

already increasingly alien to most family life throughout the world. Hebblethwaite's single collapse into jargon when referring to "sensing peoples' vibes" and, alas, God's vibes (p. 101), may be less forgivable but it is also less serious.

Some recent writing on God and motherhood has seemed abstract, remote and idealistic, as if being a mother was somehow less significant than the *idea* of maternity. This book on the other hand, is an enriching exploration in narrative and pastoral theology, a practical, warm, honest and sincerely human account of one woman's faith that surely speaks to almost anyone. Lay-centred and incarnational, it encourages us to reconceive of God in light of the noisy, smelly, often bloody, usually messy business of *being* that most exquisite of human beings—someone's mother.

RICHARD WOODS OP

PLANETARY THEOLOGY by Tissa Balasuriya *SCM Press, London 1984, pp. 282. £6.95.*

Tissa Balasuriya OMI, chaplain to the Asian Catholic Student Federation and Director of the Centre for Society and Religion, Colombo, Sri Lanka, is already known to many in the West through his earlier study *The Eucharist and Human Liberation*. In that lively and original book Balasuriya claimed that the theology of the eucharist must now become 'planetary', so that not only the church but mankind 'may all be one'. This theme he now takes up and expands in his new book. In recent years there has been a flood of books from Latin America, but Balasuriya is one of the most significant contributors to that much smaller corpus which is emerging from Asia. He does not write, as did a previous generation, to show his competence in debates generated within Europe. Instead he writes as one born in Asia, whose home is in Asia, asking deeply challenging questions about the continuing influence of European assumptions on the Christianity of that continent.

Looked at in global perspective, a planetary view, European Christianity has advanced throughout the world in association with every kind of oppression: race, sex, class, economics and culture. As different groups challenge each of these associations, a new picture begins to emerge. Taken together they begin to form a planetary theology. The new Asia Christians are unwilling to be made aliens in their own lands in order to remain part of a tradition which in many fundamental respects is unheeding of the example and teaching of Christ.

In both this and his earlier book, Balasuriya advocates 'integral liberation', a conversion both personal and societal, both spiritual and political. He has penetrating insights into worship, liturgy, catechetics, ethics, the Ten Commandments, love and justice, the purpose of retreats. He has critical words for those who send evangelists from the West whose message is so one-sided (not integral) as to enjoin peace and resignation on the poor, without uttering a word of criticism on the rich and powerful. He is also critical of Europe for in effect giving Christianity a bad name throughout the world. Some of his suggestions have a disturbing logic: whether praying that our debts be forgiven as we forgive our debtors, might be applied to international trade, the terms of which are so unfair on the poor countries. No less disturbing is his call for an international income tax. Throughout the book he is critical of the effect of capitalism on the third world. Nor does he carefully balance his position between those deadly competitors, the USA and the USSR: from the perspective of the third world these two ideologies have too much in common. He takes it for granted that poor countries require some form of socialism, but he is critical not only of 'parlor socialism' which co-exists happily with capitalism, but also of actual Marxist regimes. 'Historical Marxism has not yet demonstrated a capacity to incorporate the value of democratic political processes within the framework of a viable socialism'.

The book is well written, very readable and full of stimulating insights. It contains no footnotes and its undogmatic style is complemented by a page setting which is not

justified on the right side. While there is no bitterness of tone, the writer is unremitting in his criticism of the West (including the USSR). Inevitably a western reader might wonder what Asia would do without us. Who then would they have to blame? It is bad enough that we seem to have invented sin, greed, exploitation and ambition—things apparently unknown in a pristine continent which up till then had nothing to show but a caste system for its efforts. But apparently the West has foisted on Asia modern medicine, agrarian reforms, rapid transport, science and technology. However, the lasting impression of the book is not of such Manichaeism, but rather of a work which represents yet another step towards an independent Asian theology, increasingly positive and self-confident. As such it makes a fine contribution towards an emerging planetary theology.

ALISTAIR KEE

THE QUEST FOR CHRISTIAN ETHICS, by Ian C.M. Fairweather and James I.H. Macdonald. *The Handsel Press, U.S.A., 1984. Pp. 275. \$17.50.*

This is a thorough and learned study that, while not suitable as an introduction to the subject, unquestionably merits consideration by those who specialize in it and teach it. The book is divided into four parts. Part 1 (on moral decision-making) considers various moral criteria with reference to the New Testament. Parts 2 and 3 consider the relation between morality and Christian theism, with special reference to natural law and the teaching of the Reformers. Part 4 presents the authors' own views in the light of the preceding survey. The authors cover so much ground that I can only indicate two of their main themes.

Firstly, on the relation between morality and religion (and Christianity in particular) the authors maintain that although morality is an autonomous form of activity it is intrinsically rooted in religion. Thus they write that "religion and morality are related intrinsically or internally to one another, for religious and moral experience interpenetrate" (p. 110). They proceed to show how this interpenetration affects Christian ethics. They sum this up as follows: "The moral claim is autonomous, and cannot be denied by any alleged higher claim, but the Christian *interprets* the moral 'ought' as God's claim on him" (p. 133).

The authors interpret Christian ethics primarily in terms not of principles or rules, but of God's personal claim on believers in particular circumstances. Thus they write on p. 225 that "the divine address, meeting, presence does not come in the form of a universally valid law or norm, and the response we make is not obedience to laws or rules, not even an application of principles given in revelation". However, they admit that "this is not to say that we may throw away all norms and become antinomian" (pp. 225–6) and that "on a personal and relational model, norms for social morality, even rules, will be justified on the grounds of the provision of minimum conditions for personal growth" (p. 253).

On the whole I find the authors' judgments sensible, well grounded and convincing. But I wish that they had discussed more fully, and with more practical examples, the place of principles and rules in Christian ethics with particular reference to "middle axioms" that, on their own admission, are necessary to "mediate between the Christian message and particular actions and social policies" (p. 254).

H.P. OWEN