

OUTSTANDING, BRILLIANT NEW BOOK

*From Wasteland to Promised Land.
Liberation Theology for a Post-Marxist
World*

By Robert V. Andelson and
James M. Dawsey.

(Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York;
Shepherd-Walwyn, London.)
146 pages.

Liberation theology refers to efforts by Christians in third world countries, particularly Latin America where it originated, to cope with and change oppressive power structures, both in terms of theory and practice.

The authors are respectively (a) a professor of philosophy and an ordained Congregational minister, and (b) an associate professor of religious studies and an ordained Methodist minister, at Auburn University, U.S.A.

They use the Old Testament story of the exodus of the Hebrews from Egypt to the Promised Land as the backdrop for their exploration of the issues involved in liberation theology.

Their critique of Marxism is powerful, perceptive, and scholarly without being tortuously complicated. This is important in view of the tendency of many liberation theologians to rely, in varying degrees, on Marxist concepts, and in view of the current growing disillusionment with Marxism worldwide.

There is an excellent discussion of the currently popular theme "preferential option for the poor", in which compassion and realism are beautifully balanced. There is also an excellent analysis of the popular "dependency theory", according to which events in developing nations are largely influenced by the activities of the advanced developed nations.

There is a degree of theological sophistication, rare, if not unique, in Georgist works incorporating a religious approach.

This is well illustrated in the distinction drawn between the Promised Land and the Kingdom of Heaven.

The book contains numerous surprising factual data, e.g. the miniscule percentage of landowners who control a large percentage of land (usually the best) in various countries.

An appendix contains a biography of Henry George which is easily the best of its length that I have ever encountered.

The "footnotes", located at the back of the book, bear witness to scholarship both deep and wide-ranging; though

here, as the acknowledgements appropriately testify, the co-operation of other Georgists, on an international scale, was undoubtedly very important.

The Introduction is written by John Davies, Bishop of Shrewsbury, U.K., who has had experience in living in a third world country. The book is appropriately dedicated to Dr. Hector Raul Sandler, a Georgist, "teacher of justice and heroic champion of human rights". Two Australian authors, A. R. Hutchinson and L. Hemingway, are cited.

Of all Georgist books written since Henry George's death in 1897, this would have to be included in the top ten, and ranked very close to the top. It is very difficult indeed to find any point for criticism. Perhaps, and it is a very tentative, muted perhaps, more space could have been given to the socio-economic teaching of the Old Testament, especially as Frederick Verinder's great work "My Neighbour's Landmark" seems virtually out of print.

In this superb book Georgists will find a splendid presentation of their philosophy and its contemporary application. Those with Judaeo-Christian convictions will perceive fresh insights of their faith and its relevance for various present-day issues. People who do not adhere to a traditional religious faith will gain a greater understanding of how religion has been moulding various facets of Western culture up till the present.

"From Wasteland to Promised Land" merits the greatest possible publicity and the widest possible circulation, not only for promoting the Georgist message for a needy world, but especially for the sake of so many who suffer unnecessarily because of prevalent unjust power structures.

Geoff Forster.

Note: The book is not yet generally available in Australia. Inquiries should be directed to our Hardware Street office.