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A table of contents for the *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_ajet-02.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_ajet-02.php)

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**BOOK REVIEWS**

**Sundkler, Bengt and Christopher Steed**  
***A History of the Church in Africa***

Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. 2000. xix + 1232 pp.

“A bitter pill which the majority of writers on Christianity and missionary activities in Africa should swallow is that they have not been writing African Church History ... [they write] as if the Christian Church were in Africa, but not of Africa”. This incisive critique by two notable Nigerian historians is used by Bengt Sundkler to preface his massive and magisterial effort to set the record straight. Bengt Sundkler (1909-1995) of Sweden was formerly a missionary in South Africa and Tanzania, and later professor in Church History at the University of Uppsala. Owing to his death in 1995, the project had to be completed and prepared for publication by Christopher Steed, his former research assistant and now instructor at Uppsala. Sundkler develops some prominent themes of his earlier works (most notably, *The Christian Ministry in Africa*, 1960; *Bantu Prophets in South Africa*, 2nd ed 1961; *Zulu Zion*, 1976) in stressing the indigenous African initiative during the progressive Christian evangelisation of this great continent. In fact, it is “a fundamental thesis of this book ... [that] the Western missionary arriving at any place in Africa always found that he had been preceded by some group of African Christians” (299).

The well-known and documented missionary enterprise is certainly not ignored, but Sundkler and Steed (hereafter, S&S) take pains to point out that this is only a small part of the full story. It is crucial to view the whole picture and hence also the vital, creative role that Africans themselves—kings and catechists, merchants and migrants, refugees and returnees, itinerant prophets and independent religious movements—played in this dynamic process of Christianisation. It is this particular local perspective, one that “focuses not on Western partners but on African actors,” which makes the book such a worthwhile, indeed indispensable, study.

S&S present a detailed, well-researched historical overview and evaluation that has some important contemporary theological and missiological implications, not only for the Church in Africa but also for Christianity world-wide.

In his personal introduction, Sundkler calls attention to several other principal concerns of his research. One is to demonstrate the close connection between the established mission-related churches and the so-called "African Independent Churches," which form such a distinctive, locally "charismatic" element of current Christianity south of the Sahara. Another interest was to present an ecumenical perspective by "highlighting Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant and Independent work ... [so that] both Catholics and non-Catholics might find an interpretation of the essential intentions and achievements of their respective churches". This is a worthwhile goal in view of the fact that, until recent times at least, there has not been a great deal of interaction or co-operation among these different macro-groups, as indeed was (and often still is) the case also among the different denominations of Protestantism.

A major problem that S&S faced in their treatment of African history is the "wide chronological discrepancy" among the different regions of African—North, West, East, Central, and South—in terms of religious proselytisation and development. In some parts of Africa, notably the north-east, Christian Church history goes back nearly 2000 years; elsewhere, especially in the inland areas, development has been limited to much more recent times. This led the authors to adopt what I felt was a helpful historical description on a more restricted, region-by-region basis but within some very broad time frames, namely: Part I—the first 1400 years, Part II—the "middle ages" (1415-1787), Part III—the long 19th century (1787-1919), Part IV—the Colonial years (1920-1959), and Part V—the age of "independent Africa" (1960-1992). Despite the great period of history and large area covered, the treatment is very complete and relatively balanced too, which might not be expected of a study this size. Ironically, however, it is the most recent period that appears to be the most thinly discussed (given the publication date of 2000), with adequate coverage petering out rapidly during

the final decade of the last century. This is reflected also in the otherwise extensive Bibliography of 48 pages.

In addition to their special focus upon the significant indigenous African contribution to "mission work" in Africa, S&S point out most, if not all, of the other important factors that have led to the relatively rapid growth of the Christian Church throughout the continent (except for the northern region, which due to the influence of Islam is a special case). In most instances, these topics are discussed diachronically as they happen to occur in the historical overview, not synchronically in extended sections. I would consider the following to be the most important of these strategic influences (in parentheses noting a particularly important exemplifying reference): use of the vernacular in popular communication in preference to a Western language (517-518); translation of the Bible, whether the whole or selected portions (157); a Scripture-based gospel message (309); effective preaching/sermonising (665-673); persistent and widespread lay witness (36-37), including that carried out by women (712) and the youth (392-393); travel to new areas via the rivers of Africa (303) and newly built railroads (865); the development of distinctive Christian hymnody and liturgy (916-917) as well as literature programs (743); increased training and use of national pastors (509) and "evangelists" or catechists (310); the widespread promotion of literacy (573) and education, including that for girls and young women (249-250); agricultural (363) and medical missions (307); the establishment of mission stations (312-313) and Christian communities (377). A study of some of these constructive influences within their historical setting could be of benefit to African churches today as they plan for the future in view of the significant changes that have taken place in the meantime.

Side by side with such positive promotional forces for numerical growth in Africa was a diversity of factors that definitely limited, hindered, or even prevented the Church's advance in different areas and at different periods of history. S&S deal with these honestly and often with keen insight as to their original cause or subsequent acerbation. Among the more serious of such obstacles to progress were: ecclesiastical rivalries and denominationalism; enforced or

ritualistic sacramentalism and sacerdotalism; doctrinal disputes and consequent factionalism; association (whether real or supposed) of the Church with slavery, colonialism, and/or apartheid; varied legalistic, paternalistic, or even prejudicial attitudes and practices on the part of Westerners; the imposition of Western cultural ideals and customs at the expense of African equivalents; debilitating tropical diseases and a high death rate among missionaries; inter-ethnic tensions and tribal conflicts; and the continual advance of Islam from the north and east. These factors are all well known of course, but a consideration of them in concrete historical contexts is always a salutary exercise. May we better learn to learn from history!

Along with the preceding, relatively straightforward positive and negative considerations are a number of others that are not so clear as to their ultimate impact and effect on the growth of the African Christian Church—or should one rather say, the Christian Church in Africa? This matter of designation is important and concerns the principal issue of controversy, which in one way or another involves the relative influence, past and present, of traditional religious beliefs and practices on various Christian churches. These would include specific instances such as: the use of indigenous symbolism and arts (painting, singing, instrumentation, dancing, dress, bodily decoration, etc.) in church buildings and during worship services; the communicative importance attached to dreams, visions, and possibly even divination; an appeal to rites aimed at combating sorcery and witchcraft; the continuation of certain “beneficial” protective and promotional magical practices; ancestral veneration through prayers, sacrifices, offerings, life-cycle and agriculture-related ceremonies. Such influences have been and continue to be debatable, even divisive—that is, depending on a group’s theological persuasion and beliefs with respect to what they regard to be a biblically-based Christianity. At times, through their lack of comment, S&S seem to be overly tolerant or uncritical of syncretism involving an accommodation with ancient ancestral rites and ceremonies, such as: the royal ancestral cult (61), sacrifices in times of calamity (181), “rain-making” rituals (474), dreams of divination (504), funerary libations (811), and miracle working

“prophets” (814). On the other hand, they might be congratulated for their “objective” record of the various sources that they utilise, leaving it up to readers to make their own valuation of such accounts. Furthermore, on occasion S&S do also gently warn against a Christianity of “adhesion” (96), which is simply “a thin veneer over a groundwork of solid traditional religion” (55).

This is not some long, dry, fact-saturated historical report. On the contrary, S&S quickly engage the reader by their generally clear, interesting, and informative manner of writing. Theirs is an easy style that is lightened by periodic, subtly humorous and ironic comments, but one that is also punctuated by many important insights and penetrating observations. Space limitations will not permit more than minimal illustration of this feature, but the few quotes following should be sufficient to whet the reader’s appetite. For example, concerning the existential significance of Christianity for the African believer, S&S state,

An observation in all parts of Africa would seem to be the view of Christianity as not only the way of New Life but also of the New Death. In a milieu where death was an ever present threat, the ‘New Death’—i.e., the new way of facing the threat and fact of Death—was recognised throughout the continent as something distinctly different (95-96).

Commenting on the irony that sometimes confused Christian principles and practice, they observe,

The attitudes of these young [missionary] men were not unique in the Protestant world of Africa prior to 1914. There were other zealots ... who desired to pull up the young [African] shoots from the soil in order to check whether they had begun to grow aright. Western actors in the drama insisted on the dictates of the Spirit, but overlooked the fact that a Church, on whatever foundation it starts, and however it develops, lives in a tension between ‘Institution’ and ‘Spirit’. Even the most ‘spiritual’ organisation necessarily develops its institutional frame, even though organisation must be, to some extent, informed by the Spirit through the Word and Sacraments administered there (246).

Despite their focus on the African initiative and honest portrayal of the obvious errors that were made by the Western message-

bringers, S&S do not degenerate into “missionary-bashing,” but regularly call attention to their considerable accomplishments, for example,

Western missions were often portrayed at the time as having destroyed the cultural values of indigenous peoples, particularly in Africa. The [1925 Rome] Exhibition eloquently demonstrated that some of the missionaries, not least in Africa, had other designs (630).

Then there is this accurate description of the power of African Bible-based preaching,

The village sermon must be appreciated against the background of a live, pulsating milieu with its tensions and afflictions, its witches and spirits, its fears and hopes and expectations, its sighs and tears, laughter and jubilation, and the Gospel text bringing the Holy Land with its demons and Beelzebub and its healing miracles close to the African village, and in the midst of all, the Christ, Son of God and Saviour of the world (667).

Finally, I cannot resist the following keen insight into the nature and practice of past efforts at Bible translating, an enterprise that is especially close to my own heart,

One looks with admiration at the efforts of Protestant missionaries who spent their lifetime at the task of Bible translation. There were sure to be linguistic limitations in the work, but a historian is bound to look at this work in terms of history. It is too easy to condemn by the standards of today’s linguistics what had been done previously in this field. *The team aspect of Bible translation needs to be underlined.* ... There was formed almost invariably a deep Christian fellowship between the foreigner and their African co-workers, the former always aware of his foreignness in this most central of missionary tasks and therefore aware of his constant dependence on his local co-workers, the real experts (1030, my emphasis).

The composition of Bible translation teams may have changed nowadays—being much more African in character—but

importance of close co-operation and mutual dependence surely remains.

There are several other excellent features of this history that are worth calling attention to. In addition to its lucid style, the text's overall organisation is enhanced by a helpful division into major and minor sections, all of which are provided with summary titles. Principal sections are normally prefaced by an introduction that is accompanied by a map of the particular area of Africa to be covered. A very detailed Name Index and Subject Index enables the reader to quickly locate persons and topics of special interest. Several succinct topical studies of important subjects are provided from time to time, for example, on: African religions, missionary societies, David Livingstone, Church strategies, Islam, preaching, healing practices, African church music, and Independent churches. S&S also make pertinent suggestions along the way about areas that could use further study as well as current puzzles that require additional research, for example: reasons for the surprisingly rapid conversion of the Igbo people in Nigeria (253), differing preaching styles among various denominations (668), the relationship "between Christianization in Africa ... and recruitment for jobs of discipline and order" (706), refugee peoples in relation to the society into which they move (796), a sociological study of those who were caught up in the East African Revival in the 1930s (864), and the varied evangelistic methods that were adopted on the coastal plantations of the Indian Ocean (872).

With so much positive to say about this book, could I have any criticisms? Indeed, there are a few, but they are relatively unimportant in relation to the whole: The inadequate treatment of the last decade has already been noted; hence the current AIDS pandemic in relation to medical missions is not mentioned (e.g., 674). The present three-page Epilogue could easily have been expanded to provide a summary at least of some more recent developments in the Christian history of Africa. The footnotes, though very many in number, are largely bibliographical in nature. They do indicate the extensive documentation that underlies this study, but little additional information beyond that supplied in the text is given. Nor is any sort of evaluation made of the relative



reliability of the sources that are cited—that is, in possibly questionable or doubtful cases (e.g., the information from mission archives). There are very few spelling mistakes in the text, which is rather amazing for a book this size that contains so many proper names of various kinds. There are also a handful of quotations that are left unattributed (e.g., 1025). I noted several errors of fact—for example, credit for the entire New Testament in Chichewa given to just one person, when a whole team was involved throughout (979). And I would disagree with several interpretations of the historical record, for example, that it was mere “fortuitous chance, almost fate” that led certain missions to begin work among particular African societies (311-312). Surely the Holy Spirit deserves a little more credit than that. All in all, however, there is precious little to complain about in this magnificent study.

On the opening publisher’s description of this book, it is claimed that it “will become the standard reference text on African Christian Churches”. I would heartily endorse that assessment of this exemplar of the historical genre. It is one of those essential books for the new millennium that needs to be displayed in every theological library worldwide. Having said that, I would also encourage the publishers to make a much more affordable (paperback?) edition available so that scholars, pastors, and teachers on the African continent can also have immediate personal access to a text that so completely and competently surveys their deep-seated Christian roots.

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**Craig A. Evans & Stanley E. Porter Editors**  
**DICTIONARY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT**  
**BACKGROUND**

A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship  
Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 2000

*The Dictionary of New Testament Background* is the fourth and last in a series of New Testament dictionaries published by InterVarsity. The other dictionaries in the series include: *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, the *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* and the *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments*.

This 1,328 page volume is a landmark publication with 153 acknowledged, international scholars with PhD's in their fields of expertise. It represents the latest scholarship with the most up-to-date resources in the field. Representing the international status of the dictionary are the two editors who come from both sides of the Atlantic. Craig Evans is professor of religious studies and the director of the graduate programme in biblical studies at Trinity Western University in British Columbia, Canada. Stanley Porter is research professor in New Testament at the University of Surrey, Roehampton, London. However, the contributors of these articles are primarily from North America and Europe, including Israel, with numbers coming from Australia and Singapore. No one from the third world is represented.

The dictionary focuses on the cultural cradle of the New Testament and is a major secondary source to study the contributions of the Apocrypha, Old Testament Pseudepigrapha and early Christian literature for our understanding of the meaning of the biblical text. "The purpose of the present volume is to clarify the world of thought and experience in the light of which the New Testament should be read and the early Christian church understood."

This research tool is carefully designed to enable the student to achieve the maximum use of the book. Bibliographies are found at the end of each article which are placed in alphabetical order.

These articles are cross referenced in several ways to guide the student to other related topics treated in the dictionary. Five types of cross references are made within the articles for handy referral.

In this handy one-volume dictionary one can learn much of the background of the New Testament. Careful interpretation of Scripture not only requires a knowledge of the original languages. It is essential that one interprets the Scriptures within the biblical context, as well as the historical, geographical and cultural context of the times.

Herein is the value of this dictionary. One is able to research the New Testament background of the times. Assisting the student is a Scripture Index of twelve pages. There is also a Subject Index. By referring to the Scripture Index one can ascertain whether there is any reference in the dictionary to the biblical text under study.

These articles range in size from 500 words to 10,000 words. Because they have limited the number of topics to 300, the authors have been able to produce greater in-depth discussion within the restrictions of one volume.

A random survey of useful background articles include: Adultery and Divorce; Alexander the Great; Antioch (Pisidia), Apostolic Fathers; Archaeology and the New Testament; Art and Architecture: Greco-Roman; Asia Minor; Associations; Athletics. One can easily see that there is a gold mine of background information helpful to the better understanding of the biblical text.

Surely, this book is essential for New Testament scholars and teachers. It is also desirable for those intelligent and better educated pastors who want to probe the depths of meaning of the biblical text.

However, since the pastor desires to feed the sheep and not the giraffes, a pastor will need to pick his way through this erudite volume to glean those insights useful in expounding the text. For the strength of the dictionary becomes somewhat academic because it includes many articles related to discussion of primary sources and documents which provide us with this helpful background information.

A sampling of some of these articles include: Ahiqar; Apocalypse of Zephaniah; Apocryphon of Joseph (4Q371-372,

539); Aristeas, Epistle of; Beatitudes Text (4Q525); Catena (4Q177); Cave 7 Fragments (Qumran); Copper Scroll (3Q15); Damascus Document (CE and QD); Genesis Apocryphon (1QapGen).

However, as one pages through the dictionary one is awed by the rich and enriching diet that awaits anyone who devours this compendium of New Testament background scholarship. We are compelled to agree with the view of David Noel Freedman when he says, "The breadth and scope of the dictionary on the one hand, and the depth of scholarship demonstrated on both small and large entries are notably impressive, and it is clear that everything that anyone might wish to know about the background of the New Testament is to be found in this massive work."

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**Theological Advisory Group (TAG)**  
**THE HOLY SPIRIT**  
**AND THE CHURCH IN AFRICA TODAY**

For details on purchasing this book see page 132

The Theological Advisory Group (TAG) of Scott Theological College has produced a number of books in its Theological Reflections series, which seeks to address issues of theological and pastoral concern in the African context. *The Holy Spirit and the Church in Africa Today* is the most recent of them, and its aim is set out on the back cover: 'The purpose of this book is to provide the serious student of Scripture with a careful study of the biblical teaching on the Holy Spirit. It is intended for advanced students of the Bible and can be used as a textbook in theological institutions.'

It is a substantial work of 440 pages, including a bibliography and brief topical and biblical indices. There are two appendices of which the first deals with the development of the doctrine of the

Trinity and the second offers a history and evaluation of the Pentecostal and charismatic movements. The main body of the book consists of 7 chapters, all but one prefaced with a brief narrative or description drawn from the African context, and each concluding with questions 'for review and further study' and a list of books 'recommended for further study'.

However, it is not simply intended to be a standard text on the Holy Spirit, but aims more specifically to address the controversies and divisions that surround the doctrine of the Spirit, particularly in the African context, and to do so in a conciliatory manner. Thus, while parts of the book do offer a standard textbook approach ('Who is the Holy Spirit?' and 'The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Life of the Believer'), others discuss the theology of the Spirit that emerges from particular sections of Scripture ('The Power of the Spirit in the Old Testament' and 'The Life-Giving Spirit in Luke-Acts'), and a very sizeable portion is directly related to the controversies which are the book's primary focus ('Pentecost: Baptism in the Spirit and the Initial Sign of Tongues'; 'The Fruit and the Gifts'; 'Those Controversial Gifts: Healing, Prophecy and Tongues'). The authors are addressing issues that are of central concern for contemporary African church life, and their goal is to develop a response that is soundly based on the testimony of Scripture to the Spirit and his work.

In general, the book repudiates most of the typical charismatic and Pentecostal distinctives. Thus, the authors argue against the view that the baptism in the Spirit is a work of God subsequent to conversion, and that speaking in tongues is the sign that it has taken place. They interpret Pentecost as a unique, unrepeatable act whose main significance was the birth of the church. They contend that being filled with the Spirit should not be equated with the baptism of the Spirit, and that it is more biblical to speak of one baptism and many fillings.

On the 'controversial gifts' - prophecy, tongues and healing - the authors are clearly sympathetic to the cessationist interpretation of 1 Corinthians 13:8-12, but find themselves unable to give it unequivocal support. However, they maintain that cessationism is true in practice: 'we cannot affirm that the gift of tongues has

ceased on the basis of 1 Corinthians 13:8-12, but we can point to the dramatic change in the need for revelatory gifts with the formation of the canon of Scripture' (p.349). Thus they claim that these gifts had an absolutely essential and unique role in the New Testament era, but that it no longer exists. So, the gifts of apostle and prophet were foundational to the church 'because of their inspired and authoritative witness to Christ' (cf. Eph 2:20), but it is Scripture that fulfils that purpose for today. Tongues were a 'revelatory word-gift' akin to prophecy. Healings were 'sign-miracles' whose purpose was to authenticate the ministry of Christ and the apostles, and in practice miracles of the sort carried out by Christ and the apostles are no longer seen.

However, the authors identify the proclamation of the Word of God in preaching as an 'analogous gift of prophecy' although not identical to the revelatory prophecy of the New Testament and Old Testament eras. They recognise too that there is a need for Christians to encourage and admonish one another, but not with the authority of a prophetic 'thus saith the Lord'. They affirm that miracles may still happen and that the relevant teaching for the church today is to be found in James 5:13-16. Indeed, they express concern that many non-charismatic African churches have altogether missed the role of the church in ministering to and praying for the sick. They also accept the possibility that God may grant to some believers a gift of tongues for personal prayer, again analogous to but not identical with the 'sign-gift' and 'word-gift' spoken of in the New Testament, but they are clearly very doubtful about this: 'What assurance can anyone have that praying unintelligible syllables is genuine communication with God and not mere gibberish?' (p.350).

Moreover, despite its weighty critique of Pentecostal and charismatic teaching, the book recognises that the practice of Pentecostal and charismatic Christianity is often attractive because of the cold, shallow formalism and nominalism of so many churches that hold to the more traditional evangelical approach but show little evidence of the presence of the Spirit himself. In strong terms the authors explain why so many Christians abandon non-Pentecostal churches to go to Pentecostal ones: 'They leave because

the churches are living on a sub-normal plane .. It is often because of the failure of our churches to be fervent in prayer, zealous in witness, meaningful in worship .. ' (p.162). They concur with John Stott's judgement on the charismatic movement: 'there can be no question that God has used this movement to bring blessing to large numbers of people. .. The movement constitutes a healthy challenge to all mediocre Christian living and all stuffy church life' (p.153).

As the authors admit, this is a book for the serious student and its length will deter any who are looking for a quick and easily digested summary of the subject. It is good, therefore, to note that TAG has also produced a number of smaller studies on the same theme intended for 'lay people'. Nevertheless, in places the present work could itself have been abbreviated to make it more accessible. There is a degree of repetition with sometimes the same issues being worked over more than once. In the third chapter, for example, the authors discuss occasions recorded in Acts when the Spirit came on individuals or groups and some of the phenomena of Pentecost were repeated, as with the Samaritans, Cornelius, and the Ephesian believers in Acts 19:1-7. The relevant passages are then discussed again in chapter four in order to respond to Pentecostal and charismatic interpretations. Speaking in tongues is discussed on three separate occasions, in chapters four, six and seven. A substantial restructuring might have avoided such repetition, both reducing the length of the book and making its argument easier to assimilate. At the same time there might have been a little more on certain areas. Discussion of 1 Corinthians 12:13 is somewhat limited despite its importance, and there is no systematic treatment of the distinct contribution of John's gospel to the doctrine of the Spirit as there is of Luke's.

Nevertheless, *The Holy Spirit and the Church in Africa Today* is a significant and very useful work. It offers a thorough analysis and rebuttal of the charismatic position. The arguments are clearly explained and contextually applied, and the authors seek to be faithful in their interpretation of Scripture while avoiding the use of emotive and inflammatory language. Not everybody will agree with the conclusions, but it will repay careful study from both sides of the divide. It is at this level of serious and honest biblical reflection

that the issues raised by charismatic claims and practice need to be debated.

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**Richard S. Hess & Gordon J. Wenham (eds.)**

***MAKE THE OLD TESTAMENT LIVE:  
FROM CURRICULUM TO CLASSROOM***

Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co. 1998.  
218 pp, ISBN 0-8028-4427-8, pbk. US\$ 15.00.

I came across this book by chance in the book exposition hall at a large theological conference. The names of the editors—Richard S. Hess and Gordon J. Wenham—made me pick it up, and half an hour later I bought four copies, for myself and for my postgraduate students from Tanzania and Madagascar. Why? Simply because I realised that this book addresses many of the questions we discuss outside the classroom.

The book is a collection of essays focusing on the teaching and studying of the Old Testament. Approaching both the Old Testament itself and the profession of scholarly interpretation of the Old Testament from an evangelical perspective, the 13 essays range from teaching undergraduates to supervising doctoral dissertations, and from a location in secular universities to theological seminaries. Most of the 13 essays go back to a Tyndale Fellowship Old Testament study group in Cambridge, but some have been commissioned additionally for the publication of this book. In the following I will first make a brief presentation of the 13 essays, then go a bit deeper into two of them, and finally make some concluding remarks.

The book is made up of three sections: (i) content, (ii) context, and (iii) communication. The first section suggests parameters for the content of the curriculum of Old Testament studies. Richard S.



Hess (1) examines the place of Old Testament within the curriculum of a theological college, and considers the place of Old Testament study in the overall aims of the college. Craig G. Bartholomew (2) outlines what he calls a post-liberal agenda for Old Testament study, emphasising the Christian context. And James McKeown (3) discusses the role of Old Testament theology in Old Testament study. The second section, which focuses on the context in which this curriculum is developed, includes the majority of the articles. Paul Barker (4) makes an appeal to teach the Old Testament in a way integrated with the New Testament, emphasising a biblical theology of the Bible. Robert L. Hubbard, jr. (5) shares his experiences of teaching the Old Testament in a North American theological seminary. T. Desmond Alexander (6) discusses various aspects of teaching the Old Testament in a secular university, whereas Gordon J. Wenham (7) outlines a model for teaching the Old Testament in a department of religious studies. Rebecca Doyle (8) shares her experiences of surviving as an Old Testament Ph.D. student, and Hugh Williamson (9) sees this from the other side, discussing various aspects of how to supervise Old Testament Ph.D. students. Then follows two essays with a non-western focus: Ida Glaser (10) discusses the teaching of the Old Testament in the context of Islam, and M. Daniel Carroll (11) discusses various challenges of teaching the Old Testament in Latin America. The third section addresses communication issues. David W. Baker (12) discusses models for learning and teaching biblical Hebrew. And Clive Lawless (13) reflects on the factors that determine the learning process, and how this should affect the teaching of the Old Testament. An appendix (28 pp.) gives an annotated Old Testament bibliography – from the perspectives of this book.

Let me go a bit deeper into two of these essays, and notice some of their relevance to evangelical contexts in Africa. The first is Richard S. Hess' essay (1), which examines the place of Old Testament study within a theological college. This context, Hess points out, primarily prepares the students for spiritual leadership and ministry, a context that must be reflected in Old Testament study too. On the one hand spirituality is crucial, as the spiritual

life of the lecturer and the students obviously have an impact upon how the Old Testament is appropriated for ministry. However, on the other hand spirituality is irrelevant, Hess claims, as the *sola scriptura* principle of evangelical Christianity demands that the skills that are developed and applied for Old Testament interpretation must be those that submit to objective evaluation. There is, accordingly, and this needs to be repeated also in African evangelical circles, no conflict between the spiritual, practical, and academic aspects of the study. Another important contribution is M. Daniel Carroll's essay (11) on various aspects of teaching the Old Testament in Latin America. Many African theologians and biblical scholars will recognise his description of difficulties and challenges. One is the various forms of limitations in physical resources, as financial constraints influence the capacity of both students and lecturers, and as it further makes the library situation (books, journals, articles, electronic tools) most difficult. Another aspect noticed by Carroll is the importance of mature mutual appreciation between first and two-thirds world scholars. The former tend to think that the only "really serious" academic work is done in North America or Europe, and the latter often exhibit a bit of an inferiority complex towards the West. A dialogue between the two is certainly necessary, and Carroll points out exchange of course plans, lecturers, and students as ways to initiate such dialogues.

Three concluding remarks. First, I am, once again, struck by the variety of approaches to the teaching and studying of the Old Testament, and as such the book challenges me to go back to the classroom with new ideas about how I can organise my lectures and seminars. Secondly, if anyone would tend to doubt, the book demonstrates that evangelical scholars by no means form a marginal phenomenon within the broader guild of Old Testament scholarship. What here is labelled an "evangelical" perspective, includes both central names and a plurality of positions in contemporary Old Testament scholarship. Thirdly, I would like to say that the book clearly would have benefited from including certain African perspectives. Most of the topics addressed by the thirteen mostly western contributors have their parallels in the

teaching and studying of the Old Testament in African universities and theological seminaries, and the African academic experience with the Old Testament would here have a lot to share with its non-African counterparts.

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