

**TODAY'S WORLD** by Donal Dorr *The Columba Press, Dublin, 2000. Pp. 308, £9.99 pbk.*

This book, by an Irish missionary and theologian, tries to clarify 'what it means to live out the 'missionary spirit' in this period when the traditional missionary enterprise is under serious challenge and rich new opportunities for mission are opening up' (p.9). In my judgment, the author succeeds very well. He manages to broaden the debate on mission by looking at it from a variety of points of view: as evangelisation, inculturation, struggle for liberation, reconciliation, option for the poor and as a sharing in the creative powers of the Spirit. At the end of each chapter, there are two or three questions provided that could form the starting-point for group discussion.

The first part of the book is devoted to 'mission as dialogue'. Dorr believes that for Christians, dialogue with other religions and spiritual outlooks is not opposed to mission but is a central aspect of it and a precondition to any other dimension of mission. He illustrates this by mentioning what Christians have to gain from dialogue with the so-called 'world religions' and with 'primal' religions (paganism). He also insists on the need for a religious dialogue with the value system of our 'secularised' Western world. Perhaps the author could have expressed more clearly what the benefits are for other faith-believers in dialogue with Christians. One can also regret that Dorr adopts a post-denominational view of Christianity. Is it possible to write forty pages on 'mission as dialogue' without considering the inner divisions of Christianity?

Three chapters of the book are devoted to the more limited sense of mission as 'mission to the nations' (*ad gentes*). Dorr makes an important distinction between the building up of the Church and the promotion of the 'reign of God values'. He discusses some of the pressing needs of our world that call for a 'missionary' response from the Church: for instance, the great number of refugees, the problem of human rights abuses, the burning issue of injustice and poverty at the global level, the challenges posed by ecological degradation. Those who work as foreign missionaries, in the so-called 'developing countries', will be grateful to Dorr for the last part of his book in which he answers very practical questions: when is the right time to move on? to return home? is it possible to use my missionary experience in my own home church? Bishops and religious superiors will find here precious suggestions for the care of their missionaries in difficult periods of transition.

Rather than a comprehensive bibliography, Dorr gives useful and well-chosen suggestions for further reading. One will just regret the absence of a recapitulative conclusion to this very readable and thought-provoking book.

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