

Harkness, Georgia. *Understanding the Kingdom of God*. Nashville and New York: Abingdon, 1974. 175 pp. \$6.50.

The author acknowledges that many books have already been written about the kingdom but defends her work by explaining that earlier books were of an academic nature. They sought to show what the writers considered the true understanding of the kingdom on the basis of Scripture, but hers is of a more practical nature—to satisfy the spiritual hunger evident in such phenomena as the Jesus movement, the charismatic revival, the turn to Eastern cults, the upsurge of belief in an imminent second coming of Christ; and to serve as a corrective to the lack of discipline and self-denial in these movements by demonstrating the life-giving personal and social relevance of the kingdom of God.

After giving the various views of the kingdom, the apocalyptic or consistent eschatology, prophetic or this-worldly kingdom with its emphasis on love, realized eschatology, and existential eschatology, Harkness presents her own view. She calls it the composite view since it includes elements of the views discussed above. This includes the view that (1) "the kingdom of God means the eternal, ultimate sovereignty of God"; (2) the rule of God obtains among men "insofar as this sovereignty is accepted and God's will is done"; (3) "the kingdom of God is the complete and final establishment of God's rule in the age to come, a final consummation in which God's will is fully done" (pp. 62-63). She describes the first as above history, the second as within it, and the third as at the end, or beyond the end. Our relation to it is (1) to acknowledge the ultimate sovereignty of God; (2) to participate in it; (3) to wait in hope for its coming. The first characteristic she equates with Dodd's realized eschatology, the second with the social-gospel theologians, and the third with Weiss's and Schweitzer's consistent eschatology. She confesses that she has questions with the view of an apocalyptic end to history. She seems to deal with this problem by attributing at least some of the apocalyptic passages to "imperfect reporting" and fully admitting that Jesus "may have been mistaken as to the imminent end of the world" (p. 58).

She affirms that Jesus was indebted to the past. This included apocalypticism, prophecy, and law, but he infused them with new meaning. He believed himself called to a unique mission, but Harkness hesitates to say that he believed himself to be the Messiah.

The parables confirm the threefold view of the kingdom mentioned above and show what it "means for daily living in terms of its worth which calls forth quest, the conditions of its entrance, the call to continuing obedience, and the assurance of divine control and concern which undergird hope" (p. 93).

The main emphasis of the author is on the kingdom as present now. She wants to point out that the kingdom of God includes hope and promise but also demand and duty. Life in the kingdom requires obedience and service. The Christian is called upon to help eradicate the social evils that are rampant in the world today. She says, "The kingdom of God in the present . . . could make a great difference in our churches, and through them in society, if it were taken more seriously" (p. 142). This understanding, she feels, will

bring the satisfaction that people are looking for when they turn to the Jesus movement, charismatic experiences, Eastern religions, etc.

In regard to the future aspect of the kingdom, the author is agnostic. She rejects any apocalyptic view of a second coming of Christ, yet accepts the final triumph of God's kingdom over evil. She leans toward the social-gospel kingdom but wants to emphasize more than adherents of that view did the divine grace needed for the conquest of evil and less reliance upon human effort alone. Because of her distaste for the apocalyptic, on the one hand, and the problem of overcoming the depth and power of human sin, on the other hand, she wavers in the ultimate solution to the future coming of the kingdom. She would very much like a gradual coming in of the kingdom, but she finds it difficult for this to take place. This is a possibility, yet how she correlates this with the resurrection and the reception of eternal life she does not say. She only affirms by faith that God will work everything out.

While it is true that greater definiteness of the statements one makes concerning the future is no guarantee that such statements are reliable, nevertheless it seems to the reviewer that the author has left too many loose ends untied and a thoroughly consistent picture does not emerge. She speaks in the last chapter of the next life, but how does this fit in with a kingdom which gradually appears? Is there a resurrection or, if immortality, when does this come to a person? And how is this connected with a kingdom on earth? Perhaps this is an area the author will confess that we cannot know, but it seems to me that the picture of the future should be consistent. While her affirmations concerning the ultimate triumph of God's kingdom and the certainty of life after death are admirable, it seems that her liberal stance dominates her positions. It is very difficult to deny a radical apocalyptic break in this world's history and also affirm a resurrection.

Andrews University

SAKAE KUBO

Harrington, Wilfrid J., *O.P. Parables Told by Jesus: A Contemporary Approach to the Parables*. New York: Alba House, 1974. vii + 135 pp. Paperback, \$2.95.

The author seeks to present a popular treatment of certain parables incorporating some recent approaches to them. His treatment is based on form and redaction criticism, but he is equally as interested in their contemporary as in their original meaning and the meaning they had to the early church. He calls for a more flexible approach to the interpretation of the parables that will allow them to break the fetters of their original life setting so that they can speak to every generation. What is applicable is "the faith content of the parables, their revelation of what believing existence must mean" (p. 14). And the parables call men to make a decision for or against this revelation. One reason for their universal appeal is the fact that they are couched in an art form.

The rest of the chapters seek to illustrate his approach by means of specific treatments of parables, such as the parables in Mk 4, Mt 13, the servant