

## Book Review

*Good News for Animals? Christian Approaches to Animal Well-Being* Editors: Charles Pinches & Jay B. McDaniel Orbis Books (1993), Maryknoll NY 10545 US\$18.95 Paper pp 258

A collection of essays by fifteen men and women, even though well-edited, is hard to deal with. It comes from the thinking that produced a paper for the World Council of Churches meeting in 1988 on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation.

The writing is diffuse and rather informal. The authors are very much aware of biblical teaching as well as of the movements for peace and non-violence, for liberation and feminist theology, as well as environmental and ecological reflection.

My fear was that the hidden agenda was to convince readers to be vegetarians. On this point the book was discreet. It does indicate that it is only in Genesis 9:2 after the covenant with Noah, in which God promised not to destroy the world for its sins, that the concession is given to eat flesh.

I was challenged to read this book for its title: Is there any good news for Animals? I would be inclined to think of Good News for myself and for people who hear the proclamation of the Gospel, but is there not also Good News for the whole of creation. Is not Christ's Redemption for the whole of creation!

Modern lifestyles are confronted with their impact on the world and this world includes animals. Does our compassion extend to all sentient beings and are we aware of the consequences of our economic expansion and technological patterns of thinking. Such are the issues that are grappled with. I think of Francis of Assisi. He might not understand much of what was written, but he certainly fulfills the aspirations of the authors.

What has been said in the past about Christian approaches to animals and their well-being? What is being said about animals today? Should Christians eat animals? How should Christians respond to current concerns about animals? These were the four questions the fifteen contributors were asked to address themselves to. After reading the book, I am not so sure I feel more competent to deal with such issues.

*Crisis and Challenge of the Ecumenical Movement-Integrity and Indivisibility* Statement of the Institute for Ecumenical Research, Strasbourg WCC Publications 1994 pp<sup>43</sup>

A team of six put their names to a report of 115 paragraphs on their

reflections on the present stage of the ecumenical movements as seen through the eyes of the World Council of Churches.

From a Catholic point of view, it is interesting to read that 'ecumenism' had been seen as an Anglo-Saxon Protestant endeavour in the early years of this century. Missionaries returning from evangelization in Africa and Asia asked themselves if there were not One Good News, which all could cooperate in to bring the non-evangelized majority of humanity to Christ.

Jesus had prayed that we may be one so that the world would believe in Him, follow Him and be transformed by Him. By the WCC Assembly in Uppsala (1968) the 'Third World' had begun to make itself visible, just as at the Second Vatican Council (1962-66) when the Bishops of the non-European World began to be influential. The Catholic Church was once aloof from the ecumenical movement since one cannot comprise on the truths of revelation and commitment to Christ and his Church. However since the second Vatican Council, Catholic involvement and commitment to Christian unity have been strong and evident, especially at local levels and in terms of formal meetings. The Petrine Office has always been to confirm those who believe in the Risen Christ and to pastor the flock into unity.

The value of the 115 numbered paragraphs of this report (31 October 1993) of Andre Birmele, Flemming Fleinert-Jensen, Harding Meyer, Elisabeth Parmentier, Michael Root and Yacob Tesfai lies in giving the view of the World Council of Churches. The Ecumenical movement has lost much of its enthusiasm and vitality. Its aim is not just 'conciliatory', of having a meeting at which there is a sharing of concerns and experiences, with the consequent cooperation and support. The aim is *koinonia* which has an element of "fully mutual commitment—full commitment to the Lord and thus among those who belong to him". #77. In the Catholic context, it is the "communion of charity" seen at the Eucharistic celebration.

Interestingly, the unity of Church as *koinonia* is seen in five dimensions: A communion in apostolic faith and confessions; in the sacraments; in ordained ministry; in the mission of proclaiming the Gospel; and in serving all of humanity and creation. #79 That is the challenge we face in the present so-called 'crisis'. But we are pilgrims, and pilgrim ecumenism is a journey to this goal "borne by the promise and assurance of God." #115 Difficult to read, but rich with the experience of the team, it could well help in the 1995 theme of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity—"Communion with God; Communion with each other."

*Reviewed by Harold Naylor*