

Phillips, James M., and Robert T. Coote, eds. *Toward the 21st Century in Christian Mission*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993. x + 400 pp. Paperback, \$24.95.

This collection of 28 essays, written in honor of Gerald H. Anderson, the director of the Overseas Ministries Study Center and editor of the *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, attempts to provide a comprehensive survey of the "state of the Christian world mission" as the world is about to enter a new century.

The editors, both also associated with the Overseas Ministries Study Center in New Haven, Connecticut, have arranged the essays under four main headings. Section I deals with the "Christian Families in Mission" and provides well-written and informative profiles of the missionary philosophies and activities of evangelicals, the conciliar churches, Roman Catholics, and charismatics. The eight chapters of section II look at the world by region. Section III treats the foundational disciplines of mission and deals with the theological basis of mission; the spiritual formation for mission; mission strategies; and issues concerning contextualization, the development of indigenous theologies, and the widespread phenomenon of "folk" religions. The final section is dedicated to special challenges in mission, such as the teaching of missions, women in mission, mission and social justice, the need for a new focus on the city, Christian dialogues with other faiths, and church-state relations in a mission context.

As in most books of this nature, not all contributions are of equal scope and depth, although most of the essays in this *Festschrift* do succeed in providing a succinct summary of the main issues in the area they are addressing. A few are somewhat disappointing, especially in the last section, where one would have expected more of a mission agenda for the next century. This is certainly true for Ruth A. Tucker's contribution on women in mission, and Harvie M. Conn's essay on urban mission.

Other contributions, e.g., Lamin Sanneh's chapter on Africa, are rich in philosophical insights, but fail to give much factual information, or, like Yoshinobu Kumazawa's survey of mission in Northeast Asia, offer little more than factual data, lacking in interpretation.

The overall quality of the essays in this book is high, as would be expected, considering the caliber of the experts who have contributed to it. If pressed to list the best essays, this reviewer would mention the survey of the "Commonwealth of Independent States" by J. Martin Bailey; the "Reflections on Biblical Models of Mission" by the recently deceased David J. Bosch; and the critical evaluation of "Mission Strategies" by Wilber R. Schenk.

The contributors come from a wide range of traditions, but unfortunately the male/Western element predominates strongly. It also seems that the representatives of "conciliar missions" are overrepresented. The broad scope of the first section of the book, dealing with the different "Christian families in mission," is to a large degree absent in the rest of the book, where the viewpoints and concerns of the mainline Protestant churches receive most, and sometimes almost exclusive, attention. Two examples to illustrate this point of

criticism must suffice: The dominant theme of the people-group concept in current evangelical mission literature and the challenge of the unreached people groups is hardly mentioned. Also, with regard to the relationship between different Christian churches and mission organizations and also between Christianity and other religions, viewpoints characteristic of the World Council of Churches tend to dominate.

The bibliographies at the end of each essay greatly enhance the value of the book, even though in some of the lists evangelical and Roman Catholic authors are underrepresented and more non-American literature should have been included.

In spite of these limitations in focus and scope of treatment, the book is extremely useful, not only as required reading for college students in introductory mission courses, but also for mission planners and all individuals who want a comprehensive picture of mission in the last decade of this century.

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REINDER BRUINSMA

Postgate, J. N. *Early Mesopotamia: Society and Economy at the Dawn of History*. London: Routledge Press, 1992. xxiii + 367 pp. \$65.

J. N. Postgate, a well-respected Assyriologist with a teaching appointment at Cambridge and also varied field experience in the Near East, has provided a distinctive and exhaustive tome on the development of the state in ancient Mesopotamia. Documenting the period from the third to the first half of the second millennia BC, the new approach refreshingly focuses on socioeconomic factors in the development of Mesopotamian culture rather than on more prevalent typological and historical sequences. Extrapolating from a vast pool of economic, legal, and commercial documents available from ancient Mesopotamia, as well as from less frequently available, but invaluable, historical accounts, Postgate leads the reader through the maze of textual and archaeological evidence by providing insightful and stimulating reflections with penetrating style and a persuasive manner.

The book's 16 chapters are grouped topically in four parts. Chapters on more common subjects like "Crops and Livestock" and "Domestic Economy" fit well under such larger categories as institutions, economics, and social order. These titles reemphasize the stress on a socioeconomic model for reconstructing the origin of civilization in Mesopotamia. While Postgate provides convenient references for further reading at the conclusion of each chapter, these references seem to indicate more his preference for certain authors than an exhaustive citation of primary and secondary sources. A few chapters seem poorly placed and structured. For example, to place chapter 14, "Religion and Politics," directly after chapters 7 and 8 on "The Temple" and "The Palace," would have enhanced the flow of thought and would have avoided the hiatus in the discussion of the duties of kingship, which discussion begins in one chapter and is not further developed until some one hundred pages later.