

Pro-Life and Pro-Animal From [The Writings of Vasu Murti](#)

I must confess: I prefer *pro-choice vegans* to religion-motivated right-to-lifers, because vegans don't glibly say "I believe" while hiding behind Scriptures they aren't even following. It's easier to convince a pro-choice vegan to oppose abortion than to convince a religious right-to-lifer to go vegan, because vegans don't hide behind their religion -- *if they even have one!*

Let me bring up some points of my own:

1. My own experience as a Hindu vegetarian and as an animal advocate is that **Christians are incredibly anti-semitic.**

Adolf Hitler thought Albert Einstein's scientific discoveries were mere "Jewish science" and thus not applicable to gentiles. This is the mentality of meat-eating Christians towards vegetarianism, which they regard as a sectarian (like circumcision) dietary restriction (like "keeping kosher") rather than as a universal ethic for all mankind (like abstaining from cannibalism).

Meat-eating Christians, relegating animal rights and vegetarianism solely to Judaism are as bigoted as Hitler. There is a sad irony here as many liberals see the abortion issue as sectarian, too: if you're not born again, you don't have to be pro-life.

We don't hear meat-eating Christians say, "God bless the Jews. They gave the world monotheism. They gave the world Jesus. Albert Einstein's scientific discoveries revolutionized the world in which we live. And now that we've abolished human slavery and emancipated women, it's time to end animal slavery. Animals are not ours to eat, wear, experiment on, or use for 'entertainment' insists People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA). And the Hebrew Scriptures, which make up half of our own Christian canon, provide a basis for doing that!"

Leonardo Da Vinci, Count Leo Tolstoy, Mohandas Gandhi, George Bernard Shaw, Susan B. Anthony, Percy Shelley, were all vegetarian, and none of them were Jewish!

At the end of 2007, shortly before moving to Israel, Pete Cohn of Veggie Jews in San Francisco said to me, "PETA's not Jewish."

The scribes and the Pharisees, Jesus claimed, "have neglected the weightier matters of the Law; justice and mercy and faith." (Matthew 23:14,16-23; Luke 11:42, 20:45-47)

This is painfully obvious when contrasting Paul's pronouncements on the Law with those of Jesus.

The most-repeated argument against biblical vegetarianism I've gotten from Christians is that they claim they are no longer under Mosaic Law, because the apostle Paul referred to his background as a former Pharisee and his previous adherence to Mosaic Law (with its dietary laws, commandments calling for the humane treatment of animals, etc.) as "so much garbage." (Philippians 3:4-8)

Nothing in the synoptic gospels suggests a break with Judaism. Jesus was called "Rabbi," meaning "Master" or "Teacher," 42 times in the gospels. Jesus' ministry was rabbinic. Jesus

related scripture and God's laws to everyday life, teaching by personal example. Jesus engaged in healing and acts of mercy. Jesus told stories or parables -- a rabbinic method of teaching.

Jesus went to the synagogue (Matthew 12:9), taught in the synagogues (Matthew 4:23, 13:54; Mark 1:39), expressed concern for Jairus, "one of the rulers of the synagogue" (Mark 5:36) and it "was his custom" to go to the synagogue (Luke 4:16).

Jesus called himself "Son of Man." The prophet Ezekiel was addressed by God as "Son of Man." (Ezekiel 2:1) In Hebrew, "son of man" ("ben adam") was a synonym for "man." Psalm 8:4 uses it in plural. Simon (Peter) referred to Jesus as "a man certified by God." (Acts 2:22)

Both John the Baptist and Jesus were considered prophets by the people. (Matthew 11:9, 21:11, 21:26, 21:46; Mark 6:15, 11:32; Luke 7:16, 7:26, 9:19, 24:19; John 4:19, 6:14, 7:40, 9:17)

Jesus placed himself in the tradition of the prophets before him. (Matthew 13:57; Mark 6:4; Luke 4:24, 13:33; John 4:44)

Jesus frequently compared his ministry to the ministries of Noah, Lot and Jonah. (Matthew 10:15, 11:24, 12:39-40, 16:4, 24:37-39; Luke 10:12, 11:29,32, 17:26-29,32)

Jesus began his ministry by teaching the multitudes not to "give what is sacred to the dogs, nor cast your pearls before swine." (Matthew 7:6)

Dogs, like swine, were considered foul and unclean by the Hebrew people. (Deuteronomy 23:18; I Samuel 24:14; II Kings 8:13; Psalm 22:16,20; Matthew 7:6; Luke 16:21; Revelations 22:15)

These words were used by the children of Israel to describe the neighboring heathen populations.

When sending his disciples out to preach, Jesus instructed them not to go to the gentiles, but to "go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." (Matthew 10:5-6) When a Canaanite woman asked Jesus to heal her daughter, he replied, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel... It is not fair to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." (Matthew 15:22-28)

Jesus regarded the gentiles as "dogs." His gospel was intended for the Jewish people. Even the apostle Paul admitted that the gospel was first intended for the Jews, and that the Jews have every advantage over the gentiles in this regard (Romans 1:16, 3:1-2).

When a scribe asked Jesus what is the greatest commandment in the Torah, Jesus began with "Hear O Israel, the Lord, thy God, is One Lord." This is the *Shema*, which is still heard in every synagogue service to this day.

"And you shall love the Lord with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength... And you shall love your neighbor as yourself," Jesus concluded.

When the scribe agreed that God is one and that to love Him completely and also love one's neighbor as oneself is "more important than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices," Jesus replied, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." (Matthew 22:36-40; Mark 12:29-34; Luke 10:25-28)

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus himself said:

"Do not suppose I have come to abolish the Law and the prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill... till heaven and earth pass away, not one jot or tittle pass from the Law till all is fulfilled. Whoever, therefore, breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven... unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:17-20)

Jesus also upheld the Torah in Luke 16:17:

"And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for the smallest portion of the Law to become invalid."

Nor do these words refer merely to the Ten Commandments. Jesus meant the entire Torah: 613 commandments. When a man asked Jesus what he must do to inherit eternal life, Jesus replied, "You know the commandments." He then quoted not just the Ten Commandments, but a commandment from Leviticus 19:13 as well: "Do not defraud." (Mark 10:17-22)

Jesus' disciples were once accused by the scribes and Pharisees of violating rabbinical tradition (Matthew 15:1-2; Mark 7:5), but not biblical law. At no place in the entire New Testament does Jesus ever proclaim Torah or the Law of Moses to be abolished; this was the theology of Paul, a former Pharisee who never knew Jesus, but who used to persecute Jesus' followers. Paul openly identified himself not as a Jew but as a Roman (Acts 22:25-26) and an apostate from Judaism (Philippians 3:4-8)

Sometimes Christians cite Matthew 7:12, where Jesus says "Do unto others..." and this "covers" the Law and the prophets.

But Jesus was merely repeating in the positive what Rabbi Hillel taught earlier.

Hillel was asked, "What is Judaism?"

He replied: "What is hateful to you, do not do unto others. That is Judaism. All the rest is commentary."

No one took Hillel's words to mean the Law had been abolished -- *why should we assume this of Jesus?*

If Jesus really came to abolish the Law and the prophets, Simon (Peter) would not have resisted a divine command to kill and eat both "clean" and "unclean" animals (Acts 10), nor would there have been a debate in the early church as to what extent the gentiles were to observe Mosaic Law (Acts 15).

When Paul visited the church at Jerusalem, James and the elders told him all its members were "zealous for the Law," and that they were worried because they heard rumors that Paul was preaching against Mosaic Law (Acts 21).

None of these events would have happened had Jesus really come to abolish the Law and the prophets!

Jesus not only repeatedly upheld Mosaic Law, he justified his healing on the Sabbath by referring to commandments calling for the humane treatment of animals!

While teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath, Jesus healed a woman who had been ill for eighteen years. He justified his healing work on the Sabbath by referring to biblical passages calling for the humane treatment of animals as well as their rest on the Sabbath. "So ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham... be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?" Jesus asked. (Luke 13:10-16)

On another occasion, Jesus again referred to Torah teaching on "*tsa'ar ba'alei chayim*" or compassion for animals to justify healing on the Sabbath. "Which of you, having a donkey or an ox that has fallen into a pit, will not immediately pull him out on the Sabbath day?" (Luke 14:1-5)

Jesus compared saving sinners who had gone astray from God's kingdom to rescuing lost sheep. He recalled a Jewish legend about Moses' compassion as a shepherd for his flock:

"For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost. What do you think? Who among you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it?

"And when he has found it," Jesus continued, "he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!'

"I say to you, likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance... there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." (Matthew 18:11-13; Luke 15:3-7,10)

Paul, on the other hand, said if anyone has confidence in Mosaic Law, "I am ahead of him" (Philippians 3:4-8).

Would that mean Paul places himself ahead of Jesus, who said he did not come to abolish the Law and the prophets?

Would that mean Paul places himself ahead of Jesus, who said whoever sets aside even the least of the laws demands shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:17-19)?

Would that mean Paul places himself ahead of Jesus, who taught that following the commandments of God is the only way to eternal life (Mark 10:17-22)?

Would that mean Paul places himself ahead of Jesus, who said that it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for the smallest portion of the Law to become invalid (Luke 16:17)?

Paul may have regarded his previous adherence to Mosaic Law as "so much garbage," but it should be obvious by now that **JESUS DIDN'T THINK THE LAW WAS "GARBAGE"!**

If Christians revere Paul's words over those of Jesus, then "Christianity" really is "Paulianity".

Bertrand Russell referred to Paul as the "inventor" of Christianity.

I'm not saying Christians should all be circumcised and following Mosaic Law. The Reverend Andrew Linzey, the foremost theologian in the field of animal-human relations and author of *Christianity and the Rights of Animals* (1987), rejected such an approach in a 1989 interview with the *Animals' Agenda*.

I'm merely saying that Christianity for the past 2000 years has been based on a misunderstanding. Christians aren't really following Jesus. They're following Paul.

Pete Cohn of Veggie Jews in San Francisco says Rabbi Michael Lerner, founder of the Network of Spiritual Progressives, focuses on Palestinian issues, not animal rights!

At the end of 2007, we were distributing copies of Reverend Janet Regina Hyland's *God's Covenant with Animals* (actually, its previous incarnation, *The Slaughter of Terrified Beasts*, Viatoris Press, 1988) at a San Francisco Vegetarian Society (SFVS) potluck. I offered a copy to Pete Cohn, and he politely declined.

When I told him People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) had called the book a must-read for anyone tired of hearing the Bible misused to justify animal cruelty, Pete said, "PETA's not Jewish."

2. The pro-choice premise that it's acceptable to kill the unborn because they are not human is based on the flawed premise that it's acceptable to kill animals.

During 1986 - 1988, on USENET, a nationwide computer network linking corporations, military bases, think tanks, universities, etc., the subject of animal rights always came up for discussion during the abortion debate, albeit indirectly.

The mentality of the pro-choicers was that the fetus wasn't human, but rather some kind of lower life form--and that lower life forms couldn't possibly have rights.

When a pro-lifer discussed the potential humanity of the unborn, a pro-chooser replied, "MY CAT has more potential than that!"

One pro-chooser said sarcastically, "Maybe the kid (the fetus) should be raised as a vegetarian. After all, don't cows have the right to life?"

Another pro-chooser, Oleg Kiselev, upon hearing the pro-life argument that brain waves can be detected in the unborn as early as six weeks, pointed out that animals also have brain waves. He then added, "Excuse me, while I eat my veal stew."

In the spring of 1988, Stephen Carrier, a grad student in Mathematics at UC Berkeley, wrote: "I don't see that life has anything to do with it. Chickens live and I eat them for dinner. And it isn't 'human life' that's the issue or every scrape of the knee would be a major tragedy."

Stephen Carrier went on to say: "The unique genetic combination possessed by the fetus is not enough to make it a person. To insist that it really is sufficient to make it a legal person is to fetishize DNA."

In a later posting, responding to Gary Samuelson (a Christian), Carrier wrote:

"I *don't know* what makes it okay to kill animals for meat. Many people think it's wrong and I have *no logical* argument that refutes them. But I don't believe it's wrong and I think abortions are analogous. Yes it's killing. No it's not murder because it's not a person... I think animals have souls too, but I eat them for dinner. I live with moral ambiguity. What's it like over there where you are?"

Carrier argued: "Unless we take a DNA fetishist position (which makes chimps 99 percent human by the way)..."

Gary Samuelson replied: "If it will make a difference, I will agree to oppose killing anything which is genetically 99 percent or more human, chimpanzees included."

Carrier responded:

"Okay. What about 50 percent human? That probably brings quite a few species into the net."

Carrier then concluded:

"...I will extrapolate from how we regard the rights of animals to how we may consistently regard the rights of fetuses.

"My argument has been an indirect one, that since we think certain things are okay, such as killing fish, perhaps killing fetuses is okay. It's not a mathematical proof, but there will be no mathematical proof that settles the abortion debate."

(Of course, if it IS wrong to harm or kill animals, it changes the dynamics of the entire debate!)

In the fall of 1986, pro-life student John Morrow of Rutgers University compared abortion to slavery: *Roe v. Wade* denied rights to an entire class of humans merely on account of their age and developmental status, just as the Dred Scott decision of 1857 denied rights to an entire class of humans based on the color of their skin.

Dave Butler of Tektronix in Oregon responded: "Abortion and slavery? Not even close. A fetus isn't human. If you believe it's wrong to eat meat, should your morality be imposed upon everyone else?"

"Not even close" has become a popular slogan with pro-choicers. It even appeared on the headlines of many San Francisco Bay Area newspapers in November 1992, when Bill Clinton was elected.

"Not even close" is not a new slogan. Peter Singer writes in *Animal Liberation* that when Mary Wollstonecraft, a forerunner of today's feminists, published *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* in 1792, "her views were widely regarded as absurd."

Thomas Taylor, a distinguished Cambridge philosopher, tried to refute Mary Wollstonecraft by demonstrating that if women could be given liberation, then animals could be given liberation, too. And since this is "absurd" it must be equally "absurd" to give women liberation.

Taylor titled his parody, "A Vindication of the Rights of Brutes."

"Not even close" is the "A Vindication of the Rights of Brutes" of the late 20th and early 21st century, because it repeats the insurmountable prejudice that other animals couldn't possibly have rights.

It is this prejudice which we in the animal rights movement are struggling to overcome.

The pro-choice mentality hasn't changed since then.

On AlterNet (a liberal headlines email newsletter), on February 20, 2009, in an article entitled "why get freaked out?", pereztx writes on the subject of abortion:

"...the thought of killing an innocent little life form and tossing them in an incinerator or trash might be the hang up other than that I cant think of why they might freaked out. This article writer probably then sheds tears during a PETA meeting about a chicken being killed..."

Again, the mentality of the pro-choicers was that the fetus wasn't human, but some kind of lower life form -- and that lower life forms couldn't possibly have rights. This led me to conclude that if there's any constituency out there which ought to be sympathetic to animal rights, IT'S PRO-LIFERS!

3. The Slippery Slope.

Anti-abortion activists consider abortion the ultimate form of child abuse, and claim that since abortion was legalized, child abuse rates have risen dramatically. Acceptance of abortion, they argue, leads to a devaluation of human life, and paves the way towards acceptance of infanticide and euthanasia.

Animal rights activists, likewise, compare the lives of animals to those of young human children, and insist that a lack of respect for the rights of animals brutalizes humans into insensitivity towards one another.

In a 1979 essay entitled "Abortion and the Language of the Unconscious," contemporary Hindu spiritual master Ravindra-svarupa dasa (Dr. William Deadwyler) wrote:

"A (spiritually) conscious person will not kill even animals (much less very young humans) for his pleasure or convenience. Certainly the unconsciousness and brutality that allows us to erect factories of death for animals lay the groundwork for our treating humans in the same way."

Vegan author John Robbins writes in his Pulitzer Prize nominated *Diet for a New America* (1987):

"The way we treat animals is indicative of the way we treat our fellow humans. One Soviet study, published in *Ogonyok*, found that over 87% of a group of violent criminals has, as children, burned, hanged, or stabbed domestic animals. In our own country, a major study by Dr. Stephen Kellert of Yale University found that children who abuse animals have a much higher likelihood of becoming violent criminals."

A 1997 study by the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (MSPCA) reported that children convicted of animal abuse are five times more likely to commit violence

against other humans than are their peers, and four times more likely to be involved in acts against property.

Pro-lifers who kill animals are thwarting their own cause!

Russell Weston Jr., tortured and killed twelve cats: burned and cut off their tails, paws, ears; poured toxic chemicals in their eyes to blind them; forced them to ingest poison, hung them from trees (the noose loose enough to create a slow and painful death.) Later killed two officers at the U.S. Capitol in Washington, DC.

Jeffery Dahmer staked cats to trees and decapitated dogs. Later he dissected boys, and kept their body parts in the refrigerator. He murdered seventeen men.

Kip Kinkle shot 25 classmates and killed several in Springfield, Oregon. He killed his father and mother. He said he once blew up a cow. He set a live cat on fire and dragged the innocent creature through the main street of town. His classmates rated him as "Most Likely to Start World War Three."

As a boy, Albert De Salvo, the "Boston Strangler," placed a dog and cat in a crate with a partition between them. After starving the animals for days, he removed the partition to watch them kill each other. He raped and killed thirteen women by strangulation. He often posed bodies in a shocking manner after their murders.

Richard Allen Davis set numerous cats on fire. He killed all of Polly Klaas' animals before abducting and murdering Polly Klaas, aged twelve, from her bedroom.

After sixteen-year-old Luke Woodham mortally stabbed his mother, killed two classmates and shot seven others, he confessed to bludgeoning his dog Sparkle with baseball bats and pouring liquid fuel down her throat and to set fire to her neck. "I made my first kill today," he wrote in his court-subpoenaed journal. "It was a loved one... I'll never forget the howl she made. It sounded almost human."

In June 1998, Woodham was found guilty of three murders and seven counts of aggravated assault. He was sentenced to three life sentences and an additional twenty years for each assault.

Theodore Robert Bundy, executed in 1989 for at least fifty murders, was forced to witness a grandfather who tortured animals. Bundy later heaped graves with animal bones.

David Berkowitz, "Son of Sam," poisoned his mother's parakeet out of jealousy. He later shot thirteen young men and women. Six people died and at least two suffered permanent disabilities.

Keith Hunter Jesperson, the "Happy Face Killer," bashed gopher heads and beat, strangled and shot stray cats and dogs. He is known to have strangled eight women.

He said: "You're actually squeezing the life out of these animals... Choking a human being or a cat -- it's the same feeling... I'm the very end result of what happens when somebody kills an animal at an early age."

Carroll Edward Cole, executed in 1985 for an alleged 35 murders and reputed to be one of the most prolific serial killers in U.S. history, confessed that his first act of violence was to strangle a puppy under the porch of his house.

Robert Alton Harris murdered two sixteen-year-old boys, doused a neighbor with lighter fluid and tossed matches at him. His initial run-in with police was for killing neighborhood cats.

Rachel Carson, author of *Silent Spring*, which launched the modern day environmental movement, wrote:

"Until we have the courage to recognize cruelty for what it is whether its victim is human or animal we cannot expect things to be much better in this world. We cannot have peace among men whose hearts delight in killing any living creature. By every act that glorifies or even tolerates such moronic delight in killing we set back the progress of humanity."

In a December 1990 letter to Eric Mills of Action For Animals, vegan labor leader Cesar Chavez similarly wrote:

"Kindness and compassion towards all living things is a mark of a civilized society. Conversely, cruelty, whether it is directed against human beings or against animals, is not the exclusive province of any one culture or community of people. Racism, economic deprivation, dog fighting and cockfighting, bullfighting and rodeos are cut from the same fabric: violence. Only when we have become nonviolent towards all life will we have learned to live well ourselves."

Mother Teresa, honored for her work among the poor with the 1979 Nobel Peace Prize, wrote in 1992 to Marlene Ryan, a former member of the National Alliance for Animals. Her letter reads:

"I am praying for you that God's blessing may be with you in all that you are doing to create concern for the animals which are often subjected to much cruelty. They, too, are created by the same loving Hand of God which created us. As we humans are gifted with intelligence which the animals lack, it is our duty to protect them and to promote their well being.

"We also owe it to them as they serve us with such wonderful docility and loyalty. *A person who shows cruelty to these creatures cannot be kind to other humans also.* Let us do all we can to become instruments of peace — where we are — the true peace that comes from loving and caring and respecting each person as a child of God — my brother — my sister."

Pro-lifers have reason to be especially concerned about violence towards animals. Animals are sentient beings possessing many mental capacities comparable to those of young human children. If we fail to see them as part of our moral community, how will we ever embrace humans in their earliest stages of development?

Anti-abortionists look in horror as an entire class of humans are systematically stripped of their rights, executed, and even used as tools for medical research. Yet this is what we humans have been doing to animals for millennia.

Marjorie Spiegel, author of *The Dreaded Comparison: Human and Animal Slavery*, writes: "All oppression and violence is intimately and ultimately linked, and to think that we can end prejudice and violence to one group without ending prejudice and violence to another is utter folly."

4. An Analogy.

On the surface, not eating animal products sounds like a roundabout solution to the abortion crisis.

However, John Robbins, author of the Pulitzer Prize nominated *Diet for a New America* (1987), points out that the Rainforest Action Network did not start as an animal rights group. But when they discovered the real cause of destruction of rainforests in Central America was the American fast-food market, they called for a boycott of Burger King.

Vegan author John Robbins provides these points and facts in his Pulitzer Prize nominated *Diet for a New America* (1987):

Half the water consumed in the U.S. irrigates land growing feed and fodder for livestock. It takes 25 gallons of water to produce a pound of wheat, but 2,500 gallons to produce a pound of meat. If these costs weren't subsidized by the American taxpayers, the cheapest hamburger meat would be \$35 per pound!

Livestock producers are California's biggest consumers of water. Every tax dollar the state doles out to livestock producers costs taxpayers over seven dollars in lost wages, higher living costs and reduced business income. Seventeen western states have enough water supplies to support economies and populations twice as large as the present.

U.S. livestock produce twenty times as much excrement as the entire human population, creating sewage which is ten to several hundred times as concentrated as raw domestic sewage. Meat producers contribute to half the water pollution in the United States.

A 2007 pamphlet put out by Compassion Over Killing similarly points out:

Nearly 75% of the grain grown and 50% of the water consumed in the U.S. are used by the meat industry. (Audubon Society)

In their 2007 book, *Please Don't Eat the Animals*, mother and daughter Jennifer Horsman and Jaime Flowers write:

"Half of all fresh water worldwide is used for thirsty livestock. Producing eight ounces of beef requires an unimaginable 25,000 liters of water, or the water necessary for one pound of steak equals the water consumption of the average household for a year.

"The Worldwatch Institute estimates one pound of steak from a steer raised in a feedlot costs: five pounds of grain, a whopping 2,500 gallons of water, the energy equivalent of a gallon of gasoline, and about 34 pounds of topsoil.

"Thirty-three percent of our nation's raw materials and fossil fuels go into livestock destined for slaughter. In a vegan economy, only two percent of our resources will go to the production of food."

According to the editors of World Watch, July/August 2004:

"The human appetite for animal flesh is a driving force behind virtually every major category of environmental damage now threatening the human future -- deforestation, topsoil erosion, fresh

water scarcity, air and water pollution, climate change, biodiversity loss, social injustice, the destabilization of communities and the spread of disease."

Meat-eating pro-lifers and/or meat-eating pacifists saying, "First let's end abortion and/or war, and then we'll move on to animals, are comparable to a Green Party activist saying, "First let's end the water crisis, and then we'll address animal issues."

If we address animals first, there won't be a water crisis!

5. Abortion and war are the karma for killing animals.

"When we turn to the protection of animals, we sometimes hear it said that we ought to protect men first and animals afterwards... By condoning cruelty to animals, we perpetuate the very spirit which condones cruelty to men."

--Henry Salt

The fate of the animals and the fate of man ARE interconnected. (Ecclesiastes 3:19) A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada said in 1974:

"We simply request, 'Don't kill. Don't maintain slaughterhouses.' That is very sinful. It brings a very awkward *karmic* reaction upon society. Stop these slaughterhouses. We don't say, 'Stop eating meat.' You can eat meat, but don't take it from the slaughterhouse, by killing. Simply wait (until the animal dies of natural causes) and you'll get the carcasses.

"You are killing innocent cows and other animals -- nature will take revenge. Just wait. As soon as the time is right, nature will gather all these rascals and slaughter them. Finished. They'll fight among themselves--Protestants and Catholics, Russia and America, this one and that one. It is going on. Why? This is nature's law. Tit for tat. 'You have killed. Now you kill yourselves.'

"They are sending animals to the slaughterhouse, and now they'll create their own slaughterhouse. You see? Just take Belfast. The Roman Catholics are killing the Protestants, and the Protestants are killing the Catholics. This is nature's law. It is not necessary that you be sent to the ordinary slaughterhouse. You'll make a slaughterhouse at home. You'll kill your own child -- abortion. This is nature's law.

"Who are these children being killed? They are these meat-eaters. They enjoyed themselves when so many animals were killed and now they're being killed by their own mothers. People do not know how nature is working. *If you kill you must be killed.* If you kill the cow, who is your mother, then in some future lifetime your mother will kill you. Yes. The mother becomes the child, and the child becomes the mother.

"We don't want to stop trade, or the production of grains and vegetables and fruit. But we want to stop these killing houses. It is very, very sinful. That is why all over the world they have so many wars. Every ten or fifteen years there is a big war -- a wholesale slaughterhouse for humankind. But these rascals -- they do not see it, that by the law of *karma*, every action must have its reaction."

6. Cause-and-effect.

I'll be honest with you: we humans can't end abortion (or war) until we cease to kill animals.

Legal abortion is promoted in China, and we now see a gender imbalance of 37 million more males than females in China, due to sex-selective abortion.

Ending abortion in China would end the gender imbalance.

Whether expressed in terms of *karma* (action and reaction) or a secular slippery slope argument familiar to pro-lifers, clearly, there is a direct cause-and-effect relationship: allowing one social injustice to flourish results inevitably in other social injustices.

Is ending abortion "work"? Or is it merely ceasing to do evil, as the prophet Isaiah (1:11,15) says, when quoting God Himself attacking animal sacrifice?

Opponents of global warming, global hunger, the energy, environmental, population and water crises aren't offended when told veganism (ceasing to kill animals) is the solution to each of their respective crises. Nor when told killing animals created these crises in the first place.

Perhaps it's time pro-lifers take a serious look at animal rights as THE political strategy for ending the abortion crisis!

(Even with sentience, rather than species membership, as the criterion for personhood, later-term abortions would have to be prohibited.)

7. Christians really shouldn't hide behind the Bible!

I understand Christians aren't interested in being "converted" to another religion! Animal rights, *as a secular, moral philosophy*, may appear to be at odds with traditional religious thinking (e.g., human "dominion" over other animals), but this is equally true of:

...democracy and representative government in place of monarchy and belief in the divine right of kings; the separation of church and state; the abolition of (human) slavery; the emancipation of women; birth control; the sexual revolution; LGBT rights...

...all social progress since the end of the Dark Ages and the beginning of the Age of Enlightenment... social progress even conservative Christians take for granted!

(A century ago, for example, ALL Christian churches opposed birth control.)

In a 1989 interview with the now-defunct *Animals' Agenda*, Reverend Andrew Linzey, an Anglican clergyman, said:

"We treat animals today precisely as we treated slaves, and the theological arguments are often entirely the same or have the same root. I believe the movement for animal rights is the most significant movement in Christianity, morally, since the emancipation of the slaves. And it provides just as many difficulties for the institutional church..."

The International Network for Religion and Animals was founded in 1985. Since then, numerous books have been written on animals and theology, including:

The Vegetarianism of Jesus Christ: the Pacifism, Communalism and Vegetarianism of Primitive Christianity; Food for the Spirit: Vegetarianism and the World Religions; The Souls of Animals;

Replenish the Earth; Of God and Pelicans; Is God A Vegetarian?; God's Covenant with Animals; They Shall not Hurt or Destroy; The Lost Religion of Jesus; Good News for All Creation; Vegetarian Christian Saints; The Dominion of Love; Good Eating; Of God and Dogs; Every Creature a Word of God; School of Compassion, etc.

All of this biblical scholarship by Christian vegetarians and vegans (and their friends in the non-Abrahamic faiths, like the Hare Krishnas), trying to reconcile biblical tradition with animal rights, would be completely unnecessary if the other side would treat animal rights as a secular civil rights issue applicable to ****everyone**** -- including atheists and agnostics -- as they view their own (sectarian?) opposition to abortion.

In a pamphlet entitled "The Spiritual Link Between Humans and Animals," Reverend Marc Wessels of the International Network for Religion and Animals (INRA) writes:

"We recognize that many animal rights activists and ecologists are highly CRITICAL of Christians because of our relative failure thus far adequately to defend animals and to preserve the natural environment. Yet there are positive signs of a growing movement of Christian activists and theologians who are committed to the process of ecological stewardship and animal liberation."

Similarly, I am highly critical of pro-life Christians for thinking their religion exempts them from animal rights, exempts them from secular arguments to protect animals.

Why is protecting animals, with many mental capacities comparable to small children, considered "funny" by religious pro-lifers but protecting single-celled organisms (zygotes and embryos) taken seriously? Especially when pro-lifers claim to care about children?

"Animals are God's creatures, not human property, nor utilities, nor resources, nor commodities, but precious beings in God's sight... Christians whose eyes are fixed on the awfulness of crucifixion are in a special position to understand the awfulness of innocent suffering. The Cross of Christ is God's absolute identification with the weak, the powerless, and the vulnerable, but most of all with unprotected, undefended, innocent suffering."

--Anglican priest Reverend Andrew Linzey, from the PETA website, www.jesusveg.com

8. Along the lines of Reverend Linzey's words above, I would argue pro-life Christians are in a special position to understand animal rights: the animals' right to life.

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"The reasons for legal intervention in favor of children apply not less strongly to the case of those unfortunate slaves—the animals."

---John Stuart Mill

In his book, *Christianity and the Rights of Animals*, Reverend Andrew Linzey, an Anglican priest, notes that "In some ways, Christian thinking is already oriented in this direction. What is it that so appalls us about cruelty to children or oppression of the vulnerable, but that these things are betrayals of relationships of special care and special trust? Likewise in the case of animals who are mostly defenseless before us."

A rational case exists for the rights of preborn humans. The case for animal rights is equally compelling. Animals are highly complex creatures, possessing a brain, a central nervous system and a sophisticated mental life.

Animals actually suffer at the hands of their human tormentors and exhibit such “human” behaviors and feelings as fear and physical pain, defense of their children, pair bonding, group/tribal loyalty, grief at the loss of loved ones, joy, jealousy, competition, territoriality, and cooperation.

Dr. Tom Regan, the foremost intellectual leader of the animal rights movement and author of *The Case for Animal Rights*, notes that animals:

“...have beliefs and desires; perception, memory, and a sense of the future, including their own future; and emotional life together with feelings of pleasure and pain; preference and welfare interests; the ability to initiate action in pursuit of their desires and goals; a psychophysical identity over time; and an individual welfare in the sense that their experiential life fares well or ill for them, logically independent of their utility for others and logically independent of their being the object of anyone else’s interests.”

While it is known that the feminist movement originally opposed abortion as “child-murder” (Susan B. Anthony’s words) and as a form of violence that women are forced to turn to in a patriarchal society, a society that shows virtually no concern or respect for new mothers, it is generally not known that many of the early American feminists—including Lucy Stone, Amelia Bloomer, Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton — were connected with the 19th century animal welfare movement. Together, they would meet with anti-slavery editor Horace Greeley to toast “Women’s Rights and Vegetarianism.”

Many of the early American feminists thus saw animal rights as social progress, women’s rights and civil rights. Count Leo Tolstoy similarly described ethical vegetarianism as social progress:

“And there are ideas of the future, of which some are already approaching realization and are obliging people to change their way of life and to struggle against the former ways: such ideas in our world as those of freeing the laborers, of giving equality to women, of ceasing to use flesh-food, and so on.”

The case for animal rights and vegetarianism should be readily understandable to the millions of Americans opposed to abortion on demand.

“Although I may disagree with some of its underlying principles,” writes pro-life activist Karen Swallow Prior, “there is much for me, an anti-abortion activist, to respect in the animal rights movement. Animal rights activists, like me, have risked personal safety and reputation for the sake of other living beings. Animal rights activists, like me, are viewed by many in the mainstream as fanatical wackos, ironically exhorted by irritated passerby to ‘Get a Life!’

“Animal rights activists, like me, place a higher value on life than on personal comfort and convenience, and in balancing the sometimes competing interests of rights and responsibilities, choose to err on the side of compassion and nonviolence.”

Both the anti-abortion and animal rights movements consider their causes -- extending rights to the unborn and/or extending rights to animals -- social progress, like the abolition of human

slavery or the emancipation of women. Leaders in both movements have even compared themselves to the abolitionists who sought to end human slavery.

Dr. J.C. Willke, former head of National Right to Life, entitled a book *Abortion and Slavery*. Like abortion opponents drawing a parallel between the *Dred Scott* decision and *Roe v. Wade*, Dr. Tom Regan also draws a parallel between human and animal slavery in *The Case for Animal Rights*:

“The very notion that farm animals should continue to be viewed as legal property must be challenged. To view them in this way implies that we cannot make sense of viewing them as legal persons. But the history of the law shows only too well, and too painfully, how arbitrary the law can be on this crucial matter. Those humans who were slaves were not recognized as legal persons in pre-Civil War America.

“There is no reason to assume that because animals are not presently accorded this status that they cannot intelligibly be viewed in this way or that they should not be. If our predecessors had made this same assumption in the case of human slaves, the legal status of these human beings would have remained unchanged.”

Both movements see themselves extending rights to an excluded class of beings. Both movements claim to be speaking on behalf of a group unable to defend themselves from oppression. Both movements compare the mass destruction of, in one case the unborn, and in the other case, the mass killing of animals, to the Nazi Holocaust.

Both movements have components that engage in nonviolent civil disobedience and both have their militant factions: Operation Rescue and the Animal Liberation Front. Both have picketed the homes of physicians who either experiment upon animals or perform abortions. The controversial use of human fetal tissue and embryonic stem cells for medical research brings these two causes even closer together.

Both movements are usually depicted in the popular news media as extremists, fanatics, terrorists, etc. who violate the law. But both movements also have their intelligentsia: moral philosophers, physicians, clergymen, legal counsel, etc.

Feminist writer Carol J. Adams notes the parallels between the two movements: “A woman attempts to enter a building. Others, massed outside, try to thwart her attempt. They shout at her, physically block her way, frantically call her names, pleading with her to respect life. Is she buying a fur coat or getting an abortion?”

The Fur Information Council of America asks: “If fashion isn’t about freedom of choice, what is? Personal choice is not just a fur industry issue. It’s everybody’s issue.” Like the abortion debate, lines are drawn. “Freedom of choice” vs. Taking an innocent life. “Personal lifestyle” vs. violating another’s rights.

Animal rights activists have even proven themselves to be “anti-choice” depending upon the issue. A letter in *The Animals’ Voice Magazine*, for example, states:

“Exit polls in Aspen, Colorado, after the failed 1989 fur ban was voted on, found that most people were against fur but wanted people to have a choice to wear it. Instead of giving in, we should take the offensive and state in no uncertain terms that to abuse and kill animals is wrong, period! There is no choice because another being had to suffer to produce that item... an eventual ban on

fur would be impossible if we tell people that they have some sort of 'choice' to kill... remember, no one has the 'right to choose' death over life for another being."

Similarly, a letter in *Veg-News* reads:

"*I did* have some concerns about (the) Veg Psych column which asserted that we must respect a non-vegan's 'right to choose' her / his food. While I would never advocate intolerance (quite the opposite actually), arguing that we have a 'right to choose' when it comes to eating meat, eggs, and dairy is akin to saying we have a 'right to choose' to beat dogs, harass wildlife, and torture cats.

"Each is a clear example of animal cruelty, whether we're the perpetrators ourselves, or the ones who pay others to commit the violence on our behalf. Clearly, we have the ability to choose to cause animal abuse, but that doesn't translate into a right to make that choice."

Recognizing the rights of another class of beings, of course, limits our freedoms and our choices, and requires a change in our personal lifestyle. The abolition of (human) slavery is good example of this. Both movements, however, appear to be imposing their own personal moral convictions upon the rest of our secular society.

Animal rights activists point out the health hazards associated with meat and dairy products, while anti-abortion activists try to educate the public about the link between abortion and breast cancer.

The threat of "overpopulation" is frequently used to justify abortion as birth control. On a vegan diet, however, the world could easily support a population several times its present size. The world's cattle alone consume enough to feed 8.7 billion humans.

Both movements make use of similar political tactics, such as economic boycotting. Both movements make use of graphic photos or videos of abortion victims or tortured animals. Both movements speak of respecting life and of compassion.

Both movements cite studies that unnecessary violence towards an oppressed class of beings leads to worse forms of violence in human society — this is known as the "slippery slope." The term was coined by Malcolm Muggeridge, a pro-life vegetarian.

Anti-abortion activists, for example, consider abortion the ultimate form of child abuse, and claim that since abortion was legalized, child abuse rates have risen dramatically. Acceptance of abortion, they argue, leads to a devaluation of life, and paves the way towards acceptance of infanticide and euthanasia. Animal rights activists, likewise, compare the lives of animals to those of young human children, and insist that a lack of respect for the rights of animals brutalizes humans into insensitivity towards one another.

In his Pulitzer Prize nominated book, *Diet for a New America*, for example, author John Robbins writes of a Soviet study, published in *Ogonyok*, which found that over 87 percent of a group of violent criminals had, as children, burned, hanged or stabbed domestic animals. An American study by Dr. Stephen Kellert of Yale found that children who abuse animals have a much higher likelihood of becoming violent criminals. A 1997 study by the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (MSPCA) reported that children convicted of animal abuse are five times more likely to commit violence against other humans than are their peers, and four times more likely to be involved in acts against property.

Pro-lifers have reason to be especially concerned about violence towards animals. Animals are sentient beings possessing many mental capacities comparable to those of young human children. If we fail to see them as part of our moral community, how will we ever embrace humans in their earliest stages of development? Anti-abortionists look in horror as an entire class of humans are systematically stripped of their rights, executed, and even used as tools for medical research. Yet this is what we humans have been doing to animals for millennia.

Marjorie Spiegel, author of *The Dreaded Comparison: Human and Animal Slavery*, writes: “All oppression and violence is intimately and ultimately linked, and to think that we can end prejudice and violence to one group without ending prejudice and violence to another is utter folly.”

Mostly religious in nature, the anti-abortion movement will need to become completely secular, as it attempts to convince the courts, the legislatures, philosophers, ethicists and universities that human zygotes and embryos should be regarded as legal persons.

Conversely, the animal rights movement is secular and nonsectarian, but — *like the civil rights movement before it* — will need the inspiration, blessings and support of organized religion to help end injustices towards animals.

Otherwise, Christians cry "MOVE" as if we were talking about some lifeless, soulless thing devoid of religious inspiration, like the past five hundred years of **secular** social progress --

...democracy and representative government in place of monarchy and belief in the divine right of kings; the separation of church and state; the abolition of human slavery; the emancipation of women; birth control; the sexual revolution; LGBT rights, etc...

-- all of which were resisted by previous generations of Christians, but which conservative Christians today now take for granted!

The Reverend Marc Wessels, Executive Director of the International Network for Religion and Animals (INRA), made this observation on Earth Day, 1990:

“It is a fact that no significant social reform has yet taken place in this country without the voice of the religious community being heard. The endeavors of the abolition of slavery; the women’s suffrage movement; the emergence of the pacifist tradition during World War I; the struggle to support civil rights, labor unions and migrant farm workers; and the anti-nuclear and peace movements have all succeeded in part because of the power and support of organized religion. Such authority and energy is required by individual Christians and the institutional church today if the liberation of animals is to become a reality.”

At a speech before the National Right to Life Convention in Cherry Hill, New Jersey, on July 15, 1982, Reverend Richard John Neuhaus of the Evangelical Lutheran Church said:

“...The mark of a humane and progressive society is an ever more expansive definition of the community for which we accept responsibility... The pro-life movement is one with the movement for the emancipation of slaves. This is the continuation of the civil rights movement, for you are the champions of the most elementary civil, indeed human right — simply the right to be.”

While there are indeed similarities between the present day anti-abortion movement and the anti-slavery movement of centuries past, the pro-life movement, actually, has a lot in common with the animal protection movement—a fact which pro-lifers should readily acknowledge. The animal rights movement should be supported by all caring Americans.

Ingrid Newkirk, Executive Director of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, admitted in an interview with Dennis Prager, that the animal rights movement is divided on the issue of abortion.

Where should an animal rights activist stand with regards to abortion?

Mohandas Gandhi, India's great apostle of nonviolence, once wrote, "It seems to me clear as daylight that abortion would be a crime."

C.S. Lewis and other Christians have acknowledged that denying rights to animals merely because they do not exhibit the same level of rational thought most humans exhibit upon reaching full development means denying rights to the mentally handicapped, the senile, and many other classes of humans as well. Herein lies the basis for better understanding and cooperation between two movements seeking liberty and justice for all.