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A Meatless Dominion: Genesis 1 and the Ideal of Vegetarianism

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Abstract

I argue that a strand of biblical tradition, represented in Genesis 1:26–29, depicts a nonviolent relationship between humans and nonhumans—indicated by the practice of vegetarianism—as a moral ideal that represents the divine intention for the Earth community. This argument is supported by four claims. First, the cultural context of Genesis 1 suggests that the "image of God" entails a democratized royal charge of all humans to make God present in a unique manner in the created order. Second, this functional role must be understood in light of the unique deity (Elohim) in Genesis 1, a deity whose peaceful and other-affirming creative act is distinctive from violent creative acts of deities in other ancient Near Eastern cosmologies such as the Enuma Elish. Third, Genesis 1 provides an exegesis of humanity's dominion over animals in verse 29, which limits humanity's food to vegetation. Finally, juxtaposing Genesis 1 with Genesis 9 reveals a nefarious shift from human dominion, which is meant to be peaceful and other-affirming, to something altogether different—a relationship that is built upon terror.

Key words: Genesis; Nonhumans; Animals; Vegetarianism; Dominion; Image of God; Creation; Food Ethics

"There is no justification, either theologically or biblically, that supports the practice of vegetarianism." Those were the words of a Protestant senior pastor to his associate pastor (who was a vegetarian). The conversation came up often between them, each time with a similar outcome: impasse. One believed the Bible supported vegetarianism. The other rejected this possibility outright.

I find the senior pastor's claim incorrect (on both theological and biblical grounds) inasmuch as it provides an absolute negative assessment. While the Bible does not provide a unanimous requirement of vegetarianism, it is my contention that the first creation narrative in Genesis, especially when read in juxtaposition to the priestly account of a postdiluvian re–creation narrative, provides a foundation for the affirmation of an attitude of nonviolence towards nonhuman animals, particularly with reference to humanity's role as the "image of God" and the practice of vegetarianism. In other words, there is a least a strand of tradition within the biblical literature that views vegetarianism (and more generally nonviolence) as the divinely intended ideal for the Earth community.

To argue this claim, I suggest the possibility of an animal–friendly hermeneutic with which one can approach passages such as Genesis 1 (and more particularly verses 26–29). I then engage in such a hermeneutic, drawing out how the cultural context of Genesis 1 frames the claim that humans bear the "image of God" as a democratized royal charge to lead the Earth community to a state of peace and mutual prosper-

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ity. This reading is further solidified by the manner in which the Priestly author/redactor exegetes humanity's dominion over animals in verse 29—human are not permitted to eat the animals. Finally, juxtaposing Genesis 1 with Genesis 9 reveals a shift from human dominion, which is meant to be peaceful and other–affirming, to something altogether different—a relationship that is built upon terror. Synthesizing these claims, I argue that the Priestly strand presents vegetarianism as an ideal for human behavior. Such nonviolence represents the original divine intention for the created order.

Not *the* Biblical View, but an Animal–Friendly Hermeneutic

It must be said from the onset: I would agree with the aforementioned pastor's claim *if* the intention were that there is no *clear and singular* biblical imposition on Jews or Christians to be vegetarians. However, this lack of imposition is due in no small part to the reality that the Bible, a document written and redacted over hundreds of years in a broad spectrum of socio–political contexts influenced by various cultural milieus, more often than not fails to present clear impositions regarding controversial issues. For example, there is no single biblical view regarding war (Birch et al.: 191–39), ethnic cleansing, and slavery (Phelps: 13–23). Likewise, there is no single biblical view regarding the moral treatment of animals. Andrew Linzey, a prominent animal theology, acknowledges this point in his response to the critique of Mark McEntire that his theology is "utterly foreign to the Old Testament" (McEntire: 99; see Linzey: 112–13).

Furthermore, the primary focus of many biblical voices is human beings in relation to one another and God. However, there are also passages that echo a discontent with this focus. These passages suggest the possibility of developing an animal–friendly hermeneutic—a way of interpreting (or even critically retrieving) passages of the Bible in a manner that challenges the anthropocentric assumptions with which so many interpreters (especially in the West) have read biblical texts (Bauckham 2010; McLaughlin 2014). Such a hermeneutic would bear similarities to hermeneutical keys employed by liberation and feminist theologians (Boff; Ruether: 17–33).

A number of passages are worthy of note. Animals share the sixth day of creation with humans (Gen 1:24–31). In Genesis 2:18–19, animals are not created as resources for Adam, but rather companions with Adam. In Genesis 9, animals, as well as the Earth itself, are included in the Noahic covenant (vv 8–11). The Psalmist claims that God saves humans and animals alike (Ps 36:6), a passage that was formational for Karl Barth's understanding of the nonhuman animal (Barth: 181; Thompson: 181–95). Isaiah 11:1–9 presents an edenic vision of cosmic harmony that includes animals (McLaughlin 2014: chapter 6). Jesus compares his love for his followers to a "good" shepherd who cares deeply for his sheep (John 10:1–16). Jesus does maintain that humans are worth more than sparrows—but not that sparrows have no worth (Matt 10:29–31). Norm Phelps draws upon this saying of Jesus (and others) to develop a biblical ethic of animals (Phelps: 144–45). Paul suggests that the entire groaning creation will participate in the glory of the liberated children of God (Rom 8:18–22). Brendan Byrne develops this passage toward an ecological ethic (Byrne: 83–93). The cosmic christologies of Colossians 1:15–20 and Ephesians 1:3–10 portray a cosmic reconciliation (Balabanski: 94–107; Deane–Drummond: 100–07).

As noted, a number of contemporary biblical scholars and theologians have explored these passages (and others) and argued that they represent the potential of the Bible to promote the extension of theological and moral concern beyond the scope of the human community. In doing so, it is essential to be exegetically responsible. If an animal–friendly hermeneutic is to carry weight in the realm of biblical studies, biblical theology, or even constructive theology, it must entail a method that cannot fall under the critique of proof–texting. I seek here to add to these voices by exploring Genesis 1 in an exegetically sound manner.

Of course, this sword cuts both ways. Those who dismiss Judaism and Christianity as inherently anthropocentric often fail to take adequate account of the passages they cite. Such was the issue with Lynn White's famous essay in which he identifies the Priestly creation narrative in Genesis 1 as the source for an anthropocentric attitude that, once adopted and defended by Western Christianity, paved the way for an ecological crisis.

At any rate, the point I intend to make here is twofold. First, I do *not* argue that the Bible presents a monolithic view with regard to the moral status of nonhuman animals. As I have noted elsewhere, it is important to remember that

> from a narrative standpoint, the God who remembered "Noah and all the wild animals and all the domestic animals that were with him in the ark" (Genesis 8:1) and made a covenant with all creatures (9:9–10) also seemed to enjoy the smell of burning animal flesh (8:21) [McLaughlin 2016].

In considering the human relationship to nonhuman animals in the Bible, one cannot ignore less–than–animal–friendly passages, including, but not limited to, those advocating animal sacrifice (although, see Morgan: 32–45; Hyland: 9–19) and conveying a divine command to slaughter animals in war (see 1 Sam 15:1–3).

Second, I contend that a careful exegesis of particular biblical passages reveals the possibility of an animal–friendly hermeneutic, one that portrays the ideal relationship between humans and nonhumans as one of nonviolence. In light of these two points, for the remainder of this article I focus my efforts on applying an animal–friendly hermeneutic to the Priestly creation narrative in Genesis 1. To aid in this effort, I examine how the Priestly postdiluvian re-creation account in Genesis 9 illuminates the nonviolent image of Genesis 1.

Genesis 1 and the Nonhuman Animal

I focus on the Priestly creation account in Genesis 1 for three primary reasons. First, influential theologians such as Thomas Aquinas have interpreted the passage in explicitly anthropocentric terms (see McLaughlin 2012). Aquinas adopts Aristotle's hierarchy of souls, writing,

> From the order observed by nature...the imperfect are for the use of the perfect; as the plants make use of the earth for their nourishment, and animals make use of plants, and man makes use of both plants and animals. Therefore it is in keeping with the order of nature, that man should be master over animals [Aquinas I.96.1].

Aquinas further follows Aristotle in claiming that humans can hunt nonhuman animals as a "natural right" qua humans (ibid. 1). The significant point is that, for Aquinas, this language of human mastery over the created order and the practices it justifies derives from Genesis 1: "In describing man's production, Scripture uses a special way of speaking, to show that other things were made for man's sake" (Aquinas: I.91.4 ad 1).

Second, the anthropocentric interpretation of Genesis 1 from thinkers like Aquinas contributed to the claim, made by Lynn White, that the Genesis text is inherently anthropocentric. White writes:

> Christianity inherited from Judaism...a striking story of creation. By gradual stages a loving and all–powerful God had created light and darkness, the heavenly bodies, the earth and all its plants, animals, birds, and fishes. Finally God had created Adam and, as an afterthought, Eve to keep man from being lonely. Man names all the animals, thus establishing his dominance over them. God planned all of this explicitly for man's benefit and rule: no item in the physical creation had any purpose save to serve man's purpose. And, although man's body is made of clay, he is not simply part of nature: he is made in God's image [White: 1205].

It is of note that White conflates Genesis 1 and 2 in this criticism. It is also of note that he is not here addressing *interpretations* of the creation myths; he is rather suggesting that the narratives themselves are the root of Christianity's anthropocentrism.

Because Genesis 1 has both provided a foundation for anthropocentric views in thinkers such as Aquinas and received criticism for being inherently anthropocentric from thinkers such as White, it is a passage worth exploring. As I argue, however, the passage is best read in a *non–anthropocentric* manner. Here we arrive at the third reason I focus on Genesis 1. Despite its history and reputation, the text provides striking grounds from which to reject anthropocentrism. It furthermore provides a foundation for the claim that vegetarianism is an ideal and, in turn, meat–eating is a divine concession to a world that is no longer as God desires it to be.

In what follows, I unpack this claim. To do so, I examine the claim that humans bear the "image of God" in light of both the context of the ancient Near East and a comparison of the depiction of Elohim in Genesis 1 to the depiction of Marduk in the Babylonian cosmogony the *Enuma Elish*. Next, I consider how the dietary restrictions implied in verses 29–30 (and the "primordial peace" the verses assume) provide an important cipher for how readers ought to understand the notion of "dominion." Finally, I compare Genesis 1 with Genesis 9, arguing that the postdiluvian re-creation narrative further highlights the non–anthropocentric tones of the Priestly creation narrative.

Created in the Image of (a Particular) God

> Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."

> So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.
>
> 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 air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth" [Gen 1:26–28].

These three verses have been among the most frequently cited in Christian history with regard to the development of a theological anthropology. One is hard pressed to find an influential theologian who has not built his or her theology of the human upon the notion that humans beings bear (or at least originally bore) the "image of God." Moreover, contemporary systematic theologies invariably draw upon the phrase when addressing the doctrine of the human person.

But what does the phrase mean? Historically, the dominant interpretation of the phrase was what contemporary scholars refer to as the "substantive interpretation" (Cairns: 116–19; Grenz: 142–61). This reading focuses on the essential similarities between God and humans and the essential differences between humanity and the rest of creation. For theologians such as Augustine, these similarities and differences come down to two human faculties: reason and free will (Augustine: XII.24).

In his examination of the historical development of the doctrine of the image of God, Stanley Grenz maintains that the roots of the substantive interpretation lie not in the Priestly creation narrative but rather in Hellenistic philosophy (Grenz: 143). He notes the propensity toward the substantive view in Irenaeus, whose influence is evident in subsequent theologians (Grenz: 145–52). In the East, these include Clement of Alexandria, Gregory of Nyssa, and finally John of Damascus. In the West, Augustine set a firm groundwork for a substantive interpretation. He argued that the image of God, which entails rationality and freewill, sets humans over the nonhuman creation (Augustine: XII.24). Grenz traces Augustine's influence through Aquinas, who ascribed at least an aspect of the image of God to all humans on account of their rational soul. After a lull in the substantive interpretation with early Reformers like Luther and Calvin, subsequent Protestants returned to this view (Grenz: 153–73).

As Grenz's overview suggests, the substantive interpretation is historically normative. However, modern biblical scholars have questioned the exegetical validity of this view. J. R. Middleton argues that "most patristic, medieval, and modern interpreters typically asked not an exegetical, but a speculative, question: In what way are humans *like* God and *unlike* animals?" (Middleton 2005: 18–19). For these theologians, the image of God signaled how humans were similar to God and different from animals. And, as Douglas John Hall notes, "'different' almost invariably implies 'higher,' 'nobler,' 'loftier,' 'better'" (Hall: 90).

Many contemporary biblical scholars have challenged this speculative reading on two fundamental levels (for exceptions, see McKeown: 27; Sarna: 12; Waltke and Fredericks: 65; Reno: 52–53). First, scholars such as Middleton and W. S. Towner argue that the syntax of Genesis 1 suggests a functional interpretation of the image of God—an interpretation in which humans bear the image of God in order to fulfill some role within the Earth community (Middleton 2005: 24–29; Towner: 341–56). The authors and redactors of Genesis 1 connect the object created to the purpose for its existence. God creates a "dome in the midst of the waters" so that it can "separate the waters from the waters" (Gen 1:6); God creates the "lights in the dome of the sky" so that they "separate the day from the night," provide "signs and for seasons and for days and years," and "give light upon the earth" (Gen 1:14–15). Following this pattern, God creates humans in God's image *so that* they might have dominion over all nonhuman life on the earth (Middleton 2005: 53–55).

Second, this functional interpretation is further solidified by the cultural milieu of the ancient Near East. In other texts from that socio–historical context, an image of a god—typically reserved for a royal figure—served as the mediator through which that god accomplished his or her work on earth (Middleton 2005: 93–145). In contrast to other ancient Near Eastern views, however, in Genesis this royal role is democratized inasmuch as *all* humans bear the image of God (Fretheim: 46–48).

From these exegetically sound arguments, it follows that, in the words of Ellen van Wolde, "The human being is created to make God present in his creation" (Wolde: 28). But how should humans fulfill this role as the image of God? What should exercising the dominion implied by the image of God look like?

Terrance Fretheim notes the issue that, while so much theological thought has focused on what the word "image" entails, less emphasis has been placed on the God behind the image. If the image denotes a functional role of humanity—to make God uniquely present in God's creation—then it is essential

to consider the particular God whose image humanity bears (Fretheim: 48). It is, however, important to note that there are disparate portrayals of God throughout the Bible (Johnson: 176–78; Dick: 262). As a point of clarification, my focus in on Elohim in the Priestly creation narrative.

To consider adequately the character of Elohim, it is essential to consider Genesis 1 in its wider cultural context. Israel's familiarity with cosmogonies from the ancient Near East makes the similarities and differences between these myths and the Priestly creation account noteworthy. The differences are particularly noteworthy, as they suggest places where the Priestly authors/redactors intended to distinguish their mythology (and thus their worldview) from that of their neighbors—for example, in democratizing the image of God (Moberly: 50–54; McKeown: 12). As Bill Arnold argues, the author of Genesis 1 "was familiar with Egyptian and Mesopotamian cosmogonies and intended to present an alternative worldview" (Arnold: 30). To understand this alternative worldview, one must understand the cosmogonical worldviews with which the text contrasts.

The *Enuma Elish*, a Babylonian cosmogony, provides an example of such a worldview. This account depicts Marduk's defeat of Tiamat and his resulting enthronement over the other gods (who commissioned him to battle with Tiamat). Marduk uses Tiamat's corpse to create the earth. Marduk then uses the blood of Tiamat's son and consort, Kingu, to create humans. The purpose for the creation of humans is the service of the gods: "He shall be charged with the service of the gods that they may be at ease" (see the translation in Wolde: 189–94).

There are a number of differences between the Priestly narrative and the *Enuma Elish* (see Cotter: 10). As one example, in Genesis humans are created to share in Elohim's rule as opposed to be slaves to the gods—a point at which Genesis also differs from the *Epic of Atrahasis* (Middleton 2005: 133; Brueggemann: 79: Fretheim: 65, 77). Among the most significant of these differences is that the *Enuma Elish* represents a cosmogonical motif in ancient Near Eastern literature: a *chaoskampf* or "combat myth." In this motif, a deity battles against external forces (such as chaos) and, through this violent struggle, imposes order upon the world (see Middleton 2004: 341–55). In the *Enuma Elish*, the order of the world emerges out of war and murder. Indeed, the earth itself is made from a divine corpse, and humans are made from a slain god's blood.

There are themes of combat with chaos in the Hebrew Scriptures (Middleton 2004: 343–44). In Genesis 1, however, there is no struggle against chaos. (I do not intend by this claim to argue that God creates "out of nothing." The presence of something that is *tohu wa–bohu* in Genesis 1:2 grinds against an *ex nihilo* interpretation. However, there is no hint of struggle between God and this something. God does not need to conquer it. God simply orders it.) Rather, as Middleton notes, "God's relationship to the world predates the origin of violence, which is portrayed as beginning with human disobedience in Gen 3" (Middleton 2004: 352; also Arnold: 30–32). Unlike the *Enuma Elish*, the act of creation in Genesis 1 does not burgeon out of violence (Bauckham 2012: 183–84). In fact, even those creatures which typically symbolize the necessity for *Chaoskampf* (like the *tanninim* or "dragons") are, according to Middleton, "part of God's peaceable kingdom" (Middleton 2004: 352–53). God's act of creation is an act of sovereignty that includes other creatures in the creative process. Whereas Marduk creates by violently conquering all other powers, Elohim creates by peacefully enabling other powers and giving them their own space to be and become.

The significance of this difference is of particular import for the doctrine of the image of God. If the image of God entails that humans make God present in a unique way in the world by sharing in the divine rule; and if the God whose image humanity bears establishes creation without violence and by enabling others to be and to become, then the doctrine itself does not justify human violence towards animals. Indeed, such violence strikes against the character of Elohim (Middleton 2004: 354). If this claim is accurate, the reader should expect some evidence of nonviolent dominion. And, if one reads past verse 28, one gets exactly this evidence.

Dominion and the Eating of Animal Flesh

> God said, "See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so [Gen 1:29–30)].

The notion that the image of God entails a nonviolent and other–affirming relationship between humans and nonhumans is further solidified in the Genesis text. Ironically, one of the central terms upon which this claim hinges is "dominion,"

a term historically reserved for the more negative aspect of the Judeo–Christian tradition (see White; Santmire: 1–7). There is in fact a double irony, because the term "dominion" even exceeds the "stewardship" interpretation in which humans must be wise keepers (and utilizers) of the nonhuman world (see Bauckham 2010, 2–12). Beyond both despotism and stewardship, "dominion" in Genesis 1 suggests a human rule that God intends to establish—a nonviolent Earth community.

This claim may strike readers as odd, given that the Hebrew words behind the English terms "subdue" (*kabash*) and "dominion" (*radah*) often carry a violent, military connotation (Middleton 2005: 51). However, four points must be made here. First, and for the purpose of this article, only the term *radah* refers to animals. The term *kabash* refers to humanity's task regarding the Earth. Hence, even if *kabash* has a violent connotation, it would refer to cultivation of the Earth, not humanity's rule vis–à–vis nonhuman animals.

Second, as Towner notes, the organization of Genesis 1 suggests that the authors/redactors intend the terms *kabash* and *radah* to reflect "the Creator's own strong, universal, and loving 'dominion'" (Towner 2005, 247–48). David Cotter offers a similar assessment:

> As God is to the entire universe—the One who creates a good, blessed, nonviolent place where life is possible and order reigns—so Humanity is to be to the world. We live up to this responsibility when we make the world good, live in just nonviolence, and render the blessed life possible here [Cotter: 18].

Thus, *radah* must be understood in the context of the juxtaposition between Elohim and other deities such as Marduk. It follows that *radah* should be read not as a violent rule—a rule that would mirror a *chaoskampf*—but rather a rule that is peaceful and other–enabling.

Third, while *radah* often occurs in passages dealing with warfare and slavery, it is frequently used in a manner that is modified by a negative adjective. That is, on occasions (e.g., Lev 25:43) those who rule are warned not to rule "ruthlessly" (*perek*). The addition of this adjective suggests that the connotation of *radah* itself is not *necessarily* negative. Indeed, in 1 Kings 4:24, the rule (*radah*) of Solomon results in peace. Given these claims, I am in agreement with Middleton, who maintains that the meaning of both *radah* and *kabash* does not entail the violent images evoked elsewhere in scripture (Middleton 2005: 50–54).

Fourth, and perhaps most significant, the intended meaning of *radah* must be understood in terms of the subsequent verses. Genesis 1:29–30 represents another common ancient Near Eastern motif: a primordial age of peace (see Westermann: 164–65). Gerhard von Rad notes that, in this motif, there is "no shedding of blood within the animal kingdom, and no murderous action by man!" He continues to suggest that the text thus entails "a limitation in the human right of dominion" (von Rad: 61).

But von Rad may be revealing a problematic assumption here. The nonviolence implied by Genesis 1:29 does not *limit* dominion; it *defines* dominion. Indeed, Genesis 1:29 is the closest in–text exegesis we have of the Hebrew term *radah* in the Priestly creation narrative.

If verse 29 exegetes *radah*, then, as Claus Westermann notes, human dominion "cannot mean killing them for food" (Westermann: 159). As Richard Bauckham states, because "neither humans nor animals are carnivorous," it is the case that "human dominion over other living creatures involves no conflict. Its exercise ensures that there is no competition for living space or resources. All is peaceable" (Bauckham 2012: 183–84).

Significantly, then, *radah* not only contraindicates despotism, it also goes beyond a mere stewardship of the nonhuman world. Humanity's rule is to lead to peace, and humans are to embody this peace first and foremost in the manner in which they rule. They are to image Elohim's enabling and other–affirming rule, not the violence of Marduk. There is no hint that this rule is about wise stewardship over the gift God has given humanity. Instead, humanity bears a responsibility on behalf of other members of the community of life.

Given the importance of Genesis 1:29 for understanding how the authors and redactors of Genesis 1 intend the term *radah*, it is immensely surprising that so many theologians and biblical scholars, in their exposition on terms such as "image of God" and "dominion," underplay or ignore the verse (for exceptions, see Rogerson: 24–26). Douglas John Hall, whose work is instrumental in understanding the image of God as loving dominion, never cites the verse (Hall: 246). Likewise, Middleton posits that the image of God provides an ethical framework through which one can rethink human engagement of creation. Still, he does not explore this link between a restricted diet and humanity's *radah* (Middleton 2005: 52). In his introductory text to the Hebrew Scriptures, Brueggemann addresses Genesis 1:26–28 and the notion of the image of God, but he never mentions verses 29–30 (Brueggemann: 418).

These omissions may be innocuous enough, given the limited (or extremely broad) focus of the authors. However, verses 29–30 are also frequently side–stepped or altogether ignored in commentaries on Genesis. For example, Russell Reno, in his contribution to Brazos' theological commentaries on scripture, offers no theological significance whatsoever to the verses. Reno does, however, offer an implicit significance of verse 29 in reference to Genesis 9:1–3 (Reno: 124). Similarly, Arnold completely bypasses verses 29–30 in his exposition on Genesis. Cotter also avoids them with the sole exception of noting their place in an outline of Genesis 1 (Cotter: 11). Towner (2001) completely skips over them in his commentary on Genesis 1. McKeown also largely overlooks them—especially in his commentary (McKeown: 64). In his theological reflections, however, he notes that verse 29 highlights the theme of "seed" in primeval history (McKeown: 218). More significantly, he notes that the nature of humanity's rule—that of harmony—is "underlined by the indication that the animals are not a source of food at this stage, but they and the human beings eat green plants and the produce of the trees (1:29)" (McKeown: 228). McKeown offers no further theological (or ethical) reflection—this brief explanation exhausts his engagement of the passage.

There are exceptions to the dearth of engagement of the dietary verses of Genesis 1 (Fretheim: 219). In many cases, however, this engagement is extremely limited and unclear. For example, regarding both verses 29 and 30, Nahum Sarna writes,

> God makes provision for the substance of man and beast—a reminder that man is still a creature totally dependent on the benevolence of God. The narrative presupposes a pristine state of vegetarianism. Isaiah's vision of the ideal future in 11:7 and 62:25 sees the carnivorous animals becoming herbivorous [Sarna: 13–14).

Sarna notes the presupposition of the text and traces it forward to the eschatological vision of Isaiah. Yet he makes no claims concerning the ethical import of this presupposition.

Perhaps I am reading too much into verse 29 and therefore placing too great a burden on authors to engage the passage in their examination of humanity's rule. The question: Do I overstate my case that Genesis 1:29–30 qualifies *radah* in a morally significant manner? After all, Westermann argues that these verses speak to divine provision for creatures as opposed to divine prohibition against the consumption of meat (see Westermann: 25–26). While it is true that Genesis 1 includes no explicit prohibition against the consumption of meat, the prohibition is implied by the Priestly postdiluvian re–creation account, which contains both striking similarities to and differences from Genesis 1.

Dominion, "Fear" and "Dread," and Meat–Eating

> God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth. The fear and dread of you shall rest on every animal of the earth, and on every bird of the air, on everything that creeps on the ground, and on all the fish of the sea; into your hand they are delivered. Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you; and just as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything" [Gen 9:1–3].

Bill Arnold writes, "The new, post–diluvian cosmic order begins as the old has done, reverting essentially to a pre–creation state" (108). The similarities are clear. God's act of creation once again begins with a world of water. As with the first creation account, God brings forth land, blesses humans, and commands them to "fill the earth."

But there are significant differences as well. As Arnold notes, "The new order is not altogether the same as the old, since it also involves an alteration of the food chain" (Arnold: 109). The human diet gets a significant new source of protein. This dietary allowance, which suggests that God did not grant humans nonhuman animals as a food source in the first creation narrative, represents a shift between the first order and this new postdiluvian order (see Matthews: 401).

What is the reader to make of this shift? Sarna offers a positive reading: "Man's power over the animal kingdom is confirmed and enhanced" (Sarna: 60). Sarna recognizes the shared peaceful vision Genesis 1 and Isaiah 11 (Sarna: 13–14). However, ironically, he also maintains that dominion is "confirmed and enhanced" (better?) when that vision is obliterated in the postdiluvian re–creation account. In a similar fashion, Arnold argues that God's provision of meat re–establishes "God's will that [humans] represent [God] on earth by exercising dominion" (Arnold: 109).

Sarna and Arnold read the re–creation narrative of Genesis 9 in a positive light. The divine will comes to fruition, and human dominion is confirmed and enhanced. Such a positive assessment strikes against my claim that Genesis 1

exegetes *radah* (dominion) with a vision of nonviolence (more specifically, vegetarianism). My interpretation of *radah* in light of Genesis 1:29 would suggest an *absence* or *warping* of dominion rather that its confirmation and enhancement. Which reading bears the evidence of the text?

In answering these questions, it is important to note another difference between the creation account of Genesis 1 and the re–creation account of Genesis 9: the absence of the word *radah*. While the text reaffirms the divine blessing of humans and the mandate to fill the Earth via procreation, it does not reaffirm humanity's dominion over nonhuman animals. Nor does it reaffirm the command to "subdue" (*ḳabash*) the earth.

There is no mention of dominion in Genesis 9. In its place, new terms appear: *mowra*' ("fear") and *chath* ("dread"). These terms bear a consistently negative connotation in biblical literature. Because the *radah* that leads to peace of Genesis 1 is replaced by such unpleasant qualities, I concur with McKeown's claim that a "sinister" shift is afoot in this passage: "The language of 9:2 in contrast to 1:28 holds the tension between the benevolent Creator with his willingness to bless all his creatures, on the one hand, and the effect of human rebellion with its power to sour relationships, on the other" (McKeown: 64). Human dominion in Genesis 1 entailed the absence of violence toward nonhuman animals. Humans could domesticate the animals (see Middleton: 51), but this domestication was not for the purpose of food; it was for the purpose of communal peace.

To the point: In Genesis 9, the word *radah* disappears just as God gives human permission to eat the animals. The best conclusion from this evidence is that the original *radah* of humanity is compromised by a new created order in which, in the words of Cotter, "God gives humanity an outlet for its violence" (Cotter: 59–60). As von Rad writes, "The relationship of man to the animals no longer resembles that which was decreed in ch. 1. The animal world lives in fear and terror of man" (von Rad: 131). Norman Habel captures these notions when he writes, "Humans are now transformed into beings that terrify the rest of the animal world. . . . Clearly, this tradition reflects an extreme reversal of the peaceful memory of Eden and the prophetic dream of lions, lambs and humans dwelling in harmony" (Habel: 107).

Far from enhancing or confirming human dominion over nonhuman animals, Genesis 9 suggests that dominion is no longer possible. Something has changed in the created order, which requires a departure from *radah* and a "sinister" shift to "fear" and "dread." The peaceful community that exemplified the peaceful and other–affirming rule of Elohim in Genesis 1 becomes a community worthy of the chaos exemplified in Genesis 6. Indeed, if there is a *chaosḳampf* in Genesis, it occurs in Genesis 6–9, not Genesis 1. And from this *chaosḳampf* comes a war–torn community.

It is imperative to make one parenthetical (but essential) point here. I am aware of the scientific issues implied by the protological claims of Genesis 1 (see McLaughlin 2014: 93–94). I am not here advocating creationism. Nor am I arguing that there was a historical era in which predation did not exist among mammals. There is simply no responsible manner to maintain this position (see Southgate). However, I tend to accept the view that Genesis 1 appears as an eschatological hope rather than a historical reality (See Bauckham 2010: 24; Rogerson: 22–23).

Synthesis: Vegetarianism as a Biblical Ideal

To this point, I have made three points.

First, the image of God entails a functional role for humanity that must be enacted in a manner that reflects the nonviolent and other–enabling rule of Elohim.

Second, Genesis 1:29 is exegetically significant for the meaning of *radah* inasmuch as it reveals that humanity's rule must be one of a peaceful respect for the lives of other animals (i.e., vegetarianism).

And third, the re–creation narrative of Genesis 9 constitutes a "sinister" shift in humanity's role in the community of life inasmuch as the original vegetarian diet is replaced by an omnivorous diet and, as a corollary, *radah* is replaced by "fear" and "dread."

Synthesizing these three points, while I acknowledge that other biblical strands view the human/nonhuman relationship differently (see Dick: 243–70), I nonetheless maintain that one can understand a strand of the biblical tradition portraying vegetarianism as an ideal. Granted, this ideal is not always possible. But the divine permission to consume animal flesh is not a positive development in the Priestly narrative. Eating meat is permissible, but it is not ideal. It appears as a concession of God to a violent world, not as a benevolent design for the wellbeing of the human creature. Thus, as John Rogerson argues, "Genesis 1 read in the context of Genesis 9 is not a mandate for the human exploitation of the world; it is a critique of the actual state of human behaviour" (Rogerson: 27).

It is therefore no surprise that First Isaiah (11:1–9) envisions a new creation in which the ideal of God's original creation comes to fruition (for a fuller development of this point, see McLaughlin 2014: 96–113). In this vision, a truly just humanity leads the nonhuman world into a state emblematic of the primordial peace. Isaiah's prophecy should remind contemporary readers that humanity's royal role of leading creation toward a community of peace is not merely a primordial myth; it is also a future hope (see Bauckham 2010: 124–25; Clough: 120–21; Camosy: 46–48).

For these reasons, I contend that the pastor's claim I recounted in the introduction is egregiously incorrect. I furthermore contend that, in the Priestly strand, vegetarianism is the *ideal* or divinely intended mode of interaction between humans and nonhuman animals. To practice vegetarianism in a manner that is both health–conscious and ecologically responsible is to embody *radah*.

This conclusion is, historically speaking, starkly counter–intuitive. It grinds against White's contention that "dominion" is inherently anthropocentric in a manner that is ecologically harmful. It also contests Aquinas's claim that Genesis speaks of all things existing for humanity's sake (not to mention his justification of hunting). It rejects Francis Bacon's claim that, through a scientific pillaging of nature's secrets, we can regain dominion over the created order, including animals (see Merchant: 164–90). The vision of animal experimentation in *New Atlantis* does not exemplify *radah*. It furthermore challenges the claim that humans are to be good stewards of nonhuman "resources."

It is in refusing to harm animals, in refusing to hunt them and eat them, that humans truly epitomize *radah*. When we act otherwise—when we harm, hunt, and kill—we are not acting in the Priestly tradition of dominion. Rather, we are embodying the postdiluvian relationship of "fear" and "dread."

Conclusion

While there is no clear and singular view with regard to how humans ought to treat animals in the Bible, there nonetheless exists a strand of tradition (i.e., the Priestly tradition in Genesis 1:26–29) that views vegetarianism as the original ideal for the Earth community. Employing an animal–friendly hermeneutic highlights how a functional interpretation of the image of God in conjunction with the particular depiction of Elohim in Genesis 1 suggests that humanity's role in creation is to lead all creatures into a mutually affirming peace. Verse 29 provides an in–text exegesis of *radah*, revealing that humanity's exercise of dominion entails embodying the nonviolent practice of vegetarianism.

While the postdiluvian re–creation account in Genesis 9 does depict God as expanding the human diet to include meat (and therefore expands human actions to include violence), this permission appears as a compromise to what God originally intended. It is not an affirmation of *radah*, as that word is stricken from the creation account. It is rather a shift toward a world characterized by "fear" and "dread."

Collectively, these claims suggest that God intended humans to bear a special responsibility *within* the Earth community—not *over* it. The human is to embody Elohim's peaceful and other–affirming rule. Doing so entails living at peace with other members of the community—indeed, exemplifying peace by practicing it (e.g., through vegetarianism). This nonviolent role carries through from primordial creation to eschatological hope. It follows that vegetarianism has biblical roots. Jews and Christians can embrace the practice as a form of honoring God's intention for the cosmos, both protological and eschatological.

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