men, are the only characteristics belonging to God." Concerning the almightiness of God it is stated: "It (the word Pantokrator) does not mean 'one who can do anything he wants' in an unqualified way, but rather 'one in whose hands all things are.'" Their answer to the theodicy problem is this: "Christian tradition argued that evil is a consequence of the freedom that is God's gift to human beings. But this does not provide a full answer to the question of theodicy, for evil is also present outside the realm of human responsibility. The ultimate answers lie in God's overcoming evil, suffering and death in the reconciliation of the world through the Son of God."

Hopefully these examples give an idea of the importance and usefulness of this book. My personal opinion is that each and every student and minister should have a copy of this book. It can help us understanding our faith and bring clarity in difficult problems of faith. And it can provide church leaders with biblically grounded arguments to defend our common faith, hope and love.

In 1998 one of my student groups at the Hervormde Teologiese Opleiding already made use of this book as prescribed literature - and with great success. I can therefore recommend this book to all lecturers, especially of dogmatics, as an extremely helpful source of knowledge.

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Birch, C & Vischer, L 1997 – Living with the animals: The community of God’s creatures (Risk book Series 77)


Reviewer: Prof P M Venter (University of Pretoria)

This book deals with the relationship between human beings and animals. Technological progress made man less dependent on animals, but simultaneously endangered the survival of animals by disturbing their habitat. This problem is investigated and some recommendations are made on how to live with animals on this earth.

In the first part Lukas Vischer advances the Biblical vision that animals were created in indissoluble community with humankind to praise God. Because of sin this balance was disturbed and human beings started dominating the animals and exploiting the earth for their own gain. What is needed is a new relation with the animals where human beings live in restraint and harmony with them.

In part two Charles Birch uses scientific research to reject the degrading viewpoint that animals are irrational beings. They do not have instrumental value only, but also intrinsic value. They have rights and are to be treated with respect. A shift should take place away from an anthropocentric and towards a biocentric or life-centred ethic.

This first part of the book can be criticised for its uncontextual and thematic use of Scripture. The second part, however, can be recommended for presenting the issue in a balanced way, not avoiding critical questions addressed to this new viewpoint. In general the present society is criticised for its human centredness and a shift is propagated towards greater harmony between the inhabitants of the earth.

Although this is a short document, it will probably have quite a large influence on its readers and the community. It is highly recommended for lay people as well as theologians who want to be informed on the Christian viewpoint on ecological matters.