

Book Reviews

A Guide to the Book of Amos: TEF Study Guide No. 4: by Bernard Thorogood, S.P.C.K., 1971. Pp. 118. Price £0.45.

This is the fourth of a series of study-guides published for the TEF in response to requests from theological teachers and students in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and the Pacific. The book has been divided into five parts, each consisting of a short introductory outline, summary and background, detailed interpretation, notes on particular words and suggestions for study. At the end of the book, a key to the study-suggestions is provided, and three 'Theme-discussions' have been given, on Judgement, Social Justice and Priest and Prophet. All bear witness to sound theological judgement and scholarship, and the text is interpreted with clarity and simplicity. The very beautiful photographs, time-chart and map add to the relevance and interest.

A few comments must however be made, which may be of help in a future revision of the book. A sub-title, 'The Importance of Amos' is found on p. 7; but what is discussed under it is the relevance of the eighth century prophets. The sub-title would have been more applicable on p. 12.

Identifying the prophets with modern revivalists may perhaps not be thought the right thing for an author to do in a book such as this (cf. pp. 5, 24, 93). Such comparisons might give a wrong impression about the prophets to readers in those areas where the image of the 'revivalist' is not very bright. Another misleading statement is found on p. 23 (and cf. p. 27, Question 12): 'The Church has always taught that prostitution, i.e. to have sexual intercourse for money, is wrong for Christians'. This is of course very true; but does it imply that intercourse outside wedlock (but not for money) is permitted? This ambiguity may have repercussions among Christians who hold rigid views.

The author hesitates to give his opinion concerning the meaning of a particular text on the grounds that here scholars do not agree in their views (p. 43). But this is no excuse to leave the reader in suspense! The author does give his opinion in a similar situation on p. 100 (para. 4). It is generally acknowledged that Deuteronomy was composed by men who were influenced by the eighth century prophets, but it seems that the author either ignores this view or overlooks it when he quotes Deuteronomy to prove the antiquity of certain views found in Amos (cf. p. 47).

Sermonizing on the text should be avoided, and readers would prefer to have exposition and correct interpretation. How-

ever, on two occasions we find the sermonizing tendency, e.g. p. 45 — 'Prepare to meet thy God'. What is significant here is not simply meeting God but meeting Him for judgement. Without any support from the text on p. 80, the author writes about two kinds of plumbline. There are also a number of instances of wrong references: 5:8 instead of 3:8 (p. 8); 5:4 instead of 6:4 (p. 70); Exod. 34:47 instead of 34:6-7 (p. 13).

Considering the merits of the book, the defects are not serious. We are grateful to the author and the TEF for making it available for use in Africa and Asia. The author does not dictate things to us, and the reader has the freedom to use the book in the light of his own background. As he himself points out, suggestions are only suggestions. There is no doubt that the book will stimulate readers, for the author has done justice to the prophet of justice.

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Voices of Revolution: Five plays on the prophecies of Hosea, Joel, Amos, Habakkuk and Malachi: by Joyce M. Peel, C.L.S., I.S.P.C.K. and L.P.H., 1971. Pp.108. Price Rs.3.80.

As the name suggests, the author attempts to bring out the revolutionary message of five of the prophets in the form of plays. All except the last are the product of Bible studies.

Even in reading the plays one is gripped by the tension and keeps wondering, what will the message be? This is specially true in *Cry Violence in the City*, where the editor of 'The Watchman' sends a reporter to investigate the corruption and injustice of employment in the industrial areas which is escalating into riots and murder. When the reporter brings the news the editor prepares his editorial with Habakkuk in the background, and maintains that most of the violence is really 'counter-violence to an unjust society maintained by force'. The proprietor rejects the editor's view, and threatens, 'You'll be fired!' Young people will enjoy acting this play. There is plenty of action, violence and rioting; but the message is very much of the day: violence simply does not pay.

In the same category can be placed *Beloved Harlot* and *Valley of Decision*, based on Hosea and Joel respectively. The latter brings out forcefully the way in which justice can be bought by the few or the individual. The last play, *Rejected Offering*, based on Malachi, is the most exciting of all. It can be produced very easily and the cast is small (and very typical of most congregations!). It is tailored to take the place of a sermon; and it would be a wonderful life illustration to climax a stewardship campaign. Anyone who reads or produces any of

these plays will get a new vision of the prophets' message and their relevance for our time. They may well begin to take the minor prophets seriously.

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M. E. PONNIAH

The Ten Commandments and Responsible Freedom: by James A. Bergquist, C.L.S. and I.S.P.C.K., 1971. Pp. 136. Price Rs.4.75.

This paperback is clearly designed to be a textbook and it succeeds admirably in its purpose. Each chapter is set out in numbered paragraphs with cross-headings, which make it easy to follow the argument, and then it concludes with a summary of its contents, followed by a prayer which makes it plain that the subject is not just a matter of academic interest but of Christian living and discipleship. When you add to all this that Dr. Bergquist, at present Associate Director of the Theological Education Fund of the W.C.C., writes out of his personal knowledge of the Indian scene and carefully avoids unnecessary jargon, it will be realized that he has put us greatly in his debt.

The book will serve admirably not only as a textbook for theological students but also for study circles and lay training courses. The general viewpoint, as may be expected, is that of an informed scholar who is familiar with modern thinking on ethics and yet has his own faith firmly rooted in the faith once delivered.

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R. W. BRYAN

The Ecumenical Advance: A History of the Ecumenical Movement, Vol. II, 1948-68: edited by Harold E. Fey, S.P.C.K., 1970. Pp. 524. Price £3.25.

The Ecumenical Advance is the second volume of the ecumenical history published under the auspices of the World Council of Churches. The first volume, *A History of the Ecumenical Movement, 1517-1948*, edited by Ruth Rouse and Stephen Neill, was published in 1954. The present volume covers the period between the formation of the W.C.C. in 1948 at Amsterdam and the Fourth Assembly of the W.C.C. at Uppsala in 1968. The book is divided into fifteen chapters and it surveys different aspects of the ecumenical movement, e.g. the general ecumenical development since 1948, the life and activities of the World Council of Churches, regional ecumenical developments, the development of social, political and missionary concerns,

Faith and Order discussions since 1948, and the response of confessional groups including the Orthodox and the Roman Catholics to the ecumenical movement.

The period between 1948 and 1968 was of tremendous importance both for the world and the church. The changes and developments in the world have greatly affected the life and mission of the church and the course of the ecumenical movement itself. During the last twenty years, ecumenism has begun to be understood in a much wider sense than before. It is no longer merely a movement for inter-church co-operation and efforts towards unity. The ecumenical discussion as narrated in this volume reveals that new questions are being asked about the nature and the purpose of the church itself. A new image of the church and its mission in the contemporary world is emerging in these discussions. The youth and other radical groups have introduced an element of dynamism into the movement. There is an increasing concern for the world and its problems. The ecumenical statements consistently urge that the church does not live for itself and that its vocation is to serve mankind. The unity of the church is no longer sought for its own sake but rather seen more and more in relation to the unity of mankind and the task of the church in the world. The world and all mankind have come to assume a new place in the ecumenical deliberations since 1948. The developments in the Roman Catholic Church in recent years have added a new dimension to the present-day ecumenical situation. All these developments are narrated in this book by those who are intimately related to such developments and activities. However, the book has certain serious defects.

It is said of a historian in the Middle Ages that he undertook the writing of a history of the world, somewhat like St. Augustine's City of God. But when he came to the end of the first five centuries, he wrote, 'I am no longer writing the history of the two cities, but of one only which I call the Church.' It is true that the W.C.C. is the major institutional expression of ecumenism in our time. But the history of the ecumenical movement is much wider and richer than that of the W.C.C. or the Second Vatican Council. The writers of this volume are aware of the danger of identification of the ecumenical movement with an institutional expression of it. But unfortunately when they came to write the history of the movement for the last twenty years they were no longer writing about a movement—a movement of renewal, unity, witness and service—but tended to narrate mainly the activities of an organization. With the exception of certain sections, the book is mainly a chronicle and several sections read like official minutes of proceedings of committees and conferences. There is a good deal of repetition. Of course, some repetition could not be avoided in a compilation like the present volume, but if properly edited much of the repetition could have been avoided.

It has become an uncritical assumption in the ecumenical movement (which is also noted in the present volume) that the ecumenical movement owes its origin to the missionary movement, and the Western missionaries in Asia and Africa are credited with taking the early initiative for co-operation and unity. This is only a partial truth. In India, in the second half of the nineteenth century, there were several missionary conferences which discussed the question of co-operation and unity. But during this period there were several Indian Christians (and the movements they organized) who ardently fought for the establishment of one Catholic Church in India. In fact it was their criticism of the divisiveness of the Western missionary enterprise that, in several cases, led the missionary conferences to take up the question of co-operation and unity. The same thing could be said of China and Japan also. It is a pity that both volumes of the history of the ecumenical movement have largely ignored the history of such indigenous movements in the non-Western world.

We must also ask whether the book describes the actual ecumenical situation that exists today. We are thankful to God for all that has been achieved through the various activities of the World Council of Churches or the Second Vatican Council or their related agencies; but the ecumenical situation pictured in this volume is very far from actual reality. There exists a great gulf between the decisions and agreements of the solemn ecumenical gatherings and the actual life of the Christian Congregations in different parts of the world.

Nevertheless, this is a very important work. It gives a good deal of information which no other book gives, about what has taken place in the movement during the last twenty years. The various chapters are written by men, many of whom have been at the centre of events they describe. The bibliography given at the end of the book is indispensable for the study of the subject, and the book as a whole is of great value for students of ecumenical history.

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T. V. PHILIP

Salvation and Humanization : Some crucial issues of the theology of Mission in contemporary India: by M. M. Thomas. C.I.S.R.S. and C.L.S., 1971. Pp. 64. Price Rs.2.75.

The understanding of Christian salvation as 'humanization' is the theme of these three essays by Dr. M. M. Thomas. Why is a new word needed for the traditional term 'Salvation'? Humanization stands for the historical, this-worldly, dimension of salvation in Christ, both of men as individuals and of society as a whole. It lays stress on the transformation of this life, the salvation which is realized (made real) in the 'here and now'.

The value of this emphasis on humanization is threefold. First, it integrates the social responsibilities of the Christian more firmly into Christian soteriology. Dr. Thomas shows that concern for education and social reform has long been a vital part of the mission of the Church in India. Like Jesus himself, the Church has attracted many outcasts of society who have sought new human dignity and status. A theology of Humanization prevents salvation being restricted to a heavenly reward for individuals, having no consequences for contemporary society. (One is reminded of the recent challenge that the Bangladeshi refugees presented to the Church in Bengal and throughout India. There were still many Christians who could not grasp their Christian responsibilities.)

Secondly, humanization is an important area of dialogue with contemporary Hinduism. Dr. Thomas describes the two fundamental concerns of Neo-Hinduism as the moral regeneration of Indian society (Rammohan Roy and Mahatma Gandhi) and the ultimate spiritual liberation through the philosophical vision (Vivekananda and Radhakrishnan). From different angles, both are wrestling with the relation between man's ultimate spiritual destiny and the regeneration of human society.

Thirdly, the concern for humanizing society brings Christians into dialogue with Marxism and other secularist philosophies. A passion for social justice, for freedom of thought and religion, and an attack on the dehumanizing forces of modern society is shared by Christians and secularists. There are frequent opportunities for co-operation to achieve these goals.

What, then, can the Christian understanding of humanization contribute to the dialogue with Neo-Hinduism and secularists? Societies based on humanist ideals can still resort to inhuman methods (witness Stalinist Russia). This realization has provoked a reappraisal, within secularism, of the relation between secularity and transcendence. The author mentions Jawaharlal Nehru's struggle to find a spiritual and ethical framework for his socialist secularism. Others, like Aurobindo, have deserted politics altogether for religious spirituality. It is a quest for the ultimate goal of human life which is not supplied by the empty Marxist future. Karl Rahner has suggested the 'Absolute Future' as one possible way of interpreting God in secularist categories.

The problem of the norms of humanization—what it is to be truly human—also taxes Neo-Hinduism. The basic dilemma is how to reconcile transcendent Reality with the dynamics of human history. Principles assume a greater importance than persons, as Dr. Thomas has shown already in his study of the Neo-Hindu approach to Christ. This setting aside of the historical Christ is paralleled in the existentialist strand of modern Christian theology (Bultmann and Tillich), and it has serious consequences for the prophetic interpretation of human history as the sphere of God's activity. The scandal of the historical

particularity of Jesus, Dr. Thomas stresses, is the core of the Christian belief that 'historical human existence can acquire a positive relation to our eternal salvation'.

One of the chief values of this little book is the issues it raises for further study and reflection. What is the relation between individual and social humanization, in the light of existentialist theology? Or between the historical and the eschatological Kingdom of God? Dr. Thomas' controversial remarks on the place of Advaita spirituality in the Hindu-Christian dialogue may provoke the reader to reconsider the prophetic and mystical visions of God.

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D. B. MUMFORD

Proclaiming Christ: by E. Le Joly, St. Paul's Publications.
Pp. 416. Price Rs.7.50.

Fr. Le Joly of the Sacred Heart Church, Calcutta, has an impressive list of books to his credit, written primarily for the intelligent and dedicated laity, and his latest puts the whole Church still further in his debt. In his Preface he explains how this book came to be written and what is its intention and scope.

It grew out of the favourable reception given to an earlier book, *Witnesses of Christ*. Lay people and clergy alike wrote in great numbers to the author and their general cry was, 'You have told what we should do; now tell us how to do it'. In particular it was felt that even where the local Church was actively engaging in evangelism, the work was being done in an unorganized manner, without plan or method. Several bishops and priests also wrote to ask for a more elaborate study of missionary methods adapted to Indian conditions. 'So I began work on such a book, hoping that it would render service to seminarians, priests, religious and lay apostles. *Proclaiming Christ* examines the bases of our apostolic motivation; it studies the problems and techniques of planning our missionary work; it lays down principles for the optimum use of personnel and finances; it describes and appraises various possible methods to propagate the Gospel. The book, which includes numerous instances taken from life, offers practical schemes and suggestions for our apostolic work.'

The result is a book which deals fully with its subject, yet manages to remain cheap in price. It is only rarely that the author allows himself to write anything that could not be accepted by all Christians, of whatever Church, and his book can be commended unreservedly as an excellent and practical guide to its subject, written out of personal knowledge and experience.

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