

Book Reviews

The Re-discovery of the Tabernacle. By John Lalrosen SONGATE. Revised edition; Delhi: ISPCK, 1996. Pp XXXII+284. Rs. 60.00

An IAS officer and a devout Christian of conviction and commitment, J.L. Songate has authored 'The Re-discovery of the Tabernacle'. The book is divided into six parts containing altogether sixty six chapters, long and short. To start with, it explains the reason why the tabernacle came into existence: it was born out of Yahweh's - the term Jehovah used throughout the book for Yahweh is not a very felicitous expression - desire to dwell with Israel (EX 25:1-9); Yahweh, the holy God, needed a holy place, separated from the sinful Israel by an enclosure. It gives a detailed description of the tabernacle, and of its different parts. It also speaks about priests who functioned inside the tabernacle, their dress, duties and dues, about the mode of worship and about Jewish feasts. It points out how the tabernacle gave place finally to the temple of Jerusalem - from the temple built by Solomon to its destruction by the Romans in A.D. 70.

This book, however, is not a scientific study or a scholarly treatise on the subject, as the author himself admits (p. XVII), but contains too simplistic, pious reflections. The author uses many a quotation from the OT and NT without paying attention to their context. To give just one example, Songate writes about the gate/door of the tabernacle; immediately he goes on to portray Jesus Christ as the door (pp. 56-58; 90-92). There are several pictures and diagrams which are helpful to common readers.

As B.J. Christi Kumar remarks, "Songate does not bore us with lengthy descriptions of the parts of the Tabernacle but inspires us to dwell in this Holy Sanctuary" (see back cover). This probably explains the reason why the book has gone into a second (revised) edition within two years since its publication in 1994.

J. Susaimanickam

I'm Lonely, Lord - How long? By Marva J. Dawn, W. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, U.R., 1998, i-xiv 240.

This is a Revised edition of the same title published in 1983 by Harper & Row. Close to an autobiography, the book presents Dawn's life as shaped by the Psalms and Psalm-shaped experiences. As the author herself confesses: "This is not a scholarly book, though it is based on theological and literary research" (ix) and we may add, it comes from a person whose unendurable loneliness "had been the story of my (her) life all along" (222). Combining objective research with personal experience, Dawn aims "to bring God's comfort into your (our) particular situation against whatever sadness or grief or loneliness oppress you (us)" (227). Infact, her over-all goal is "to use the Scriptures for emotional healing" (221). To a large extent she succeeds in her purpose.

Under 31 apt headings Dawn tries to reread her life from portions of 20 psalms, which are mostly psalms attributed to David (14 of them). Her experiential analysis covers the various groups of the psalms, more than half of them being Lament Psalms in which she sees her own afflictions, pains, sorrows and heart-aches. Her mastery over the Hebrew syntax and grammar and the nuances she brings out of individual words and phrases may be of great help to the reader who will want to use this book in prayer.

Barring a few unavoidable repetitions, the book fulfils the purpose for which it is written. It is curious that while the author prefers to use the terms the "First Testament" or the "Hebrew Scriptures", "to avoid our culture's negative connotations of the term Old Testament and to emphasize both the continuity of the covenants in the Bible . . . and also the consistency of God's grace for the people" (3.n.4), yet she uses the expression "New Testament" (21.45.222) instead of the terms the "Second Testament" or the "Apostolic Writings" as is now the custom among some writers.

R.J. Raja, S.J.

Mission Trends Today: Historical and Theological Perspectives, Mattam, J., Kim, S., (eds); St. Pauls; 23rd Rd; T.P.S. III; PB. 9814; Bandra; Mumbai 400 050; 1997, pp. 215; paperback, pp. 215, Rs. 85, ISBN 81-7109-313-2.

During the past decades we have seen a copernican revolution in the understanding of the nature of mission and hence also its methodology. The various studies presented here are a selection of papers read at the 5th annual meeting of FOIM held at Pune in 1996. Stimulating as they are, they give us an overview of recent mission trends as experienced and lived by both Catholics and Protestants today. The paper "Mission and a Missionary Christology" by J. Kavunkel is the fulcrum around which all the other papers revolve. They are best understood in terms of the meaning and role we give to Jesus Christ, who is Wisdom incarnate, who permeates the whole of creation. Thus the Mystery we name Christ is universal and it includes, besides the incarnation in Jesus Christ which is unique, other manifestations in history with which we need to enter into dialogue. The Christology that emanates from this universality of the Mystery demands the Church to be a servant of a new humanity, to be the salt, the leaven and the light of the world (pp. 94-95).

From the historical perspective the book contains 2 papers from the Catholic side, one portraying the trends as coming from the official Documents of the Church (1) and the other, from Recent Missiological Literature (3). The 2nd paper deals with the Mission Trends as developed from the Protestant side. Paper 4 deals with relationships in Mission, the former in the "intra-Christian", financial level (5) and the latter at the "extra-Christian" level (6), from the dialogue with Popular Religions.

The next 3 papers (7, 8, 9) deal with "intra-church" and "inner-Christ" realities: The role of the Laity and Mission (7); the role of the Spirit in the life and activity of the missionary in India (8), the role of Worship and Liturgy in so far as it provides both the content and the context for the mission of the church in the world (9).

The last two papers (10, 11) are of a general nature; the former, highlighting the need for the mission of service as the basis for dialogue (10); and the latter, giving priority in the mission to the obedience to the Scripture and its Lord than to the concept and theory of Mission as Church growth (11). One and all, the papers in general are well-documented and creative and will make an interesting reading for all whether actually engaged in missionary work or otherwise.

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