



Holy Cows:
How PETA twists religion
to push animal “rights”

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One man’s faith allows him to eat everything, but
another man, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables.

[Romans 14:2]

The Lord said to Moses ... “Say to the people, ‘Consecrate
yourselves for tomorrow, and you shall eat meat.’”

[Numbers 11:16, 18]

The Center For
Consumer Freedom

The Center for Consumer Freedom is a nonprofit coalition supported by restaurants, food companies, and consumers, working together to promote personal responsibility and protect consumer choices.



One PETA activist “crucifies” another wearing a pig mask on Holy Thursday, 2005 in front of Berlin’s Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial cathedral. [AP Photo/Fritz Reiss]

Introduction

At the “Animal Rights 2002” national convention, *Animal Liberation* author and avowed atheist Peter Singer lamented that “mainstream Christianity has been a problem for the animal movement.” Two days later at the same event, a program director with the Fund for Animals issued a warning: “If we are not able to bring the churches, the synagogues, and the mosques around to the animal rights view,” he cautioned, “we will never make large-scale progress for animal rights in the United States.”

“[H]owever sympathetically you interpret the Judeo-Christian religious tradition, it puts animals in a fundamentally different category from human beings ... I think in the end we have, reluctantly, to recognize that the Judeo-Christian religious tradition is our foe.”

— Peter Singer, author of *Animal Liberation*
and PETA’s philosophical godfather

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In the hope of converting Planet Earth’s religious majority into vegetarians, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) has taken these challenges seriously. The group regularly searches for “faith-based campaigners” to spread the gospel of vegetarianism. And like Peter Singer, acknowledged by PETA founder Ingrid Newkirk as her life’s inspiration, the group’s own odd evangelism actively seeks to confront and challenge the beliefs of Jews, Catholics, Protestant Christians, Mormons, and Muslims—often in deliberate defiance of their respective scriptures.

PETA generally avoids alienating Hindus, whose “bad karma” prohibitions against killing most animals have endeared them to animal rightists. But Hindu law expressly permits eating meat. Similarly, the Buddhist world has (so far) been spared PETA’s impious tantrums, although many Buddhists eat meat—including the Dalai Lama.

In its religious outreach, as with everything else the group attempts, PETA has blindly pursued offensive strategies without regard for the consequences. Instead of earning a reputation for “kindness,” “compassion,” and other qualities associated with religious faithfulness, PETA pursues campaigns that offend, provoke, and otherwise show contempt for the faithful.

PETA claims—despite ample evidence to the contrary—that Jesus Christ was a vegetarian. (The six-volume, 7,000-page *Anchor Bible Dictionary* doesn't even include an entry for “vegetarianism.”) A PETA website urges Muslims to eat no meat, in open contradiction to the Qur'an.

“Considering the level of religious interest in the United States, it seems unlikely that we'll achieve animal liberation without mobilizing, especially, Jewish and Christian progressives, and perhaps also many of the conservatives.”

— PETA vegetarian campaign director Bruce Friedrich

PETA holds protests at houses of worship, even suing one church that tried to protect its members from Sunday-morning harassment. Its billboards and advertisements taunt Christians with the message that livestock (not Jesus) died for their sins.

PETA declares, contrary to a wealth of rabbinical teaching, that ritual kosher slaughter is inherently cruel and barbarous. It directs its Jewish members (and any other Jews who will listen) to abstain from eating lamb during the Passover seder. And the group's infamous “Holocaust on Your Plate” campaign crassly compares the Jewish victims of Nazi genocide with farm animals.

Along the way, PETA has considered “Thou Shalt Not Steal” a commandment of convenience, lifting copyrighted materials without permission from a Catholic religious order, a popular television show, and even the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. PETA's mission to bring carnivores under the tofu tent routinely ignores prohibitions against “taking the Lord's name in vain.” And the group's official endorsement of arson and other violence against animal-rights targets comes most often from its leading parsnip pulpitarian, a man who publicly holds himself up as an example of “Christian mercy” while privately advocating “blowing stuff up and smashing windows” and “burning meat trucks.”

Because of PETA's obnoxious and often hateful rhetoric (and its brazen association with the violent underbelly of the animal rights movement), its voice is frequently condemned by mainstream religious leaders and increasingly unwelcome among worshippers.



Jesus Was a ~~Vegetarian~~ Fisherman

Beginning in 1995, PETA engaged and enraged Christians with its claim that “Jesus was a vegetarian.” PETA’s leaders, already accustomed to recruiting Hollywood stars to carry its animal-rights messages, were apparently looking for a more powerful frontman. As Catholic Archbishop Terrence Prendergast told *The Ottawa Citizen*, PETA seemed to be “motivated to find somebody on their side, and Jesus is a good one to have.”

“To use Jesus for political purposes is irreverent and unnecessary. It calls into question the truth of what else they might say.”

— Dr. Howard Baston,
pastor of the First Baptist Church of Amarillo, Texas

Since then, PETA’s billboards, advertisements, bumper stickers, and press releases (usually appearing near Christmas and Easter) have carried the message that the historical Jesus ate no meat. In one ad, the Prince of Peace becomes a “Prince of Peas.” Another depicts Christ with an orange slice over his head instead of the traditional halo. One PETA press release announced that the group was “enlisting Jesus as its newest spokesperson.”

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In 1998, Roman Catholic bishops decided to study whether the Church should tell Catholics to return to the pre-1965 practice of abstaining from meat on Fridays. PETA campaign director Bruce Friedrich pounced, sending letters to all 449 U.S. Catholic bishops and cardinals asking them to “endorse a vegetarian diet,” since “Christ was himself a vegetarian.” He got few responses.

“No diet should invoke Jesus. He nowhere universalized his diet any more than he advocates wearing robes and sandals. [This is] an attempt to co-opt Jesus for left-wing animal rights propaganda.”

— Russell Moore,
assistant professor of theology at the Southern Baptist
Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky

Friedrich's subsequent attempts to convince religious leaders that being a good Christian entails giving up animal protein have met with similar rejections. Friedrich asked Pope John Paul II to direct Roman Catholics to leave the traditional lamb off Easter Sunday menus in Italy. He sent a form letter to all 17,700 Catholic pastors in the United States, and later wrote to Billy Graham, Pat Robertson, and Jerry Falwell. None of them replied, at least not in words that the group cared to share publicly.

“I confess that even I—a thoroughgoing animal advocate—have found the [‘Jesus was a Vegetarian’] campaign too much to stomach. Animal advocates have nothing to gain and all to lose from fabricating the Bible for their own campaigning ends.”

— The Rev. Prof. Andrew Linzey, Oxford University

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PETA's billboards went up near Tulsa's Oral Roberts University and along the Pope's motorcade route during his visit to St. Louis. It sent an activist dressed as Jesus to distribute "Jesus was a vegetarian" pamphlets outside the annual Southern Baptist Convention. Another bearded, robed, and sandaled PETA member picketed the National Conference of Catholic Bishops meeting along with an activist dressed as a chicken. They held signs reading "Meat is Murder" and "Thou Shalt Not Kill. Go Vegetarian."

The clerical response? A mixture of suspicion and dismissal.

Rev. Ted Traylor of Pensacola's Olive Baptist Church told reporters: "I saw 'Jesus was a vegetarian' billboards in Atlanta; boy, somebody is putting a lot of money into this ... [They're] illiterate biblically. To use scripture in this way is not noble."

Rev. Charles Clary, pastor of Tate Springs Baptist Church in Arlington, Texas, saw PETA's billboards and told Ohio's *Columbus Dispatch*: "That's the biggest bunch of baloney I've ever heard. All the Jewish feasts involved meat, and Jesus was a good Jewish man."

Sister Sylvia Schmidt, executive director of the Tulsa Metropolitan Ministry, told the *Daily Oklahoman*: "Dumping guilt on people about eating or not eating meat is not what Jesus is about."

“The Gospel According To PETA (The Essene Argument)”

PETA first aired its claim that Jesus was a vegetarian in its 1995 holiday catalog, arguing that according to “many” biblical scholars, Jesus was a member of the Essenes, a Jewish sect that “followed a strict vegetarian diet and rejected animal sacrifices.” PETA never names these scholars, and also never provides evidence for its description of the Essenes—or for its insistence that Jesus was one.

The Essenes were, by all accounts, a secretive and austere Jewish sect that lived during the time of Jesus on the western shore of the Dead Sea. Some Biblical scholars suspect that Essenes wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls, found during the late 1940s. If so, they were certainly not PETA-oriented vegans: The Temple Scroll, unearthed in 1956, contains dozens of commands of animal sacrifices, described in the kind of gory detail typically used by PETA in its own declarations of “animal cruelty.” And besides, notes Oregon State University religious studies professor Marcus Borg, the Essenes were Jewish purists and would have slaughtered a lamb at Passover.

But even if the Essenes didn’t write the Dead Sea Scrolls and were Palestine’s original carrot-crunchers, was Jesus among their members? Not likely. Borg also observes that Jesus mixed freely with lepers and prostitutes, while the Essenes were obsessed with a kind of “purity” that could only be maintained by separation from others—even healthy and respectable Jews. Jesus preached a “love thine enemy” message, while the Essenes believed their adversaries would be destroyed by a world-ending war.

In 1999 PETA’s argument got a shot in the arm from a short article in *Archaeology* magazine reporting that no animal bones were found at a site believed to be the remains of an Essene settlement near Ein Gedi in southern Israel. “Although we worked carefully, sifting everything, we didn’t find any,” the chief excavator told *Archaeology*. But two Israeli archaeologists working at Qumran, where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found, have since discovered the bones of over 100 sheep neatly packed into clay jars. In 2004, they told the journal *Bible and Interpretation* that the remains of Qumran’s dinners were packed and stored rather than thrown away in order to avoid luring wild beasts to their settlement. Essenes may have done the same thing at Ein Gedi.

Biblical Scholars Fight Back

However PETA may feel about the idea of a vegetarian Savior, mainstream religious leaders clearly see a meat-eating Jesus emerging from scripture. Carl Evans, chairman of the University of South Carolina's Department of Religious Studies, told *The State* newspaper that Jesus observed the Jewish customs of his time. "The general population of his day," said Evans, "would have eaten cheese, breads, vegetables, cereal grains, fish, and red meat." Evans also noted that mutton was served at the Last Supper.

"As a Jew," Georgetown University theology professor Chester Gillis added during a National Public Radio interview, Jesus "would have participated in the Passover meal in which they kill the lamb and consume that lamb."

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"Making Jesus into a vegan is an absurd stretch," religion professor Michael McKenzie told the *Chicago Sun-Times*. McKenzie teaches at Keuka College in central New York. "It's absurd to think that the rest of the disciples were eating fish and having fish fries and Jesus was sitting there munching on figs and herbs." Southern Baptist Theological Seminary theology professor Russell Moore goes one step further, arguing that the question of Jesus' diet has no relevance to modern times anyway. "No diet should invoke Jesus," Moore told the *Los Angeles Times*. "He nowhere universalized his diet any more than he advocates wearing robes and sandals."

Even noted animal-rights apologist Andrew Linzey, an Oxford University fellow in "theology and animal welfare," has problems with PETA's "Jesus was a vegetarian" campaign. Linzey is quoted liberally in PETA's "Christian Mercy" brochures and Internet websites, and even wrote a PETA-friendly Anglican "service for animal welfare" in 2004—complete with a prescribed prayer "for animals slaughtered for food."

But Linzey believes PETA has gone too far. "I confess," he told *The Independent* newspaper, "that even I—a thoroughgoing animal advocate—have found the campaign too much to stomach. Animal advocates have nothing to gain and all to lose from fabricating the Bible for their own campaigning ends."

Denying the New Testament

"The evidence that Jesus was a vegetarian is strong," PETA's website claims, "and the evidence that he would be one today is irrefutable."

Biblical experts, of course, derive their opinions about the life of Jesus from scripture. And the New Testament has plenty to say about the Nazarene's diet.

Jesus commanded his disciples to pull fish out of the Sea of Galilee and eat them. He told them to prepare his Passover meal, a feast that explicitly includes lamb. In his Prodigal Son parable, Jesus described a family reunion as a feasting occasion worthy of killing a fatted calf.

Jesus' miraculous transformation of a few fish and barley loaves into enough food to feed 5,000 people was recounted by all four Gospel writers. No matter. The fish, PETA claims, never existed. "The multiplication," writes PETA's Bruce Friedrich, merely "represents a prediction of the burgeoning church, and has nothing to do with eating animals."

Friedrich writes on a PETA website (without offering any proof), that "Fish were added to the stories" later on "by Greek scribes." He even alleges that the Greek word *Ixous* (fish) was "mistranslated"—that it represents seaweed, not sea creatures.

In reply, Vicar-general Rev. Pat Cramer, the second-in-command in Calgary's Roman Catholic Diocese, accuses PETA of butchering Biblical text. "If you twist scripture to your own ends, it's frightful," he told *The Calgary Sun*.

And what of the end of Luke's Gospel? After his resurrection from the dead, Jesus eats a piece of broiled fish in the presence of his apostles in order to convince them that he is physically alive.

Friedrich says he knows better. "The earliest Gospels we have in our possession," he claims, "come from the 4th-century Greeks, and they were fighting the theory that Christ never rose bodily from the dead. So they just added those bits about him eating fish."

Not so, counters New Testament scholar Duane Garrett, of Minnesota's Bethel Seminary. The Dead Sea Scrolls, he reminds Christians, have pushed back our dating of the Gospel texts—complete with actual fish—well into the 1st century AD, within a generation of Christ's crucifixion. "You can prove anything you want if you tamper with the evidence," Garrett says.



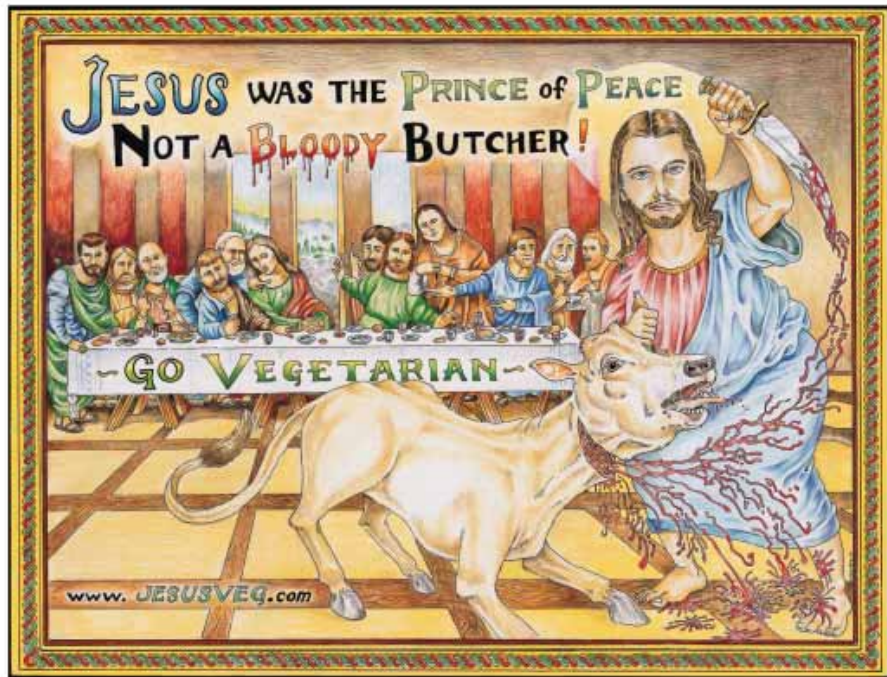
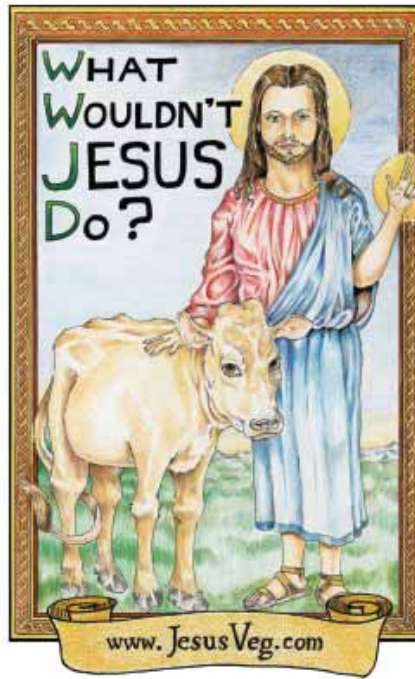
Why should Christians be vegetarians?

Jesus counsels love and compassion, yet there is nothing loving or compassionate about factory farms and slaughterhouses, where billions of animals live miserable lives and die violent, bloody deaths. God created every animal with the capacity for pain and suffering. But on today's factory farms, animals are dehorned, debeaked, and castrated without painkillers. They are genetically bred to grow so quickly that many suffer lung, heart, or painful leg collapse. Finally, they are trucked without food or water, through all weather extremes, to a frightening and hellish death.

Christians have a choice. When we sit down to eat, we can add to the load of violence, misery and death in the world, or we can respect His creation with a vegetarian diet.

To find out more: We invite you to visit our Web sites JesusVeg.com and GoVeg.com, or contact us at 1-888-VEG-FOOD for a free vegetarian starter kit.

PETA PEOPLE FOR THE ETHICAL TREATMENT OF ANIMALS
501 Front St., Norfolk, VA 23510 • 757-622-PETA • PETA-online.org



PETA claimed in 2001 that it sold over 20,000 of these outrageous Easter cards during the first year they were offered to the public.

Mocking God 101

“Two followers of PETA [were] waving to a bus full of children from my church ... Standing nearly naked on a street corner is not a socially accepted standard in this or any other community. It is, however, a standard for one profession—prostitution.”

– Pastor J. David Biter,
Calvary Baptist Church, Memphis, Tennessee

The “Jesus was a vegetarian” campaign isn’t PETA’s only public slap at traditional Christianity. PETA began selling Easter cards in 2001. The front depicts a haloed Jesus alongside a calf, and the words “What *Wouldn’t* Jesus Do?” (He’s also wearing what appear to be leather sandals.)

Open one up, and you’ll find Christ depicted at the Last Supper—wielding a bloody knife as he slits the animal’s throat. “Jesus was the Prince of Peace,” the card’s headline reads, “Not a Bloody Butcher! Go Vegetarian.” The graphic image includes blood splattering everywhere, including on Christ’s (suddenly sandal-less) feet.

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This grotesque Easter stunt is just the beginning. Since 2000, over a dozen of the group’s billboards and print advertisements have used the images of Jesus, Moses, and the Virgin Mary to promote animal rights.

One ad depicted the famous Shroud of Turin—believed by many faithful to be Christ’s burial cloth, complete with a permanent image of the crucified Jesus. “Make a Lasting Impression,” the ad blared. “Go vegetarian.”

PETA’s press release announcing the ad was a paragon of bad taste: It described Jesus Christ as PETA’s new “poster boy.”

“[I]t’s insulting to all religious people when our religious symbols are defamed like that.”


– Rhode Island State Council of Churches executive minister
Rev. John Holt, reacting to a PETA billboard depicting the Virgin
Mary cradling a dead chicken instead of the Christ Child



G⊕ VEGETARIAN
It's an Immaculate Conception


PETA GoVeg.com

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He Died for your Sins.
GO VEGETARIAN.

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals **PETA** JesusVeg.com



**JESUS WAS THE PRINCE
OF PEAS**
FOLLOW HIM—GO VEGETARIAN

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals **PETA** JesusVeg.com

PETA's outdoor billboards routinely use religious images to suggest that the only way to be a good Christian is to "go vegetarian."

The group's billboards in Toronto and Boston have depicted Moses—clutching a staff in one hand and a bunch of carrots in the other—booming: “I said ‘Thou Shalt Not Kill.’ Go vegetarian.”

Taking a dig at the billboard, *Toronto Star* columnist Garnet Fraser wrote: “God wants us to go vegetarian. I predict the city will respond in unison: ‘Bite me.’ ... The Bible records just one incident involving the eating of an apple and nothing good came of it, not even pie. This despite the waiter's recommendation. If Adam and Eve had wised up and eaten the snake, wouldn't we all be better off?”

Hog Heaven

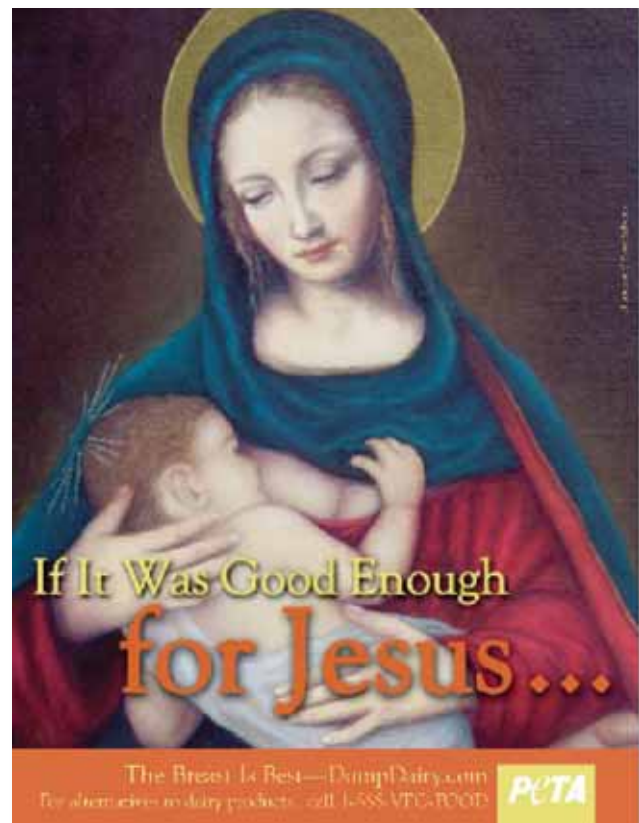
Another PETA billboard first appeared during Lent in 2003, largely in rural areas whose residents depend on livestock production for their livelihood. It features a photo of a piglet and the caption: “*He* died for your sins. Go Vegetarian.” *The Winston-Salem Journal* editorialized: “The comparing of a pig with Jesus is blasphemy ... The billboard is outrageous. PETA is outrageous.”

Hail Mary, Full of Shame

PETA billboards have used the image of the Virgin Mary since 2002. One early campaign depicted the infant Jesus breast-feeding and featured an anti-dairy message: “If it was good enough for Jesus ... Dump Dairy.”

A more recent example, timed to coincide with the Catholic Feast of the Immaculate Conception (celebrated in December), used an image of Mary cradling a dead chicken instead of the Christ child. “Go Vegetarian,” the sign read. “It's an immaculate conception.”

Church leaders in Rhode Island and nearby Boston—the targeted areas—were furious. “PETA's approach



One of PETA's advertisements uses the image of a breastfeeding Mary to suggest that cow's milk is not good for children.

is essentially predatory and parasitical,” the president of the Catholic Action League of Massachusetts told *The Boston Herald*. “They gain publicity for themselves by expropriating and exploiting the sacred symbols of others.”

The billboard’s owner eventually took it down because of the sheer volume of community complaints.

Thou Shalt Not Violate Copyright Laws

In at least two cases, PETA has been forced to revise or withdraw its religion-themed billboards after news surfaced that the group’s designs used copyrighted artwork without securing (or even seeking) permission.

In August 2000, the Priests of the Sacred Heart—a 127-year-old religious order based in Milwaukee—demanded that PETA stop using a devotional image of Jesus Christ to promote vegetarianism. The Sacred Heart order, which owns the image, objected after PETA replaced the halo around Christ’s head with an orange wedge. Its representatives told reporters that they own the copyright to the image and wanted to reserve it exclusively for devotional use.

No problem, PETA replied, telling the *National Catholic Reporter* that it would begin looking for a “new Jesus to star in its ads.” It didn’t take long.

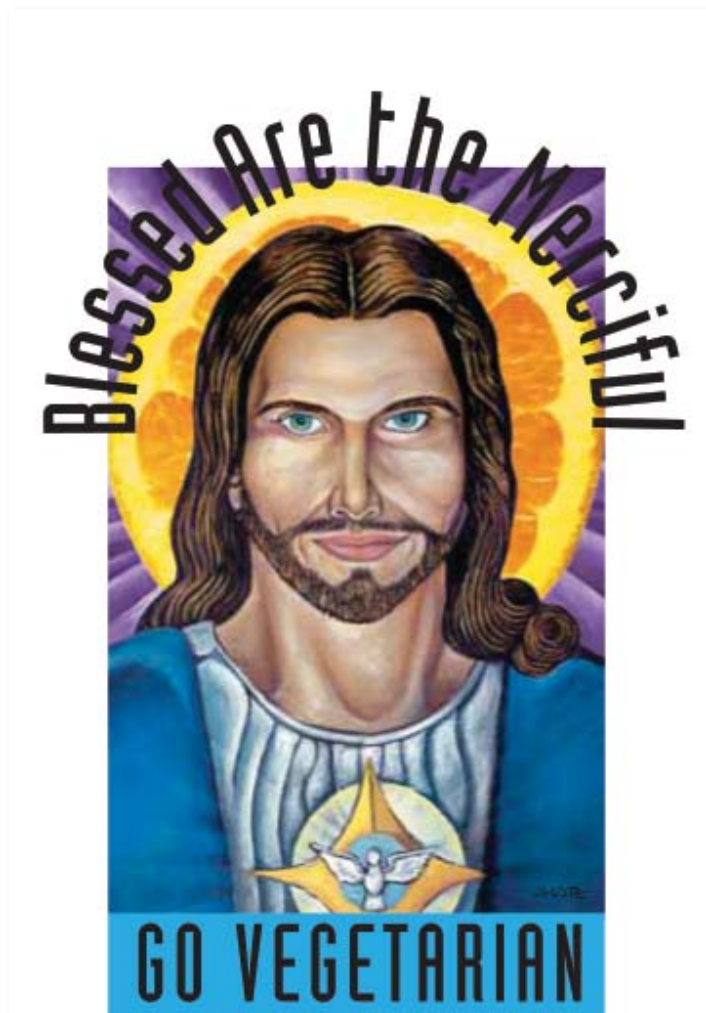
Two weeks later, a new “Jesus was a vegetarian” billboard emerged in the city of Corpus Christi, Texas. This time, it featured the cartoon drawing of Jesus from the animated and often offensive “South Park” television series.

When *The Houston Chronicle* learned that another copyright dispute was brewing, its reporter asked PETA’s Bruce Friedrich for a reaction. “My hunch is that it’s something in the public domain, and the ‘South Park’ guys (producers) would appreciate the way we’re using Jesus.”

The Comedy Central Network (which owns the copyright) disagreed, and threatened legal action if PETA didn’t remove the pirated image. Friedrich, true to form, told reporters that PETA would replace the “South Park” cartoon with yet another image of Jesus. But the billboard would remain in the same place, he told the *Chronicle* irreverently.

“It’s a bit of a pun to put the body of Christ up in Corpus Christi.”





PETA uses the image of Jesus in many of its religious-themed materials.



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Theme IV: Compassion

One: Our prayer is that the God of the new covenant written into our hearts will enlarge our sense of kinship and fellowship with all living beings.

A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. (Ezekiel 36:26, RSV)

Put on, then, garments that suit God's chosen and beloved people: compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience. (Colossians 3:12, RCB)

There follows a pause for reflection

One: For animals neglected and ill-treated
All: Give us new hearts, O God.

One: For animals hunted to death
All: Give us new hearts, O God.

One: For animals exhibited for entertainment
All: Give us new hearts, O God.

One: For animals killed for convenience
All: Give us new hearts, O God.

One: For animals suffering in laboratories
All: Give us new hearts O God.

One: For animals suffering in captivity
All: Give us new hearts, O God.

One: For animals bought and sold in markets
All: Give us new hearts, O God.

One: For animals slaughtered for food
All: Give us new hearts, O God.

One: Compassionate God
 awaken within us
 a sense of feeling
 for all living creatures

14 A service for animal welfare

PETA isn't the only organization using religion to advance animal "rights." Great Britain's Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) now distributes an Order of Worship including special prayers said for animals "slaughtered for food," "hunted," "exhibited for entertainment," and "suffering in laboratories."

Uncivil Disobedience

A variety of disgruntled protesters peppered Pope John Paul II's parade route as it wound through the streets of Chicago in 1995, but few were odder than the two from PETA. One was dressed in a head-to-toe nun's outfit, complete with veil. The other wore a cow costume. "Eating meat," their signs read, "is a bad habit."

To be sure, these Keystone-Kops escapades offered more in entertainment value than in theology lessons. But this was just the beginning. By early 2000, PETA activists wearing the group's "Jesus" costumes protested outside pork-barbecue restaurants in Texas, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Alabama.

And the group picketed outside the Southern Baptist Convention in 2000 and 2001, capitalizing on the made-for-television spectacle of "Jesus" being arrested and handcuffed by police trying to keep order.

Standing on Holy Ground

During the summer of 2000, PETA pulled off a protest that was over the top, even by the group's bizarre standards: Its activists picketed a house of worship with "Jesus was a vegetarian" signs. Three dozen PETA members, including one dressed and groomed to resemble Jesus, appeared on a Sunday morning outside the entrance to the well-known Crystal Cathedral in Garden Grove, California. "Anybody who eats meat is mocking God," one protest leader told the *Los Angeles Times*.

In September 2002 a PETA member who attended Hibernia United Methodist Church in Coatesville, PA (west of Philadelphia) complained to the group's headquarters that Hibernia's annual "country fair" would include a weekend pig roast. PETA promptly wrote the pastor, Rev. David McMillan, threatening a vocal protest at the church unless he agreed to serve only vegetarian food instead.

"PETA seems more concerned with showing contempt for Catholics than with protecting animals."

— C.J. Doyle, executive director of the Catholic Action League of Massachusetts

PETA also alerted its members nationwide, providing the church's telephone number *and* McMillan's home number. PETA activists made so many calls that the pastor had his home telephone disconnected one day later.

True to form, PETA showed up in force that Saturday. One activist told an Associated Press reporter he was dressed as Jesus that day "to make sure his words were taken as gospel."

Crash Christmas Eve, Sue the Church

By late 2003, PETA had developed the institutional audacity to impose on worshipers wherever and whenever it wanted its demands heard. Unhappy about what it claimed were the KFC restaurant chain's lax animal-welfare standards, PETA brought its boisterous road show to Southeast Christian Church, the Louisville, Kentucky house of worship attended by the company's CEO and his family.

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Continuing to push the boundaries of what most people consider acceptable social protest, PETA sent activists to show blood-and-gore slaughterhouse videotapes on big screen TVs outside the church before and after Sunday services.

"As they continue to be unmoving in their lack of standards, we continue to step up what we are doing," PETA's Matt Prescott told the Associated Press. And step it up they did. PETA's Bruce Friedrich returned to Southeast Christian on Christmas Eve along with his wife, PETA campaign coordinator Alka Chandna. Friedrich wore a Santa suit; Chandna dressed as an elf. When the two showed up at their target's home on Christmas Day (to deliver "sacks of coal," they told reporters), they were arrested for criminal trespassing. Friedrich was subsequently convicted.

Friedrich and Chandna later sued Southeast Christian Church because their rowdy protest was moved across the street where it couldn't disrupt Christmas Eve services.

The Final (Papal) Insult

Catholics at Boston's Cathedral of the Holy Cross had to walk past a protest to get to Holy Week masses in 2004. PETA's "cow pope" statue—a 10-foot-tall standing cow dressed in Papal attire and encased in a plexiglass "pope-mobile"—was parked near the cathedral as part of a five-city East Coast tour.

Most contemptible of all, the “cow pope” appears with a crosier (a ritual staff) topped with a cross. But instead of Christ’s figure, it holds a crucified *cow*. Worshipers in Philadelphia had to contend with this bizarre display on Good Friday.

“Only bigots and extremists would think about going to a house of worship on Palm Sunday to mock someone else’s religion,” the Catholic Action League of Massachusetts told Boston media outlets. “PETA seems more concerned with showing contempt for Catholics than with protecting animals. They continue to exploit and demean Catholic religious symbols as a way of gaining publicity for their organization.”

Asked by the New York *Daily News* to explain themselves, PETA activists were matter-of-fact. “We did it in conjunction with Holy Week,” a spokesman said. “We selected a time when people would be entering and leaving Mass.” The *Daily News* also noted the protest’s only bright spot: PETA’s “cow pope-mobile” was ticketed for making an illegal turn on Fifth Avenue.



With its “cow-pope” statue, PETA continued its pattern of showing disdain for the symbols of organized religion.

TO ANIMALS, ALL PEOPLE ARE NAZIS



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BABY BUTCHERS



PETA's "Holocaust" exhibit suggested that the victims of the Nazi concentration camps were equivalent to livestock.

“Holocaust” Chutzpah

The World War II Nazi Holocaust is a subject about which Jews have strong—often overpowering—feelings. Even the very word *holocaust* has a singular meaning to most Jews, a deeply felt significance that leaves no room for comparisons with other people’s plights.

It’s clear that PETA’s leaders knew they were diving into stormy emotional waters when they unveiled a traveling exhibit titled “The Holocaust on Your Plate” in February 2003. Early in the group’s history, PETA president Ingrid Newkirk bemoaned the fact that “six million people died in concentration camps, but 6 billion broiler chickens will die this year in slaughterhouses.” The resulting outcry was both predictable and deserved.

PETA’s “Holocaust” campaign has met with similar scorn. It consists of eight 60-square-foot posters, each showing a livestock-farming or slaughterhouse scene side-by-side with a photo from a Nazi death camp. Interspersed between the photos is a series of statements suggesting that farm animals endure a “Holocaust” as severe as what Jews suffered under Adolph Hitler. “In relation to them [animals], all people are Nazis,” reads one of PETA’s banner headlines.

Asked about this line during a CNN broadcast, PETA vice president Lisa Lange said that it was “a quote from the Jewish Nobel laureate Isaac Bashevis Singer.” Singer, however, never said this: The words were only “spoken” by a fictional character in one of his novels.

“The Holocaust has a special meaning for Jewish people ... This is anti-Semitism in its worst form because it’s hidden.”

— Anna Schoenfeld, a Hungarian Holocaust survivor who lost her entire family at Auschwitz and Dachau

Another appalling quote from PETA’s traveling road show: “The leather sofa and handbag are the moral equivalent of the lampshades made from the skins of people killed in the death camps.” The exhibit’s last panel, titled “The Final Indignity,” juxtaposes a pile of dead Jews with a pile of dead pigs.

SCRIPTURE OF THE WORLD'S RELIGIONS

The Torah (Old Testament)

God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." [Genesis 1:28]

Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the Lord. But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. [Genesis 4:2-5]

Everything that lives and moves will be food for you. Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything. [Genesis 9:3]

The Lord said to Moses, "I have heard the grumbling of the Israelites. Tell them, 'At twilight you will eat meat, and in the morning you will be filled with bread. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God.'" [Exodus 16:11]

The Lord said to Moses ... "Say to the people, 'Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow, and you shall eat meat.'" [Numbers 11:16, 18]

"I will provide grass in the fields for your cattle, and you will eat and be satisfied." [Deuteronomy 11:15]

When the Lord your God has enlarged your territory as he promised you, and you crave meat and say, "I would like some meat," then you may eat as much of it as you want. [Deuteronomy 12:20]

Be sure you know the condition of your flocks, give careful attention to your herds; for riches do not endure forever, and a crown is not secure for all generations. When the hay is removed and new growth appears and the grass from the hills is gathered in, the lambs will provide you with clothing, and the goats with the price of a field. You will have plenty of goats' milk to feed you and your family. [Proverbs 27:23-27]

Your lips drop sweetness as the honeycomb, my bride; milk and honey are under your tongue. [Song of Solomon 4:11]

The Lord, the Lord Almighty, called you on that day to weep and to wail, to tear out your hair and put on sackcloth. But see, there is joy and revelry, slaughtering of cattle and killing of sheep, eating of meat and drinking of wine! "Let us eat and drink," you say, "for tomorrow we die!" [Isaiah 22:12-13]

The New Testament

[It is] not what enters into the mouth that defiles a man, but what proceeds out of the mouth. [Matthew 15:11]

Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, [Jesus] gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to set before the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand. [Mark 6:41-44]

The son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son." But the father said to his servants, "Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate." [Luke 15:21-23]

Then came the day of Unleavened Bread on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and make preparations for us to eat the Passover." [Luke 22:7-8]

When [Jesus] had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence. [Luke 24:40-43]

Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. He called out to them, "Friends, haven't you any fish?" "No," they answered. He said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some." When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish ... When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread. Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you

have just caught” ... Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” [*John 21:4-6, 9-10, 12*]

Then a voice told him, “Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.” “Surely not, Lord!” Peter replied. “I have never eaten anything impure or unclean.” The voice spoke to him a second time, “Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.” [*Acts 10:13-15*]

One man’s faith allows him to eat everything, but another man, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. [*Romans 14:2*]

Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its grapes? Who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk? [*1 Corinthians 9:7*]

Eat anything that is sold in the meat market without asking questions for conscience’s sake; for the earth is the Lord’s, and all it contains. [*1 Corinthians 10:25-26*]

Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration, or a Sabbath day. [*Colossians 2:16*]

For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving. [*1 Timothy 4:1-4*]

The Qur’an

[God] has only forbidden you to eat animals that die of themselves [without human interference], blood, the meat of pigs, and animals dedicated to anyone other than God. [*Sura 2:173*]

[When] they ask you what is lawful for them to eat, say: “Lawful for you are all good things, including what trained dogs and falcons catch for you. You have trained them according to God’s teachings; eat what they catch for you, but pronounce the name of God over it. [*Sura 5:5*]

And God created the cattle for you; you have in them warm clothing and many benefits, and of their meat do you eat. [*Sura 16:5*]

[God] has committed the sea to serve you; you eat from it tender meat, and extract jewelry which you wear. And you see the ships roaming it for your

commercial benefits, as you seek His bounties, that you may be appreciative. [*Sura 16:14*]

And in the livestock there is a lesson for you: We provide you with a drink from their bellies. From the midst of digested food and blood, you get pure milk, delicious for the drinkers. [*Sura 16:66*]

You shall not utter lies with your own tongues stating: “This is lawful, and this is unlawful,” to fabricate lies and attribute them to God. Surely, those who fabricate lies and attribute them to God will never succeed. [*Sura 16:116*]

For those who believed, and their children also followed them in belief, we will have their children join them. We never fail to reward them for any work. Every person is paid for what he did. We will supply them with fruits and meats that they love. [*Sura 52:21-22*]

The Book of Mormon

Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in my house; and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of Hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it. [*3 Nephi 24:10*]

The Mormon Doctrine & Covenants

And whoso forbiddeth to abstain from meats, that man should not eat the same, is not ordained of God; For, behold, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, and that which cometh of the earth, is ordained for the use of man for food and for raiment, and that he might have in abundance. [*D&C 49:18-19*]

Manu Smruti (The Hindu Book of Laws)

He who, even daily, devours those destined to be his food, commits no sin; for the creator himself created both the eaters and those who are to be eaten, for those special purposes. “The consumption of meat befits the sacrifice”; that is a rule made by the gods. [*Smruti 5:30-31*]

He who eats meat, when he honors the gods and manes, commits no sin—whether he has bought it, or has himself killed it, or has received it as a present from others. [*Smruti 5:30-32*]

To PETA's zealots, this was not an exaggeration for effect. They meant every word. "Anybody who eats meat," PETA campaign coordinator Matt Prescott told a Canadian reporter, "is guilty of holding the same mindset that allowed the Holocaust to happen." Asked by a Rutgers University journalist if he equated the suffering of chickens with that of human beings, Prescott offered an emphatic "Yes!"

"Monstrous ... An anti-Semitic provocation."

– Paul Spiegel, president of
Germany's Central Council of Jews

The astonishing "Holocaust on Your Plate" display toured 70 U.S. cities, three Canadian provinces, and 15 foreign countries during its first 18 months. When London authorities banned the exhibit, PETA defied the order and set it up in Trafalgar Square. But in Germany, the Central Council of Jews obtained a court order prohibiting PETA from its plan to show "Holocaust" in Stuttgart. Under the threat of a \$300,000 penalty, PETA backed down.

22

Anger, Outrage, Pain

PETA activists typically erected their "Holocaust" exhibit's oversized photo-posters in a central plaza, park, or other public place. Many viewers were repulsed by PETA's comparisons: a hundred human corpses next to piles of animal carcasses, children in death-camp uniforms flanking a group of caged pigs, a crowd of naked Auschwitz denizens alongside the warbling population of a turkey shed.

In Ithaca, NY, Cornell University students were outraged. "I gave these guys money," one undergraduate told *The Ithaca Journal*. "This is counter-productive [and] anti-Semitic."

Another, who lost family in the Holocaust, visited PETA's display a second time—holding a sign that read: "My aunt was not a chicken. She was a human being."

PETA's Ben Goldstein, a full-time activist who traveled with the "Holocaust on Your Plate" exhibit, countered: "Sometimes people need to be offended."

One New York City passer-by, a 79-year-old Holocaust survivor, asked the New York *Daily News* rhetorically: “Who are these people now, who are comparing me to anybody else? ... If PETA wants to learn about the horror of the death camps, let them come to me.”

“The Holocaust on Your Plate” drew immediate and harsh condemnations from Jewish organizations nearly everywhere it was displayed. The Anti-Defamation League’s leader, a Holocaust survivor himself, called it “abhorrent” and “outrageous,” adding that PETA “takeschutzpah to new heights.”

In New York, the Westchester Holocaust Education Center labeled the exhibit “a gross misuse and distortion.” And the famed Simon Wiesenthal Center called PETA’s horrible effort an “obscene distortion of history” that “cheapens memory of the victims of the Nazi Holocaust.”

In a published statement, Wiesenthal Center dean and founder Rabbi Marvin Hier observed: “Judaism was the first [faith] to identify cruelty to animals as a sin, but rejects any equivalency between humans and animals.”

“It’s the most offensive piece of crap I’ve ever seen in my life.”

— Bernie Farber, Executive Director,
Canadian Jewish Congress

The most poignant response came from Nobel Peace Prize winner and Boston University professor Elie Wiesel, a Holocaust survivor whose death-camp memoir *La Nuit* (“*Night*”) has been translated into over 30 languages. “I’m not afraid of forgetfulness,” Wiesel told a California reporter. “I’m afraid of banalization, of trivialization, and this is part of it.”

Stolen Ideas

So where did this outrageous “Holocaust on Your Plate” project come from? PETA lifted it—the comparative idea, the shocking graphic style, the designs, and the use of oversized banners—from an unlikely source: a Christian pro-life campaign.

Outrage Over PETA's "Holocaust" Campaign

"The effort by PETA to compare the deliberate systematic murder of millions of Jews to the issue of animal rights is abhorrent ... [It's] outrageous, offensive, and takeschutzpah to new heights."

— *Abraham Foxman,
National Director of the
Anti-Defamation League*

"The exhibit is deceptive at every level ... Perhaps it's all a publicity ploy. Or perhaps, in the twisted world of PETA, the Nazi insistence on slaughtering Jews for death's sake alone is identical to the farmer's role in raising animals for human consumption. Either way, PETA's exhibit is a disgrace."

— *Editorial, The Boston Globe*

"An organization so concerned about inflicting pain on animals should not be so oblivious to the pain it is inflicting on humans."

— *Fred Zeidman,
Executive Director, United States
Holocaust Memorial Museum*

The Genocide Awareness Project (GAP), inaugurated in 1997 by the California-based Center for Bio-Ethical Reform, shockingly juxtaposes pictures of aborted human fetuses with scenes from Nazi death camps and photos of deep-South lynchings. "Ungentile. Unwhite. Unborn." reads one poster. In addition to Nazi photographs, GAP also uses images of genocide in Rwanda and Yugoslavia to suggest that large-scale killing of the unborn should elicit the same outrage.

Like the "Holocaust" project, GAP tours U.S. cities and college towns and has its share of scornful detractors. But unlike PETA's display, it sticks to comparisons involving human beings.

Stolen Photos

There was an even greater misappropriation involved with the design of "Holocaust," however: PETA's giant concentration-camp pictures, appearing with the caption "Holocaust photos courtesy of USHMM." Less than one week after PETA unveiled its exhibit in Berkeley, California, the USHMM—the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum—accused the animal rights group of fraudulently obtaining the copyrighted photos. PETA ignored a USHMM cease-and-desist ultimatum, insisting that it "requested, received and paid for the use of the photographs"—a claim Museum officials vehemently denied.

One spokeswoman explained to the *New York Daily News* that USHMM was never

told about the nature of the campaign, or even that it was related to PETA. The request, she said, came from the private e-mail account of one Matt Prescott, who vaguely described his project's scope as "comparing the atrocities of the Holocaust to other forms of oppression throughout history."

If the museum had known that starving Nazi prisoners would be compared with turkeys, she said, "We never would have gotten involved in this."

A week later, USHMM executive director Fred Zeidman spoke to the press through a news release:

[PETA] has chosen to ignore common decency and desecrate the memory of Holocaust victims, survivors and their families in its perverted effort to generate headlines. We are especially offended that PETA has chosen to use materials obtained deceitfully from the Museum ... An organization so concerned about inflicting pain on animals should not be so oblivious to the pain it is inflicting on humans.

USHMM communications director Arthur Berger later told *The Boston Globe*: "Prescott was not honest with us about how he would be using the images. He did not say that it had anything to do with animals. We would not have given permission for that."

"It is the most illegitimate thing I can imagine ... these people are sick to do that."

— *Dov Hilkind, New York State Assemblyman, (D-Brooklyn)*

"I think it basically belittles the millions of people who were killed in the Holocaust in [PETA's] attempt to shame a few meat eaters into vegetarianism."

— *Jon Goldberg, Executive Director, Canada's Atlantic Jewish Council*

"[It] borders on evil. PETA's an organization that I believe is morally askew. I deeply believe in preventing the suffering of animals, but to fail to make a distinction between humans and animals is preposterous."

— *Rabbi Victor Urecki, Temple B'nai Jacob, Charleston, West Virginia*

"[T]o compare human victims of history's worst genocide to chickens and pigs is a travesty that will just add to PETA's reputation as a radical, crackpot group that is more eager to offend than to convince and to educate."

— *Editorial, The Jewish Week*

The Non-Apology Apology

On May 5, 2005 as Jews observed Holocaust Remembrance Day, PETA president Ingrid Newkirk e-mailed a half-hearted *mea culpa* to various Jewish press outlets, conceding “we know that we have caused pain” with the “Holocaust” project. *The Jerusalem Post* reported that although Newkirk offered a “terse apology,” most of her statement was “devoted to explaining the rationale behind launching the campaign” in the first place.

Newkirk’s statement didn’t appear anywhere on PETA’s own website. And PETA—a group that issues over 50 press releases in a typical week—did not devote one to its supposed apology. PETA’s website still contains over 200 pages discussing the “Holocaust” campaign, including over 100 press releases promoting it.

26 PETA’s appearance of contrition did not impress Simon Wiesenthal Center associate dean Rabbi Abraham Cooper. “Did they know the impact this campaign would have when they started it two years ago?” Cooper asked in *The Jewish Journal of Greater Los Angeles*. “Absolutely. They leveraged the victims of the Shoah to promote their issue. The victims of the Shoah should not be leveraged to gain copy in a newspaper or airtime on TV.”

And Rabbi Avi Shafran, a spokesman for the Orthodox Agudath Israel of America, told *The Forward* that the issue of Jews’ hurt feelings was only “one of the sins of this incredibly offensive campaign.” Newkirk’s “essential sin,” Shafran said, “is that she equates humans with animals.” Instead of apologizing for this, “she reiterates it.”



Animal Rights: Not Kosher

Since at least 1974, when a loose coalition of animal activists and their lawyers sued the United States Department of Agriculture, the animal rights movement has been looking for innovative ways to attack the Humane Slaughter Act—or at least the portion of it that permits Orthodox Jews to produce meat that’s compatible with kosher dietary laws.

“PETA is against all animal slaughter, which it has grotesquely equated with the Holocaust. It is hardly qualified to tell a 3,000-year-old religion what is humane.”

— Menachem Lubinsky, editor, *Kosher Today*

The Humane Slaughter Act provides that before a livestock animal can be killed, it first must be “rendered insensible” to pain by a “single blow” or similarly “rapid and effective” means. But Jewish *kashrut* (kosher) law states that livestock must be slaughtered by a ritual cutting of the carotid artery with a surgically sharp knife—a process called *shechita*. It also requires that a rabbi supervise the slaughter, and that the animals be unblemished, unbruised, and conscious for the lightning-quick procedure.

27

Many Jews believe that since God instructed Moses in the laws of *shechita*, they may only eat meat from animals slaughtered accordingly.

As the Humane Slaughter Act made its way through the legislative process in 1958, the law provided an exemption for “slaughtering in accordance with the ritual requirements of the Jewish faith or any other religious faith.” Muslim *halal* slaughter methods are also protected by this portion of the law.

In the 1974 case, the plaintiffs argued—unsuccessfully—that this special government dispensation amounted to an unconstitutional “establishment of religion.” The animal rights movement has been trying to overcome this defeat ever since, mostly by fighting state-level skirmishes and attacking companies that engage in kosher slaughter.

There is, of course, disagreement about whether this interference with the religious practice of observant Jews rises to the level of anti-Semitism. But it's clear, at least, that it amounts to a crass insensitivity toward Judaism, and a disregard for the dietary laws many Jews believe were prescribed by God himself.

Reform Jews have a beef with PETA as well. As Rabbi Richard Levi (president of Reform Judaism's rabbinical conference) notes, "It seems that God authorized humans to eat meat for a purpose. In the Talmud, there is no proper celebration without meat."

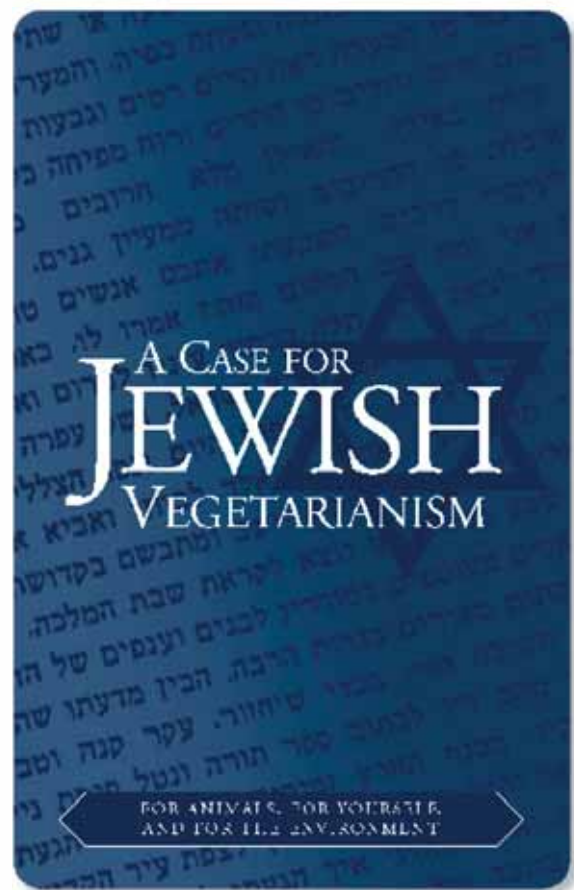
Yet a growing number of Jews are beginning to realize that—in the words of Orthodox Union executive vice president Rabbi Tzvi Hersh Weinreb—"PETA wants everyone to be vegetarians. They are not just against *shechita*. They are also against using animals as pets or as seeing-eye dogs."

Rabbi Weinreb isn't exaggerating. In a 2003 profile, *The New Yorker* reported that PETA president Ingrid Newkirk "regards the use of Seeing Eye dogs as an abdication of human responsibility and, because they live as 'servants' and are denied the companionship of other dogs, she is wholly opposed to their use. She has had at least one dog taken from its owner."

Modern Attacks

In 1994 the animal rights group Farm Sanctuary sued the California Department of Food and Agriculture; the group argued (again, unsuccessfully) that an endorsement of kosher slaughter might result in the state approving methods of slaughter that weren't truly "humane."

Western nations are a mixed bag when it comes to tolerance of kosher slaughter. *Shechita* is illegal in Norway, Denmark,



PETA's long-standing attempt to convince Jews to abandon all meat and dairy foods provides the basis for its more recent attacks on kosher slaughter.

Sweden, and Switzerland, although Swiss authorities permit unlimited imports of kosher meat. New Zealand approved a *kashrut* exemption to its Animal Welfare Act in 2001, over the objection of the native “Save Animals From Exploitation” group.

In England, a 2003 campaign to ban *shechita* was launched by Vegetarians International Voice for Animals—on Yom Kippur. Earlier that year the Farm Animal Welfare Council, an organization established to advise the British government on animal issues, asked Parliament to require that all animals be mechanically stunned before slaughter.

In 2002, the German high court reversed a 1995 law that banned Muslim *halal* slaughter. *Shechita* was already legal in Germany, although the German Animal Protection League told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency (Israel’s largest newswire) that it “would like a complete ban.”

There’s no sign one is forthcoming. Germans, Jew and gentile alike, understand that when Adolph Hitler came to power in 1933, his very first anti-Jewish regulation was an act prohibiting *shechita*.

Postville, Iowa

For seven weeks in 2004 an undercover PETA activist worked at Agriprocessors, Inc., an Iowa kosher slaughterhouse, and used a hidden video camera to record what the group later called the plant’s “horrific” and “gruesome” practices.

The covert videographer, who spoke to *The New York Times* but refused to have his name published, said that in addition to recording what he saw on the job, he was able to film the plant’s operations during his lunch breaks and on days when he wasn’t working. In typical fashion, PETA would later release 30 minutes of video, out of an undetermined number of hours of footage.

What PETA chose to show, of course, was calculated to outrage the public. But the plant’s supervising rabbi said the video was “testimony that this is being done right.” The Orthodox Union, the largest kosher-certifying organization, told the *Times* that while the pictures were not pretty, the slaughterhouse hadn’t violated kosher law.

Agriprocessors executives were livid. Company president Sholom Rubashkin told *The Chicago Tribune*: “This story is not about Agriprocessors. In my opinion,

there's a whole attack here on the ritual [slaughter] process ... If a person wants to belong to PETA, that's your right. But for heaven's sake, do not attack our sacred religion."

"We'll put them on the wall with Hitler," Agriprocessors lawyer Nathan Lewin added during another interview.

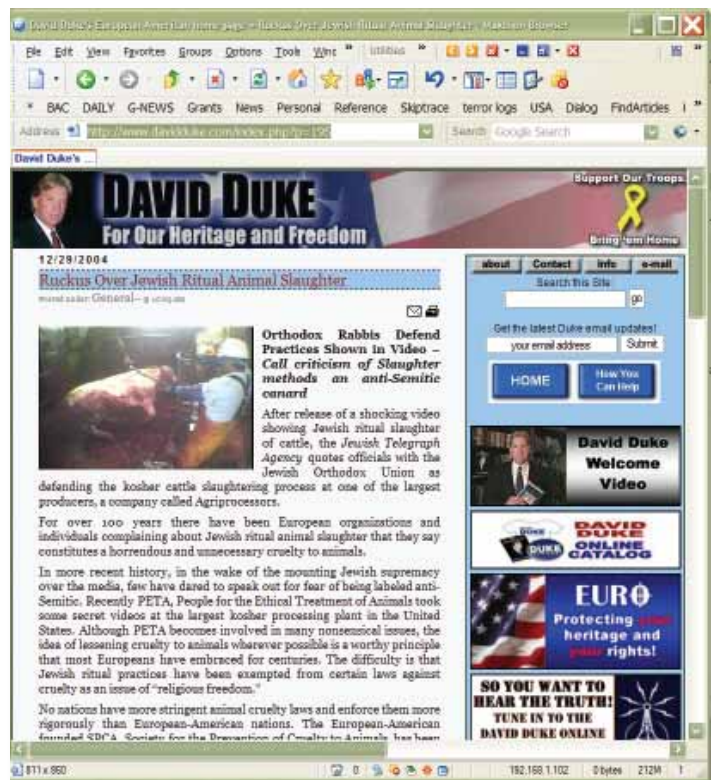
Kosher Fallout

As the dust settled, a picture emerged that differed greatly from the one PETA initially painted. Media reports began emphasizing that the plant's kosher slaughter is overseen by a veterinarian, four USDA inspectors, and nine rabbis. Bruce Friedrich, PETA's point-man, conceded to *The Washington Post* that his organization is "not a fan of killing animals, period."

The Orthodox Union openly praised Agriprocessors, saying that its "procedures meet all OU standards to the highest degree, and that the *shochtim* [rabbinic slaughterers] are all highly proficient, skilled, and knowledgeable." And when Iowa Agriculture Secretary Patty Judge toured the company, she emerged declaring: "I have no problem with what I saw today."

"This was the first time I had an opportunity to see kosher slaughter," Judge said. "I was glad to see how it works. Slaughter is never pleasant, but it was humane, quick, and I have no problem with the way those animals were being treated." The rabbis performing the *shechita*, she added, "were much more gentle than my grandmother was on our farm when I was a child."

The New York Sun would later report that the story had an odd prologue. A year and a half before PETA decided to embark on a



In 2004, noted anti-Semite David Duke used his "European-American Home Page" to promote PETA's attacks on kosher slaughter practices.

video exposé, the group wrote to Agriprocessors and (according to the *Sun*) “in unspecific terms expressed its dissatisfaction with the company’s operating procedures. The company’s lawyer, Nathan Lewin, responded by offering to discuss and, if necessary, fix any problem the group had. But he said he never heard back from them.”

Blind Persistence

PETA continues to maintain that the company habitually engages in “animal cruelty,” launching a nationwide ad campaign in February 2005. The following month PETA called on its members to press the U.S. Department of Agriculture “to file criminal charges against Agriprocessors.”

But the group’s stable of vocal supporters is dwindling. Two prominent rabbis initially voiced their agreement with PETA. One was Rabbi Shear-Yashuv Cohen, chief rabbi of Haifa and president of the Haifa District Rabbinical Courts; the other was Rabbi David Rosen, the American Jewish Committee’s director of Interreligious Affairs.

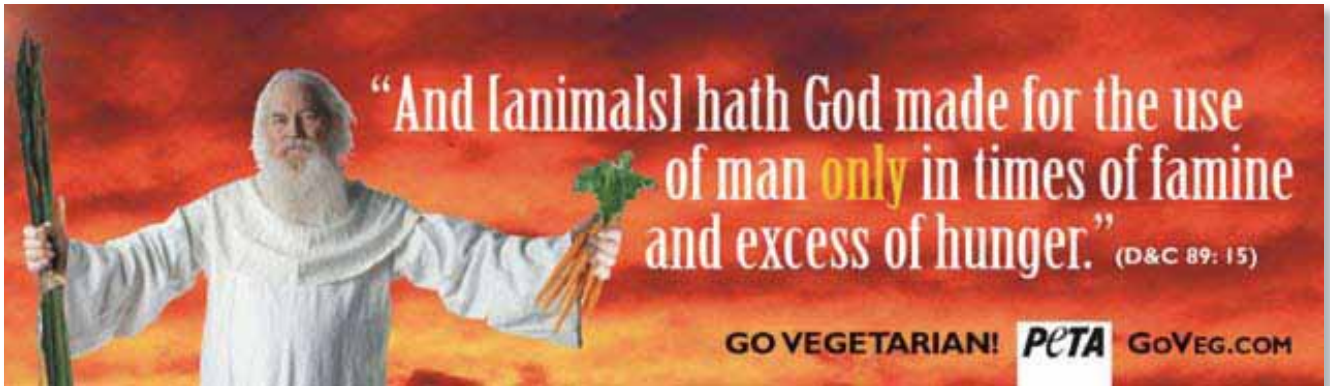
Rabbi Cohen later issued a public rebuke of PETA over what he called “the misuse of his name” in the group’s anti-*shechita* campaign. PETA’s selectively edited video, he noted, did not show the entire ritual slaughter process.

Worse, Cohen said that when Israeli activist Tal Ronen had approached him with questions about ritual slaughter standards, he hid his association with PETA and misrepresented himself as a *baal teshuva* (a returnee to Orthodox Judaism) in order to engage him in conversation and earn his trust.

“When this story broke,” Cohen wrote, “several rabbis, in Israel and Europe as well as in the United States, at first commented negatively on the *kashrut* of this *shechita*. Almost all of them, including the Israeli Chief Rabbinate, have now said that their initial statements were based on misinformation, and have retracted them.”

One of PETA’s initial backers who has stayed the course is one-time Ku Klux Klan leader and convicted felon David Duke, whose “European American Home Page” continues to rail against what Duke calls the “horrendous Jewish practices” of ritual slaughter and the “Jewish extremists” who defend them.





PETA’s use of the image of Moses includes a billboard targeted at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, which twisted Mormon scripture.

Latter-Day Soy Saints

A 2002 Pew research poll showed that more than 5 million Americans identify themselves as Mormons, or “Latter-Day Saints.” PETA began targeting this large group of religious faithful in March 2004 with a high-profile billboard in the heart of Salt Lake City.

The billboard selectively quotes a part of Mormon scripture commonly known as the “Word of Wisdom”—those commandments from *The Doctrine and Covenants* (“D&C”) on which Mormons base their abstinence from tobacco, caffeine, and alcohol. In three-foot-tall letters, PETA’s billboard blares D&C Section 89, verse 15: “And [animals] hath God made for the use of man *only* in times of famine and excess of hunger.”

Within 24 hours of the giant ad’s unveiling, two different LDS spokesmen unequivocally told reporters that church members do not regard Section 89 as a call to vegetarianism.

No wonder. A closer look reveals how PETA invented scripture to fit its goals (*emphasis added*):

(14) *All grain* is ordained for the use of man and of beasts, to be the staff of life, not only for man but for the beasts of the field, and the fowls of heaven, and all wild animals that run or creep on the earth;

(15) And *these* hath God made for the use of man only in times of famine and excess of hunger.

In their coverage of the ensuing controversy, the *Salt Lake Tribune* noted that the late LDS Apostle (elder) Bruce R. McConkie wrote in his landmark book, *Mormon Doctrine*, that faithful Mormons can eat meat and still be in compliance with the Word of Wisdom:

There is no prohibition in Section 89, for instance, as to the eating of white bread, using white flour, white sugar, cocoa, chocolate, eggs, milk, meat, or anything else except items classified under the headings, tea, coffee, tobacco, and liquor. As a matter of fact, those who command

that men should not eat meat are not ordained of God, such counsel being listed by Paul as an evidence of apostasy.

Indeed, Saint Paul's first letter to Timothy—a part of the Christian New Testament as well as Mormon scripture—includes a warning about those who “fall away from the faith ... speaking lies in hypocrisy” and “commanding to abstain from meats which God has created to be received with Thanksgiving.”
[1 Tim 4:1-3]

“[T]hose who command that men should not eat meat are not ordained of God, such counsel being listed by [Saint] Paul as an evidence of apostasy.”

— LDS Church Elder Bruce R. McConkie

34
A week after PETA's billboard appeared, a *Deseret Morning News* editorial declared that PETA had “misrepresented” the LDS Church's tenets, and characterized the episode as “another blow to the organization's dwindling credibility. Should the organization ever want to champion a legitimate cause, who would bother to listen?”

The most recent answer to PETA's misguided blasphemy came in October 2004, when the Mormon Church bought 87,700 acres of Nebraska ranchland. Beginning in 1990 with a 20,500 acre plot, the church now owns nearly 270,000 acres in five Nebraska counties.

Inside the LDS church, the Farm Management department oversees the operation of its extensive farm and ranch holdings. When *The Lincoln Journal-Star* asked a church Farm Management employee what the Mormons planned to do with that much Nebraska land, he replied: “We run cattle ranches. We are the largest calf-cow operator in the nation.”



People Eating Tofu for Allah (SWT)*

Compared to PETA's dizzying array of campaigns designed to elicit outrage from Christians and Jews, its programs targeting Islam are relatively modest. In fact, PETA had scarcely acknowledged the Muslim world until January 2003, when a Palestinian bombing attack in Jerusalem was carried out by means of a donkey loaded with explosives.

PETA president Ingrid Newkirk promptly faxed then-Palestinian-leader Yasser Arafat, pleading with him to stop the senseless donkey killing and "leave the animals out of this conflict." Newkirk also referred deferentially to him as "Your Excellency." When *The Washington Post* inquired why she didn't ask Arafat to persuade his people to stop blowing up Israeli citizens as well, she replied: "It's not my business to inject myself into human wars."

Newkirk and PETA have continued to regard Muslims with calculated deference, for reasons that are difficult to fathom. While PETA's leaders blindly claim that Christianity and Judaism *require* strict vegetarianism, they seem content to point out merely that the Muslim Qur'an *permits* it.

Excerpts from the *Islamic Teachings on Animal Welfare* can be found on one PETA website devoted to "Islamic concerns." One section relates how the Prophet Muhammad (S)* said: "One who kills even a sparrow or anything smaller, without a justifiable reason, will be answerable to Allah (SWT)." But when he was asked what would be a justifiable reason, Muhammad (S) replied: "to slaughter it for food."

"And God created the cattle for you; you have in them warm clothing and many benefits, and of their meat do you eat."

— The Qur'an, Sura 16:5


* When Muslims mention the name of God (Allah), it is usually followed by the phrase "Subaanahu Wa Taala" (abbreviated "SWT") which translates to "Glory be to God." In a similar way, the name of the Prophet Muhammad is generally followed by the phrase "Sullaho alayhi wa sallam" (meaning "Peace be upon him"). When writing in English, this is often abbreviated "PBUH," or simply "S."

PETA operates over 125 websites, and this may be the only place on any of them where the idea of killing an animal for food isn't met with immediate ridicule.

Halal Panic

But however resigned PETA may be to the reality of Islamic meat-eaters, it's deceptively planting seeds of dissent among the faithful.

“Halal”—an Arabic word literally meaning “permissible”—is a term that generally describes foods Muslims are allowed to eat. In Western countries, however, it usually refers specifically to beef and poultry. Producing halal meat involves, among other things, saying special prayers before slaughtering the animal. In this respect, the “halal” designation controls dietary practice for Muslims in the way a “kosher” label dictates what observant Jews may eat. The opposite of halal is “haram.”

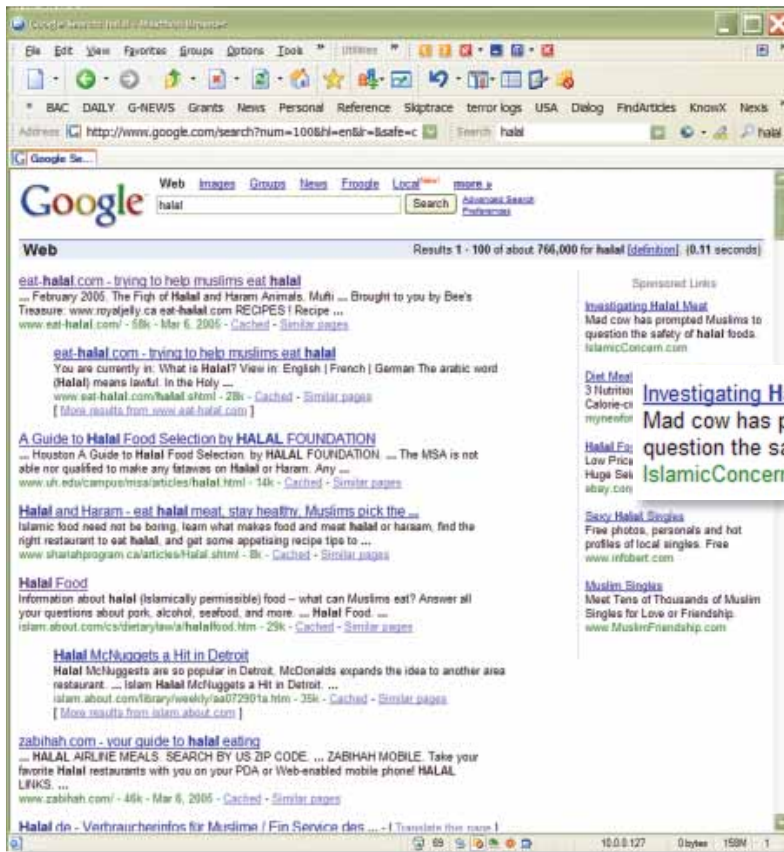
36  Entering “halal” into the Google Internet search engine in May 2005 produced a curious result: Appearing atop dietary-education websites and religious food-selection guides was a PETA-funded “sponsored” link (a paid advertisement of sorts).

“Investigating Halal Meat,” PETA’s ad begins. “Mad cow has prompted Muslims to question the safety of halal foods.” Clicking on this alarming statement brings web surfers to PETA’s “IslamVeg” website, where Muslims read that eating meat, dairy, and eggs “conflicts with Islamic teachings.”

Among its other claims, PETA insists that halal meat is “susceptible to mad cow disease” and that “most meat produced under current standards is not halal, but is instead ‘haram,’ and therefore should be avoided by all conscientious Muslims.”

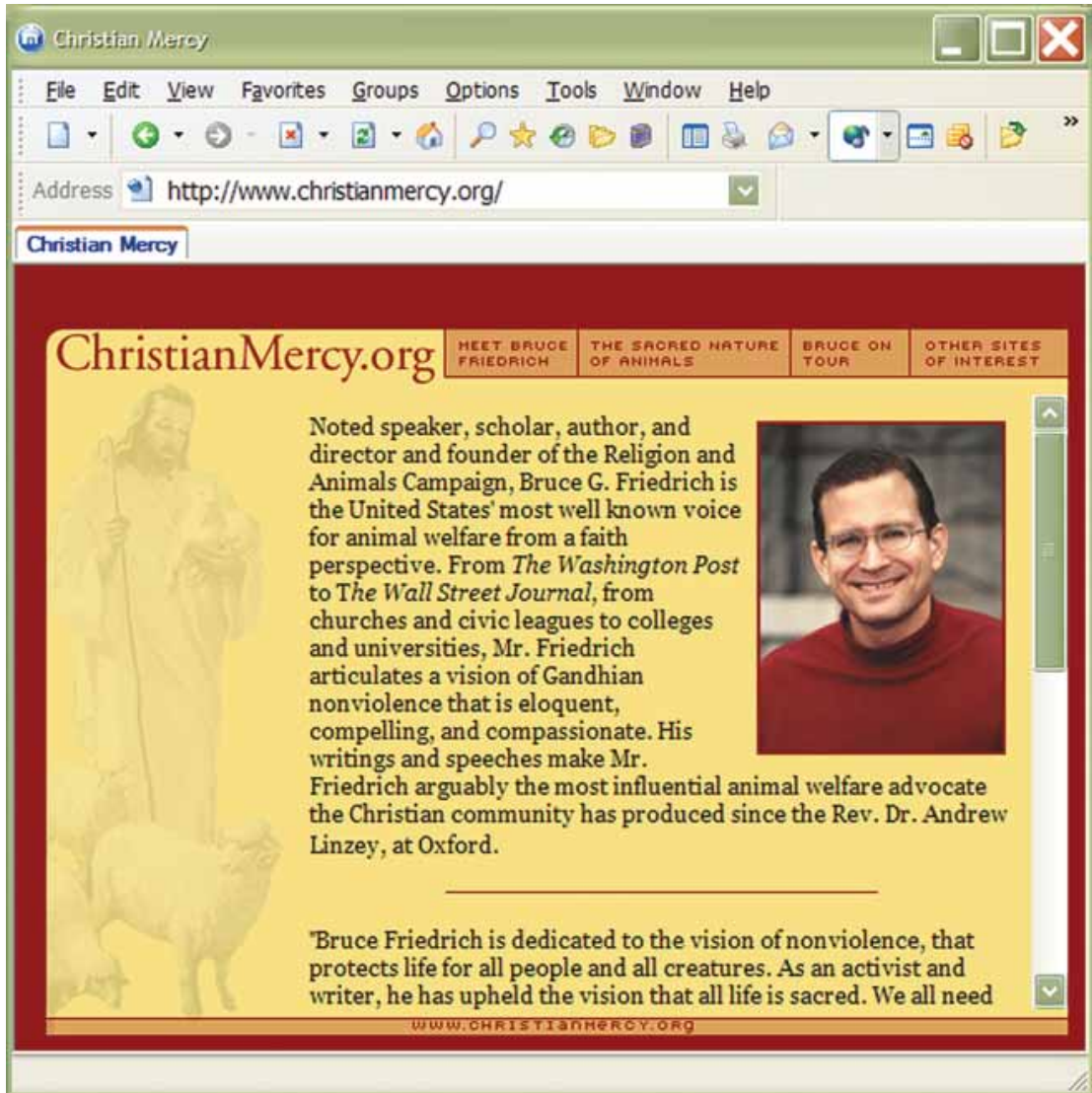
Add to this PETA’s collected “Fatwas on Vegetarianism,” and the picture emerges of a savvy animal rights group doing an end-run around the Qur’an. Islam doesn’t really insist on meatless eating, PETA reasons, but a few Muslim scholars have approved it. And since you don’t really *know* your meat is halal unless you’re the butcher—and since mad cow disease is scary as all get-out—well, you get the picture.





Investigating Halal Meat
Mad cow has prompted Muslims to question the safety of halal foods.
IslamicConcern.com

PETA has paid for Internet search-engine advertisements designed to make Muslims question the safety of eating certified Halal meat.



PETA campaign coordinator Bruce Friedrich promotes himself and PETA as examples of “Christian Mercy.” This is the same PETA official who publicly advocates “blowing stuff up and smashing windows” as “a great way to bring about animal liberation.”

Blessed Are the Firebombers?

While PETA employs a stable of over 100 full-time activists, few have a passion for combining the religious fervor of animal-rights activism with actual religion. The most notable exception is Bruce Friedrich, the group's vegetarian campaign director and the man generally regarded as the group's third-in-command. But PETA's in-house theologian hides an ugly tolerance for arson and other violence against what he sees as the enemies of God's plan for animals.

“I think it would be a great thing if all of these fast-food outlets, and these slaughterhouses, and these laboratories, and the banks that fund them exploded tomorrow. I think it's perfectly appropriate for people to take bricks and toss them through the windows, and everything else along the line. Hallelujah to the people who are willing to do it.”

— PETA vegetarian campaign director Bruce Friedrich

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Friedrich is generally unapologetic and immodest about leaning on his Catholicism to advance PETA's vision of “total animal liberation.” One PETA website, ChristianMercy.org, is singularly devoted to praising Friedrich's views on “how people can extend mercy and compassion to the animal kingdom.” In his world, the “virtues of Christian mercy” include eating no meat, drinking no milk, wearing no leather, and “attach[ing] a button with an animal rights slogan to your purse or briefcase.”

Eating meat, according to Friedrich, “is not your personal decision, any more than whether somebody beats their child is their personal decision.”

Asked by a newspaper reporter about his decision to post a “go vegetarian” billboard with a religious theme outside a popular steakhouse, Friedrich snapped: “People need to be confronted. In this case, people are going to be confronted by God.”

Challenged by an incredulous reporter about a “Jesus Was a Vegetarian” billboard erected in Fort Worth near the arrival point for the Southern Baptist

Convention, he insisted that “killing and eating animals is inherently un-Christian.” Defending another such ad in Canada, he insisted: “Eating meat absolutely mocks God.”

It’s a message that few Christians support, and Friedrich exhibits the frustration of a man who believes he’s ten steps ahead of his own religion. “I’m convinced,” he told the *National Catholic Reporter*, “that future generations will look back on the way Christians treated animals in the year 2001 with the same horror presently reserved for Christian complicity in past atrocities like slavery and the witch burnings.”

‘Nonviolent’ arson

At the heart of Bruce’s nonstop sermonizing is his constant public endorsement of “nonviolence” and his self-proclaimed mission of “making the world kinder day-by-day.” PETA promoted his speaking tour of India with steady references to “mercy and compassion,” as befits the leader of PETA’s “Religion and Animals Campaign.” But take him out of an overtly religious context, and this (self-described) deeply spiritual man is quick to discard his Christian ethics, embracing instead the violent tactics of the animal-rights movement’s most dangerous criminals.

“Our nonviolent tactics are not as effective. We ask nicely for years and get nothing. Someone makes a threat, and it works.”

– PETA co-founder and president Ingrid Newkirk

Friedrich told a captive audience of hundreds of activists at a national animal rights convention about the need for “blowing stuff up and smashing windows.”

“For the record,” he said, “I don’t do this stuff, but I do advocate it. I think it’s a great way to bring about animal liberation.”

“I think it would be a great thing,” Friedrich added to thunderous applause, “if all of these fast-food outlets, and these slaughterhouses, and these laboratories, and the banks that fund them exploded tomorrow. I think it’s perfectly appropriate for people to take bricks and toss them through the windows, and everything else along the line. Hallelujah to the people who are willing to do it.”

This is the real Bruce Friedrich—a staunch ally of the Animal Liberation Front (ALF), the arson-happy underground group described as a “domestic terror threat” by the FBI. In a 2004 essay titled “Defending Agitation and the ALF,” he declares that “ALF actions are helpful in the long-term struggle” and calls them “a reasonable response” to a world in which people eat meat.

Then, in a section subtitled “Blow It Up,” Friedrich offers the following reflection on the unpredictability of controlling arson fires without claiming innocent lives:

I was shaken by the events of September 11, and now, along with many other activists, I question the ability to ensure that burning down a building can be done without putting human beings, especially firefighters, at risk. Based on my time living with rats and mice in Washington, D.C., I have always assumed that animals will escape such fires, since their senses of smell, wariness of such dangers, and ability to move through almost invisible holes is so impressive, but I think that we should not dismiss the possibility that they, also, will be harmed.

These reflections do not, of course, rule out burning meat trucks. And they don’t mean that when the next slaughterhouse or vivisection lab burns down, I will denounce those who carried out the burning, or that I will feel anything other than joy in my heart.

This is the activist leader chosen by PETA to deliver its message to faith communities. In the strictest sense of the word, Bruce Friedrich is a zealot—a man willing to say anything and endorse *anything* to further a cause that venerates animals above all else.

“As far I am concerned, Christian carnivores are committing the ultimate sin by enslaving, torturing and murdering animals for food clothing and entertainment.”

– PETA “humane educator” Gary Yourofsky, a convicted felon who lectures schoolchildren about vegetarianism

PETA’s point of view ultimately places pigs, cows, and chickens above human beings. And whenever religious beliefs get in the way—no matter how deeply

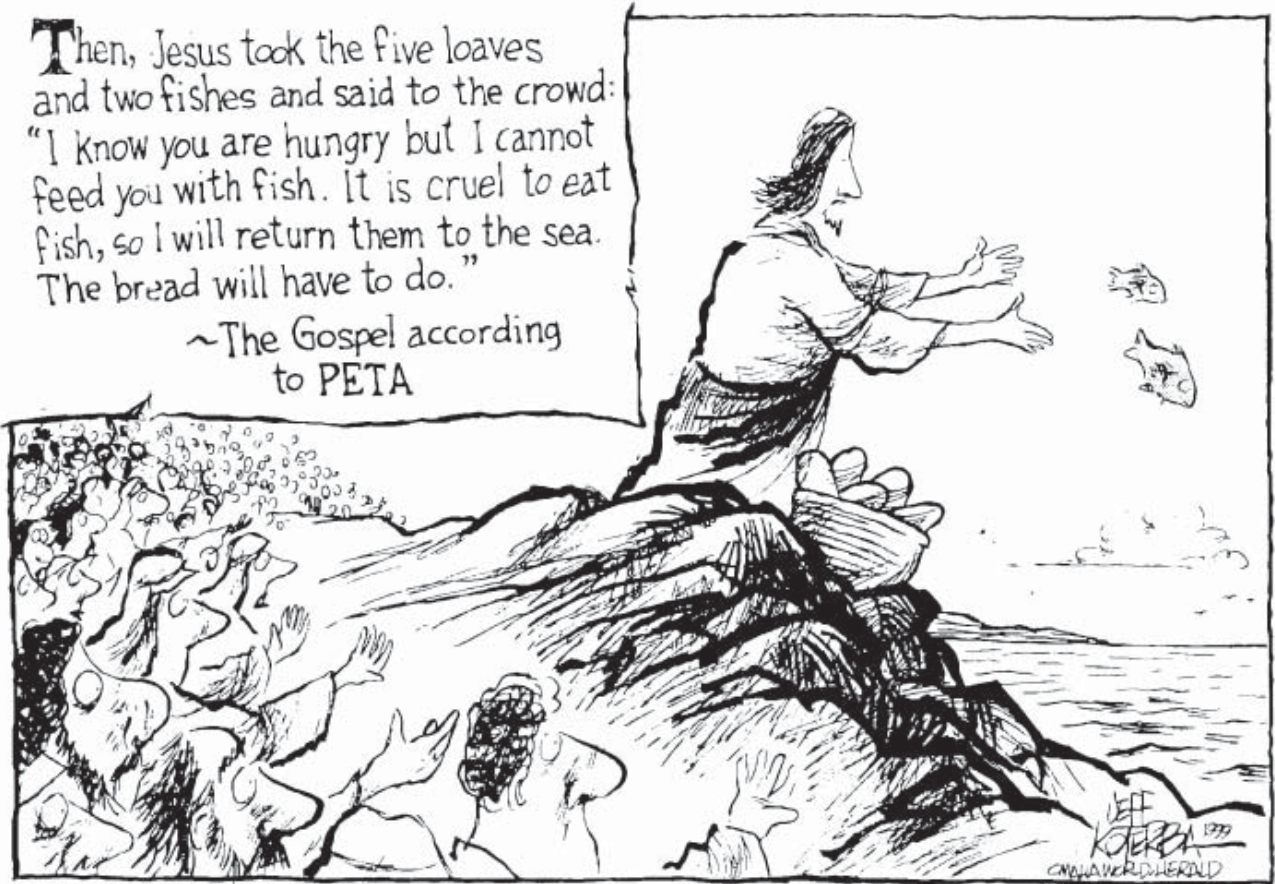
felt in ritual or ancient in practice—PETA is out to destroy them. In this respect, PETA is practicing a disrespectful idolatry that borders on replacing traditional religion with one of its own making—trading God-worship for animal-worship.

“I am concerned for [PETA activists’] well-being,” writes one *Orlando Sentinel* columnist. “God kept the Israelites wandering in the wilderness for 40 years because they worshiped a golden calf, built by Moses’ brother, Aaron. If you get 40 years for worshiping a golden calf, how much time will be given to those who seem to worship the real thing?”



Then, Jesus took the five loaves and two fishes and said to the crowd: "I know you are hungry but I cannot feed you with fish. It is cruel to eat fish, so I will return them to the sea. The bread will have to do."

~The Gospel according to PETA



Jeff Koterba/Omaha World-Herald



The Center For
Consumer Freedom

1775 Pennsylvania Avenue NW | Suite 1200 | Washington, DC 20006-4605
telephone 202.463.7112 | www.ConsumerFreedom.com