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A Biblical Approach to Religious Life,  
A.T.C. Publications, ,  
Bangalore, 1976; 212 pp.

In recent years several books dealing with various aspects of religious life have been published. But we have very few books which examine religious life entirely from a scriptural point of view. The book under review is a significant one in this direction. It examines almost every aspect of religious life in the light of the Bible. The Bible is the source of inspiration to religious life. Starting with vocation, the book disaiss practically every aspect of religious life. Vocation, a call from God or a choice by God, finds its explanation in God and in Him alone. The call of Abraham, and of the apostles, show how God out of his love chooses apparently unworthy individuals and makes them worthy instruments in His service. The same is true of the call of every religious person. The call to holiness is addressed to all, for there is only one holiness. j

The author explains the New Testament basis of religious life. Religious life is apostolic life. The religious are invited to respond to their call as the apostles did. The religious have as their ideal the early Christian communities, formed and presided over by the apostles. "For the religious, therefore, insertion into community, personal sanctification and taking seriously of the radical demands of the Gospel, witness and apostolic dynamism should all be integrated into a single ideal, which is religious life". It is not by austerity that the religious communities should live the Christian life fully but by love, that is, by a community of communion. Very often there is the danget of a community life remaining at the level of "peaceful co-existence." But it becomes a true comminity only

in so far as the members positively enrich one another, help one another develop in personality, and share with one another. In a true community the members are called to be mutual sacraments in the community, living and effective signs, which demonstrate that God loves each member of the community.

Though not very elaborate, the chapters on obedience, mission, prayer, poverty and evangelical celibacy contain the richness of the biblical meaning of true discipleship. We may not find in the whole of the Bible even a single text which could be applied in the strict sense to support the concept of religious obedience. A wrong understanding of some of the texts in the past has in fact blurred the concept of obedience. We are slowly led by the author towards a correct understanding of the concept. Today the emphasis is rightly placed on Christian liberty instead of blind observance of the law. A realization of the importance of the community and the place of each member in the community will make the concept more clear. Closely related to this is the concept of authority. Today this subject is widely discussed. However, the author declines to say anything categorically about the exercise of authority. "Therefore, at least for the moment, a superior will generally exercise authority by way of dialogue and consensus" (p. 76).

In the context of the mission of the religious occurs the discussion on charism. The word charism has become very popular in recent years. "Charism is a gift from God, a gift whose mode of operation is often quite clear and which incarnates in a concrete instance God's care and graciousness towards man" (p. 90). Charismatic aspect is the principle of growth, development, adaptation, insight and renewal. Every charism promotes the building up of the community to which the individual belongs. A religious institute lives on in the Church mainly for one purpose: to ensure the permanent enrichment of the Christian community by preserving, developing and applying the founder's charism. A tension between the charismatic and institutional aspects has been a constant phenomenon in the Church; today the charismatic aspect seems to have gained in emphasis.

The chapter on "The Mystery of Christ in the Gospels" is the most important one in the whole of the book. The author here underlines "a few elements common to all the gospels, elements that converge and focus themselves on Jesus, his centrality and mystery" (p. 191). Declaring the reliability of the gospels.

the author gives some guidelines also as to how we should imder-stand the gospels. And the last chapter – "In the End, God" – can be said to be a summary of the whole biblical message: God's gradual self-revelation and the response we ought to give. Thus the book examines almost every aspect of religious life wholly from a scriptural point of view. The book wiU be greatly appreciated by all the religious and especially those who are trying to bring about a renewal in religious life. Priests and the religious involved in the formation of youngsters will also find this book very useful.

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