

ISSN 0038-763

\$1.50

spiritual life

summer 198



us models, both traditional and modern, worthy of study and emulation. It is a clear, convincing, and inspiring book for concerned Christians of all religious persuasions.

AMANDA LANGEMO

A FIFTH GOSPEL: THE EXPERIENCE OF BLACK CHRISTIAN VALUES. By Joseph G. Healey, MM. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1981. Pp. xvi, 203. Paper \$7.95.

This is the story of a contemporary mission experience and a theology created by approaching persons and their lives in the concrete. It is a contribution to the growing understanding of the Gospel which comes from experiencing the revelation of God within our own historical milieu. Within this theological journey we are invited to enter into the author's own personal journey: one of search for understanding and growth in prayer.

Joseph Healey spent ten years as a missionary in Africa (1968-78). During the final two years he lived the everyday life of the people in Nyabihanga Ujamaa village, western Tanzania, and served as an animator of the small Christian communities being formed in Rulenge Diocese. In this book he reflects on his experience and tries to share it with us. He also attempts to acquaint the American reader with the Church's growth in Africa and the implications of this development for the entire Christian community.

The book is written in a simple straightforward style. It introduces us to life in Tanzania along with Julius Nyerere's experiment in socialism: Ujamaa (familyhood) or rural villagization. We meet interesting and charismatic persons like the dynamic Bishop Christopher Mwoleka of Rulenge Diocese who has joined the development of small Christian communities to the villagization program of the government. The book describes problems in ministry that

would not be part of discussions in the western Church, i.e., how to handle polygamy and the pastoral question of second wives. It surveys the growth and the fragility of newly-formed small Christian communities. But mostly, throughout the pages, it expresses the values of traditional African culture and how they can contribute to and be integrated with our very western-based Christianity. These values include presence, community, prayer, sharing and joy in the simple things of daily life.

The premises of this book are founded on a theology of incarnation—a theology that has grown from anthropology rather than being strictly rooted in a philosophical system. Healey believes that theology is coherent when it makes the Gospel of Jesus Christ meaningful in a particular social situation and evangelization is effective when it helps the Gospel word permeate peoples' lives. This kind of stance recognizes the problematic of how salvation (in the Christian sense) is accomplished through the cultural context and in this case, a particular African culture. He states:

"The contemporary theology of revelation emphasizes the communication of God himself to his people. Revelation is an on-going, dynamic process of God's self-disclosing presence, which changes persons' hearts as well as their minds, transforming their whole way of life. Revelation takes place in history, in the everyday events of individuals and communities. It is not primarily conceptual or verbal, but an experience of God's presence at the heart of everyday living.

"The pastoral implication of this contemporary theology of revelation is that evangelization must deal seriously with the life of the people to be evangelized. To take the example of Africa: the starting point of evangelization is the life of the African people—the underlying values and ideals that give meaning to their lives (p. 129-30)."

Healey backs up his methodology with many examples: praying from life experiences, sharing work in the fields, taking

time to sit and drink beer with the village elders, helping others through practical actions, i.e., carrying water for a newly delivered mother, taking up a collection so one member of the village can go to the hospital. And most importantly, establishing small Christian communities with a human face.

One apparent limitation of this book is that it deals largely with a rural setting. When Tanzania (then Tanganyika) achieved its independence in 1961, the vast majority of the people were subsistence farmers. Today, though some cash economy has developed, life for most of the people still revolves around farming and Tanzania is one of the twenty-five poorest countries of the world. Healey gives various instances of the real, grinding poverty, lack of education and insufficient medical care. In this kind of situation it is easier to hold on to traditional lifeways and values and exploit them for Christianity. How would these same values be incarnated in other parts of Africa where, because of urbanization and identification with western styles of

progress, traditional lifeways and values are breaking down at a rapid pace? Another limitation is that the missionary, being an expatriate, can never fully identify with the African mind (cf. p. 176 ff.). It will be helpful when more Africans articulate how Christianity is incarnated for them and when the reflections come from differentiated social conditions. Nevertheless, if we are to explore, sift and understand the Gospel in a cross-cultural perspective we need more studies like this one. Healey's own ministry at St. Agnes parish, Detroit (cf. concluding section), should enlarge his frame of reference and be enriching for urban evangelization in the future.

Christians in the western world should find this book both informative and inspiring, and hopefully, black Christians can touch some of their own roots here. Finally, it should help all of us to realize again the breadth and length and height and depth of Jesus Christ.

COLETTE ACKERMAN, O.C.D.

REVIEWERS

Fr. Timothy McGough, O.C.D. is Director of Pastoral Care at St. Joseph's Hospital in Elmira, New York.

Amanda Langemo of Cedar Falls, Iowa

is a regular contributor of book reviews to religious publications.

Sr. Colette Ackerman, O.C.D. is a member of the Carmelite Monastery of Baltimore, Maryland.

BOOK NOTICES

THE WORK TRAP: SOLVING THE RIDDLE OF WORK AND LEISURE. By Martin C. Helldorfer, FSC. Winona: St. Mary's Press, 1981. Pp. 96. Paper. \$5.95.

Many in the ministry have experienced the kind of tiredness that sleep cannot cure, the "vacations" that do not seem to refresh, the sense that even our

"leisure" itself has become another job to be accomplished. Any thorough discussion of ministry in the Church today will include some mention of "burnout," "stress," "overwork" and the means to deal with these problems. Many in ministry are turning to time management and other professional business skills for answers to these common dilemmas.