

VAIHARAI

(The Dawn)

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Book Review

Hope for your Future, Theological Voices from the Pastorate. 70

ed. by *William H. Lazaretu*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan / Cambridge, UK, 2002.

– *Fr. S. Jesudasan*

The Encyclopedia of Christianity, Vol. 1 A-D. 72

ed. by *Erwin Fahlbush, Jan Lochman, John Mbiti, Jeroslav Pelikan & Lukas Vischer* (Trans. & English Lang. ed.: George Bromiley; Stat. ed. David Barret), Grand Rapids, Michigan: William Eerdmans / Leiden: Brill, 2003

– *Dr. D. Alphonse*

The Intercultural Challenge of Raimon Panikkar. 74

ed. by *Joseph Prabhu*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 1996

– *Dr. S. Devaraj*

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TOWARDS AN INDIAN INTERPRETATION OF THE BIBLE

Editorial

The question of interpretation evokes a lot of interest in our times. Is there such a thing as an Indian interpretation of the Bible? A few years ago the answer would have been a categorical 'no'. It was assumed that there could be only one 'right interpretation' and only one 'true meaning' for a text!

It was also thought that there was only one objective method of interpretation i.e., the 'historical-critical method'. Even the Vatican document (of the Biblical Commission in 1995) on Interpretation of the Bible says, "The historical-critical method is an indispensable method for the scientific study of the Bible" (I A). Yet the objectivity and the relevance of this method has come under scrutiny. According G.M. Soares-Prabhu historical-critical method is ineffective, irrelevant and ideologically loaded (*Biblical Themes for a Contextual Theology Today*, Vol. I, 208-214).

The historical-critical method strives to arrive at the 'author-meaning'. This was seen as the "true meaning" of the text. Dissatisfied with the inadequacy of the author-centred approach, the focus shifted to the text itself. The sacred text, in its final form and viewed as a whole, was seen as autonomous. It stands by itself and speaks for itself. The text is seen as a finished product. As such it seems to possess meaning and message. The text became the basis for interpretation. This text-

centred interpretation is also called narrative or rhetorical approach. It believes that a text can give new meanings to new readers in new situations which the author had never in mind!

But now moving away from both the author and the text, there is a new reader-centred approach. In this approach the reader and his/her social location become all-important. People in different social, cultural and political locations bring different questions to the text and consequently the meaning of the text can significantly vary. A monk living within the four walls of his monastery, a social activist risking his/her life in a struggle for liberation, a woman subjected to immense hardships and humiliations, an active member of a basic Christian community and an ardent advocate of globalization may not all see the same meaning in a given text. This reader-centred approach gives rise to several interpretations such as feminist, Dalit, Black etc.

In this issue of Vaiharai the reader-oriented hermeneutical reading is in focus. All the four articles in this issue look at the Bible from various Indian social locations. Dr. P. Arockiadas writes on biblical interpretation from the subaltern cultural matrix of India. Dr. A. Maria Arul Raja speaks of the hermeneutical engagement of the Dalit locations with the Biblical world. Sr. A. Metti, in her article on Indian feminist hermeneutics, looks at the Bible from the perspective of an Indian woman. Finally Dr. J. Susaimanickam attempts to show the basis of reading the Bible from the sufferers' perspective. Let us hope that these serious attempts by the above mentioned scholars will prove to be another milestone in the long journey towards a full-fledged Indian interpretation of the Bible.

Cruz M. Hieronymus