

BOOK REVIEWS

Anderson, Gerald H., ed. *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999. xxv + 845 pp. Paperback, \$50.00.

Anderson, Director of the Overseas Ministries Studies Center in New Haven, Connecticut and editor of *International Bulletin of Missionary Research (IBMR)*, has long been interested in mission biography. It was evident in his earlier work with Stephen Neill on the *Concise Dictionary of the Christian World Mission* (1971). This present work is in many ways also a fitting capstone to his long-running biographical series in *IBMR*, in which each article is titled "The Legacy of . . . [person's name]." These *IBMR* essays have been collected into the volume *Mission Legacies*, which gives in-depth coverage not possible in the *Biographical Dictionary*.

In this new groundbreaking work, Anderson surveys the entire history of Christian missions from the time of Christ to the present by looking at the lives of twenty-four hundred people out of the estimated ten million cross-cultural missionaries who have served. Roman Catholics, Orthodox and Protestants are all covered. An assistant editor (Robert T. Coote) and an advisory board of eleven helped him supervise the work of 349 authors from forty-five countries who wrote the articles. A careful look at the volume as well as private discussion with writers makes it clear that the editor solicited wide input into the choice of names that appear in the dictionary.

Most entries contain bibliographies for further study. The length of articles is quite consistent. Even well-known names like David Livingstone and William Carey rate just slightly over one-half page, while more obscure names usually cover 15-20 percent of a page. An extensive appendix and an index covering eighty pages conclude the work.

It is a challenge to evaluate a work such as this, which is the first real effort of its kind. Even so, it seems obvious that an extremely important contribution to world Christianity has been made here, and any subsequent efforts will certainly owe a great debt to Anderson and his coworkers. The work is thoughtfully and sensitively conceived and carefully executed. Church and mission historians have a gold mine here to which they will continually go back.

The dictionary has particularly well-designed helps. Asterisks in the text signal important cross-references to related people and areas. The appendix is a delight because it classifies the names in seven different ways: (1) by time of birth—by far the most names come in the nineteenth century, with the second half exceeding the first half; (2) women missionaries; (3) martyrs; (4) geographical region of service; (5) major orders, agencies, and religious traditions; (6) non-Western persons; and (7) type of mission work performed. The index lists important geographical names, institutional names, and personal names, with actual main entries in bold type.

Some possible areas of weakness in coverage and choice of names are admitted up front by the *Dictionary* itself (vii). Women are mentioned (I counted about 280 references in the appendix) but not to the true extent of their involvement. Non-Western missionaries are dealt with (again I counted just over 280 names), but many more could be added. In both instances lack of documentation in earlier periods is a

major factor. As more information becomes available, further editions can work on adding to these areas.

One issue that does need work is in the coverage given to Protestants outside the mainstream denominations. Prime examples would be Pentecostal/Assemblies of God and Seventh-day Adventists. In Anderson's defense it can be said that writers from both these traditions have been used, and a few of their missionaries have been included. Neither, however, rates a category listing in the appendix. Looking at mission history over the last eighty years and the size of third-world churches, it seems hard to justify a separate appendix category for the Roman Catholic Society of the Divine Word (SVD), while Assemblies of God/Pentecostals have none. Hopefully future editions of this work will work to remedy this situation.

None of this, however, detracts from the value of this work. Every theological library must include this volume on its priority acquisition list. Historians in general would learn much from this resource. While it is not designed as a textbook, all serious students of mission will want this book as a valued reference source that has long-term usefulness.

This volume will also contribute to the ongoing renaissance of interest in biography as an important topic not only for study, but also for inspiration. Many thanks and hearty congratulations to Anderson and his team for a major contribution to missions in particular and the Christian community in general.

Andrews University

JON L. DYBDAHL

Arnold, Bill T., and Bryan E. Beyer. *Encountering the Old Testament: A Christian Survey*. Encountering Biblical Studies, ed. Walter A. Elwell. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999. 512 pp. Hardcover with CD-ROM, \$49.99.

The intended market for *Encountering the Old Testament* is freshman survey courses in evangelical colleges. For my money, it is the best book of its sort I've ever seen, a very impressive achievement. In fact, I would happily assign the book in my own Old Testament class at a state university if I used a survey approach.

Baker is in the midst of an ambitious attempt to take over the Bible textbook market in evangelical colleges. The similarly excellent *Encountering the New Testament* is already available. Several volumes on single books of the Bible meant for upper division classes are now out or will be shortly. Not commentaries but introductions to "content and issues," they include books on Genesis, Psalms, Isaiah, John, Romans, and Hebrews. Seminary level introductions are in the works.

No expense was spared to make *Encountering the Old Testament* an attractive and accessible book (though printing in Singapore helped keep down the cost). It is filled with color photos which help the student picture the biblical setting. The many maps are simplified, but unusually attractive, useful, and easy to read. There are many interesting sidebars which focus on important critical questions.

There are thirty-four chapters in the book, which means it was designed to be assigned a chapter per day, leaving room in the semester for several exams. Most chapters cover one biblical book, though the major prophets get two and some chapters cover three or more minor prophets. The book begins, however, with useful chapters on Old Testament canon, geography, and chronology. The handiwork of