



Why I'm a Vegan, again, this time for "life". *(His life, their life, and my life)*

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Growing up, animals were my best friends. Sure, I hung out with a lot of guys who were my "buddies", but the most loyal and faithful friends were my dogs. The depth and intensity of their ability to "read" my emotions were amazing, especially as I struggled to deal with the difficulties of life. If I was a little discouraged, they'd come up and try to get me to play. Bouncing around at my feet barking, they'd draw me up and out of my negative cloud. When I was really depressed, they'd quietly lay their head in my lap. Like sensitive counselors, they seemed to know exactly what I needed. Just someone to be there, soul to soul.

Over the years, it became obvious that other animals also had wonderful capacities to think, feel, and develop special bonds of friendship. In other the capacities that come from a "soul". I remember rescuing and raising a young swamp rabbit, who I named Harvey. He grew to trust my love, clearly enjoying the safety and comfort of my arms. Harvey was just one of many "wild" animals I had the privilege to rescue and get to know personally. Not only wild ones, but domestic "food" animals too.

On one of my hikes as a boy in the woods and fields near my home, I heard something coming up behind me. Turning around, I was surprised to see a young male calf with the birth defect of dwarfism. He was so cute, covered in thick curly hair, with shortened legs that made him look almost like a little stuffed toy. Looking around, I saw a herd of cows far away from us. For some reason, he had left his own group to come to me. I walked him back to the herd to hopefully find his mother. But as he went into

the midst of the herd bellowing for his mom, the adult cows began to moo at him rejectingly and push him away. Apparently, his deformity caused the cows to see him not as a young calf, but an outsider. He seems so confused and even hurt.

Eventually, he came back over to me, bellowing with a sound that seemed to beg me for something. Obviously, he was hoping I could give him the food, warmth, protection, and safety that every baby desires above all else. After petting, rubbing, and playing together, I left him near the herd and went home to do my own bellowing. I begged my dad to find out who owned the cows, so we could adopt this little orphan. Though my dad was a compassionate man who loved animals, he was also very pragmatic. He said no, because it was illegal for us to have a cow in a residential area. For days, I went out to watch the little calf wander around the edge of the herd calling for his mother. Then one day, I found his body lying in the pasture, apparently having died from starvation or loneliness. I've since learned that orphaned baby elephants rescued into sanctuaries must have a human keeper live with them 24/7. Even with sufficient food, young elephants and young cows can gradually die of loneliness unless someone is there to meet their emotional and social needs.

My desire to learn more about animal souls and relationships led me to pursue a career in ethology, the study of animal minds, emotions, and behavior. As soon as I graduated from LSU with a degree concentrated in psychology and biological sciences, I landed a dream job at the

Audubon Zoological Gardens in New Orleans. I became a caretaker of elephants and large carnivores (yep - lions and tigers and bears – and many others). It was like having a bunch of exotic personal pets, yet somebody else paid all the expenses, and then gave me a paycheck. Spending all day, every day, caring for their physical, psychological, and social needs allowed me to get to know each one individually. Not only was each species unique, but within a species, individuals had very different personalities. It was like living in the Garden of Eden.

Every morning as I walked into my area of the zoo, the Asian Domain, my animal friends would smell my scent coming, hear my keys jingling, and begin calling for me – each little soul in his or her own way. For example, Akela, the male tiger, would let out an unbelievably loud, deep moan that sounded like a ghost in an old haunted house movie. That’s a tiger’s way of begging, just like the little dwarf calf bellowing. Akela wasn’t asking for food. What he wanted most was for me to rub and hug his giant head. Physical touch from his keepers, his best friends, was what he craved most.

Mandy, our soft and gentle clouded-leopard would greet me with her characteristic “chuffing”. That’s a big feline technique of blowing air across her lips, making a loud fluttering sound. She was asking me to climb up to my face for a good morning hug.

I could go on with hundreds of zoo stories, and even more from years working as an emergency veterinary assistant, then as a rescuer and rehabilitator for the state of Louisiana department of Wildlife, and for decades serving families as an animal-assisted marriage and family counselor. Yes, that means I’m old, just an old sheepdog of the Good Shepherd. But, I’ll save those stories for later. As you can guess from what I’ve shared so far about animals in my life, the decision to practice a vegan diet back then was first for them.

In college and at the zoo, I began researching the way cows, pigs, and chickens were treated in modern, “factory-farms”. I was soon shocked and horrified over the physical, mental, and emotional pain, fear, and inhumane death that the majority of our “food” had to suffer for our pleasure. I first started my vegan diet around 1980. My own health and nutrition was not my first concern. In fact, back then there wasn’t nearly as much research available to support the health benefits of vegan and vegetarian diets as there is now.

I was an inconsistent vegan. Since there was no “Whole Foods” store or special isles in other groceries like there are today, it was very difficult to prepare a complete, balanced diet back then. What little was available was scarce and expensive. So, I made my own homemade soy milk every Monday night for the week. It was cheap, but I was too impatient to do it right, so it tasted terrible. Anyway, that reality along with social pressures tempted me into giving up veganism, switching to vegetarianism, and eventually to the old animal-parts diet that most of my friends ate.

I avoided reading anything about factory-farms or new nutrition research for years. But occasionally I’d remember old info or stumble across new studies about both and become convicted. So gradually, I stopped eating cows and pigs. I still ate chickens, fish, milk, and eggs. My rationale was that cows and pigs are more capable of thinking and feeling so they suffer more. In addition to the little dwarf calf that I had the privilege to know soul to soul as a boy, at the zoo we helped care for a young wild boar, named Arnold, that we rescued. Getting to know little Arnold forever changed my thinking about “bacon”. Even eating “chicken” parts finally ended, after discovering more about the “modern” methods of massive poultry-factories (added hormones, warehouses packed with thousands of birds in conditions that mirrored Nazi concentration camps, and slaughtering processes that were worse). I stopped eating fish as I learned about the increasing problems

of heavy metals and toxins absorbed from their polluted water environment and concentrated in their flesh. The last animal-parts to go were dairy and eggs.

It's common for vegetarians to be reluctant to embrace a purely plant-powered vegan diet and give up dairy and eggs. Many fear they'd not get enough calcium or protein. As for the calcium issue, I discovered research countering that fear from several directions. First, almond "milk" has about 50 percent more calcium than cow "milk". By the way, cow milk is a euphemism for what it really is. It's cow breast juice designed to make a baby cow grow big and fat in a matter of months. Plus, most dairy cows live lives of sad and silent suffering. Second, new research is showing that people who drink large amounts of milk daily are not any less likely to have osteoporosis in their bones later in life. Genetic predispositions and lack of exercise to stimulate bone growth seems to be the main culprits.

How about the "need" for protein? Yes, as a teacher of honors and on-level biological sciences in upper and middle school for the past 15 years, I fully agree that we need a sufficient amount of protein. We simply need the right amount of certain essential amino-acids that are the building blocks of all proteins. However, relatively recent research has shown that plant-powered protein sources are not only sufficient, but healthier than dead-animal protein. *(see my website, SoulCare.ORG, Good Shepherd Initiative, for links to the scientific research)*

Milk protein, casein, has been associated with increased formation and growth of certain types of tumors. Chicken egg protein, albumin, is no better than a balanced source of plant protein. More importantly, eggs must be handled and prepared carefully to reduce the danger of bacterial growth and infection from microbes like salmonella. But most significantly, the vast majority of eggs, even those advertised as "cage-free" or "free-

roaming", come from the horror-house chicken-factories described earlier.

My decision to re-embrace a vegan diet, finally and for good, was easy. My decision was not just for the animals' lives or even for my own life and health. Two other motivations became even more important to me.

One of the other motivating factors for choosing a vegan diet is to do it for other people, especially the millions, potentially billions, around the world who have inadequate diets and poor health. The production of animals for human food is a far less efficient use of resources than producing equally nutritious plant-powered food. And as mentioned earlier, a diet based on animal-parts is less healthy for human bodies. Not only milk protein, but the western diet based on animal products has been shown to increase the rate of heart disease, diabetes, obesity, and immune-response disorders.

Ultimately however, the most important motivation for choosing to eat a compassionate vegan diet is not primarily for me, or for the animals, or even for other people. It's for Him, the Good Shepherd Creator of all thinking-feeling souls, both human and animal. For years, I researched multiple sources of evidence, *(various religions and philosophies, historical-archaeological findings, scientific discoveries in astronomy-geology-biology, psychology-sociology, etc.)* to find answers to the big questions of life. All people, everywhere on Earth, long to know when and how everything came into existence, to know their purpose if there is one, to understand why so much suffering is happening even among the animals, and what happens after death (ours and theirs).

For me, the evidence from all avenues converged at the same central conclusion. If we and all things originally came *from* NOTHING that somehow exploded in a big bang by an unknown mystery mechanism, then all of history and all that we're doing now is *for*

NOTHING. If that's true, then there's no meaning to our life story or the life story of the amazing animals living with us. However, if we and all things originated, not by some Chance, but by some Creator, then there is a purpose that we can know and fulfill.

Evidence has convinced me that the existence and reality of our Creator has been revealed throughout history (His-story), and through nature's beauty, complexity, especially the vast depths of coded genetic information producing the forms and functions of all living creatures. Please think about it. Every observation we've know of demonstrates that coded information always comes from an intelligence, and life always comes from previous life. They never from non-living chemicals simply by random chance. The latest discoveries have revealed that DNA and epigenetic information are a mind-blowing, self-replicating, four-dimensional computer system. Our best supercomputers are like toddler toys in comparison. And no "natural" mystery-mechanism has ever been directly-observed to produce life apart from the already existing coded information in a living cell.

Therefore, the evidence points to a simple and logical conclusion for the origin of life, of souls. It's a supra-natural "Mind" or super-Soul who transcends this natural space-time creation. But Who is it? Nature and history are merely "general" revelation proving beyond reasonable doubt that an intelligent and powerful Creator obviously exists. Those "general" evidences do not reveal the full character of our Creator. We need more to know who or what kind of Being our Designer and the Creator of the pets we so deeply love really is. Is our Creator good or evil? Nature is now full of violent, selfish, survival of the fittest, parasites, predators, pain, fear, terror, unimaginable agony, and death. Is that the way of our Creator? Is that just the "Way" of life and how we should treat one another and the animals under our care? Was the *current* "survival of the fittest" really our Creator's design or could it be an *infection* in

creation? Is the Creator a *Good Shepherd* we can love and trust, or a *Great Predator* we should fear and appease?

Please think of this example. If you saw my artwork, my drawings, or some machines I'd built, you would only know that some person created them. But you really wouldn't know "me". That's especially true if I had given them to someone else before you saw them, and that person changed my creations in dramatically negative ways. For you to know the real me, I'd have to personally reveal my heart and soul in some direct and special way to you. A personal letter, email, or book from me would be needed. What I'm writing right now about myself is a simple illustration.

What if our Creator, in love, already did write to us, to you and to me, progressively revealing His true character and "Way" of life. Then we'd know our purpose, the animals' real purpose, how we should treat one another, and why the horrors of selfish survival of the fittest now infect all of creation, including our own souls. I believe that our Creator did just that all throughout history. History not only reveals His-story, but also the story of what happens when creatures like us are willfully separated from Him, the only source of pure, unselfish love. I'm convinced, by the massive mountain of evidence, that our Creator directly chose and led specific people, like Moses, Isaiah, and John to write for us a library of books, yes, the Bible, as a *special* revelation gradually and progressively revealing Himself and His Way. That evidence proves beyond any reasonable doubt that the Bible is unique, spiritually led by the One who transcends this physical, space-time creation.

Why is it that our increasing technology has not made us less selfish creatures? Our technology is merely the accumulation of knowledge that lets us invent even more horrendous ways to use, abuse and feed on one another and the innocent animals under our power. The Bible alone offers the "gospel", which literally means

“good news” solution to this universal problem. In stark contrast, all human-made religions offer the opposite, the “bad news”. All human-made religions in various forms claim a way for humans to overcome their infection of selfishness, to not only produce utopia here and now, but to make them good enough for a positive life after death. The bad news is that none of them work any better than our technological advances to make us “better” morally.

We are infinitely less than our eternal Creator, who alone is the source of pure, unselfish love. A love that’s even willing to sacrifice self for the real needs of an enemy (Romans 5:1-10). Our Creator is the only Self-Existent Being, yet we in our arrogant ignorance think we can muster up the pure love we need apart from Him. According to His-story, the human choice of self-serving sin led to separation, survival of the fittest, and the suffering that has soaked history and surrounds us now.

So, my decision to re-embrace a compassionate vegan diet, is not something I’m depending on myself to do. It’s merely a small part of my overall decision to trust and draw from Him for His pure goodness to overcome my own selfishness. I *admit* my inability to love others as much as I naturally desire to give myself pleasure (like bacon). I *submit* to my Good Shepherd Creator, Christ, and depend on Him to forgive me for the suffering I’ve already caused, progressively train me in His Way, and after death to transform me fully into His character of pure, self-sacrificing love. If you’d like to know more about the evidence that led to my decision and what the Bible, His Word to us, says about His animals just email or checkout my website. Please remember, they are His not ours, and the real point is not human-rights or animal-rights, but His right to tell us how to treat all His created souls. One day, each of us will stand before Him, exposed and accountable for our choices in this life.

Gratefully and prayerfully,
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of our Good Shepherd Christ*

“But ask the animals, and they will teach you, ... Which of all these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this? In his hand is the life **[Hebrew term is “nephesh” meaning soul]** of every creature and the breath of all mankind.” Job 12:7-10

“The righteous care for the life **[Hebrew term is “nephesh” meaning soul]** of their animals, but the kindest acts of the wicked are cruel.” Proverbs 12:10

“Then God said, **“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. 30 And to all the animals of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground— everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food.”** And it was so. 31 God saw all that he had made, and it was **very good....”** Genesis 1:29-31 [THE ORIGINAL PLAN BEFORE INFECTION OF CREATION – ALL VEGAN]

"... With **righteousness** He will judge the needy, with **justice** he will decide for the **poor** of the earth the **wolf will lay down with the lamb** ... and a little **child will lead them** ... the **lion will eat straw** like the ox **they will not hurt or destroy** in all my Holy Mountain, for the Earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD." Isaiah 11:6-10 [THE COMING NEW CREATION RESTORED LIKE EDEN]

