

BOOK REVIEWS

Aubert, Roger, et al., eds. *The Church in a Secularized Society*. New York: Paulist Press, 1978. xxxi + 719 pp. \$19.95.

This is vol. 5 in the important series *The Christian Centuries*. It begins with the election of Pope Pius IX on the eve of the great European crisis of 1848, and ends reasonably enough shortly after the close of the Second Vatican Council in 1965. For the most part it has been written by the distinguished Belgian church historian Roger Aubert, but there are important contributions from other historians and in particular from the well-known American historian John Tracy Ellis.

The different authors of this series have attempted to break with two long established practices of Catholic historians. They have departed from the old habit of seeing the Catholic Church as a primarily European institution by devoting a large amount of space to the Eastern Churches, to the English-speaking world beyond Europe, and also to the Third World, i.e., the older Christian churches of Latin America as well as the "young churches" of Asia and Africa. Similarly, instead of focusing on the tumultuous relationships between Church and State or the theological controversies during these 120 years there is a greater concentration on the daily life of the People of God, on the faith and devotion of Catholics, on Social Catholicism and Catholic Action, on pastoral work and biblical renewal. The authors have consciously attempted to incorporate materials too often ignored by earlier Catholic historians.

This wider approach to the writing of ecclesiastical history suffers from inevitable limitations. In the first place, the amount of research and sheer information which is available in some areas of church history is not available in others. Similarly the different subject divisions do not always appear to coincide neatly with each other, and as a result the narrative at times seems disjointed or limited. On the other hand, the account of the Catholic Church in the United States (which goes a little farther than the closing of Vatican II) is a remarkable example of what can be achieved in a limited space.

The book is outstandingly illustrated and offers, at the beginning, a thirteen-page Chronological Table which draws an often stimulating parallel between successive political, social, and cultural events on the one hand, and the evolution of history of the Roman Catholic Church in its various aspects on the other. The volume also includes an extensive and invaluable bibliography which to some extent alleviates the shortcomings of the more incomplete and somewhat schematic sections of the survey. This bibliography is the most valuable in that for many of the subjects treated in these volumes no adequate general work of reference as yet exists. One can only hope that the wider approach of this writing of ecclesiastical history will

be welcomed and will be imitated by historians in the future. The volume, obviously, was not intended as a university textbook. Still, even specialists in these subjects will appreciate having an overall picture of the period.

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RAOUL DEDEREN

Beegle, Dewey M. *Prophecy and Prediction*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: Pryor Pettengill, 1978. vi + 274 pp. Paperback, \$5.95.

Dewey Beegle's interest in questions pertaining to biblical revelation and inspiration has surfaced in various earlier titles, and his stance on this subject has caused no inconsiderable stir in current Christian evangelical circles (to which he presumably may be said to belong or at least has had the closest affinities). Indeed, his particular "inductive" approach to the question of inspiration of the Bible has tended to categorize him as somewhat of a maverick among evangelicals.

The present title continues Beegle's work in this particular field, specifically in the area indicated in its title; but it appears to be more polemical in nature than some of his earlier publications. Indeed, his Introduction gives voice to this fact by describing the book as "an attempt to meet the need for a thorough discussion of the issues. The aim is to understand what the Bible teaches about prophecy, especially concerning the prediction of events which already have occurred and those which are to come at the end of the age" (p. 2). He continues: "On the one hand, the task is very difficult because traditional views about prophecy are often charged with emotion. Constructive criticism is taken as a threat instead of being accepted as an aid to a more accurate comprehension of what Scripture teaches and what to expect. . . . On the other hand, there are many Christians who are uneasy about the prophetic systems taught them and they are searching for better alternatives."

A thorough-going analysis of this book's contents is impossible in this brief review, but a listing of the chapter titles, together with a few comments on some of the matters covered, will be appropriate.

The first chapter, "Jesus is Coming Soon!" (pp. 3-6) serves hardly more than as a second introduction, and it is with chap. 2, "Early Prophets of Israel" (pp. 7-19), that the main text actually begins. The discussion of the prophets is continued under the titles "Later Prophets," "Short-range Predictions," "Were the Prophets Inerrant?," "Long-range Predictions," and "The Messiah and the Suffering Servant" (pp. 20-87). The treatment provided in these chapters seems rather elementary, and can hardly be considered to constitute "a thorough discussion of the issues" as promised on p. 2 of the Introduction (noted above). In fact, the material presented is hardly more than