

Joseph Pathrapankal, Dimensions of the Word, Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2000, pp. xiv+343, Rs. 250.00, US\$18.00, ISBN: 8186861-26-2.

In the long tradition of the Church the Bible was understood as the Word of God and it was presented as inspired by God. With the emergence of the scientific study of the Bible a new aspect was also added, namely, the Bible as the Word of God in human words. The Encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu* by Pope Pius XII in 1943 has positively encouraged this approach to the study of the Bible and it has been confirmed thorough the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation by Vatican II, published in 1965. The publication of a document *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church* by the Pontifical Biblical Commission in 1993, with the approval of Pope John Paul II, has once again confirmed the need of a scientific study of the Bible. The Pope wrote: "The increasing complexity of the task (of biblical exegesis) requires everyone's effort and a broad interdisciplinary co-operation. In a world where scientific research is taking on greater importance in many domains, it is indispensable for exegetical science to find its place at a comparable level. It is one of the aspects of inculturating the faith which is part of the Church's mission in connection with accepting the mystery of the incarnation" (p.20).

Hence theologians and exegetes in our times have a greater responsibility to explore the wider dimensions of the Bible as the Word of God and make them available to the people of God in their search for a meaningful life in the changed circumstances of our contemporary society. Times are gone when the exegetes spent their time exclusively in literary, historical and textual criticism and in philological analysis bringing out some dry and insipid arguments and doctrines which did not mean anything for the people of God in their everyday struggle of life. Now it is a question of rereading, re-conceiving, actualizing, exploring the dhavani meaning of biblical passages, complementary approach in the study of religious scriptures of world religions and enriching each other, inculturating the message of the Bible into the manifold areas of human life and thereby making the Word of God living and dynamic, "Widen the space of your tent, extend the curtains of your home. Do not hold back! Lengthen your ropes, make your tent-pegs firm, for you will burst out to right and to left" (Isa 54:23): it is in these words that Deutero-Isaiah exhorted Israel to go out of her introverted existence and enlarge the

horizons of her thinking and living. This exhortation is very much applicable to the theologians and exegetes of our times who are also challenged to go out of their centripetal world of theologians and exegetes of our times who are also challenged to go out of their centripetal world of theological reflection to the wider world of God. In a global village of ours it is but natural that the world of theologians and exegetes come closer and shares their concerns and problems which will add beauty and meaning for their theological ministry.

Dimensions of the Word tries to analyze the various dimensions of the Word of God as it is encountered in the pluralistic society of our times. Through the analysis of the profile of a theologian as a "scribe trained for the kingdom of God" (Mt 13:52), the author establishes the need of theologians and exegetes developing the broader vision of history through which God is guiding the world. Thirteen specific topics related to a variety of theological issues are analyzed which together constitute the main thrust of this work as a breakthrough in theological and biblical interpretation.

This book contains the following essays:

"The Profile of a Theologian", "God, Time and History: Biblical Perspectives", "Models of Evangelization in the New Testament", "The Way to the Kingdom of God: A Semiotic Reading of Mk 10:2-16", "At Home with the Mother Church", "New Testament Perspectives of the Church", "Significance of Jesus Christ and Religious Pluralism", "Mary as a Model Disciple in the Theology of Luke", "These Little Ones (Mt 18:10): Reflections on Little Traditions in the Bible", "Church and Culture: Some Biblical Reflections", "Spirit Perspectives in New Testament Writings", "Apostolic Commitment and 'Remembrance of the Poor': A Study in Gal 2:10", "Religious Life as Radical Discipleship: Biblical and Indian Perspectives", "Leadership in the Church: Biblical Reflections".

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