

that he states that his introduction "does not focus on the composition of prophetic books" (xi). However, one wonders whether a scholarly introduction can really afford to avoid such questions.

Some identifications of specific theological themes in each prophetic book are missed. These would help the reader to sense the special quality of each OT prophet and to recognize the multiple facets of this body of literature.

In the end, in spite of the sociological and communicative outlook at the OT prophets, not many new insights seem to emerge from this viewpoint.

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Spickard, Paul R., and Kevin M. Cragg. *God's Peoples: A Social History of Christians*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994. 486 pp. \$24.99.

God's Peoples represents a new wave in the study of church history. In the preface the authors explain clearly their working objectives. Their goal was to answer several questions in the context of different eras and parts of the globe: First, How did Christians in this time and place experience God? How did they conceptualize Him? How did they experience Him in daily life? Second, How did Christians relate to one another? Third, How did Christians relate to the society around them? How did they fit into the social structure?

This is obviously a very ambitious program, but one which Spickard and Cragg have accomplished quite successfully. It is commendable that the authors sought the cooperation of five other church historians in the writing of the book. This provides more expertise, but also causes occasional repetitions.

To show how the global social-history perspective caused a shift in the treatment of church history, one can look at the table of contents. While seven chapters are devoted to the church from the apostolic period to the reformation, six chapters are written on the church in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. One can also observe that four chapters take the reader to areas that are often neglected in church history textbooks. Chapter 6, "Christians in the Non-Christian World to 1500," covers the Syrian, Coptic, Ethiopian, and Nestorian churches. Chapter 9 is devoted to European expansion in the Far East and the Americas. Chapter 13, "Christianity as a Worldwide Phenomenon," talks about missions but gives due attention to the place of native peoples in the spread of Christianity. Finally, chapter 17 introduces the students to native Christian movements in the Developing World. If we add to that the

effort to draw quite precisely the political and social context of the different phases of Christianity, we must congratulate the authors for carrying out their program so well.

The authors frequently provided in the margins interesting excerpts from primary source material. The print is clear, the illustrations helpful.

The selection of material for a book covering such a wide area will never satisfy all readers. As far as this reviewer is concerned, the major wish is that the book could be a little shorter because it includes such a wealth of information that students find it difficult to cover it carefully. On the other hand, the reading is interesting and the students' reaction in my class last summer was extremely favorable.

Here are a few desiderata: it would be helpful if the social significance of Western monasticism and of the building of the cathedrals could be presented a little more clearly. The cathedrals are handled as a topic of architecture, but anyone who reads Emile Mâle's exciting chapter on the building of the cathedrals will wish that the students could know about the exhilarating social ferment it engendered. The chapter on "Christians in the Non-Christian World" needs to be recast. Egypt is treated on pp. 132 and 136 and Ethiopia on pp. 133 and 137, and it is very difficult to know why that is done. Of course, for this reviewer it is unfortunate that the long tradition of seventh-day Sabbath keeping in those churches is not mentioned. When one is aware of the influence of the religious exercises of Loyola, one could wish for a little more precision on the Jesuit method of spirituality. The role of women in the church could be pictured better.

In this Seventh-day Adventist institution the students noticed the passage on Seventh-day Adventists which unfortunately included some obvious inaccuracies. "Followers of Ellen White (1828-1915) sought to obey God's medical, as well as his moral, laws by eating only grains and vegetables, exercising, drinking lots of water; and abstaining from sex and other excitements." (292). Actually, White was born in 1827; she recommended, but did not require, lacto-ovo vegetarianism; and she never denigrated sex in marriage. Fortunately, the book as a whole is quite reliable. It is recommended for class textbook use and as introductory reading for people who want to know more about the history of the peoples who compose the Christian church.

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