

Book Reviews

Theologie im III. Millennium - Quo vadis? Antworten der Theologen; Dokumentation einer Weltumfrage, Raul Fornet-Betancourt (Hrsg.). Im Auftrag des Missionswissenschaftlichen Institut Missio e.V. - Frankfurt/Main: IKO - Verlag für Interkulturelle Kommunikation, 2000. (Denktraditionen im Dialog: Bd. 7).

The title of the volume could be roughly translated as "Whither Theology in the III Millennium?" The book is one of the many contributions of the Missionswissenschaftliches Institut (= MI, a sort of research department of Missio, Germany) to making known more extensively new trends in theology (especially in the Third World). The volume consists of answers (in English, German, Spanish and French) to a questionnaire sent out by MI to only those theologians, the editor tells us, "who through their work had either left their imprint on the development of present-day theology in the 20th century or had received at least a certain degree of recognition in their respective contexts" (p.13). The questions put to the theologians are the following:

1. In your opinion, which are the historical events that have more strongly influenced the development of theology in this century, and which of these events should become subject of theological reflection?
2. Which are the events in this century that have influenced your own theological development the most, and which in particular have made you change your theological positions?
3. Which issues, ideas, currents, or works would you say are essential to the theology of the twentieth century?
4. Which theological traditions from this century do you think should continue to be developed in the future?

5. Which tasks do you think should be given priority in theology at the beginning of the twenty-first century?

Far from being a heavy-duty theology book *Theologie im III. Millennium - Quo vadis?* presents in the space of a few pages the views of some of the important theological figures of our age (that is, not school theologians but those who have been reflecting on the signs of the times and interpreting them contextually) regarding the historical influences and events, the present context and its pressing priorities, the important trends that have begun, the abiding importance of some issues and the future vision for the new century - all this with regard to the process of theologizing contextually. Perhaps Albert Nolan from South Africa speaks for all who take such theologizing seriously when he states: "My theology has changed from a typical theology of abstract and eternal truths to a contextual theology, that is to say, a theology which is fully aware of the context within which and for which one is doing theology" (200-201).

We cannot go into details but perhaps some samples could give us an inkling of what these theologians have to say about their own theology and consequently of the value of this publication:

Michael Amaladoss confesses: "The opening up to the other religions have (sic!) also led me to develop a theology of interreligious dialogue" (22).

Jan A. B. Jongeneel, Urecht, the Netherlands, hazards the guess that: "Finally, third millennium Christianity will need many people who will be loyal to non-Christians and the whole of creation.

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Prakash Lotus, *The Emerging Hindutva Force: The Ascent of Hindu Nationalism*, New Delhi: Indian Social Institute, 2000, x+308.

After discussing its fascist, communalist and fundamentalist character, Louis traces the development of Hindutva ideology, starting with the fermenting of nationalist sentiments in Bengal, and in the manifesto of the Arya Samaj, founded in 1875 by Dayanand Sarasvati. This ideology was further sharpened by Savarkar, a prominent Hindu Mahasabha leader, and Hedgewar, who founded the RSS in 1925.

The author sees Hindutva as a monolithic ideology that seeks to perpetuate the structured society of the past, in which a few upper caste people get most of the benefits of the state. In as much as economic gain for a few is one of its concern, it sympathizes with those capitalistic forces that are trying to control the world market through globalization.

Though spokespersons of Hindutva sound liberal in their attitude towards women, Dalits and tribals, their real aim is to keep them in their age-old subjugation. For this they successfully coopt feminist, Dalit and tribal movements and leaders. As this exploitative structure is essentially Hindu, those who follow another religion are a threat, and need to be contained. Hindutva is also non-democratic not only in its understanding of the state but also in its dealings with those who question its thinking and actively oppose its agenda.

To gain respectability, the Hindutva forces are trying to give their participation

in politics the façade of democracy. Besides having their own educational network, they are also trying to infiltrate the highest research institutes of the nation and control the public educational system so that their ideas are accepted and propagated. In all this they do not hesitate to distort the past or to dish out half truths.

The author has done a lot of reading and offers the reader a good historical, social, political and economic analysis of Hindutva. This analyses shows that it is correct to describe Hindutva as a "highly structured belief system involving the interpretation of the past, an analysis of the present, and a set of precepts and imperatives for future conduct" (p.32). The book contains helpful charts and tables, and a select bibliography, but it lacks an index.

Unfortunately the book gives the impression that it was brought out in a hurry. The endnotes do not follow a consistent pattern, and often it is difficult to make out whether the source cited is an article or a book. There are clumsy formulations, grammatical and spelling mistakes, and at times the data in the text and tables do not tally (e.g., the statement about female/male ratio on p.182). In some cases, information on one page differs from that on the other (e.g., date of formation of Hindu Mahasabha on pp. 49 and 196). Some statements sound too harsh; e.g., "at the gut level of most Hindus there is the pathological hatred and fear of the Muslims..." (p. 34). These shortcomings notwithstanding, the book is a good introduction to a complex but important issue of our times.

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Jnanadeepa

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The basis of contemporary world is basically radically challenged by *postmodernism*, which is shaping today's social, literary, philosophical and theological thought. Is postmodernism a mere fad? Has postmodernism anything meaningful to contribute to our Indian situation? How is it related to science and religion today? How can we respond to it? These are some of the questions the next issue, January 2002, of *Jnanadeepa* seeks to answer.

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