

# *I ACCUSE*

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## *INTRODUCTION*

*And as the earth withered under the sun, and the forests disappeared, and the grass shrivelled to dust, and the rivers were befouled with detritus, and the seas were rank with rot, and the creatures of the barren bush, and the birds of the fetid air, and the fish of the wasted waters, and the food animals heaved in their continuous agony, and the people lurched to their doom, the leaders of the religions prayed and wept and beseeched their gods to save them, these gods looked down on these leaders and said, "You have failed. The world is dying for you are the cause. You have led your people, our people, my people, astray. You have not listened to what you were told. Evil has come because of you. You cannot expect salvation when you have damned others through your example. So be it." And the rabbis and the bishops and the imams and the brahmins and the monks wrung their hands in despair. But it was too late.*

The eating of animals is the greatest moral scourge of on this planet. It wastes the spirit and destroys the soul. How ironic it is, then, that religious leaders who claim to lead the way to salvation, actually push their followers to damnation by endorsing this practice of evil.

I shall show how Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism should be read as forbidding the eating of animals or, if not this, encouraging a vegan diet. I acknowledge that there is not one Judaism, or one Christianity, one Islam, one Hinduism or one Buddhism. Instead, I shall comment on various core texts that indicate how animal rights and veganism should be adopted by all the branches of these religions.<sup>1</sup>

By referring to and interrogating the germane teachings of the various religions, I will show that these religions can well be friendly to animals. In order to uphold the teachings, the rights of these animals should be protected and a vegan way of life is

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<sup>1</sup> In order to facilitate the flow of ideas, when I refer to animals as such, it is the non-human ones that are being discussed. If I refer to a creator or god as male, it is in line with the basic understanding of this gender in the religious texts. Also, when I mention "man" or "men" or related pronouns, it is not that I am excluding women, but that it has generally been men who have written, transcribed, edited or interpreted the texts in question.

the only moral way of life to follow. And if I am accused of being selective, I shall be no more so than those leaders who are so invested in ritual, practice and tradition, and in their stomachs, and sometimes in their pockets, that they've ignored or willfully countenanced the harm they do to the creations of their god or gods. In this they are subverting the good that they keep spouting about their religions and defile the Creator that they insist that they pray to.

I understand that religious texts equivocate and contradict themselves when it comes to animal rights, but I condemn the religious leaders who generally choose the cruel rather than the compassionate. These leaders should know that what they do is wrong; but they are indifferent because, no matter what they say, their taste buds have dictated their destructive veneration of ritual and tradition. They are the arch warlords instead of the bringers of peace.

They refuse to acknowledge that there is unity of all life, of all living creatures. They refuse to consider that there is no entitlement to take the life of a defenceless creature. They feel little for those who suffer both observed and unseen. They could not care for those who cry unheard. They are blind; they are deaf; they are unfeeling. They are dead; spiritually dead.

Bear in mind the words of one of the more deserving Nobel laureates for Peace, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, in the Foreword to *The Global Guide to Animal Protection*, edited by Andrew Linzey:

I have seen firsthand how injustice gets overlooked when the victims are powerless or vulnerable, when they have no one to speak up for them and no means of representing themselves to a higher authority. Animals are precisely in that position. Unless we are mindful of their interests and speak out loudly on their behalf, abuse and cruelty go unchallenged. So much of our maltreatment of animals stems from a kind of spiritual blindness, a kind of hubris, in which we foolishly suppose that our own welfare is God's sole concern.

Therefore, the message here should be shouted. Why whisper and mumble when billions of animals scream with fear, with terror, with pain, when they are oppressed, when they suffer, when they are slaughtered? Why, when animals are in dread throughout their lives and now in the nightmare of their ends, when they hear and see and smell their fellows being butchered? Why, when they are sometimes still conscious while they are hacked to pieces to become steaks and chops and burgers?

Is this ingestion ethical? Think about it. Of course, it's not, and it must be brought to mind and confronted. This would be in line with Albert Schweitzer's comment that "the thinking man must oppose all cruel customs no matter how deeply rooted in tradition or surrounded by a halo .... We need a boundless ethic which will include the animals also."

I accuse religious leaders of ignoring what they should understand, because they are so swamped by their self-interest, so soused in the cesspools of self-preservation, so intoxicated by their power, and so immersed in their egocentrism that they refuse to acknowledge mistakes, that they repel any atonement for their ways.

Admittedly and thankfully, there are some who are not like this, who pursue goodwill and kindness and love to all creatures, but they get little appreciation because their leadership is generally discounted as a result of the base injunctions of their fellows. It is the latter I accuse. Organized religion on the whole remains silent, or supports the status quo, or legitimizes the torture and oppression of animals.

I accuse the religious leaders of many of the religions of murdering the creatures of their god or gods and, as a result, destroying the souls of their adherents and the beauty of the world that should be around us all.

I accuse those leaders who see themselves as the spiritually uplifted, self-appointed or anointed to guide their flocks, of misleading and corrupting them.

I accuse them of promising their followers salvation and that all will be good with them and the world if they do as they are told. But they are really destroying the world and betraying their god or gods through their hellish practices.

I accuse them of reaching out to the fashionable animals of the world (who, indeed, should also be protected and saved) – the elephants, the rhinos, the dolphins, the baby seals, the orangutans – while not only neglecting but, indeed, taking part in the active torture and murder of the billions of animals that they consume because their consciences do not go beyond their salivations.

I accuse them of being obdurate, hard-hearted, impervious to reason, closed to compassion, and mired in the morass of a tradition that refuses to move into a sensitive present. Their forefathers (Abraham and the Buddha are examples) broke with their own traditions when they realized they were out of joint with the time. Today's leaders do not have the strength to follow their example and, in this way, they, unlike their ancestors, are not pioneers but milksops.

The leaders seduce people into a moral wilderness, and are party to a spiritual implosion. They pay idolatrous homage to customs of carnage. Any divinity in people is being cankered by the viciousness of such action in the name of a misemployed culture, a misconceived ritual, a misconstrued religion.

I accuse those who are too arrogant to read this, or when, on reading it, respond with a kneejerk reaction, of being too immersed in their own misguided importance and, also, too stultified in unthinking traditions, and so set on destructive ritual, to pay heed to what I say. But, then, that is the way of many of them. They may try to get away with their perverse deeds by accusing me of promoting heresy. If so, I accuse them doubly of being the ultimate blasphemers in saying they speak for their god while encouraging all to spread a canker through religious interpretation that, in effect, warps and defiles the blessings given to all creatures by this selfsame god.

It is the destruction of lives brought into being by the Creator. By taking these lives, people are, then, not in any godly image but are the antithesis of it. Killing animals is akin to rejecting the Creator in any compassionate manifestation. Whereas a god creates, religious leaders set themselves up as gods unable to create but skilled at

destroying. Instead of putting the Divine in the centre of the universe, they are actually putting themselves there in an omnipotent role.

The religious leaders are so set in what they regard as sacrosanct, that they fail to understand that in certain cases their sacred cows betoken the idolatry of debased rituals and customs and traditions that abuse themselves, their people and their god.

I am not suggesting that anybody suspends belief, but I am accusing the leaders of not being prepared to suspend vicious customs that are dislocated from true spirituality.

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*And in the beginning, light was decreed, and there was light. And time passed. And there was brightness on the land and on the seas and in the hearts of all. But men brought evil with them and took unto themselves the flesh of their fellow beings. Then the priests, coming in their multitudes, asked why there should be light to reveal the iniquities of the world. And so they became party to the darkness as they hid the evils of their indifference, their actions, their participation in the murder of their fellow creatures from their followers whom they told it was permissible to eat, particularly in a certain way, no matter what their suffering, their torment. No matter that they were killing the creatures of their gods. And their gods looked down on the world that they had created and saw dark burgeoning on all sides. And they wept.*

A major problem with the leaders of most of the religions of the world is that they've constructed their spiritual-cum-ritual-cum-temporal worlds in a certain guise, what Jacques Derrida calls carnophallogocentrism.<sup>2</sup> This refers to the arrogance of the animal-eating, language-using, male who sees himself as the centre of the world that he insists on mastering. The majority by far of priests and imams and rabbis and many pujaris and bhikkus immerse themselves in such a carnophallogocentrism. In doing so, such a person corrupts his followers and, in effect, spurns, traduces and put to shame his god who created all beings – not just hominids but every animal.

Such a person rejects change even if it would be to the benefit of peace and wellbeing. He is apostatophobic, fearing what he sees as betrayal and the undermining of his authority by those who once shared his views but now wish to progress to another vision of life, of the world, of religion, of practice, even if that means a move to greater compassion for all.

I accuse the religious leaders of being complicit in elevating homo sapiens to divine status, but only in their own eyes. They tacitly and sometimes openly condone the mechanization of murder, the ignoring of pain and distress and terror, and with the worship of mammon. I accuse them of ignoring the sentience of living beings, of not knowing or forgetting that cows and pigs and sheep and chickens and fish of all kinds need to roam, need to socialize, need to show affection to their children, instead of

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<sup>2</sup> Jacques Derrida 1989-1990: Force of Law: The Mystical Foundation of Authority. Trans. Mary Quaintance. *Cardozo Law Review* 11:920-1045.

being put in a small enclosure, so many enmeshed in their own urine and excrement, fed hormones and antibiotics, because they are seen as commodities. And I accuse these same religious leaders of ignoring the fact that these antibiotics lead to a plague when the animals struggling along the assembly line to slaughter are fed to people who then gorge themselves on death and on bodies that will accelerate their own diseases, their own cancers, their own sufferings, their own deaths.

In many countries, mass murder is euphemized with terminology such as “industrial animal agriculture”, “factory farming”, “intensive confinement animal production”, while these animals are given no chance to reach anything approaching their natural life expectancy.

If our environment is sacred, as leaders from many religions tell us, why then do they not only permit but in fact promote carnivorous carnage? Why do they pay scant regard to the fact that 70% more land must be cultivated to raise animals for slaughter than would be necessary for a vegan diet? We know that water is becoming a scarcity throughout the world. Why, then, is there the insistence on so-called animal agriculture, when billions upon billions of gallons of water are used here, water that could be used for crops eaten by people, or to assuage their thirst? Why is so much attention paid to reducing the gas emission of vehicles, when multiple times more gas emissions in the form of carbon dioxide, nitrous oxides and methane come from the hundreds of millions of so-called food animals in muck-filled captivity? And while the religious leaders wring their hands and talk about the dangers of nuclear power, they ignore this far more pertinent truth.

According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, in our world 48 billion land animals alone are killed for people’s digestion and delight each year, of which 46 billion are so-called domestic birds.<sup>3</sup> This ties up very closely with the figures of Animals Deserve Absolute Protection Today and Tomorrow (ADAPTT)<sup>4</sup> which tallies all the animals killed for meat (this time, including fish), eggs and dairy – a figure that increases continuously as you’re looking at its web page: 150 billion a year. If we look at the animals in question in this tract, we see the following regarding the numbers killed:

- Marine animals: 2 800 a second – 170 000 a minute – 240 million a day.
- Chickens: 1 450 a second – 87 000 a minute – 125 million a day.
- Pigs: 40 a second – 2 350 a minute – 3½ million a day.
- Sheep: 16 a second – 970 a minute – close to 1½ million a day.
- Cows and calves: 9 a second – 550 a minute – 800 000 a day.

And they all go down the gullets of the most gluttonous, self-centred, self-adulating beings ever created: people.

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<sup>3</sup> However, the statistical yearbook lists every food by tonnes consumed. It is unfortunate that the number of animals is not given each time, plus the number the average person consumes in a year, rather than the weight ingested. Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations. 2013: *FAO Statistical Yearbook 2013 – World Food and Agriculture*. Rome:FAO.

<sup>4</sup> [www.adaptt.org/killcounter.html](http://www.adaptt.org/killcounter.html).

Now, all you sceptics, go and stand in a feed lot or, better still, an abattoir, look into a cow's eyes, and every second multiply by 9: 9-18-27-36 and so on. And you call yourself compassionate! Do the same with sheep and pigs and chickens. As you sit down to eat your portion of a leg of lamb, what about looking at a picture of lambs gambolling, or stroking a lamb on your lap or in your children's arms. You won't do that? You can't do that? Is it because you are not prepared to confront what you do to the creatures of your and their Creator?

Few people who eat animals, thus being party to their murder, realize how young they are when slaughtered. The largest animal rights group in the UK, the much respected Animal Aid, gives the following data:<sup>5</sup>

<i>Animal</i>	<i>Usual Age when Killed</i>	<i>Natural Lifespan</i>
Cattle	1-2 years	25-30 years
Sheep	3-10 months	15 years
Pigs	3-6 months	15 years
Chickens	6 weeks	10 years
Male chicks	1 day	10 years

But, let us see precisely what happens to these creatures that religious leaders encourage you to devour.

Let's look briefly at the treatment of some of the farm animals – the way the majority of them are raised for slaughter.<sup>6</sup> Don't say, after reading this that the ones whose flesh you buy are treated "humanely" (until they're herded to be killed, of course), or are "free-range" (a euphemism for chickens being in a suffocating barn with thousands of others rather than in a cage with just five), or are "organic" (what exactly do you mean by that and how does that make them not suffer or be tortured or be filled with terror at the horror they know is coming?).

## **CHICKENS**

Let's start with chickens: the majority are confined to battery cages, each hen having a space allowance of less than an A4 sheet of paper, never see the sun or a blade of grass; male chicks are discarded, usually by maceration (softened, broken up, minced) or suffocation as they are considered useless. Many hens are de-beaked and de-toed without any anaesthetic, meaning they suffer pain. Chickens (and turkeys and ducks and geese) have a central nervous system and feel pain just as you do. They are able to multi-task, can solve problems, have a long-term memory, can anticipate future events and rewards. While embryonic, they can communicate verbally with each other and their mother through their egg shells; they use more than 30 kinds of vocalizations, olfactory and tactile

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<sup>5</sup> [www.animalaid.org.uk](http://www.animalaid.org.uk)

<sup>6</sup> Of course there are other animals that are slaughtered for food or clothing or vanity, such as goats, buffaloes, rabbits, ostriches, ducks and turkeys, who also are forced into terrible conditions; but here I'm concentrating on chickens, cows, sheep and pigs, as well as fish in general (as apart from trout, salmon and sharks, for instance).

senses to convey messages and their intentions; they are social; they can express enthusiasm, grief, fear, anxiety, frustration and boredom; and they have strong maternal feelings – where do you think the term “broody” originates? And these intelligent, sentient beings are put through suffering just so they can lay eggs to feed a rapacious group of human. And when they slow down on their laying, they are slaughtered. Those that are bred for the table are stuffed with vitamins and antibiotics and hormones so that they grow more quickly and much bigger, so that they can be taken to the abattoir sooner in order to be devoured by people who pretend they don’t know where they come from. Shame on you who eat them – or their eggs, lain during a life of agony.

## **COWS<sup>7</sup>**

What about cows – you know, those gentle creatures with the soft, loving eyes. Oh, you’ve never looked at one in the eye? Is that how you distance yourself from them, so that when your meat arrives in plastic wrapping you discount what this meat was originally? Do you know where milk comes from? It comes from cows in just the same way it comes from human mothers. Cows only come into milk when they’re pregnant. They are artificially inseminated (what a euphemistic term for “raped”), so that they can give birth to calves that are generally ripped from their care when they’re a day old and that are, then, kept as weak as possible before being killed and turned into veal. Meanwhile, their mothers scream in anguish when their children (yes, they are their children) are dragged off. But as long as they continue lactating and are milked while being enclosed in a pen for their lives, that’s quite okay, you think. Or do you? And, again, don’t say you know of a farm where this isn’t done. It’s “done” in most countries, especially in the so-called developed world. But, as long as you have your milk, you happily think that God’s in His heaven and all’s right with the world. Like hell it is. Think of what you’re party to, what you’re an accomplice to, what, through your greed and rapaciousness, you’re encouraging an animal to suffer. And when the cows begin to dry up, they’re killed, of course. Meanwhile, their fellows that are bred primarily to be chomped by people who couldn’t care about anything except themselves, are, like chickens, injected with hormones and vitamins and antibiotics, and are sometimes fed on ground up bones and flesh from other animals. They lead horrendous lives as well until their time comes to serve the desires (not the needs) of you and you and you. Cows are sentient, have a central nervous system just as you do, have excellent spatial learning and cognition; mothers walk for hours to find a lost calf; they’re all individuals and use their own communication skills with each other, with each cow-calf combination having their own calls. Go to an abattoir and see your cow that will provide you with food, go and see how it cries – yes, it sheds tears. And you scoff your meat and you drink your milk and you eat your butter and you devour your cheese because you think you can’t go without it. But, again, consider this: it’s not yours – it’s theirs. And you can go without it, and, in doing so, will improve your own health. But, no, your greed and your lack of will power and your lack of conscience do not allow you to. Shame on you.

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<sup>7</sup> I am speaking specifically about cows here. However, oxen suffer in similarly horrendous conditions.

## **SHEEP**

And sheep? Those animals that need their wool to keep warm, exhibit social and emotional intelligence as much as dogs and apes do, wag their tails, recognize their mothers by their individual bleats, remember up to 50 faces. Are you going to turn a blind eye to them, too? To the way lambs are subjected to “mulesing” (painfully having their tails and surrounding wool removed without anaesthetic)? Having their horns removed with no painkiller? Transported in trucks with no weather protection to their deaths? Stand in pools of blood? Know that their turn to be murdered is coming because they can hear what is being done to their fellows ahead of them? But, no, your lamb on the spit is too tasty for your tongues to give them up. Those same lambs that you’ll see a picture of when they’re frolicking and show your children how cute they are. Shame on you.

## **PIGS**

And now, probably the cleverest farm animals of the lot: pigs (of course, anathema for kashrut and halaal practices). Pigs are more intelligent, curious and insightful than dogs, some primates and, also, human toddlers. They learn games and obedience faster than dogs do. They are social, communicate constantly, and use over 20 different vocalizations. Sows “sing” to their piglets while nursing – like human mothers do. They’re treated no better than cows are. Go and look at them where they are confined in farrowing crates for the duration of their pregnancy and for about a month after giving birth, unable to move in any direction. They go through absolute hell. But, no, you can’t go without your ham and pork and bacon and crackling and lard. You are deaf to their squeals, your minds are closed to their suffering, because you are too interested in stuffing yourself with them. Don’t say that anybody is like a pig. That would be a compliment to that person. You are no better than they are but your ego won’t allow you to admit, or even consider, that. Shame on you.

## **FISH**

What about fish? Those so-called cold-blooded creatures? Many people who eat them look for an excuse by saying that they have no feelings (the fish, that is, although we could be talking about people here) and, therefore, what’s wrong with eating them. But compassion does not stop at the water’s edge. Fish do have neural structures, even if different from those of mammals and birds. They have neural receptors that respond to heat, pressure and acid – therefore, to pain. And the same goes for other sea creatures such as the crab, the lobster and the shrimp, as well as the highly intelligent squid. When fish are hauled out of water, they become desperate to breathe, but their gills collapse and they

suffocate. Angling is cruel; fishing hurts; trawling is a travesty. And don't say that fishing is fine if it's catch and release (something like hunting a animal, terrifying it, hurting it, and then letting it go, thinking it won't have any after effects). When fish have hooks taken out of their mouths, often with some of their throat and gut, not only do they suffer pain, but they can also go into severe physiological shock from which they can die. So, even if they are released, they still die a torturous death. There is no excuse to be an eater of water creatures and feel holier than the murderers of land animals. If you devour them, in whatever packaging and at whatever stage this occurs, you are still a participant in the murder of about 100 billion a year. Shame on you.

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*And as the mothers and fathers saw the barrenness around them, they realized at long last that the true barrenness was within them, was where their souls should have been. But they saw hope, as their children crawled across the waste to their fellows, to the calves, to the lambs. But as they neared each other, reaching out in fellowship, from their hands and their paws and their bellies, the last of the blood flowed, drying on the desolate land. And they turned to look at the ghosts of their mothers and the phantoms of their fathers, who had brought this on them. But it was too late.*

It is time, to look at each religion in turn, and at how each is defiled by those same religious leaders. Those who are party to the killing of creation. Those who advocate the slaughtering of god's creatures. Those who are the murderers of the Divine.

## **JUDAISM**

*To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats....*

*And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.*

Isaiah 1:11 & 15

Isaiah's words should resound through the souls of Jews, but they are ignored. Sacrifices of animals are not merely the slaughtering of them to appease a jealous god but, also, to fill the guts of the murderers and their fellows. Prayers mean nothing while there is blood on the hands of the perpetrators. And the most soiled are those rabbis whose mouths move over these words but who fail to take into account their deepest meaning. No wonder God tends to be deaf to the prayers of hypocrites such as they.

Did God not create a vegan world in the Garden of Eden – a world in which animals are to be companions, not food? Is this not the paradisiacal world that Jews strive to return to? But, according to so many rabbis, they are so weak in will, in spiritual will, that, despite their rituals and their worship, they cannot attain this. And they expect the Messiah to come while they are so corrupt?

The prophet Ezekiel (Chapter 34) speaks of this return to paradise, meaning peace in the land, a land without violence. Hosea (2:20-22) does, too – a time of a covenant “with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground,” where the bow and the sword will be broken and all will lie down in safety. It is then that the Children of Israel will be betrothed to God forever “in righteousness and justice, in steadfast love and compassion”. It is then that they will be able to know the Eternal One. This is the Haftarah that is read, to go with the Torah reading from the opening section of the Book of Numbers in which the census of the tribes of Israel is taken. So, what are we really being told? That this way of life should cover all the tribes, all the people of Israel, for all time.

In the same vein, we read in Isaiah 11:6 and 9 that this will come when the wolf dwells with the lamb and when there will be no more hurt or destruction – and that includes suffering caused by people. It is then that the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord. The covenant is not to oppress, to kill, to slaughter. The covenant is one of unity, of harmony, of peace, of life.

So, what is keeping the rabbis and their supporters from returning to paradise, from meeting their Messiah? Among other things: their stiff necks and their hard hearts. It is not the worship of the golden calf (Exodus 32:9) that has made them perverse this time, but the worship of their stomachs into which such calves are interred. Truly, they have made the calf meat the gold that they worship.

I accuse Jewish religious leaders of being so concerned about ritual that they've forgotten how to return to paradise. They have forgotten how to worship their God in the way He expresses a desire to be worshipped, apart from sacrifices in their various forms. This is so because they worship their own benighted traditions based on a misinterpretation of text, a misrepresentation of commandments, a misconstruing of instruction.

But the rabbis might say that custom, that tradition, that ritual refute this. That animals should be killed as part of the Jewish religious way of life. Really? Must the pernicious murder of animals be given substance because of the old ways? Because that's the way Jews are taught. So, what then do you say about the following? Do Jews still sell their daughters into slavery (Exodus 21:7-8)? Do they still possess slaves (Leviticus 25:44)? Are they still morally obliged to put others to death if they work on the Sabbath (Exodus 35:2)? Are they banned from approaching the altar of God if they have a defect in their sight, or hands or legs, or backs, or if they are dwarves, or even have a flat nose (Leviticus 21:18-21)? Of course, the answer to all of these is no, despite the injunctions in the Torah.

In the words of the Shulchan Aruch (Code of Jewish Law), "It is forbidden, according to the law of the Torah, to inflict pain upon any living creature. On the contrary, it is our duty to relieve the pain of any creature ...." Do such creatures not tremble before they are slaughtered? Do they not mourn their children when they are ripped from their care? Do they not feel pain?

Why, then, can any cruelty to animals not be superseded by compassion? We've seen from the other examples that tradition and culture are flexible and, surely, such flexibility should always move to the side of life, of kindness. But it seems not when it comes to animals.

It's time religious leaders in Judaism realized that to be a tzaddik (a righteous person) has to be more than following certain rituals but in honouring life, because the greatest way in which one can honour God is in looking after all of His creatures. And rabbis must not come with the bunkum that if one blesses the animal before devouring it, all is well; or that the animal wishes to be eaten. That's just a way of trying to assuage the evil, the sin that they are committing.

Jews are told that they must "walk in God's ways" (Deuteronomy 28:9). If only they'd align themselves in practice with the words of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, the founder of the *Torah im Derech* school of contemporary Orthodox Judaism. He explained that "As God is merciful, so you also be merciful. As He loves and cares for all his creatures because they are His creatures and His children and are related to Him, because He is their Father, so you also love all His creatures as your brethren. Let their joys be your joys, and their sorrows yours. Love them and with every power which God gives you, work for their welfare and benefit, because they are the children of your God, because they are your brothers and sisters." Is this not an injunction that contemporary rabbis choose to ignore? I accuse them of working for their own benefit all of the time. Let these rabbis be told, let them understand, that it is the animals who will have the final say, as their flesh will eventually destroy that of the rabbis and their followers on their way to everlasting damnation.

So, I ask the rabbis: What about the edict of “tzar baalei chayim” – avoiding cruelty to all animals?

Oh, you devout Jews, oh you who do what you are instructed to do, how you recite the following blessing when you put on certain clothing for the first time: “Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who has kept us in life, and has preserved us and has enabled us to reach this season.” But this blessing may not be recited for furs and leather shoes. Have you ever asked yourself why? It’s because an animal had to be killed in the making of them. But Jews still wear them. What a schizophrenic approach to animals. A subtext is that it is wrong, it is a sin, to wear them, but that’s quite okay as long as you realize that you can’t thank God for them. Is it really? Is it quite okay that you can’t thank God for them because you are party to the slaughter of His Creatures? That you are actually destroying the lifeblood of God? You murderers of the God you purport to worship.

For the same reason surely, and not just in order to forego luxury, it is forbidden to wear leather shoes on the holiest day of the year, Yom Kippur. Why is there such a rule? Because one cannot plead for compassion when one has not shown this to other creatures.

When the Jewish custom of shechita, cutting an animal’s throat, was started, that might have been regarded as acceptable then, when compared to other ways of slaughtering. But now what is done is treif. And why? Because it has been recorded time and again that slitting the throat results in suffering for the animals that not infrequently remain alive while they are shackled and hoisted on to a frame, while their blood runs out and they squirm in pain for up to two minutes. And, yes, cows do cry; they cry when their calves are taken away, they cry when they are in excruciating pain. I accuse rabbis of hardening their hearts because they prefer to think that God wants their tradition. Shame on them. And what do they do when people oppose this horrendous deed? Their reaction is generally a knee-jerk one in which they accuse anybody questioning their motives and deeds as anti-semitic. But what these leaders are doing is decrying and betraying the Jewish God.

And while they suckle up to their Tanach, and quote the ways to sacrifice as related in Leviticus 1:3-9, 3:1-5 and 4:3-21, and Numbers 28:11-15, I’ll remind them about Psalm 40:6 which points out that God does not require animal sacrifice; about Psalm 51:16-17 where we are told that God doesn’t delight in burnt offerings but in a contrite heart; about Hosea 6:6 which warns us that mercy is required, not sacrifice. And, also, about Isaiah 1:11 and 15 where God admonishes His people, as quoted at the beginning of this section: “... I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats .... / And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.” And your mouths. And your stomachs. And, rabbis, don’t say that this is why blood is drained from the corpses before being cooked and consumed. This does not abnegate the notion that life-blood has been spilt.

We should return to the Torah to find an even greater hypocrisy: an issue that nearly all writers on animal rights and compassion in Judaism conveniently forget, don’t mention, or that has never occurred to them. Mezuzahs, the scrolls affixed to the doorpost of rooms in the Jewish home, consist of a piece of parchment. The Torah

itself is made from vellum. And both parchment and the finer vellum must come from the skin of a ritually clean animal, slaughtered for the function. Why? As mentioned, Jewish practice has turned away from other so-called commandments, so what makes the use of parchment or vellum inviolable? Let's look at this. The younger the calf the "better", as it means then the finer the vellum which is soaked, limed and scudded, following which it is dried under tension. All Torah scrolls are written in this material, also called "klaf". In other words, the Torah, the holiest document read at services, is made from the skin of a dead baby animal. The calves are ripped away from their mothers who bellow in grief. The calves, for their brief lives, are engaged and suffer. For what? So that through their suffering, their deaths, Jews can worship? Is that what Judaism is essentially about? To pray over the Torah as it is now, to bless God over the Torah as it is now, is not to honour the Torah as a tree of life but as a bush of death, a bush that has finished burning and all that remain are the ashes. This desecrates God.

Related to this are the Tefillin (phylacteries), the two black boxes containing scriptural passages which are bound by strips on the left hand and on the head, and worn for morning services. They "must" be made of leather. Why? What makes leather so special? Nothing, except the blindness of those who refuse to see, the stultified thoughts of those who stick to a tradition when it suits them. And a dead conscience of people who see themselves as their God in deciding on whom to allow to live and whom to kill.

Isaac Bashevis Singer points out in *Satan in Goray* and *The Slave* that true enlightenment can come only when there is the compassion for animals. God can only appear when the clouds are lifted, but the rabbis are covering the world in a miasma.

It is time to realize that because of these horrendous practices of slaughter to slake your stomachs, Jewish conscience has been cankered by custom. Oh, you Jewish leaders, step in to stop this gruesome sacrificial cult, this bloodlust. Has it not occurred to you that God will not redeem you because it is His animals whose flesh you crave? Has it not dawned on you that you are continually failing his test? Salvation cannot come until you admit you have been mistaken and then mend your ways; until you treat all of God's creatures with the love for which they were created in Eden.

## **CHRISTIANITY**

*A charitable heart is a heart which is burning with love for the whole of creation, for men, for the birds, for the beasts ... for all creatures. He who has such a heart cannot see or call to mind a creature without his eyes being filled with tears by reason of the immense compassion which seizes his heart; a heart which is softened and can no longer bear to see or learn from others of any suffering, even the smallest pain being inflicted upon a creature. That is why such a man never ceases to pray for the animals ... moved by the infinite pity which reigns in the hearts of those who are becoming united with God.*

Isaac of Nineveh/St Isaac the Syrian

*“If only you had known the meaning of ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice’, you would not have condemned the innocent.”*

Matthew 12:7

*“‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’ For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”*

Matthew 9:13

Christian priests with their holier than thou sanctimoniousness as they preach to their flocks, are as misguided and hypocritical as the rabbis. Jesus Himself recognized this in quoting Hosea 6:6, as we see above. I accuse you of being so concerned with evangelism that you look at bodies rather than at souls. You look at goodwill rather than at goodness or good deeds. You speak in the name of Christ while you sully what He stands for. And just as Pontius Pilate abjured responsibility for his judgment, Christian prelates wash their hands of certain decisions, being too craven to take the blame for crushing the lifeblood out of animals devoured for passing pleasure.

Priests who spend so much time decrying famine and climate change, are prepared to ignore the destruction of the world brought on by the mass slaughtering of animals that exacerbates all of this more than any other practice. The water that is used, the land that is made barren through these animal lots, is the greatest destroyer of our environment. You Christian carnivores are instrumental in the destruction of the world, killing your own children and grandchildren because, as a result of your actions, there will be no food left for them because you haven't spoken out; because you haven't thought or acted further than your gut. They will grow up in a fruitless world with a bleak life through your barrenness of soul. Because of your doing nothing to assuage the pain of our fellow creatures, generations to come will suffer. And how long do you expect to wait for the Second Coming while you betray your God and your Messiah? As you might remember reading in Mark 8:18, “Do you

have eyes but fail to see? Do you have ears and fail to hear? And don't you remember?"

Have you forgotten Matthew 5:7? "Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy."

I accuse you, the priests, of being implicit in the murder of and malevolence to God's other creatures, because of your blindness and deafness and lack of conscience and compassion. By this, you are defying and defiling God and diminishing His glory.

I won't be dwelling solely on the Catholics, but aren't we told in the catechism (2415-2418) that by their mere existence, animals bless God and give Him glory? Therefore, in killing them, or by allowing them to be killed, or turning a blind eye to their suffering, Christians are cursing Him who created them. But so many respond and say that although it is contrary to human dignity to cause animals to suffer or die needlessly, food and clothing from such animals are necessities. That's trash. Most people can get by and live healthily without eating meat, fish, eggs or dairy, without wearing hides and leather and wool and fur and feathers.

Elsewhere in the catechism (703) priests teach that the "Word of God and His Breath are at the origin of the being and life of every creature." So, by stuffing their stomachs with them, they are damning themselves. They are silencing the word of God. They are suffocating His breath.

It might speak of anathema to point out a pope's hypocrisy, but this cannot be left unsaid. John Paul II in 1990 insisted that "animals possess a soul and men must love and feel solidarity with other animals." Then, there's Benedict XVI, known as Cardinal Ratzinger in 2002, saying "we can see that they [animals] are given to our care, that we cannot just do whatever we want to them." Benedict XVI might have condemned "food cruelties" such as foie gras production, but did this stop him eating the fowls? I think not.

What makes this even more hypocritical is the reading in Matthew 3:16 and Luke 3:22 where the Holy Spirit of God is reported to have come down as a dove to Jesus' baptism. To extrapolate from this: to eat a dove, in fact to eat any bird, implies that one is destroying God.

This has further resonance in Acts 7:51 (itself reminiscent of Exodus 32:9): "You stiff-necked people! Your hearts and ears are still uncircumcised. You are just like your ancestors: You always resist the Holy Spirit."

The Protestants shouldn't sit back and think that they're following their original leaders to bliss and not damnation. You Methodist clerics, have you forgotten the stance of your founder, the vegetarian John Wesley, who spoke about numberless creatures who had never sinned but were punished so severely? You might prefer not to drink or gamble, but what about following his ethical eating habits? Or is that too holy, too spiritual, for you?

Then we get to the problem of Martin Luther. No matter what his practice might have been, he taught that "Adam would not have used the creatures as we do today.

[He rather used them] for the admiration of God and holy joy.” Why can so many Lutheran pastors follow other teachings of Luther, but are happy to ignore this one? It is because their gullets rule their vocal cords.

Members of the clergy then turn to the New Testament and, with self-satisfaction, cite Luke 24 (42-43) which says that Jesus ate fish. The King James version reads: “And they gave him [Jesus] a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And he took it, and did eat before them.” Does the “it” refer to both of or, more likely, just the honeycomb? I suggest that the latter has as much credence as the former. But do those prelates also do everything else that Jesus did, including going barefoot, or carpentry? Be that as it may, but things are different today, and there are more options.

Let’s go further than this example. The classical Greek *ichthus* (“fish”) comprises the first letters of the words, “Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour.” So, by eating fish, it’s another way of destroying the Messiah. It’s not a question of imbibing his being through chewing and swallowing a creature of the waters; it’s a question of destroying his being by doing this.

It might not be by chance that the mallet used to kill fish caught when angling is called a “priest”. Here, in a religious sense with the fish emblemizing Christianity, it could refer to the killing of Christians or of the Holy Spirit within them. To take this further, when a priest tries to defend the eating of animals, he is bashing the spirits of his followers to death.

As interesting and, in this case, as unchristian as the eating of fish is that of meat or, in particular, lamb. First of all, prelates shouldn’t say that as Jesus was an observant Jew, he must have eaten lamb during the Last Supper, in accordance with an evident tradition of remembering the paschal lamb. And where does it say this in the Bible? And don’t forget that Jesus also defied certain religious laws, such as the prohibition against picking grain on the Sabbath (Matthew 12:1-8; Mark 2:23-26; Luke 6:1-5).

It is religiously bizarre and ethically contradictory for any Christian to eat meat, particularly lamb. Jesus is often compared to a shepherd in the scriptures, particularly in John 10:11 where we read, “I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.” To extrapolate from here, Christians who take the lives of sheep are in total contradiction of Jesus’ teachings and actions. And this is even further underlined if we look at this allegorically: if the followers of Jesus are likened to his sheep and he is prepared to die for them, how much more is it to be denounced if they kill any sheep.

Jesus is referred to as the Lamb of God, the “Agnus Dei”, in John 1:29 and 1:36, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Surely, then, all lambs could well be seen allegorically, and to deprive them of freedom, of frolicking, to subject them to suffering and slaughter, is blasphemy. They are metaphorically, sometimes physically, crucified for the taste buds of people. When they are killed, Christ is killed again. The passion, the suffering, of Christ continues whenever Christians open their mouths in this way.

In 1 Peter 1:18-21 we read how people are redeemed “with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.... Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.”

Don't Catholics give up meat during Lent to purify themselves in order to bring them closer to God? Doesn't this indicate that eating meat is a sin, that to be a vegetarian is the best form of spiritual renewal? And, if they're so devout, why can't they do this the whole year? And why can't the priests set the example and encourage their fellows to do this in order to form a truly sacred congregation?

But, no, they are blind to the agony, they are deaf to the screams; their faith lies in lies.

“Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God?” (1 Corinthians 6:19). And you defile your inner beings, the Holy Spirit which struggles to live within you.

I accuse you, the priests and the bishops and the archbishops of not understanding the Scriptures, the teachings of your Christ. I accuse you that if you do understand, you don't give a damn and, as a result, damn yourselves and your adherents to hell.

Keith Akers argues convincingly in “The Lost Religion of Jesus” that both Jesus and his earliest followers were vegetarians. He refers to Ebionite sources to show that Jesus was regarded as a radical who threatened the established order and, therefore, his message was suppressed.

Why can you not be more like your Messiah? He did not accept the injustices of the world. He attacked the hypocrites, just as he would have attacked you. Jesus wasn't always the calm, peaceable, man. His anger is evident in the incident where he decried the selling of cattle and sheep and doves (John 2:14-16). This was more than the use of the Temple as a market but, allegorically, it's the turning of one's body into a defilement of the Holy Spirit.

Think carefully: What would Jesus, the Prince of Peace, do today with all the horrors perpetrated on farm animals?

Can Christians then have any prospect of looking to a time as described in Revelation 21:45 when “death will be no more”, when heaven will descend to earth, when there'll be the Second Coming? I would say that this would be impossible without Christians themselves ensuring that the death of any creature is no more. I challenge the prelates to work towards this in order to avoid Jesus Christ being crucified a second time. If they desist and resist, then I accuse them of a cruelty that is betrayal, a cruelty that is infidelity, a cruelty that is heresy.

However, there is hope if the current pope, Francis, leads the way for all Christians and puts his practice where his encyclical is. On June 18, 2015, he called on all to embrace a more humane path with animals in his papal letter *Laudato Si* (“Praised Be”), after St Francis's “Canticle of the Sun” in which he praises God for animals and creation. The Pope reminds us here of Luke 12:6 where Jesus says that no bird is forgotten before God. Pope Francis contrasts dominion with domination, saying that

Christians have misunderstood the one for the other, and that cruelty towards fellow creatures has an impact on the treatment of other human beings. Therefore, kindness to animals should be at the heart of what it is to be a Christian.

In the Foreword to *The Global Guide to Animal Protection*, edited by Andrew Linzey, already cited in this tract, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, points out further that “the business of fighting injustice is like fighting a multiheaded hydra”, and this includes battling against “the abuse and cruelty we inflict on other animals.... There is something Christ-like about caring for suffering creatures, whether they are humans or animals.... Churches should lead the way by making clear that all cruelty – to other animals as well as human beings – is an affront to civilized living and a sin before God.” What a pity that Tutu, whom I otherwise admire enormously, still eats animal protein when he surely understands it is morally reprehensible.

Jesus pronounces, “I am the way and the truth and the life” (John 14:6). Jesus stands not only for truth but also for life; life in all ways. This is His way to follow, to honour His truth and bring glory to Him and to the Father.

I challenge all clerics to take up this call. If not, I accuse them of not being true Christians.

I challenge them to implement the prayer of St Basil, the 4<sup>th</sup> century Bishop of Caesarea: “Oh, God, enlarge within us the sense of fellowship with all living things, our brothers the animals to whom Thou gavest the earth in common with us. We remember with shame that in the past we have exercised the high dominion of man with ruthless cruelty so that the voice of the earth, which should have gone up to thee in song, has been a groan of travail.”

Related to this, consider the pronouncement of John Henry Cardinal Newman: “Now what is it that moves our very hearts and sickens us so much as cruelty shown to poor brutes? ... They have done us no harm and they have no power of resistance; it is the cowardice and tyranny of which they are the victims which make their sufferings so especially touching. Cruelty to animals is as if man did not love God.... There is something so very dreadful, so Satanic, in tormenting those who have never harmed us, who cannot defend themselves, who are utterly in our power.”

In remembering these words, I call upon you clerics to remember the words of Isaac of Nineveh and also those from Matthew insisting on mercy. Refresh your beings to be like Jesus, your Messiah, who was concerned with the poor, the sick, the stranger, the outsider, the downtrodden. Lift your heels from the throats of the most downtrodden and vulnerable of all. Exult not in their deaths. Rather raise them up in joy and life, and in so doing bring honour to Jesus, bring conciliation with the Lord, bring spiritual upliftment to yourselves.

## ***ISLAM***

*And there is no creature on [or within] the earth or bird that flies with its wings except [that they are] communities like you. We have not neglected in the Register a thing. Then unto their Lord they will be gathered.*

Qur'an 6:38

*Surely in the heavens and the earth there are signs for the faithful; in your own creation, and in the beasts that are scattered far and near, signs for true believers ... signs for men of understanding.*

Qur'an 45:3-4

*There is not a thing but celebrates His adoration; and yet ye mankind! Ye understand not how do they declare His glory.*

Qur'an 77:44

No doubt the imams are sitting back, realizing that unlike the leaders of the other religions in question, there is no question of their being hypocritical here. For they will contend that nowhere in the Qur'an, in the hadith, is there the injunction to forswear meat. In fact, they might say that the eating of meat is encouraged, provided, of course, that it's the "proper" meat, slaughtered in the "proper" way.

However, I accuse them of being too complacent. I also want to stress that there's nothing in the Qur'an prohibiting a vegan diet. What I say here will in no way contradict the teachings of the Prophet but, rather, underline certain aspects of them by means of exegesis. The vegan way of life actually fits in with Islam and with the teachings of the Prophet Mohammed.

To sum up the quotations above, care for all creatures is in line with the Qur'an's teachings: at times people lack understanding that all creatures celebrate Allah and bring glory to Him. As with charity and social justice, requirements of treating animals with kindness and respect are set in Islamic law – this is *shari'a*.

With this in mind, the Prophet Mohammed's comment that whoever is kind to the creatures of Allah is kind to himself does raise a certain problem. What do we have here, then, for those who eat such animals and insist on their slaughter, too? Self-flagellation? Masochism? Surely, that's un-Islamic?

The Muslim clerics should also take into account *Mishkat al-Masabih* (Book 6, Ch. 7,8:178) which reminds us that the Prophet taught that a good deed done for an animal "is as good as doing good to a human being; while an act of cruelty to a beast is as bad as an act of cruelty to a human being." Tell that to the ritual slaughterers as they

draw the knife across the throat of those creatures deemed fit to eat (*zabiha*). It matters not only how we treat animals, not only how they are slaughtered, but that they are slaughtered at all. If, according to certain Islamic precepts, people have no rights, only duties, surely the duty of saving animals should supersede any so-called right of eating them?

And, imams, don't say, like the rabbis, that your ritual method of slaughter is the best way as this doesn't cause the animal to suffer. That's nonsense. A study at Massey University in New Zealand found that calves do experience pain when slaughtered in this way.<sup>8</sup> And if there is pain, there must be fear beforehand; there must be terror.

Don't say that this way is right as it's the way that it's always been done whether it's to cattle or any other creatures, including sheep that are murdered and bled out during the annual Eid-ul-Adha celebrations. You know that God's knowledge is infinite, but that of humans, including yours, is limited. If it's your decision not to change your ways because of "tradition", that your interpretations, no matter how long they've been established, cannot be wrong, then you are taking on God's infinite, infallible being. In other words, you're seeing yourselves as perfect and as God. The ultimate sacrilege.

Muslims may not kill anything while in a state of ritual purity (*ihram*), such as while praying or on pilgrimage. Surely, from this we can glean that the slaughter of animals, or even being party to it, is an impure deed. In order to garner greater spiritual purity, more credible upliftment, Muslims should strive all the time to avoid meat of any sort. Pilgrimage isn't just for a few days or weeks of the year. It should be within oneself all the time.

I accuse any imam who speaks out strongly against veganism or even vegetarianism as actually speaking against Islam. Leading contemporary Islamic scholars have issued fatwas to substantiate this view. The Islamic scholar, Hamza Yusuf, points out that meat is not a necessity in shar'ia, and in days gone by even the wealthy only ate meat once a week, on a Friday. He says that traditionally, therefore, Muslims were semi-vegetarians (which is a strange concept – one either is or one isn't vegetarian). He also says that the Prophet was in that category, usually not eating meat. Mufti Ebrahim Desai, who runs a fatwa website, "Ask Imam", contends that a Muslim may be a vegetarian even if meat is not prohibited. This view is also held by the great Islamic faqih (scholar) Sayyid Fadhlullah who insists that vegetarianism is halal, meat is not compulsory, and any food is permissible provided it is not harmful. A vegan or vegetarian Muslim could take this further and explain that as farming nowadays drastically harms the environment, as a consequence it harms the health of people, and, therefore, an animal-free diet would be the better option.

The acceptability of vegetarianism is also underlined by the ultra-conservative Sheikh Muhammad Al-Munajjid who rejects any religious innovation, and is the founder of the website [islamqa.info](http://islamqa.info) which answers questions in line with the

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<sup>8</sup> Johnson CB, Mellor DJ, Hemsworth PH & Fisher AD. 2015. A Scientific Comment on the Welfare of Domesticated Ruminants Slaughtered Without Stunning. *New Zealand Veterinary Journal* 63(1):58-65.

Salafi school of thought, a fundamentalist movement within Sunni Islam. He explains that there is nothing wrong in not eating meat if one doesn't like it; he adds that even though abstinence from flesh might not bring one closer to Allah, it also doesn't estrange one; therefore, vegetarianism is religiously acceptable. Therefore, we can accuse any Muslim cleric who speaks out against vegetarianism as being in religious contradiction of these just referred to.

With reference to the quotations at the beginning of this section on Islam, the Qur'an attributes certain actions and features to non-human creatures that are not perceptible to people – such as a spiritual dimension. This is seen in all creatures' practice of glorifying God (*tasbīh*). It is not the other creatures' limitations, but man's that has divorced him from perceiving this.

The Qur'an, theocentric as it is, insists that if one worships God, if one obeys God, if one obtains God's pleasure, then one is rewarded in the hereafter. But what is God's pleasure? To destroy His creatures? What kind of God would that be? If the imams, disagree with this, if they insist on slaughter, then their religion is moving from the theocentric to the anthropocentric, and, therefore, they are heretics.

## ***HINDUISM***

*He, who injures harmless creatures from a wish to give himself pleasure, never gains happiness in this life or the next.*

Manusmriti 5:45

*He who never eats meat but assents to it, is considered as having killed and is stained with fault.*

Mahabharata

*One is dearest to God who has no enemies among the living beings, who is nonviolent to all creatures.*

Bhagavad Gita

Hinduism, like Judaism, is at times ambiguous and contradictory regarding animal rights. However, I shall concentrate on aspects that underline the kernel teachings of Hinduism, especially as related to the essence of Hinduism: *ahimsa* – abstaining from doing harm to any living being. This underlines the concept of all life being sacred as it is the manifestation of the divine, and that those who live according to this precept can attain bliss. In other words, whereas Christians regard their neighbours, whom they should love as themselves, as humans, Hindus extend this with much more compassion to all creatures. In theory, that is.

The argument that certain gods in Hinduism demand sacrifice, could be denounced as alien to Hinduism, to a blasphemy concocted by the addicted to cruelty, those who are weak in spirit, those who desecrate *ahimsa*.

No doubt, and unlike the Abrahamic religions, many religious leaders in Hinduism, be they Brahmins, pandits, gurus, pujaris or archakas, understand the necessity of honouring life. However, I accuse those who don't practise this of undermining their own religion. Furthermore, I accuse those who don't insist on this practice among their followers, of not being firm enough regarding these principles. All Hindus should be made to realize that as venerated as those sacred cows might be, all animals have lives that are sacrosanct and should be treated with equal respect.

In the Mahabharata, Brhaspati, the guru of the gods, instructs us that no religious practice supersedes nonviolence, this being the highest dharma – the cosmic law upheld by the gods and expressed as the path of righteousness by humans.

Therefore, from a religious point of view, from the standpoint of *ahimsa*, it is right to heed the call to end festivals such as the five-yearly Gadhimai one in Nepal in which up to 500 000 sacrifices are made to “end evil and bring prosperity”. Devotees of this should really consider whether there has ever been a positive fundamental change in their living standards because of this. I think not. But the animals suffer, evil continues, and this practice is a travesty and totally against the basic tenets of Hinduism.

Mahatma Gandhi pointed out that the life of a lamb is no less precious than that of a human being; the more helpless a creature, the more entitled it is to be protected by people from the cruelty of other people.

As the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) – the Hare Krishna movement – points out, the care and love for all animals is a cardinal principle. Killing any of them violates karmic laws, where intent and action influence the future of the individual. Thus, such violence harms the spirituality of both the individual and society.

To underline how this principle suffuses Hinduism, the Yajurveda explains that no life of any created being is expendable; and the Rigveda says that the faithful must protect the four legged as well as the two legged, providing food and water for all. From this, it follows that even a passive spectator of the crime of killing an animal is an accomplice to the execution; as if he himself is the slaughterer. Therefore, it is a fallacious argument that it is in order to eat meat as the animal would have been killed anyway.

Another salient point is the concept of reincarnation or transmigration in which the *atman*, or soul, finds a new home in another body, not only in a human, but in a bird, a fish, any animal. This underscores the belief that all creatures are related and, therefore, should be treated with compassion. Hurt one, and you may well be violating someone you once loved, and this will reflect back on you. And you priests, how can you ever tolerate adherents who know this Hindu belief but ignore it for the sake of their taste buds, their guts.

Listen to the inspiring message of Dada J.P. Vaswani – the Spiritual Head of the Sadhu Vaswani Mission, who said the following in an interview in *Hinduism Today* (Jan-March, 2003, 52-53):

Hundreds of thousands of animals are being slaughtered every day; but they love life as much as you and I do, as much as those people do who eat them up. I believe it is injustice because creation is one family. The breath that animals take is the same breath that we take. They are our kindred, our kin .... And I believe animals should be given their rights. Today wherever I go, they talk of animal welfare. Animal welfare is not the answer – animal rights are needed.... Every animal has certain fundamental rights and the first right of every animal is the right to live; for you must not take away what you cannot give. And since you cannot give life to a dead creature, you have no right to take away the life of a living one. The 18<sup>th</sup> century gave rights to man, the

19<sup>th</sup> century gave rights to slaves, and the 20<sup>th</sup> century gave rights to women. The 21<sup>st</sup> century, I verily believe, will give rights to animals, and that will be a glorious day in the history of humanity. I believe there will be no peace on Earth unless we stop all killing.

So, those Hindus who are hypocritical and devour their fellows, I accuse you and your teachers of being sacrilegious, of going against the ethos of your religion, of destroying those you love and, eventually, yourselves. You are committing spiritual suicide.

Remember that all beings love life, are terrified of pain, adore pleasure, try to live, reject annihilation. To all of them, life is cherished. And don't believe anyone who tells you otherwise.

## ***BUDDHISM***

*All beings tremble before danger, all fear death.*

*When a man considers this, he does not kill or cause to kill.*

*All beings fear before danger, life is dear to all.*

*When a man considers this, he does not kill or cause to kill.*

*He who for the sake of happiness hurts others*

*Who also want happiness, shall not hereafter find happiness.*

*He who for sake of happiness does not hurt others*

*Who also want happiness, shall hereafter find happiness.*

The Buddha in the Dhammapada

*Pray, let us not eat any flesh or meat whatsoever coming from living beings. Anyone who eats flesh is cutting himself off from the great seed of his own merciful and compassionate nature, for which all sentient beings will reject him and flee from him when they see him acting so... Someone who eats flesh is defiling himself beyond measure ....*

The Buddha in the Brahmajala Sutra

As with Hinduism, *ahimsa* is a core teaching of Buddhism – striving to cause no harm to sentient beings being the basic of ethical behaviour and spiritual growth. The aim of Buddhism is enlightenment, and compassion is an essential precursor of such enlightenment, in order to attain nirvana, eternal bliss, and escaping samsara the world of suffering in a continuous cycle of life, death and rebirth.

As with the other religions under discussion here, Buddhism has many branches, but leaders of some of these groups have deviated far from the trunk of the tree, all for the sake of their selfish stomachs. They are so busy allowing their taste buds to dance, that they disregard the dance itself. I accuse them of hypocrisy in forsaking the teaching of the Buddha in order to attain self-satisfaction. I accuse them of being so involved in the misbegotten pleasures of life that they have forgotten samsara, have devoted themselves to a worship of mara, the tempter to evil thoughts and deeds, that nirvana will never welcome them. And the reason is the pleasures they gain from devouring flesh.

The Buddha commanded that nobody should kill or cause to be killed any living being, or approve of others killing or even hurting animals, those that are strong as well as those that tremble. All animals wish for freedom, peace and joy, just as humans do. To prevent them from doing this goes against the ethos of humanity; and

here we're not talking of slaughter only but animal farming, too. Pleasure and pain are not the preserves of people only. Enlightenment and goodness only come when one is in harmony with all that lives.

The Buddha says repeatedly that he forbids the eating of meat. On occasion, he is reported to have allowed it, but these cases are in the minority. I accuse certain Buddhist leaders of ignoring the compassionate teachings and following the vicious.

This brings us to the most prominent or universally well-known Buddhist leader, the present Dalai Lama. Unfortunately, I must accuse him of hypocrisy and call upon him to lead his followers to an enlightenment that is tragically missing, in him and in them. Admittedly, unlike Chinese Buddhism, Tibetan Buddhism is suffused with meat eaters.

In *The Vegetarian Way* almost 50 years ago, the Dalai Lama said that he didn't see any reason why animals should be slaughtered to serve as human diet; there are so many substitutes. "After all, man can live without meat." But he doesn't. So, does he regard himself as more or less than "man"? And what example is he setting? In this way he is no different from Archbishop Desmond Tutu in not practising what he so ably preaches.

The Dalai Lama insists that his followers should develop *nying je chenmo* – a great compassion that includes race, gender, class, age and species. This would lead to a kinder world. I accuse him of paying lip service to his own injunctions, and it shouldn't be related to whether he practices Theravada or Mahayana or Vajrayana Buddhism. Asceticism means nothing if it doesn't include a vegan diet. However, he wrote in 2005 that one must kill only with "empathy" and hold in oneself "the sense of the compassionate". Is it compassion to kill the innocent, the weak, the harmless? And doesn't empathy mean putting yourself in the position of another to understand and share the feelings of another. I ask the Dalai Lama how he would feel with stunning, or the knife to the throat. No, of course I wouldn't wish this on him, but he seems to have no problem forgetting about this empathy, this compassion. And it's been a cop-out for him to say that he once was ill and was advised by a doctor to eat meat. His illness and such ill-begotten advice has long passed. I accuse him of setting a bad example where there is vegan food available to him and the majority of his followers to lead a healthy physical life and, unlike now, a healthy spiritual one, too.

This arch hypocrisy is further evident when one reads his response to Norm Phelps and Heidi Prescott of "The Fund for Animals" in 1998: "Whenever I visit a market and see the chickens crowded together in tiny cages that give them no room to move around and spread their wings and the fish slowly drowning in the air, my heart goes out to them. People have to learn to think about animals in a different way, as sentient beings who love life and fear death. I urge everyone who can to adopt a compassionate vegetarian diet." I call on the Dalai Lama to set the example in practice. Otherwise, this hypocrisy will demean his status, and hold him up as a shocking example to those supporting him. If he doesn't, then there is no nirvana awaiting him.

Several major Mahayana sutras in China, Japan, Tibet and Korea have the Buddha condemning the eating of meat, with the condemnation being especially explicit in the Mahaparinirvana Sutra's maintaining that eating meat extinguishes the seed of great compassion.

Carniverous Buddhists might say that there's a story in the Jivaka Sutta, in which the Buddha speaks to his physician Jivaka:

“Jivaka, I say that there are three instances in which meat should not be eaten: when it is seen, heard or suspected [that the living being has been slaughtered for oneself]. I say that meat should not be eaten in those three instances. I say that there are instances in which meat may be eaten: when it is not seen, not heard, and not suspected [that the living being has been slaughtered for oneself].”

There you have the permission, so some Theravadans would say. But, no, you don't. Surely, any animal is “slaughtered on purpose” for you. Because all carnivores are intended consumers, whether they are known to the slaughterer or not. All those who eat it, become complicit in the killing. There is no spiritual escape from this.

The Buddha himself underlines this in the Lankavatara Sutra, that meat eating is evil and that the meat-eater is ultimately responsible for the murder: “If ... meat is not eaten by anybody for any reason, there will be no destroyer of life.” All who eat meat are party to murder. And they can forget about ever becoming bodhisattvas because they fail to show compassion to all sentient beings.

Once again, I accuse the Buddhists leaders who ignore this, as being complicit in the perversion of their faith.

And Buddhist leaders must not come with the notion that if one kills an animal, one is then releasing it from a negative karma, so then it can move to a more fortunate rebirth. Not only does this arrogance give the murderer his own feeling of omniscience and omnipotence, being so godlike then, but leads him to the notion that by causing others to suffer is a good. Of course, the opposite is true, and those who are party to slaughtering will themselves move to an unfortunate rebirth – the supreme sadism and masochism combined.

It is incumbent upon all Buddhist leaders to teach their followers all of this. I accuse those who fail to do so of going against the essence of the Buddha's teachings. The exemplary Vietnamese Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh instructs the members of his sangha or monastic community: “If you are invited to a meal ... do not sit at a table where there is wine or meat.” This implies, of course, that if one does, then one is complicit in the killing.

Operative words in Buddhism are *metta* (the intention and ability to bring joy to other living beings) and *karuna* (the intention and ability to relieve the suffering of other living beings). The Buddha taught that both are essential for the practising Buddhist.

I accuse those Buddhist who ignore this of not being true Buddhists, but perverting their religion to support their misbegotten practices.

## **CONCLUSION**

*“... our lives are miserable, laborious, and short. We are born, we are given just so much food as will keep the breath in our bodies, and those of us who are capable of it are forced to work to the last atom of our strength; and the very instant that our usefulness has come to an end we are slaughtered with hideous cruelty.... The life of an animal is misery and slavery: that is the plain truth.”*

Major, in George Orwell’s *Animal Farm*

*“It hurts me to tell this story, but tell it I must and you must tell it in turn. The animals are usually crowded onto the trucks. I’ve seen them get off, or be pulled off when they get to the slaughterhouse. Many are injured, many look sick, some are dead. The living are all terrified. They know what’s coming. They’ve been jam-packed, sometimes for hours, sometimes for days, sometimes, usually, without food or drink. I know. I’ve looked, I’ve watched, I’ve understood. Some are so weak, they can’t even walk. And then, to get them to go to the right place, they are prodded, beaten, given electric shocks. And Humphrey was heading for that place.*

*“There is something like an assembly line. The animals are just hoisted along to be killed. Little boy, these are individuals. Each one is different. But they are seen by the people there, the murderers, as the same. Just to be eaten. Just to make money.*

*“I have seen these animals shot in their heads and killed. I have seen them stunned with electricity. And I have seen them only injured and still alive and conscious as they are being taken along. And I have seen them hoisted up by their hind legs and then their throats are cut.*

*“The are killed, slaughtered. Some of them are still aware of what’s going on. Some of them see other animals being killed and they know it is their time coming. Little boy, do you realize how horrific this is? I have heard people over the years talk about wicked ways and evil deeds, but this, my young friend, is what true evil is. The animals can’t fight back, they can’t talk, they can scream, but they are ignored. They are not regarded as living creatures, but just as things.*

*“They have their skins removed, they are strung up, they are dead.*

*“Little boy, enough. I can’t go on. Goodbye.”*

Caw, in Stephen Marcus Finn’s *The Story of Humphrey the Hereford*

How can you religious leaders still be part of the slaughter on this planet, this cruelty, this suffering? Don't you realize that it affects the psyches of your congregants? You say that you search for truth, for love, for meaning, for the Divine, but you'll never attain it as long as you don't confront your own brutality. And unless you do, your followers, like you, will suffer from moral indigestion, from stifling of the soul.

As we've seen with women, with black people and with the LGBTI community, religious leaders have used their religious texts tendentiously for discrimination, for oppression, for devilry. They use them equally with animals; only, the animals can't speak up for themselves.

Ask your God or your gods for forgiveness for destroying creation for so long. But such forgiveness will never come unless you change your ways, as you've been committing crimes against nature. And, when you're called to account, you'll stutter an answer before being sent to the hell that you profess to work against.

For a religion to be vital, in the meaning of both essential and energized, the core beliefs can be retained, but ritual is manmade and should be open to progress, the context of the times, the understanding of the times, a new consciousness, a new conscience. That is the only way to embrace the universal. Tradition is not sacrosanct. If the Divine that you worship can be regarded as all-living, then you should understand that the human creation must move in order to prove that the Divine as such is not only of the past but also of the present, and also of the future. If religious leaders are mired in the past, they are dishonouring their gods. They are not honouring their ancestors either because the leaders of old moved from their own pasts to confront their presents. The ancients set us on a journey; if we stay where they were, instead of progress there is stasis, stultification in the suffocating swamp of the past. There is a betrayal of those who came before us and who realized that for souls to be given succour, a progress to increasing compassion is essential.

Tradition does not necessarily betoken morality. Expedience does not necessarily indicate enlightenment. Culture does not necessarily signal compassion, and observance without compassion is an abomination. Worship without tenderness is a blasphemy. To be party to the slaughter of an animal is to be party to the slaughter of the Creator. God is dead when the corpse of religion is carried in the corruption of religious leaders who put custom before conscience, who put their control above compassion, who put themselves before their god.

We have to rid ourselves of the elemental shame of being human and lead the world into a millennial state of altruism. Transformation to the good can only happen when we have learned to lessen the evil consequences of the past, which is unchangeable, and acknowledge the incalculable effects of our actions on unborn generations.

How can there be justice and dignity and deliverance when you allow violence to flourish, exploitation to thrive, and oppression to go unchallenged?

And don't you dare say that we should be grateful for a cow or a sheep or a pig or a goat or a chicken for donating its life to sustain us. There's no willing sacrifice here; it's a forced dragging into the abyss while kicking and screaming.

For these reasons, I accuse so many of the rabbis and the bishops and the priests and the imams, the pandits and the swamis and the lamas of not leading their flocks on the correct paths, but, rather, of leading them to the destruction of the soul, in a moral wilderness, a spiritual implosion. This is their resurrection of human sacrifice – not of the body but of the being.

I accuse the clerics of turning a blind eye to the suffering, a deaf ear to the screams, a numbed heart to the torture, of all creatures slaughtered to slake their rapacious tongues and stomachs and pockets. Of not willing to accept that fish, too, have feelings, gasp for life when hauled out of water. Of being complicit in the violence done to chickens and turkeys and geese that have proven their intelligence and emotions. Of being a malicious motivation in the murder of cows and sheep and pigs and goats who have as much right to live in peace and freedom from fear as the fashionable, and equally worthy, elephants and rhinos and dolphins and seals.

I accuse the clerics of choosing to forget that other creatures also deserve to be whole and hale.

I accuse them of not healing but harrowing, of dismembering the sacred.

I accuse you who eat meat, who eat fish, who drink cows' milk, who eat eggs, who are party to slaughter and suffering, of trivializing life, of making yourselves into gods in that you decide who shall live and who shall die. It is mankind's eternal shame that people can't free themselves from this ongoing, generational murder. And I accuse the religious leaders of not stopping this.

I accuse them of being complicit in hiding the evil of the world.

I accuse them of purporting to lead their congregations into holiness, while they are doing nothing to stop the seduction into hell.

I accuse the religious leaders, mired in murder, of colonising and crushing the conscience of their followers.

I accuse them of cursing themselves, their congregants and their god.

I am not calling for civil rights but for common rights: the right to live freely; the right to give birth freely; the right to retain relationships freely; the right to die freely and naturally.

I am not calling for the overturning of culture but for cultural commitment to the well-being of all creatures that will underline the holiest precepts of religions that profess to honour the Divine Creator.

I challenge clerics to arrive at factory farms unannounced to see what is really happening. I challenge them to go to abattoirs with their congregants and see what they're espousing. Even better: I challenge them to spend time in a confined area for even a few hours on a factory farm. I challenge them to tramp around in excrement in the holding pens, in the cages, and to breathe in deeply. I challenge them to walk with animals on their way to slaughter, to experience the fear. I challenge them to see calves being ripped away from their mothers, to see chicks being mashed up for feed.

And I challenge the clerics to look into the eyes of all or any of these creatures wherever they are, in a farm or in a field, and see the soul within.

And then I challenge them to get up in their pulpits and denounce all of it.

I challenge you all to adopt a vegan lifestyle. I challenge you to encourage your congregants to follow your example. I challenge you to point out that to honour your god truly, you should desist from being party to any suffering, any torture, any slaughter.

I challenge you to stress that it is impossible to be holy without refraining from devouring animals or their products.

I challenge you to do this for your children and your children's children. For the generations to come, so that they will know that to imprison an animal, to induce suffering, to slaughter, is anathema to true religious belief.

It is up to you priests, you rabbis, you imams, you monks, you nuns, to lead your people out of the dark abyss of the soul and show that to spare all creatures, and to feed them instead of being fed by them, light will dawn again. And your gods will smile and say it is good.

## ***FURTHER READING***

It is evident from this tract that the major sources are the scriptures of the various religions. However, there is no intention here of referring the reader to every religious text (scriptural or exegetic) dealing with animals and any relationship to them. Similarly, it would serve little purpose to have a list of the most prominent works on animal rights, because few of these actually deal with the religious question. I've generally not included books on animal welfare, as the thrust in question is on animal rights itself. I've also decided not to refer to anything that can be obtained on line, as that has become easy enough for anybody interested in any subject, or any specific articles. I shall just refer to books on the subject that are generally accessible. However, to single out specific writers, I would refer you to any work on animal rights by Tom Regan and Gary Francione .

Akers, Keith 2000. *The Lost Religion of Jesus*. New York: Lantern Books. {A wonderfully thought-provoking book, giving new, well-considered insights into the Christ story, and serving as a springboard to exploring what we are told in other scriptures.}

Berman, Louis A. 1982. *Vegetarianism and the Jewish Tradition*. New York: KTAV. {A fine overview of vegetarianism but somewhat bound by custom.}

Francione, Gary L. & Charlton, Anna. 2013. *Eat Like You Care: An Examination of the Morality of Eating Animals*. np: Exempla. {Not actually about religion, but certainly complementary to this presentation, and adding to the colloquy.}

Kalechofsky, Rachel. 1998. *Vegetarian Judaism – A Guide for Everyone*. Marblehead, Mass: Micah. {A good starting point by an excellent writer, but not strong enough to ruffle rabbinical feathers sufficiently.}

Kaufman, Stephen R. & Braun, Nathan. 2002. *Good News for All Creation: Vegetarianism as Christian Stewardship*. Cleveland: Vegetarian Advocates Press. {Noble in intention and well informed regarding Christianity, but does not go far enough in pointing out any double standards.}

Kemmerer, Lisa. 2012. *Animals and World Religion*. New York: Oxford University Press. { An outstanding book, possibly the best of its kind, looking at how various religions regard animal rights. Lisa Kemmerer stops short of pointing out the egregious hypocrisy of many in these religions, but this book is essential reading for anybody interested in the interface of animal rights and religion.}

Linzey, Andrew. 2009. *Creatures of the Same God: Explorations in Animal Theology*. New York: Lantern Books. {Andrew Linzey does an enormous amount of good through his writings, discussions and actions. Everything he writes is well worth a read, but he is somewhat bound by his reticence in not launching a full-out attack on Christian hypocrisy.}

Patterson, Charles. 2002. *Eternal Treblinka: Our Treatment of Animals and the Holocaust*. New York: Lantern. {An immensely controversial and excellent book, not necessarily bound to religion, though. Taking its title from the words of Isaac Bashevis Singer, this makes essential reading for anybody examining animal rights and the hypocrisy of society, all this related to religious discrimination.}

Phelps, Norm. 2004. *The Great Compassion: Buddhism & Animal Rights*. New York: Lantern. {An acclaimed authority in this field, his writing here allowing an essential understanding of the subject.}

Schwartz, Richard H. 2001. *Judaism and Vegetarianism*. Rev. ed. New York: Lantern. {Very knowledgeable and a fine discussion. But it sidesteps veganism and animal rights as such, and kowtows to ritual and rabbinic didacticism.}

Socha, Kim. 2014. *Animal Liberation and Atheism: Dismantling the Procrustean Bed*. Minneapolis-St Paul: Freethought House. {Not directly linked to the area under discussion here, but a superb book that pulls few punches on a related topic.}

Tlili, Sarra. 2015. *Animals in the Qur'an*. New York: Cambridge University Press. {An impressive overview of the subject with much reference to exegesis.}

Tuttle, Will. 2005. *The World Peace Diet: Eating for Spiritual Health and Social Harmony*. New York: Lantern. {A feel-good book that puts people on a fine path in considering their ethical dietary options.}