postmodernist attitudes.

*Social Justice Agenda* does not sufficiently address, even at the level of a survey, certain dilemmas of public policy confronting Two Thirds World societies. Among these are the appropriate balance among certain social goals that are in tension with each other, and which compete for the scarce resources of society. Such "competing" social goals include: economic growth and egalitarian redistribution; freedom and discipline; workers’ benefits and direct investment for economic expansion; export orientation and relative autarky; cosmopolitan outlook and national or ethnocultural identity.

All told, however, the weaknesses and limitations of the book are not enough to detract from its value to the student of Christian social teaching and to those engaged in the social apostolate. It is probably the best recent concise updating on developments in the spirituality, theology and teaching of the mainline Christian Churches on social issues over the past generation. It also makes many practical suggestions on general lines of action which the Churches as institutions can follow so they can effectively promote social justice and peace in today’s world.

*Romeo J. Intengan, S.J.*


This is the second of a ten-volume series which purports to make "more readily available and usable for priests, seminarians and others who require ready access to the essential teachings found in these documents" (p. vii); that is, those documents which the anonymous editors have selected on the basis of principles equally anonymous.

The first part is made up of excerpts from the creeds and papal dogmatic letters of the patristic era; the second consists of summaries of documents from Leo XIII to John Paul II as disparate in character as *ex professo* doctrinal encyclicals, encyclicals celebrating centenaries of the early Christological councils, a papal homily, and a letter of Cardinal Seper, then prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, to Fr. Edward Schillebeeckx, O.P., in 1980. The diverse character of, and diverse theological value of, these documents, even if they were printed in full and not in précis made by unknown hands with occasional brief quotations, seem totally insignificant to the compilers, since
“regardless of form, all these documents provide the authentic teaching of the Magisterium established by Christ to teach in His name the saving truths of the Catholic Faith.” One is left to wonder whether a cardinal’s letter to a private individual, however exalted a position either may hold, is elevated to the level of the Nicene Creed, or the latter historic and infallible expression of the faith of the Church debased to the level of the letter. It would seem that the self-proclaimed monopolizers of loyalty to the pope, in their zeal for ultra-orthodoxy, are leading the reader into a heterodoxy of their own.

Nor is it reassuring to note that the advisory council of this organization, which evidently does not lack for funds, since the books are available for a voluntary contribution, is made up of such well-known ultra-conservatives as Cardinals Ciappi, Gagnon, and Hickey, together with Dr. William May of the Catholic University of America and William E. Simon, former Secretary of the Treasury of the U.S. in the Reagan cabinet, and harsh critic of the teaching of the American bishops on social justice. To complete the circle, Dr. May gives the Nihil Obstat, and Cardinal Hickey not only gives the Imprimatur, but writes the laudatory foreword.

It is hard to say who will read this book, since serious theologians would certainly follow the compilers’ own advice that they and priests consult the original documents (p. vii). On the other hand, one wonders what the ordinary Catholic or even seminarian is supposed to make of selected anathemas of the Third Council of Constantinople (553) against Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodoret of Cyrhrus and Ibas of Edessa, otherwise unidentified. Or is one to think that Pius XII’s dogmatic encyclical Haurietis Aquas, is merely “the most sophisticated teaching of the Magisterium on the Sacred Heart,” no different in substance from Pius XI’s or Leo XIII’s encyclicals touching on the same doctrine?

One might consider the book and its series with their extravagant pretensions and untheological methodology not worth a serious review, were it not for the fact that the copy used by this reviewer was received “With the Compliments of the Secretary General, Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences (FABC).” It is sad to see such a source introducing into Asia the ideological polarizations afflicting the American church, thus distracting the attention of the Asian local churches from their expressed concern for the suffering peoples of this part of the world, especially with books based on such misleading theological principles.

John N. Schumacher, S.J.