This verse tells the reader that God plans for Elijah’s needs by sending him to a place with a water source and instructing ravens to bring Elijah food - and they do. They bring Elijah a variety of food, carrying out God’s command. It is also interesting to note that due to being deemed unclean in the dietary laws, Jews viewed ravens in a negative light. God is not concerned by this though; he still sends the ravens, directs them, and uses them to aid his prophet.

Another story in Numbers recounts of a time when God uses a donkey to speak to Balaam who is well known prophet hired to curse the Israelites by the king of Moab who fears them because they are approaching his land. God attempts many times to stop Balaam from cursing Israel, but Balaam resists. Balaam departs to curse the Israelites and is on a path when his donkey sees an angel of the Lord blocking the path so it turns, but Balaam, unable to see the angel continues on the path. Two more times does the donkey see the angel and resist it which angers Balaam to the point that he beats the donkey. This is when God opens the mouth of the donkey and allows him to say, “What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times?” The donkey has eyes to see an angel on the path of which he is travelling and eventually is given the ability to speak to Balaam so that he may also recognize the angel. God uses animals throughout the course of the Bible to reveal his will and glory.

Psalms 104 describes how much God delights in his creatures and cares for them, providing for them what they need. He even says in Psalm 50:10 “for every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills.” Animals ultimately belong to him and he cares about each one. In Jonah, for example, God expresses his care for animals when he tells Jonah that 120,000 people were spared along with many animals.<sup>63</sup> This is thematic throughout the Bible, as Jesus teaches that not one sparrow is forgotten by God.<sup>64</sup> After reading of these stories in Bible, it would be hard to believe that it is acceptable in the eyes of God that his people that are commanded to restore the earth eat animals that are tortured and mutilated. Even so, the Fall certainly created conflict between man and the rest of the animals, causing them to fear us and us

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<sup>63</sup> Jonah 4:11

<sup>64</sup> Matthew 10:29: “Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father.”

to fear them.<sup>65</sup> Nevertheless, Christians should try best as they can to respect animals as creatures of God and to allow them to prosper, only infringing on their flourishing if necessary in instances of self-defense or need of food for survival.

### *Animals in the Kingdom of God*

Understanding what the kingdom of God is moving towards will help Christians identify how they should act towards animals today. Revelation and Isaiah describe Heaven as being a place of no death, pain or suffering,<sup>66</sup> and as mentioned earlier, Isaiah describes the restored earth including animals that will only eat vegetation. It says,

“The cow and the bear shall graze;  
their young shall lie down together;  
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.”

This verse specifically tells that bears and lions—carnivorous and omnivorous animals—will “graze” and “eat straw” in Heaven. This signifies that animals in the restored kingdom will not prey after one another, but instead eat plants, which was God’s original plan for their diets in the first place. The fact that the renewed creation will include animals that will not even eat one another is not a hopeless notion for the present state of the earth; it is doable, especially with the technology that has been developed to enhance the production of produce and

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<sup>65</sup> Genesis 9:2: “The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth and upon every bird of the heavens, upon everything that creeps on the ground and all the fish of the sea.”

<sup>66</sup> Revelation 21:4: “He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” Isaiah 25:8-9: “He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken.”

other plant based foods. If Christians have the ability to better the earth by bringing it closer to the state that God desires it to be, then they should; in fact, they are commanded to as the stewards of creation.

### *A Source of Cruelty*

Understanding the heart of God and that it is the responsibility of Christians to restore the kingdom begs the question of whether or not we are able to fully to so if we choose to participate in the consumption of animal products that come from a source of cruelty. This thesis answers this question by saying no, Christians cannot fully take on the role of stewards of creation if they choose to eat foods that come from most modern animal farms.

There are many problems with modern factory farming that treat animals in horrific ways. These methods have quickly and quietly appeared in the food production industry due to the increasing demand for affordable meat, eggs, and dairy; so rapidly that many people have been unattentive to the changes. The treatment and farming of animals is drastically different than it was even fifty years ago and most certainly different from how it was during Biblical times. This section of the proof aims to prove why the treatment of animals in the farming industry today is tortuous and mutilating, specifically taking a brief look into the problems in dairy, beef, egg, and chicken factory farming.

Firstly, cows on a number of dairy farms experience abuse and trauma. At around age one is the first time that female cows are forcibly impregnated either with a bull or through a procedure which requires a person to insert their arm into the cow's rectum to position the uterus

for the insertion an instrument into her vagina to inseminate her.<sup>67</sup> A “rape rack” is used to restrain the cow and make her defenseless during this procedure.<sup>68</sup> Once the cow finally gives birth to her calves, they are immediately taken from her, causing both her and her young stress and pain. The cow and her young cry as they are separated, mothers crying for many days after the separation. Because the milk meant for the calves is produced for people, the calves are fed a milk replacement that will sometimes contain cow blood. AHA Certified Humane dairy farmers dairy do not separate mothers and calves.<sup>69</sup> However, in order to get maximum milk production out of mothers, some put a plastic nose ring with spikes on the calves so that every time they try to nurse, they inflict pain on the mother, training the mother to fear her babies and the babies to learn that their mother will run away every time that they get near to her.<sup>70</sup>

Males that are of no use to dairy farmers are immediately sent away to be either killed for veal or fattened for beef; females are sent away destined to live a life like their mothers, an exhausting cycle of being impregnated, lactating for about ten months, and going through the artificial insemination process. Their living conditions are pitiful as they spend their days packed in sheds, standing on concrete floors, and living among their feces. The torture does not end there; after going through this trauma, the cows are exploited, in many cases sent to slaughterhouses for use of the beef industry.

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<sup>67</sup> "The Dairy Industry." PETA.

<https://www.peta.org/issues/animals-used-for-food/factory-farming/cows/dairy-industry/>.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> Bergman, M.a., R.m. Richert, K.m. Cicconi-Hogan, M.j. Gamroth, Y.h. Schukken, K.e. Stiglbauer, and P.l. Ruegg. "Comparison of Selected Animal Observations and Management Practices Used to Assess Welfare of Calves and Adult Dairy Cows on Organic and Conventional Dairy Farms." *Journal of Dairy Science* 97, no. 7 (07 2014): 4269-280. doi:10.3168/jds.2013-7766.

<sup>70</sup> "The Dairy Industry." PETA.

<https://www.peta.org/issues/animals-used-for-food/factory-farming/cows/dairy-industry/>.

Even on organic dairy farms, cows can be kept in disgusting environments where they in crowded in sheds, dirty with feces. Like non-organically raised dairy cows, they are artificially impregnated and separated from their calves once they give birth.<sup>71</sup>

It is also common for cows raised for their meat to experience cruelty. Starting from a young age they are branded, sometimes experiencing third degree burns. Without given pain relievers, male cows' testicles are cut off or tightly clamped and their horns are often either cut or burned off.<sup>72</sup> The cows receive little to no medical care in their upbringing, so many of them contract sicknesses. Not only that, but they are left grazing in all types of extreme weather including freezing temperatures and overly hot temperatures causing many of them to freeze or overheat to death. Once they are finished with the grazing period, cows are shipped to auction lots and from there are sent to feedlots where they live in disgusting pens with filled with mud, feces, ammonia, methane, and many of other cows. At the feedlots, they are fed large amounts of grain and corn so that they fatten up, but this unnatural diet can cause them to be bloated; so bloated that their lungs become compressed. Others experience an overproduction of stomach acid due to their unnatural diet.

Hen cruelty starts right after birth when their beaks are cut off with a burning hot blade without use of painkillers. This procedure is very painful for the chickens both while and after it takes place and makes it difficult for chicks to eat and drink, causing many to suffer from hunger and dehydration.<sup>73</sup> After going through this procedure, the chicks are introduced to their living

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<sup>71</sup> "The Dairy Industry." PETA. <https://www.peta.org/issues/animals-used-for-food/factory-farming/cows/dairy-industry/>.

<sup>72</sup> "Cows Used for Food." PETA. <https://www.peta.org/issues/animals-used-for-food/factory-farming/cows/>.

<sup>73</sup> "The Chicken Industry." PETA. <https://www.peta.org/issues/animals-used-for-food/factory-farming/chickens/chicken-industry/>.

space - an eighteen by twenty -four inch wire cage - that they share with nine other hens, all of which have about a thirty-six inch wingspan.<sup>74</sup> The hens do not have a choice but to excrete on each other because they live in such a crowded environment. This attracts not only a horrid smell, but also diseases that end up killing many of the birds which are left to rot with the survivors. Not only this, but the light in the sheds is constantly changed to stimulate egg production which puts a lot of stress on the chickens. On top of that, hens are fed low calorie feed in hopes of inducing an additional laying cycle to add to the two years that they spend producing a substantial amount of eggs. "Spent" hens are sent to slaughterhouses where their legs are bound in shackles and their throats are slit. Their bodies are so damaged that their meat generally is used as ingredients in pet food, or in some cases, in the National School Lunch Program.

Of no use to the egg industry, males are either suffocated or macerators while they are alive. Macerators put the chicks onto a machine similar to conveyor belt that dumps them into a chamber where they are ripped into shreds alive.

There are also chickens that are raised solely for their flesh: broilers. There are tens of thousands of them per one shed that has no windows or room for any of them to move which causes the birds to constantly peck at each other, producing open wounds in the each other that invite disease.<sup>75</sup> Broilers are bred and fed to be much larger than they would naturally be which also causes many health problems, the two major ones being organ failure and inability to stand up because their bodies grow at such a rapid pace compared to their legs that cannot keep up.

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<sup>74</sup> "The Chicken Industry." PETA.

<https://www.peta.org/issues/animals-used-for-food/factory-farming/chickens/chicken-industry/>.

<sup>75</sup> "Chickens Used for Food." PETA. <https://www.peta.org/issues/animals-used-for-food/factory-farming/chickens/>.

The chickens grow at such an unnatural rate that they reach slaughter weight at just thirty-five days old.<sup>76</sup>

The broiler chickens come from breeder chickens that also experience painful lives. Like the broilers, the breeders are confined, and to prevent them from pecking at each other, their beaks are cut off using a hot blade at a young age with no painkiller.<sup>77</sup> They grow at an unnatural rate just like the broilers and are thus susceptible to organ failure and weak legs. After being used for around a year, the mutilated and exhausted chickens are sent to be slaughtered.

A common thread with all of these animals is that after going through so much pain, they are shipped away in all types of weather, deprived of food and water, to be slaughtered, most commonly by being hung upside down and cut at the throat sometimes even still able to feel the pain from boiling water as they are defeathered or hacking as they are opened up.

### ***Scientific Support***

Even though this is an ethical argument, to go along with the Biblical stance that people were designed to eat a plant based diet, there is a science based section in this proof. Comparing and understanding the feeding behaviors<sup>78</sup> of animals gives us the clearest picture of what people are meant to eat. There are two characteristics that help scientists decide which feeding behaviors match up with each animal: anatomy and behavior. Comparing man's anatomy and behavior to those the four most common feeding behaviors associated to them—herbivores, carnivores, omnivores, and frugivores—gives insight as to what category man belongs in.

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<sup>76</sup> "Chickens Used for Food." PETA. <https://www.peta.org/issues/animals-used-for-food/factory-farming/chickens/>.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> Folivores, carnivores, frugivores, granivores, herbivores, and omnivores are a few examples of feeding behaviors.



There are anatomical similarities and differences between man and herbivores, carnivores, omnivores, and frugivores. The characteristics that will give us the best idea of which feeding behavior should be assigned to humans are jaw type, teeth, digestive system, and hands.

Firstly, contrary to the jaws of carnivores and omnivores, which have a jaw type at an angle that is not expanded, the human jaw is set at an angle just like the jaw of a herbivore and frugivores. Herbivores, frugivores, and man also have jaws that have great forward and lateral mobility which helps them chew and grind plant based foods, while carnivores and omnivores do not have much mobility in their jaws because they tear apart flesh and swallow it, hardly chewing meat at all.

These animals are also set apart by their teeth. Carnivores and omnivores have sharp teeth that can easily tear into flesh. They both have short and pointed incisors, blade shaped molars, and omnivores also have crushing molars. Herbivores, frugivores, and humans, on the other hand, have big and flattened incisors. Herbivores and humans have basic, small canines and frugivores have canines for defense.

The digestive systems of these four groups also differ. Carnivores and omnivores have small salivary glands that produce acidic saliva, while herbivores, frugivores, and humans have large salivary glands that release alkaline saliva with ptyalin, the reason being that plants are dry and require more chewing and breaking down before being swallowed than meat. Also, the intestinal length of carnivores and omnivores is very small, around one to three times their body length, frugivores and humans have intestines that are much longer, at nine times their body length, and herbivores have the longest intestines that are 20 times their body length. This has

much to do with what each group consumes. The meat eaters, for example, have short intestinal tracts so that meat can quickly pass through their systems which prevents it from rotting and causing sickness.<sup>79</sup> The longer intestinal tracts of herbivores and frugivores allows for their bodies to break down the plant based foods and absorb the nutrients in them.<sup>80</sup> This goes along with stomach acidity which differs between the groups as well. Meat-eaters swallow meat whole, which causes their bodies to heavily rely on their stomach acid to break the food down and kill the dangerous bacteria in it. Plant based eaters have low acidic content in their stomachs because they chew their food quite thoroughly and do not need strong amounts of acid to break it down.

The type of hands that each of these group has seems like an obvious trait, but it is very important in telling which foods each were made to eat. Carnivores and omnivores have claws which give them the ability to easily rip through flesh and herbivores have paws with hooves. Frugivores and humans have prehensile hands which allow them to grab fruits and vegetables.

Besides these anatomical characteristics which show that humans have the most in common with frugivores, there are also behavioral differences that will help show which group is the most similar to humans. Behaviorally, humans fall under the category of omnivores because they consume both plants and meat, but this is not how they would behave in nature. If a person was on the verge of starvation in nature and had the choice of picking a piece of fruit from a tree or hunting an animal with no weaponry available, it is almost certain that they would choose the fruit. Though people eat cooked meat often, most people simply could not stand to kill and rip

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<sup>79</sup> "Here Are the Real Facts About Humans and Meat." PETA.  
<https://www.peta.org/living/food/really-natural-truth-humans-eating-meat/>.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

the flesh of an animal apart and eat it, because that is not something that is desirable to them, while the thought of blood is mouthwatering to true carnivores and omnivores.

1 Corinthians 6:12 says,

“ ‘All things are lawful for me,’ but not all things are helpful.”

Even though people are able to consume both meat, that does not mean that they are meant to eat it and that eating it is beneficial to them.

Comparing physiological and behavioral characteristics of four different animal types, makes it clear that humans have the most in common with frugivores. More similarities that the two have are that they both walk upright, have a small mouth opening, produce alkaline urine, have a weak production of hydrochloric acid, require fiber to stimulate peristalsis, metabolize a small amount of cholesterol and vitamin A, sweat in whole body glands, have colons that have long sacculated acid, do not metabolize cellulose, lack shear<sup>81</sup>, lack secretion of uricase, and take twelve to eighteen hours to complete digestion. Humans compared to omnivores, however, only have a few similarities.

### ***Health Benefits to a Plant-Based Diet***

As mentioned before, although this is an ethical argument, there is substantial scientific proof in accordance with the Biblically based ideal that people were designed to eat a plant based diet. The vegan diet is attractive because when it is done right, it has many benefits which include: weight loss, lower blood sugar levels, a decrease in chances of getting certain types of cancer, and a lower risk of heart disease.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Teeth that carnivores typically have that function in slicing through meat.

<sup>82</sup> "The Health Benefits of Veganism." Rush University Medical Center.  
<https://www.rush.edu/health-wellness/discover-health/health-benefits-vegan-diet>.

One study documented by the Journal of the American Medical Association observed 73,308 adults that identified with diets varying from vegan to non-vegetarian for six years and during that time, 2,570 of the people involved with the study died. Researchers compared the diets of those who died and their cause of death and saw a correlation with coming less meat and having a lower mortality rate. The study officially concluded that vegetarian diets were associated with lower all-cause mortality and with some reductions in cause-specific mortality.

One medical journal compiled the results of five studies involving vegetarians and non-vegetarians to compare the death rates from common diseases of the two groups. The results of the analyzation of the five studies were that mortality from ischemic heart disease<sup>83</sup> was 24% lower in vegetarians than in nonvegetarians.<sup>84</sup> Comparing the categories in closer detail showed that compared with regular meat eaters, mortality from ischemic heart disease was 20% lower in occasional meat eaters, 34% lower in pescatarians, 34% lower in lacto-ovo vegetarians, and 26% lower in vegans.

Another study done by Oxford University reviewed 65,429 people with a variety of diets and observed the effects of each diet. The results of the study showed notable differences between meat-eaters and vegans, and fish-eaters and vegetarians. The results of the study showed that vegan diets are usually higher in dietary fiber, magnesium, folic acid, vitamins C

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<sup>83</sup> This is referring heart diseases specifically caused by artery blockage.

<sup>84</sup> Key, Timothy J, et al. "Mortality in Vegetarians and Nonvegetarians: Detailed Findings From a Collaborative Analysis of 5 Prospective Studies." *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, vol. 70, no. 3, 1 Sept. 1999, pp. 516–524.

and E, iron, and phytochemicals, tending to be lower in calories, saturated fat and cholesterol, omega-3 fatty acids, vitamin D, calcium, zinc, and vitamin B-12.”<sup>85</sup>

Another similar study to the previous one mentioned aimed to see if there was a connection between vegans, vegetarians, non-vegetarians, lacto-ovo vegetarians, and pescatarians and disease and compiled results from other studies to do so. The results showed that the BMI of vegetarians was two to four points less than non-vegetarians and vegetarians also had a 55% less chance of developing hypertension.<sup>86</sup> Vegetarians also had a 25% to 49% less chance of developing type two diabetes than non-vegetarians.<sup>87</sup> There was also an 8% less chance for vegetarians to develop overall-cancer and specifically, had half the risk of contracting colon cancer, 23% risk reduction for gastrointestinal tract cancers, and 35% risk reduction for prostate cancer.<sup>88</sup> Vegetarians also had a 10% to 20% lower mortality rate than non-vegetarians and a 26% to 68% less chance of dying by (ischemic) heart disease, which is the leading cause of death in the United States.<sup>89</sup> The study also found that vegetarians had a 48% less chance of death by breast cancer. Overall, the study found that vegetarians have less cardiovascular problems and decreased risk in some types of cancers and vegans experienced the same effects, possibly with slightly heightened benefits in the following areas: obesity, hypertension, type-2 diabetes; and cardiovascular mortality.<sup>90</sup> Professionals agree that keeping

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<sup>85</sup> Davey, G., Spencer, E., Appleby, P., Allen, N., Knox, K., & Key, T. (2003). EPIC–Oxford: lifestyle characteristics and nutrient intakes in a cohort of 33 883 meat-eaters and 31 546 non meat-eaters in the UK. *Public Health Nutrition*, 6(3), 259-268. doi:10.1079/PHN2002430

<sup>86</sup> Le, Lap, and Joan Sabaté. "Beyond Meatless, the Health Effects of Vegan Diets: Findings from the Adventist Cohorts." *Nutrients* 6, no. 6 (05, 2014): 2131-147. doi:10.3390/nu6062131.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> "National Center for Health Statistics." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. March 17, 2017. <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/leading-causes-of-death.htm>.

<sup>90</sup> Le, Lap, and Joan Sabaté. "Beyond Meatless, the Health Effects of Vegan Diets: Findings from the Adventist Cohorts." *Nutrients* 6, no. 6 (05, 2014): 2131-147. doi:10.3390/nu6062131.

from meat would immediately cut animal fat out of one's diet, which would in itself be beneficial to their body because animal fats are linked to diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, and many types of cancer.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> American Heart Association. "Mono-unsaturated fats from plants, not animals may reduce risk of death from heart disease and other causes." ScienceDaily. [www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2018/03/180321162252.htm](http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2018/03/180321162252.htm) (accessed December 3, 2018).

### Anticipated Objections

#### ***Mark 7:18-19***

One objection to this might be rooted in the following verse:

“Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?”<sup>92</sup>

The context of this verse is that the Pharisees are challenging Jesus because his disciples are eating with unclean hands. The ritual of eating with clean hands is found in the eleventh tractate of the sixth division of the Mishnah and was a closely observed tradition of the Jews. Instead of discussing the issue of defiled hands with the Pharisees, Jesus broadens the conversation to what really defiles a person. When Jesus talks about what goes into a person from the outside, he is referring to food and when he talks about what comes out of him, he is referring to one's words, thoughts, and actions. He is emphasizing that God is not worried about the human traditions and the impurity of hands and food but instead is focused on the purity of heart. The Pharisees did not like this, but Jesus continued speaking, telling them, “But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a person. But to eat with unwashed hands does not defile anyone.”<sup>93</sup> Jesus was trying explain to them that the defilement that they feared which came from what entered their mouths was not the type of defilement that he was concerned with; he cared most about came out of them through the fruits of their lives. People that were following the law were not as

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<sup>92</sup> Matthew 15:17

<sup>93</sup> Matthew 15:18

impressive to him as people that lived a life pure in heart and pleasing to him. In no way could food spiritually defile someone anymore, so that not be a concern to believers. This verse is in no way giving people permission to eat what they please and even if it was, this verse only mentions food that is considered defiling and the basis of this argument is not about defilement. This verse is one that is cherry-picked to object Christian veganism and/or vegetarianism, but if one takes into account what the kingdom of God is progressing to, it would not make sense if Jesus stated that it does not matter what someone consumes.

### ***The Teachings of Paul***

Another objection would be that Paul says that eating meat offered to idols only worries those who are weak in conscience.<sup>94</sup> On top of that, Peter has a vision where he is told to kill and eat all kinds of animals because they are clean in God's eyes.<sup>95</sup> These verses cannot be applied to diet in respect to Christian ethics, because they are not about ethics; they are discussing a problem prevalent in the early church: Jews holding on to dietary laws that were considered passed away by God. All of these verses were written for Christians who were more concerned about Jewish tradition than a relationship with God and were judging those who no longer followed the Jewish traditions.

### ***Romans 14:2***

The first verse referred to in the previous paragraph says,

“One person believes he may eat anything,

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<sup>94</sup> 1 Corinthians 8:4-8

<sup>95</sup> Acts 10:9-16



while the weak person eats only vegetables. Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains,  
and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats,  
for God has welcomed him.”

Paul is speaking on the issue of diet in the early church. The origin of this problem can be traced back to Leviticus where God establishes the dietary laws for his people. Then, prior to this passage in Romans, along with the teaching that what enters a person from the outside is undefiled, Jesus declares all foods clean.<sup>96</sup> This verse describes two kinds of people: the strong, who believe they are permitted to eat and enjoy all foods, and the weak, who feel convicted to abstain from certain foods. The strong ones are Gentile converts to Christianity and the weak are Jewish converts to Christianity. Jewish converts to Christianity, including Peter, had difficulty fully understanding this teaching and most held fast to their traditions and feared eating unclean meat, meat that was offered to idols in pagan cities, or meat from animals that were not slaughtered in the prescribed Jewish manner.<sup>97</sup> This was not necessarily wrong, as long as those who kept the traditions did not pass judgement on those who did not. The problem arose with the mixing of the Jewish and Gentile converts because both groups looked down each other. Paul advises the strong to not look down on the weak with contempt, and the weak not to condemn the strong *for God has accepted him*. Still, the traditional Jews, caught up in their rules and traditions, believed that it was unacceptable to eat meat offered to idols and judged new believers for doing so, despite that they did not have bad intentions eating meat. This verse is Paul mocking the judgemental Jewish converts telling them to they could restrict themselves and

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<sup>96</sup> Mark 7:15-19

<sup>97</sup> Hendriksen, William. *New Testament Commentary*: Romans.

eat vegetables, weak in mind while those eating meat could indulge in their freedom. Paul also stressed in verse 17 that “For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.” He believed that being a citizen of the kingdom was more a deeper matter than simply what one eats and drinks. He wanted to make it clear that whether or one eats meat or vegetables, clean or unclean foods, was not as important as being righteous before God and having personal reconciliation with him.

### *Jesus*

Christians desiring to eat in way that is pleasing to God should educate themselves on the words and actions of Jesus as relating to diet, remembering to keep historical context in mind. As a Jew, Jesus observed the kashrut and participated in Passover which required for a lamb to be slaughtered and consumed. The gospels account for Jesus consuming fish in multiple instances like in Luke 24:42-43, for example, which says,

“he said to them,  
 ‘Have you anything here to eat?’  
 They gave him a piece of broiled fish,  
 and he took it and ate before them.”

This took place after Jesus’ resurrection when he appeared to his disciples and was hungry. Other records of Jesus eating fish in the Bible can also be referenced, but will not be analyzed because proving whether Jesus did or did not consume meat is not critical to answering the question being addressed in this thesis because meat was a nutritional need in Biblical times. The weather dictated the harvest success and food availability for the season, so animal meat and

products were needed for people alive in Biblical times. It is no secret, however, that food was thematic in the life of Jesus as many of his miracles, parables, and actions involved food. It can be difficult, therefore, to make distinctions between stories involving literal food and the life of Jesus and metaphorical stories doing the same. Aside from the stories, it is important to point out that the very action of Jesus eating with sinners cultural taboo and challenged norms present in the Jewish society. Doing this, Jesus did not break a specific Jewish law, but crossed a line that many Jews had not crossed before: having fellowship with Gentiles.

Following this instance, many accounts involving food and Jesus were symbolic and presented a recurring theme throughout the Gospels: what matters the most is one's heart, not their actions. As mentioned earlier, Jesus even says "it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth; this defiles a person"<sup>98</sup> As opposed to the teachers of the law, he is far more concerned with people that are spiritually defiled than people who are physically defiled.

As mentioned earlier, in Matthew 6 Jesus also said,

"Therefore I tell you,

do not worry about your life,

what you will eat or drink; or about your body,

what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes?"<sup>99</sup>

Jesus is telling his followers to not worry about their physical needs because God will provide. Once again, He emphasizes the importance of not focusing on the physical and simply trusting in God. These examples were not directed toward people who felt a personal conviction

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<sup>98</sup> Matthew 15:11.

<sup>99</sup>Matthew 6:25-34

to abstain from meat or other prohibited food by the kashrut, but were directed to the Pharisees and rule followers who judged others for following the laws but failed to truly follow God and love others. The main emphasis in Jesus' message was that "faith apart from works is dead."<sup>100</sup> He knows each and everyone's hearts and reminds his followers that without faith, doing works in the name of God have no point. Jesus, however, also says in John 14:15 that "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." He says this before giving the disciples the promise of the Holy Spirit. This means that although Jesus values the heart over empty works, following his commandments is a critical part of being a believer.

One might say that vegetarianism is not necessary because Jesus himself consumed animals. This objection is flawed for two reasons: animals were not raised intensively in first-century Palestine and there was a need for meat during Biblical times due to the lack of accessibility to food because of the lack of technology and utter dependence on the weather for harvested crops.

Someone else might object this thesis by quoting Matthew 6:25, where Jesus says,

"Therefore I tell you,  
do not be anxious about your life,  
what you will eat or what you will drink,  
nor about your body, what you will put on.  
Is not life more than food,  
and the body more than clothing?"

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<sup>100</sup>James 2:26

Using this verse to object a theological approach to vegetarianism would be taking issue out of context because the verse is not referring to being mindful of dietary choices, but it is rather referring to trusting in God's provision. In saying this, Jesus is not saying that Christians should not pay attention to what they eat, but that they should not question God's provision. This has nothing to do with making ethical based dietary choices. In fact, in the following verse, Jesus reveals his care for animals when he says "Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them."<sup>101</sup> It would be contradictory of Jesus to say that it does not matter what you eat, but also emphasize his love for animals as represented in Matthew 6:26, for example.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Matthew 6:26

<sup>102</sup> Matthew 6:26 "Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?"

### Conclusion

This thesis aimed to provide readers with a clear understanding of the significance of diet in the Bible. After exploring man's duty as steward of creation and the importance of animals in the Bible, along what God's ideal diet is for man and how the Fall affected this diet brought me to the conclusion that if possible, it Christians today should keep from eating animal products.

Once Christians understand their role in creation, their original diet in the Garden that science echoes, the reality of the treatment of animals in modern factory farming, and God's heart for animals, they must ask themselves whether or not they are honoring him through their diet. I believe that Christians are failing to uphold their assigned job as the stewards of creation if they choose to participate in a system that degrades animals despite especially because while meat once provided necessary nourishment for people, there is no longer a need for animal consumption due to the overabundance of plant-based resources available for sustenance. If the kingdom of God is progressing to a place of no suffering, death, or animal consumption, it only makes sense that Christians would take actions to get to this state if they are capable. It is time for people to acknowledge their role as the stewards of God's creation and shut down the distorted view that God permitted them to dominate animals and the rest of creation.

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