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Church and Its Mission: A Shattering Critique from the Third World (Book Review)

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dor Colleges of Pasadena, California, and Big Sandy, Texas.

Hopkins engaged in an impressive amount of research in order to produce this study. Although extensively using the published Armstrong literature, he was handicapped by the current nature of his subject and more particularly by the uncooperative attitude of the Worldwide Church of God officialdom; but he did succeed in achieving one research triumph—a personal interview with Garner Ted Armstrong, son of Herbert W. and heir-apparent to the empire. The result has been that most of the first-hand information concerning the inside workings of the organization has come from former members and officials who would tend to have a strong anti-Armstrong bias, making objectivity, a prime goal of the author, harder to achieve.

Given the inherent and artificially erected difficulties of dealing with this subject, Hopkins has, however, produced an extremely informative and largely dispassionate examination of the Armstrong movement. To a large extent he has allowed Armstrong and the Worldwide Church of God literature to speak for themselves. He has not refrained, however, from pointing out their errors and misconceptions at various junctures. An example of this is Hopkins' point-by-point demolition of Armstrong's theories on British-Israelism. A valuable feature of the book is a brief summary of the teachings of the Worldwide Church of God (i.e., of Herbert W. Armstrong) and of the doctrines that it shares or derives from the Seventh-Day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Mormons in appendices at the end of the book.

For the most part, the book reads well, but it has a tendency occasionally to become somewhat tedious, as certain points are remade and teachings reiterated, although admittedly in different contexts.

This minor criticism aside, The Armstrong Empire is a solid, well-documented and illuminating study of one of the more important deviant sectarian movements in the United States today.

The Church and Its Mission: A Shattering Critique From the Third World—by Orlando E. Costas. Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, Illinois, 1974. 313 pages, \$3.95 (paperback). Reviewed by James A. De Jong, Assistant

Professor of Theology.

In a nutshell, Costas' book is a highly informed tour of contemporary positions in theology of missions. En route he subjects the various camps to thorough scrutiny, which is both appreciative of their strengths and critical of their weaknesses. His ultimate goal is to affirm the imperative of the church's mission in word and deed, while avoiding the extremes of a totally secularized version of missions and of a reactionary, other-worldly presentation of the Gospel.

Part I of Costas' study is entitled "God's Mission and the Church's Nature." In three chapters he discusses the church's character, her calling, and her message. Here he defines the church in terms of three key New Testament terms and makes a strong affirmation of her institutional character. While following Johannes Blauw in defending the missionary nature of the church's calling in the world, Costas is more Biblically precise than Blauw. He finds the church to be both a worshipping and a missionary church. The two foci are inseparable, however, since "in the New Testament, mission is understood in liturgical terms, and worship is viewed as mission-oriented" (page 40).

The church worships both through her Sunday, corporate worship in the liturgical setting and through her "incarnational worship" as the body of Christ engaged in her daily work. Both dimensions of worship are missionary in character. Costas' chapter on the message of the church is one of the best in the book. He stresses the concreteness of her message by noting that the Old Testament prophets proclaimed an era of peace, righteousness, and justice which the church proclaims "praxeologically" or through "action based upon reflection" and the "actualization of theory" (page 71). This era is inaugurated by the life and work of Christ and manifested through those bound to Him in a living faith.

In Part II, "God's Mission and the Church's Growth," Costas subjects the church-growth theory of missions to informed, penetrating scrutiny. He finds its ecclesiological-theological locus too narrow and its notion of mission too verbal. He challenges it to re-evaluate its hermeneutic and its views of man and sin. He appreciates its Biblical optimism and reliance on divine promises in its concerted effort to reach the unevangelized people of the world. Costas might have shown more appreciation for the church-growth people's emphasis on estab-

lishing churches, for in Part I he himself stresses the liturgical-missionary character of the church as God's instrument for reconciling the world to Him.

"God's Mission and the Church's Tensions," Part III, appraises the increasing polarization between certain evangelicals in the missionary movement and many World-Council-of-Churches-oriented mission figures. Several chapters discuss in depth the theology of the liberation approach to missions as articulated by Latin Americans. Peter Beyerhaus, on the evangelical side, is severely criticized for his polemical attitude toward ecumenical efforts in mission. Part III is probably as fair and comprehensive an assessment of discussions in missions today as has appeared anywhere.

Costas is a third-world churchman from Costa Rica. He is a rising star on the missiological horizon, whose theological brilliance and whose painstaking effort to be Biblical as well as relevant in his writing make him a figure to be read seriously by anyone who wishes to stay informed in the area of missions.

The Evangelical Faith—by Helmut Thielicke. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1974. 420 pages, \$10.95. Reviewed by J. B. Hulst, Dean of Students and College Pastor.

Helmut Thielicke is First Dean of the Theological Faculty and Professor of Systematic Theology at the University of Hamburg, Germany. He is the author of several books, such as Between God and Satan, A Little Exercise for Young Theologians, Out of the Depths, and The Silence of God.

Until the publication of his Theological Ethics, Thielicke was best known in this country as a preacher. According to G. W. Bromiley, translator of the book under consideration, Thielicke's "real vocation, however, has been that of a theologian, and it is no secret that he has been disconcerted rather than flattered that his incidental activity should have become the basis of his reputation. The present work should help to correct the situation" (p. 5).

The Evangelical Faith is the first of a three-volume dogmatics. The second volume will consider the doctrines of God and of Christ, and the third will deal with the doctrines of the Holy Spirit, the Church, and eschatology.

The Evangelical Faith bears the subtitle Prolegomena: The Relation of Theology to Modern Thought Forms. This subtitle is significant, for it clearly describes what Thielicke endeavors to do in this first volume. As the author himself states in the preface:

This first volume of a systematic theology will attempt clearance work in a cluttered situation. It will survey current debates from a defined standpoint, try to pin down terms like myth or death of God which are often bandied about far too freely, and seek to give them their true meaning. The attempt, then, is to get a grasp of modern theology, sounding out and preparing the ground on which to build. (p. 11)

But Thielicke is concerned with more than a grasp of modern theology. It is his purpose, within the context of modern theological debates, to set forth a doctrine of faith. Further, he is determined to articulate this doctrine of faith without presenting theology as anthropology. Seeking to dissociate himself from those who deal with faith only as it is integrated into the human consciousness, Thielicke expresses interest, not so much in the subject of faith, as in that in which faith believes and by which man is changed into a new creature.

Whether Thielicke succeeds in the realization of his purpose depends not only upon what this volume contains, but upon that which will appear in the second and third volumes of this comprehensive work. Therefore, we eagerly await the appearance of those pages which constitute the total result of Thielicke's stated attempt to produce a comprehensive work.

The Idea of a Christian College—by Arthur F. Holmes, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1975, 118 pages, \$2.95 (paper). Reviewed by Nick Van Til, Professor of Philosophy.

Professor Holmes writes out of the background of many years of teaching experience and student contact at Wheaton College. He packs a lot of ideas into this little volume. The subtitle, Philosophy of Christian Education for Laymen, is appropriate as Holmes' lucid writing