

EIR Feature

The moral issue at stake in 'animal rights'

by Nora Hamerman and Gabriele Liebig

The interview we present below, on page 22, is a world exclusive. Conducted in December by *EIR* correspondent Antonio Gaspari in Rome, it marks the first time that a priest of the Franciscan Order, who is professor emeritus at a leading Roman Catholic institution, has supplied clear answers on many scorching questions, regarding the soul of animals, evolutionism, pantheistic religions, and the anti-human offensive of the animal-rights extremists.

The interview intersects a heated debate within organized religion. In Italy, animal-rights extremism has spread dangerously within the Catholic laity and among parish priests. A spokesman for this trend, which some sources warn is the "heresy of the 1990s," Monsignor Canciani, has published two books in the last six months, one of which asserts that Christ and the Apostles were vegetarians.

Under the wings of the World Wildlife Fund (now the World Wide Fund for Nature) of Prince Philip, the consort of the British Queen, and other supranational organizations, animal rights organizations sprang up in 1989-90 like mushrooms: the "International Society for Animal Rights, Inc.," "People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals" (PETA in the U.S.), the "Association Opposing Animal Research," the "Chicken Liberation Front," and countless more.

This has mighty little to do with protecting animals. The goal of the movement—whether the individual fellow traveler and contributor is aware of this or not—is to undermine and and destroy the material and philosophical basis for the survival of mankind. At the head of the target list of the animal rights movement are biomedical research and agricultural husbandry of large animals. Firebombings against laboratories have become frequent in England and Germany. As we document below, the impact of the terror has been to slow down, and in some cases to halt, research that should be saving lives. Ominously, biology texts are now being reviewed in the United States with a view to "cleansing" them of references to animal research!

The spring 1990 edition of the magazine *Animal Defender* ran a "Declaration



Saint Francis Preaching to the Birds, a painting by Giotto dating from around 1300. While the celebrated founder of the Franciscan Order loved animals as a manifestation of God's creation, he was no vegetarian, and did not confuse the souls of animals with those of human beings.

of Animal Rights," which proclaimed for animals a "right to life," indeed, "animals are like people in the capacity to suffer, to feel pain, interest and satisfaction. . . . Differences of intelligence and of levels of abstraction of speech and consciousness can be no reason to disregard the substantial similarity in the vital basic functions."

The "Declaration of Animal Rights" makes no secret of their animosity to house pets. "The differentiation of animals according to human preferences into pets, wild animals and work animals with the consequent three classes of rights is rejected," it declares. The term "pets" is contemptuously rejected. "The keeping of animals is on principle restricted, since it offers animals no suitable environment, or rather it is tied to animal torture." Other "friends of animals" even condemn feeding birds in winter as inadmissible intervention into the cycle of nature. And Arne Naess, the guru of the radical ecology group "Earth First!" gave the order in 1987, "in case of a conflict between the interests of dogs, cats and other housepets on the one hand and wild species of animals on the other, protect the latter."

The proclaimed animal right-to-life has far-reaching consequences: "Animals may not be killed for food. . . . They must only be killed in self-defense, in no case as the object of sport (hunting) or for economic use. . . . Animal research . . . is forbidden in all cases, whether its purpose be scientific, medical, commercial or other nature."

Given the moral pretensions of the animalists, nothing less than a counterattack on the deepest philosophical level

will suffice to halt this truly satanic movement. "The animal rights movement is degrading the concept of human beings. . . . We believe inherently that there is something sacred about human beings. . . . Our legal system and Judaic-Christian religious traditions are based on human sanctity," says Dr. Frederick K. Goodwin, head of the U.S. Alcohol, Drug Abuse, Mental Health Administration.

In November, the top U.S. health official traveled to Rome to urge Church leaders to defend the use of animals in biological testing. Dr. Louis Sullivan, Secretary of Health and Human Services, said at a Vatican-sponsored conference on mental health, "Any assertion of moral equivalence between humans and animals is an issue that organized religion must refute vigorously and unambiguously."

According to a CNS story filed from Vatican City, Sullivan asked that world religious leaders "affirm the necessity of appropriate and human uses of animals in biomedical research." On Nov. 16 Sullivan met with the Pope, but no details of that meeting were made public.

In an *EIR* series authored by Kathleen Klenetsky and Marcia Merry in 1990, we charged that today's animal rights fanatics are the new Nazis. In fact, some ideologues of the movement cynically equate the human victims of the Nazi Holocaust with animals killed to nourish human beings. "Six million people died in concentration camps, but six billion broiler chickens will die this year in slaughterhouses." Ingrid Newkirk, Director of PETA, was quoted in the *Washington Post*.