

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

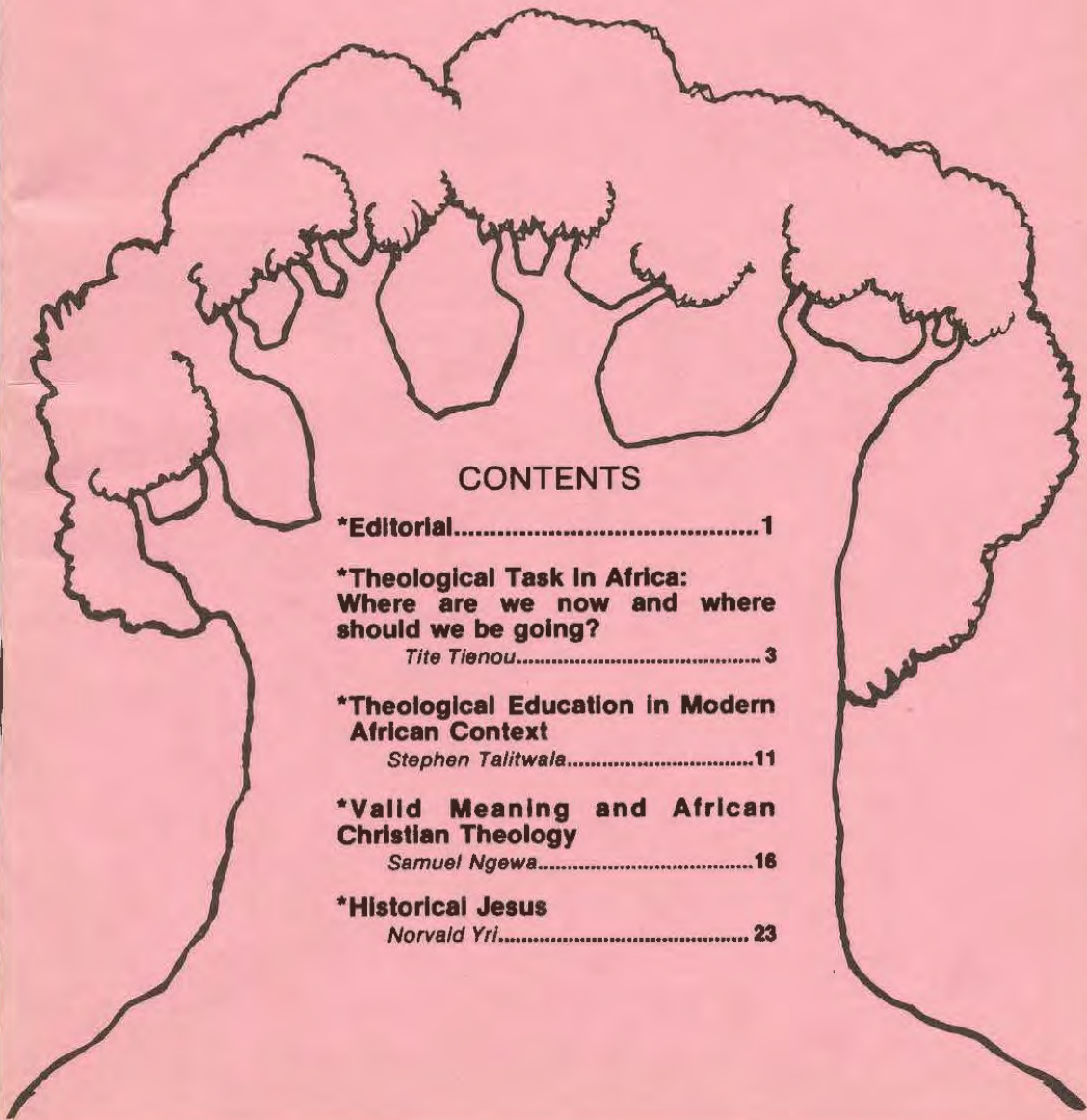
A table of contents for the *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_ajet-02.php

east africa journal of evangelical theology

VOLUME 6

No. 1 1987



CONTENTS

- *Editorial.....1**
- *Theological Task In Africa:
Where are we now and where
should we be going?
*Tite Tienou.....3***
- *Theological Education in Modern
African Context
*Stephen Talitwala.....11***
- *Valid Meaning and African
Christian Theology
*Samuel Ngewa.....16***
- *Historical Jesus
*Norvald Yri..... 23***

THE EAST AFRICA JOURNAL OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

General Editor:

Rev. Isaac Simbiri, General Secretary, Evangelical Fellowship of Kenya

Editorial Staff:

Robert cook, Athalda Mull, William Mull, Samuel Ngewa

Consulting Editors:

Dr. Tokunboh Adeyemo, AEAM
Rev. Titus Kivunzi, Scott Theological College
Dr. Josphat Yego, Kenyatta University
Rev. Yemi Ladipo, St. Stephen's Vicarage, London
Dr. John Gration, Wheaton Graduate School.

Purpose:

EAJET is published twice a year (in June and December) by the staff of Scott Theological College in order to provide African evangelical theological students with editorials, articles and book reviews on subjects related to theology and ministry.

Editorial Policy:

We welcome articles and book reviews from an evangelical perspective. Reviews and articles should be typed on one side only, double-spaced with end-notes, send to:

The Editor
EAJET
Box 49
Machakos

Subscription Information.

Annual rate in Kenya Kshs.100.00
Annual airmail rate in Africa U.S. \$16.00; Brit.£10.00
Annual airmail rate outside of Africa U.S. \$20; Brit.£15.00

Checks should be made payable to EAJET. Send to Box 49, Machakos, Kenya.

Cover:



The Baobab tree is the EAJET symbol for the gospel in Africa. The good news of Christ, like the baobab tree, is ageless, enduring and firmly rooted in African soil.

EAJET is indexed in **Religion Index One: Periodicals**, published by the American Theological Library Association, Chicago, available on line in the ATLA Religion Database through BRS Information Technologies (Latham, New York) and DIALOG Information Services (Palo Alto, California).

Editorial:

The terms African Theology, African Christian Theology and Theologia Africana are not mere names without a bearer any longer. Admittedly, the production of its content has been slow. However, there is movement and we are getting somewhere. In the first article in this issue, Dr. Tite Tienou discusses the questions: "Where are we now?" and "Where should we be going." In the second article, Dr. Stephen Talitwala explores the challenges that lie before the African Theologian in his task of producing African theology.

While the movement is there and the challenges are realized, the necessity for proper hermeneutical guidelines in working out theology for Africa remains crucial. In the third article Dr. Samuel Ngewa urges African theologians to differentiate the valid meaning of the Biblical text from the significance(s) that may be derived from it.

The goal of it all is to proclaim Christ, the eternal Son of God. In the fourth article Dr. Norvald Yri interacts with the question of "The Historical Jesus."

While these articles are only a small part of the discussions going on in these areas, it is the hope of the writers that the articles will play a key role in stimulating thought towards the right direction.

Contributors to this Issue:

Articles

Dr. Tite Tienou, Alliance Theological Seminary, Nyack, New York (Burkina Faso)

Dr. Stephen Talitwala, Daystar University College, Nairobi, Kenya

Dr. Samuel Ngewa, Scott Theological College, Machakos, Kenya

Dr. Norvald Yri, Lutheran Theological College, Makumira, Tanzania

Book Reviews

Byang H. Kato, Biblical Christianity in Africa --- Emmanuel S. A. Ayee

Gary W. Demarest, 1, 2 Thesalonians, 1, 2 Timothy and Titus: The Communicator's Commentary, Volume 9 ---Mark A. Olander

Selwyn Hughes, Marriage as God Intended --- Lois M. Draper

Christopher J. H. Wright, Living as the People of God: The Relevance of Old Testament Ethics ---Gary Fredricks

D. Tidball, Skilful Shepherds --- James Wood

I. H. Marshall, The Acts of the Apostles. An Introduction and Commentary. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries.

D. Guthrie, The letter to the Hebrews. An Introduction and Commentary. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries --- Paul Bowers

THE THEOLOGICAL TASK OF THE CHURCH IN AFRICA: WHERE ARE WE NOW AND WHERE SHOULD WE BE GOING?*

Tite Tienou

Introduction

My own introduction to the importance of theology in Africa dates back to the second general assembly of the Association of Evangelicals of Africa and Madagascar (AEAM) in January 1973 at Limuru in Kenya. It was there that Byang Kato became the first African evangelical leader to call attention to theological endeavours in our part of the world. The challenge he gave marked a turning point in evangelical theological development in Africa. Evangelical African leadership came to realise that African theology was being developed without them. As I recall, Kato did not have to do any convincing. The leaders knew that the lack of theology was one of the chief problems of African Christianity. As a result the 1973 AEAM General Assembly became an avowal of a certain theological malaise among evangelicals, the recognition of a problem, and a cry for help.

In the Byang Kato Memorial Lectures which I was invited to deliver in 1978 at ECWA Theological Seminary in Igbaja, Nigeria, I spoke on "The Theological Task of the Church in Africa" (subsequently published under that title by Africa Christian Press in 1982, as the first number in its "Theological Perspectives in Africa" series). I attempted to map out an evangelical theological strategy in Africa. I asked then, "How shall we African evangelicals fulfill our theological responsibilities in Africa?" The title of this present paper implies that the matter is not yet settled. I will first survey the current status of evangelical theological activity in Africa, then review what we have achieved since my earlier lectures, and finally suggest some appropriate directions for the future.

I. Where are we now?

More than fourteen years have now passed since the 1973 AEAM General Assembly. What has been accomplished since Byang Kato addressed his

*This paper is a revised form of a paper read in May 1986 at the "African Update - 86" Conference at Glen Ellyn, U.S.A.

challenge to African evangelical leadership? The Principal evangelical theological initiatives in Africa since 1973 have been the founding of the AEAM Theological Commission, the launching of two graduate schools of theology, and the establishment of the Accrediting Council for Theological Education in Africa, with its numerous supplementary services. These have been difficult and worthy achievements. But honesty requires us to confess that, beyond the encouraging facade of each of these institutions, chaos and disintegration have been, and still are, ever present threats. There have been some very rough spots. Indeed, while all of these initiatives have made laudatory contributions, some perhaps more so than others, not one has yet become effectively settled, not one is yet securely in orbit. And there is still so much else needing to be done. Assuredly as we survey the scene today, we are forced to acknowledge that evangelicals have a long way yet to go in achieving Kato's vision for evangelical theological responsibility and maturity in Africa. To the question why this is so there are many possible answers.

Dr Bong Ro, executive secretary of the Asia Theological Association, delights in saying every time I meet him: "Theology is created in Germany, corrected in America, and corrupted in Asia." When we think of theologians, most of us do not automatically think of people of non-European stock. Theology as we experience it in Africa is basically of European origin. It may at best have been recooked in Africa, or maybe only rewarmed. This problematic state of affairs has not changed much over the years. The Kenyan theologian John Mbiti has stated: "The Christians in Africa have a faith but not a theology."¹ What Mbiti says of Christians generally in Africa is especially true of evangelical Christians in Africa, even today. Let me single out several of the factors contributing to the continuing evangelical theological malaise in Africa.

A. Causes of theological malaise

1. Proclamation without reflection. The evangelical dilemma in Africa can best be described as proclamation without reflection. Evangelicals generally perceive themselves as proclaimers of the Word. In that sense they are concerned with making the Gospel kerygmatically universal. Since evangelicals concentrate on proclamation and contribute significantly to the growth of African Christianity, Mbiti's statement should be a stimulus to them to examine their relationship to theology in Africa. In their emphasis on gospel proclamation, they tend to neglect reflection and theological responsibilities. Sometimes reflection is even perceived as an adversary of gospel proclamation. The irony is that such a perception is, in itself, a theological decision. In a paradoxical way, evangelicals in Africa (and doubtless elsewhere) have a theology of no theology!

2. Fragmentation. A second cause of the continuing evangelical theological malaise in Africa is fragmentation. I refer to the denominational and doctrinal fragmentation in Africa which prevents evangelicals from really working together on a common theological agenda. Suspicion of ecumenical liberalism, outside influences, and inherent African realities all contribute to the persisting fragmentation of evangelicals in Africa. The result is that many groups try to do

alone certain things which could best be done cooperatively. Even when cooperation is agreed, each group wants to participate on its own terms.

One could mention such additional factors as the continuing shortage of trained evangelical theologians, unconstructive instincts for power and control, and assignment patterns which leave little time for the labour of reflection, as also contributing to the current evangelical theological malaise. The consequences of this continuing failure among African evangelicals to fulfill their theological responsibilities on the continent are severe.

B. Consequences of theological malaise

1. Silence by default. The first and most notable effect of the evangelical failure is that African theology is being made without us. Observers attribute the origin of the debate on African theology to a 1956 article by Paul Fueter entitled "Theological Education in Africa."² In the same year a group of black French-speaking priests published their *Des Prêtres Noirs S'interrogent et Suggèrent*³ which also raised the issues of African theology. Was there any similar evangelical event dating back to 1956?

The situation is made painfully evident today by the lack of evangelical presence in recent publications on African theology. In 1984 Orbis Books published *Theology in Africa* by Kwesi Dickson, and in 1985 *The Origins and Development of African Theology* by G H Muzorewa. The year 1984 also saw the release of *African Theologies: A Profile*, by Justin S Ukpong (Gaba Publications). These are substantial monographs. The most noteworthy evangelical contribution during these years was the publication of *Biblical Christianity in Africa* by Byang Kato (ACP 1985). But even this is a reprint of previously published papers. Mention must also be made of Osad Imasogie's *Guidelines for Christian Theology in Africa* (ACP 1983).

Perhaps the brightest spot has been the emergence of the EAST AFRICA JOURNAL OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY, sponsored by Scott Theological College of Kenya, now in its sixth year of publication, which has given some visibility to African evangelical theological discussion. One nevertheless wonders how many African evangelical leaders are reading this journal regularly. Articles and other short essays by evangelical African authors have also been published elsewhere; mention may be made for example of "The Church in Theological Ferment in Africa" by Imasogie.⁴ However, the lack of substantial African evangelical theological presence in scholarly publications means that in the arena of public debate in African Christianity the evangelical voice is not being heard. Evangelical contributions in the past decade have been minimal and mostly peripheral. Generally speaking evangelical theologians continue only to react to an agenda set by others, because they still have not begun to participate effectively and constructively in the larger theological debate in Africa. This is serious because ideas have a way of shaping history.

2. Spiritual immaturity. A second and more serious effect of evangelical theological failure in Africa is the impact this has on evangelism, church growth

and spiritual maturity. An observer puts it this way: "Africa has the fastest growing church in the world; it may also have the fastest declining church!" Numerical growth far outpaces spiritual depth and maturity in African Christianity. In time, a decline in numerical growth will be seen, and indeed may already be observable.

II. Where should we be going?

When we read of theological development in Africa, we often hear the expression "African theology". Let me plant a doubt in your mind by asking, should it be "African theology", or should it be "African theologies"? Is such theology singular or plural? All of us who are familiar with African theology know that in reality it is plural. Africa is a diverse continent. It is therefore more realistic to speak of African theologies in the plural. And if this is the case, what are the contours of such theologies?

Justin Ukpong renders us a service when he specifies three general types of African theology: African inculturation theology (or contextualisation), black theology, and liberation theology. Why is it a service to have suggested this typology? Because each of these three aspects of theology addresses a major problem of contemporary Africa. The first problem is cultural identity, which is addressed by inculturation theology. Black theology deals with the problem of colour. Liberation theology deals with the problem of poverty and injustice in Africa. These three, as everyone knows, are dominant problems in Africa.

But I must hasten to add that these three theologies do not deal with problems perceived by African Christians at the grassroots. What I am saying is that all three of these theologies are generated and sustained by academics. You can afford to devote your attention to African culture and Christianity and the problems of poverty when you are sure of an income from university teaching. Black theology is closer to the grassroots because you cannot deal with black theology in South Africa without having to risk your life. And of course the problem of cultural identity and the question of poverty are more than academic. But perhaps African theology needs to take its fundamental shape much more in terms of real Christians in their total context in the African continent.

A. A fresh focus

In the current development of theology in Africa, there is in fact a gap between academic and popular theology. Academic theology is theology written for international readership. In this category would be the writings of Mbiti, Pobee, Tshibangu, Sawyerr and Fashole-Luke, to name only a few. I would have to say that Kato's writings, and my own, must also be included here. Not too many people in the local churches in Africa are reading such works. I am not offended when I find that the local pastor has not read my book. We assume too quickly that what exercises us also dominates the attention of all African Christians. Once when talking to a group of pastors in Ivory Coast I was asked, "Excuse me, but you just said 'contextualization'. Can you tell me what this means?" The

question came from a graduate of a theological college. I know that what I write is not for popular consumption. And I also know that it is popular theology that takes root in the heart of the people in Africa. It is popular theology that truly counts. This is theology expressed in hymns, in preaching, and in the ordinary counsel given by pastors and other spiritual leaders on a day-to-day basis.

On the evangelical scene, a lot is happening theologically in Africa at the popular level, while little is happening at the academic. This situation is alarming because popular theology is by no means always grounded in and governed by Scripture. The way in which some pastors preach and give counsel may be totally opposed to sound scriptural interpretation.

It may yet prove, however, to be providential that there is a gap between academic and popular theology within African Christianity. For the solution to that situation, I want to suggest, lies uniquely within the reach of African evangelicals. They are in fact strategically positioned to assume the theological initiative in Africa by implementing a third way in African theology, a way which neither remains in scholastic discussions nor disdains real life issues.

David Bosch states that good theology always arises out of emergency situations, that is, in the crucible of actual ministry.⁵ So it was for the biblical writers—New Testament theology was not produced in ivory towers. I would think that evangelicals have an opportunity to make a fresh and determinative contribution in African theology, because who in Africa is more interested in applying biblical truths to emergency situations than the local evangelical pastor!

What we need to do is to provide such people with a proper approach to biblical interpretation in Africa. I do not mean just the academics. The simplest village evangelist needs to understand how to interpret the Bible rightly in context. He may not have read all the wonderful things about hermeneutics that are available. Someone will have to teach him in ways that he will understand and find useful. But if that happens, if thereby a proper interpretation of Scripture takes place at the grass roots, informed by a proper understanding of the culture, then such a pastor's preaching and counselling will be sound African theology of the best and most needed sort, whether he realizes it or not. The pastor would not call it theology, but he would be using good theology, true African theology. He would have the truth in his own context. He is the one who is ideally placed to merge academic theology and popular theology in Africa.

Of course at root it is not really a question of capturing the initiative in theology on the continent. To be on the cutting edge is not the crucial matter. Competition with this or that group is not the point. The whole issue is much more fundamental and much more comprehensive. Our basic motivation must be obedience to our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. For the Great Commission cannot be considered fulfilled unless and until there is teaching and discipleship. "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, . . . teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matt 28:19,20). Here one unavoidably encounters the role of good theology. I agree with Imasogie that "mission is much more comprehensive than bringing people to an initial commitment of their lives to

Christ. The church must become the centre of theological instruction and discussion."⁶

B. A variety of approaches

In fact, we must not only pursue a theology that is more adequately focused through the real-life needs at the local level of African Christianity, but we also need to pursue a more comprehensive strategy for evangelical theological responsibility in Africa. We need a broader perception of appropriate theological life and activity within the church. We need a strategy which seeks to facilitate such life at all levels of the church, through a variety of approaches.

I am alarmed, for example, at the over-emphasis on theological schools. We act as though the enhancement of theological education is the best and only way to promote theological development on the continent. I am not against theological schools or else I would not be teaching in one. But the theological school in Africa is only one part of the total system of theological life needed within the church. Because we are programme-oriented we tend to think we can develop a seminary and everything else will follow. But that is not true. We need, for example, to give as much attention to equipping pastors once they are out in the field as we give to equipping them before they enter the field.

Indeed, the kind of theology I have in mind is not best developed in seminaries. We need for example to pursue more vigorous programmes of publication, designed to touch base at all levels. Technology needs to be used to advantage. If a promising person is found who has sound biblical exposition, his messages should be recorded and transcribed for wider diffusion. Much more creativity is needed to develop the full infrastructures of responsible theological life in the church in Africa.

This is even true within theological education itself. Traditionally evangelicals gave greatest attention to the basic level of church leadership needs, the training of village pastors and evangelists. More recently, the base is being allowed to crumble as more and more attention has been focused on more advanced levels. Of course the highest levels of theological training need to be developed on the continent. But lower level Bible schools are not to be despised. Their existence means that there are resources available in Africa for grounding pastors in sound theological knowledge. As such they are vital for the evangelical theological agenda in Africa.

There must be no single approach. If the plurality of Africa is taken seriously, there must be a multiplicity of approaches for responsible theological activity on the continent. Two years ago I joined with some friends in a private discussion on theological developments in Africa. We came up with a list of varied approaches to theological development which should be encouraged within evangelical Christianity in Africa at the more academic level, if full-orbed responsible theological life is to emerge. Let me share the list, since it is very suggestive, even if it is only focused on the academic level. And of course in some cases these approaches are already being pursued.

1. **Theological monograph series.** Begin several different book series, providing

theological perspectives on vital issues facing Christianity in Africa, some at the scholarly level and others at a more popular level.

2. **Colloquiums.** Organize meetings which bring together influential African evangelical thinkers, for mutual fellowship and intellectual stimulation, to plan for and cooperate in effective theological development on the continent.

3. **Textbooks.** Meet the felt need among theological schools for more contextualized textbooks, in theology, church history, and especially in the applied areas of the curriculum, such as ethics, pastoral theology, counselling, and Christian education.

4. **Research centres.** Provide institutional bases for research programmes relating to theological development in Africa, and for facilitating cooperation among theological researchers.

5. **Professional newsletters.** Offering timely news, information, and stimulation for the various theological professions, such as for theological educators. This would include cross-pollination of ideas and innovations, and review of significant articles and research in the field.

6. **Theological journals.** More journals are needed on the order of the EAST AFRICA JOURNAL OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY, some at a higher level of technical scholarship and others at a more popular level.

7. **Departments of religion.** Evangelical influence in the universities, especially in their departments of religion, needs to be more deliberately pursued.

8. **Pastors' theological workshops.** Organize workshops to help pastors and church leaders better integrate theology with effective ministry in the African context.

9. **Professional societies.** Set up societies for the various theological professions and disciplines, such as a Society for Christian Educators in Africa, or an Evangelical Society for African Church History.

10. **Research grants.** Find grants for proven African scholars to do research, writing, and publication.

11. **Theological schools.** Assist theological schools in improving libraries, curriculum, administration, student recruitment, in-service staff training, continental and international contacts, and academic recognition through visiting consultants, professional workshops, publications, surveys, accreditation services, lectureships, and associations of schools.

12. **Theological students fellowships.** Promote the development of theological student fellowships in different regions.

13. **Short-term theological institutes and seminars.** Designed for laypersons or for professionals, to stimulate theological reflection on various specific problems and

challenges facing Christianity in Africa.

14. **Specialized academic programmes.** Certain academic and vocational specializations important to African evangelical development need to be set up through existing academic institutions in Africa, such as specializations in Islamics, TEE, and Christian education.

Conclusion

I would like to conclude with a summary and a challenge. I have called attention to the continuing theological malaise within African evangelical Christianity as well as some of the factors contributing to this state of affairs and some of its consequences, consequences which are profoundly detrimental both to church growth and to Christian maturity. I have also outlined some suggested directions for the future.

The situation is critical but not hopeless. It is still possible for evangelicals to move forward decisively towards theological responsibility and maturity. Evangelicals in Africa are best positioned to overcome the debilitating polarisation between academic and popular theology, and to demonstrate a new way forward for African Christian theology. To do so they must place more emphasis, not on academic theology, but on academic theology that is in touch with, responding to, and facilitating popular theology through a range of creative approaches, for the equipping and maturation of the church. If our academic theology results only in obtaining degrees and writing pompous books, then I for one want nothing to do with it. But if it encourages more missionary proclamation, more discipleship, more faithfulness to our Lord, then assuredly this is the kind of theology that makes sense for Africa.

Notes

¹On 28 May 1985 over the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

²International Review of Missions 45 (1956) 377.

³Paris: Les Editions du CERF, 1956.

⁴Evangelical Review of Theology 9 (1985) 359–71.

⁵"Missionary Theology in Africa" Journal of Theology for Southern Africa 49 (1984) 15.

⁶Evangelical Review of Theology 9 (1985) 369.

THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION IN THE MODERN AFRICAN CONTEXT

Stephen Talitwala

We who are engaged in training leadership for the church in modern Africa must continually examine whether our programmes are truly relevant to the needs of that church in its contemporary context. In order to ensure that our programmes are preparing leaders who may serve their generation in Africa effectively after the will of God, we must constantly give attention to the modern African context in which we minister. What, then, is the context of theological education in Africa today, and what implications might this have for our training programmes?

I. The Context

We Serve a Fast Growing Church

The church in Africa is still very young, in most cases dating back less than two centuries. Only the churches in Egypt and Ethiopia have a longer history. The African church has however grown very rapidly in recent times. At the beginning of the present century the church was less than 9% of the African population. By the end of the century it is expected to reach over 50%, representing over 400 million members. It is rated as the fastest growing church in the world. As a result of fast growth, the church has many exciting problems. In many urban areas, church buildings are not big enough to hold those who attend church services on Sundays. New believers do not have enough teachers. The church does not have enough trained pastors to staff the churches. Many new Christians remain babies in Christ. Many cannot read and all they know is what they have been taught in catechism classes. Many cults are cashing in on this and deceiving young Christians into becoming members.

We Serve a Divided Church

In 1973, Dr David Barrett listed over 6,000 independent Christian church groups in Africa. There have been many new groups formed since then and it appears that many more are going to spring up. The church is divided on many fronts. Firstly the large denominational groups such as the Anglicans, Methodists,

Presbyterians, Lutherans, and Baptists, are not always able to work together. The divisions have sometimes been magnified by tribal differences, because many denominations evangelised only certain tribes. So one ethnic group may be predominantly Methodist and the adjacent ethnic group Friends. Recently, there have been signs of denominations working together but only on social projects. Much outreach work is left undone because the denominational groups are not willing to pool their resources together and get certain things done, and many needed interdenominational projects have had to be abandoned.

There is also much duplication of services. This is true not least in the the area of leadership training. Each denomination is trying to set up training institutions that are too expensive to maintain. The result is that some groups that are too small to have their own training institution do not train their personnel.

Allied to divisive denominationalism are the strong links between the local churches here in Africa and their "mother" churches overseas. Any efforts to encourage joint ventures at the local level in Africa are often frustrated by the influence of the overseas churches and organisations. One example would be Christian ministries amongst the youth of Africa. Thus in Kenya the Kenya Students Christian Fellowship, Youth for Christ, FOCUS, and the Teachers' Christian Fellowship have been unable to forge a common effort in reaching the youth in Kenya. It seems that so long as overseas links remain, efforts to combine overlapping local endeavours will usually fail.

We Serve a Church That Has Not Learnt to Give

The poverty of the church of Christ in Africa is not an issue many African Christians wish to discuss. The problem is not that church members are poor, but that church members do not give support to the very programmes they themselves have approved. One would think that at least the rural pastors should not have any trouble in raising their support, since they are usually supported at the same level as their church members. However, it is not unusual for even rural pastors to go for two or three months without their salaries.

The question of giving towards God's work is an urgent matter that the churches in Africa have to face squarely. Many pastors fear to teach about giving. "Why should they be the ones to raise this issue?" is the question which arises. Whenever a pastor has to address the topic, he feels very apologetic. Perhaps it is not something that should be left to one Sunday sermon a year. We need to teach church members to give in support of their churches.

The problem of poor giving might be a result in part of traditions the church itself has helped plant and water. From the very beginning, the church was the donor to the community. When there was need for a school, the missionary wrote back home and the funds came pouring in. It is very difficult to give back to one who seems richer than you are. It is possible that the average Christian still believes that the church has some money stored away somewhere.

The other issue is that of extended families. Often many of our African Christians give first to the extended families. If anything remains, the church might be considered. God is not given the same priority as the extended family. Many congregations do not bother to find out how their pastors make ends meet. This may be a carry-over from the missionary era when the congregation did not have to be concerned about the welfare of the missionary.

Traditionally, no one went to visit a diviner without a gift. Some of the gifts were very costly, such as a spotless white chicken or goat - and yes, it had to be without blemish. In some tribes, the diviner's garden was cared for by the people in the village. Members of the village took turns to attend to such duties. The church threw out many of these traditions but did not replace them with others which taught people to give towards God's work. We serve a church that has not learnt to give and indeed believes itself poor.

We Serve a Church Existing in an Unstable and Violent Environment

One leading African evangelist and bishop has described Africa as an "active volcano." How correct that description is. From the early 1960s there has always been at least one country shedding the innocent blood of the sons of Africa.

The process started in Congo, now Zaire. We had civil war in Nigeria and then the Uganda holocaust. Of course the Sudanese civil war and the Chadian civil war have been only part of the strife in Africa. South African oppression of the blacks continues unabated. Oppressive colonial governments in Mozambique, Angola, and Ethiopia gave way to regimes unsympathetic to the Christian church. Only time will tell whether Christian churches in Africa will weather these storms. The persecution of the church in Ethiopia and the imposition of Islamic Sharia law in Sudan are suggestive of an even harsher environment in the future.

It is not only repressive governments that the church has to face. Corruption, nepotism, tribalism, racism, nationalism, the re-awakening of Islam, poverty, famine, diseases and many other evils confront the church in its context. Most of Africa is trapped in what one publication called a "chain of poverty." The links in the chain are poor health, high infant mortality, excessive population growth, rural impoverishment, urban migration, unemployment, low income, food shortage, clean water shortage, malnutrition, rising cost of living, and spiritual poverty.

II. Implications for Theological Education

This then is the environment in which our students are being equipped to shepherd God's flock to maturity. Centres for leadership training which aspire to train godly men and women to serve in this context cannot avoid being affected by such conditions. How might these contextual factors impinge upon our training programmes?

1. Africa will continue for some time to be a fragmented continent. Political ideologies, border disputes, civil wars, racism, tribalism, and religious animosity will remain with us for a while to come. Travel and transfer of funds for students training outside their own countries may be one of the major obstacles to be faced in the future. For example, a student from Uganda will have to raise over U.Shs 37.5 million to be able to pay one year's costs for graduate theological training in Kenya. To appreciate the real situation, one needs to note that a university professor earns about U.Shs 2 million a year. Large funds for scholarships will have to be raised if students in Africa are to be trained at graduate levels outside their own countries.
2. There is a resurgence of Africa traditional religions and Islam. These are also usually tied in with nationalistic sentiments. Sudan has recently introduced Islamic law and applied it to all Sudanese. One has to remember that the southern Sudanese are mostly Christians or traditionalists. A civil war is already in progress and only God's intervention will save the situation from becoming a long drawn out conflict. Our students must be trained for times of testing ahead.
3. Industrialisation, urbanisation, education, and the accompanying secularism are producing a new Africa. The church has to be effectively prepared to reach the new African. A number of university professors are anti-church and are having wide influence on the youth of Africa. The church cannot sit back and just hope. It must train its workers and prepare them for the new challenges. Training centres must develop appropriate programmes for this. Unexamined, outdated programmes will hinder in penetrating the new Africa with the Gospel.
4. High population growth, unemployment, urbanisation, and inflation will create slum ghettos in urban areas. A new class of people is being created by the environment. There will be detribalised, landless and unemployed people. The crime rate is bound to increase out of necessity. Perhaps the church needs to start offering alternative channels of self-employment. Community development programmes will have to expand. Our students must be effectively equipped to deal with these non-traditional challenges facing the church.
5. High growth rate of church membership, accompanied by scarcity of trained Christian leaders will lead to secularism, syncretism, and fragmentation of the church. Training centres must identify areas of desperate need where the investment of God's resources will yield maximum results. This calls for flexibility, keeping closely in touch with the felt needs of the church and sometimes being willing to take risks to provide for these needs. There must be involvement by training centres in the grassroots level of the church, and responsiveness to that level.
6. Foreign influence and the financial dependence of the African church on churches in the developed countries necessarily produce a proliferation of service organisations. Training centres must be prepared for awkward competition from these many organisations, especially those engaged in the same kind of ministry as they are. They will have to retain the uniqueness of their ministry and excel in

what they do if they are to survive this competition. They must also not be surprised if other bodies set up institutions which duplicate what they themselves are doing. To survive in this competitive atmosphere the ministry must be truly relevant to the African situation.

7. Time, energy and prayer must be invested to establish new local sources of financial support. We must develop local support from within Africa while simultaneously cutting back on expenditures. Our training costs must relate to the standard of living in Africa. The challenge before us is to tap that 90% of the Christian community which does not regularly contribute to Christian ministries beyond their local church. Innovation, hard work, and prayer are the necessary tools.

8. We must strive to make known to our constituencies what services we can offer. To gain credibility and acceptance, excellence and relevance must characterize our services. Only excellent staff can give excellent service. We must struggle for excellence and be committed to our goals. Our motto should be "Only the best is good enough for use in the service of our God." We must pray and work with a clear vision, determined to succeed, committed to our divine calling, and trusting in Almighty God.

THE VALIDITY OF MEANING AND AFRICAN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

Samuel Ngewa

In verbal communication, we normally have three elements involved: the speaker, the language (words) used by the speaker, and the audience or listener. When communication is in writing, as is the case with our interpretation of the Bible, we have the author, the text, and the readers or recipients. Two of these, namely the speaker and the reader, determine how effective the communication will be. The sender must put his thoughts into accurate words and the reader must accurately understand the speaker's words if any valid meaning at all will be communicated. In between the two lies the text. Where is meaning located in this transmission? Is it in the speaker's thoughts, in the text, or in the reader's understanding? In other words, in our attempt to interpret the text, for example as we have it in the Bible, where should our interpretation center, on what the Bible writers meant to say, on the Bible independent of its writers, or on the audience for whom it is meant?

Before we explore this question further, let us note how the answer will affect the course of theology in Africa. If meaning lies with what the author meant to say as he is represented by the text which is his product, then the initial task will involve the African theologians' digging out the historical and cultural contexts of the author and analyzing the text grammatically and contextually in order to find out what the author intended the text to communicate to the original readers. Only after that intended meaning has been gotten will the interpreter then proceed to answer the question: How does this relate to the African and his situation? This approach will emphasize that African theology is an attempt to answer the questions relevant to Africa in light of what we can discover from the Biblical text to have been the Bible author's answers to similar issues of his own day. If meaning lies with the text as independent from its author, then the African theologian will quote the Scriptures simply as proof-texts in his attempt to give answers to the present questions without any respect to its original context. The measure of one's interpretation will not be in terms of true and false, accurate or inaccurate, but in terms of whether it is plausible, reasonable, defensible, and not impossible.¹ In this approach, one therefore cannot speak of the true interpretation for there will be many legitimate interpretations. If the meaning lies with the reader (audience), then a Biblical text may have as many meanings as there are readers, or if we want to limit it somewhat, there are as many meanings as there are groups perceiving matters from the same perspective. In this way, a given Biblical text may mean something different to the African theologian than it meant or means to the Western theologian.

Each of these three approaches to interpretation of the text is presently tied with a main streak of interpretative process. Structuralism² lays emphasis on the text and examines it not in order to recover meaning which lies behind the text and thus governing its structure but in order "to participate in and observe the play of possible meanings to which the text gives access."³ The text itself has an afterlife of its own, totally cut off from the author.⁴ The text is autonomous and for the most part "indefinitely its own interpreter and its own subject," being accountable only to itself.⁵ The existentialist's approach to text lays emphasis on the recipient with the notion that "the meaning of a text is what it means to me" (the interpreter). According to this approach, the thoughts which the author had in mind as he wrote down his text are not the major thing, for the text has life independent of its author. The interpreter turns his attention "away from the cognitive content of the text to its effects."⁶ In these two approaches, the interpreter replaces the author as the determiner of the text's meaning. In structuralism, he reaches what he sees as the meaning by way of analysing the narrative (narratology), and in existentialism by letting the meaning get a hold of him as he reads the text. The interpreter, therefore, ceases to be the recipient of the meaning and becomes a collaborator, if not the author of the meaning. These two approaches have their positive contributions in terms of reminding the interpreter that the Biblical text must be viewed as a piece of literature following certain structures and that the message contained therein is to be appropriated to life. The positive contributions are, however, damaged by the disregard of the historical and cultural contexts reflected in the text. The disregard of the historical and cultural contexts shows a failure to realize certain matters that are fundamental to Biblical interpretation:

1. Both the divine and human authors of the Bible had original readers. The Scriptures did not evolve out of nowhere but are the product of God communicating his will through human writers to the Israelites (Old Testament) and to believers at Rome, Corinth, Thessalonica or any other destination of the New Testament writings. Each book had a purpose contemporary to its original readers.

2. As such, the Scriptures carried a message which, if not communicated to the Israelites or to the New Testament recipients, the writing of the text would have been a waste of time as far as the situations contemporary to the writing were concerned. What this says is that a meaning had to be communicated to the original recipients, otherwise why would the author write?

3. Until we have discovered the meaning which the recipients of the Old and New Testaments should have gotten from the writings, then we cannot dismiss it as irrelevant for our day, and without the original meaning, we cannot be sure that what we are calling our meaning has any relationship with the text we have, for it was written by an author to a people in a given situation. If the circumstantial contextual element is removed from a group of words, then the words may have many meanings and no one can be sure what the speaker or writer wanted to communicate. It is our common practice to understand the words of a speaker in the context in which s/he speaks and in light of the circumstances in which s/he

was. The same principle should be allowed for a text.

In light of this, therefore, the writer of this paper advocates that the approach to the Scriptures as source for African theology be that of first attempting to know the meaning of a text in light of what the author intended to communicate to his original readers. Only after that has been done will we, with accuracy, apply the text to our situations — be they colonialism or neo-colonialism, liberationism, oppressionism, paternalism, "militarism" or any other issues to which African theology should address itself.

The chief proponent of the view that the normative meaning of a text is what the author intended to communicate is E. D. Hirsch, Jr.⁷ He expounds this view both in his *Validity in Interpretation*⁸ and in his *The Aims of Interpretation*.⁹ Hirsch argues that if we are going to make our search for meaning not "just a playground for the jousting of opinions, fancies, and private preference," then we need a criterion which determines the interpretation of the text.¹⁰ Hirsch sees this criterion as what the author intended to communicate: "The only compelling normative principle that has ever been brought forward is the old-fashioned ideal of rightly understanding what the author meant."¹¹ According to him,

Verbal meaning is whatever someone has willed to convey by a particular sequence of linguistic signs and which can be conveyed (shared) by means of those linguistic signs.¹²

In addition to advocating that the meaning lies with the author's intentions, Hirsch also argues that the verbal meaning of a text is changeless.¹³ If one agrees with Hirsch concerning this second assertion, then the question of relevance of the meaning from the Biblical text is raised. Since the Bible was written thousands of years ago and each Bible book intended to meet a need at its own time which was characterized by different situations than we are in, then how does a meaning which is changeless answer today's interpreter's questions which were not the questions of the Bible times? Hirsch's answer to this question would be that we are by asking this question failing to differentiate meaning from significance. He defines these as follows:

Meaning is that which is represented by a text; it is what the author meant by his use of a particular sign sequence; it is what the signs represent. Significance, on the other hand, names the relationship between that meaning and a person, or a conception, or a situation, or indeed anything imaginable.¹⁴

Hirsch's position has been defended as the most promising approach to Biblical exegesis by Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. Kaiser concludes his discussion on "The Definition and History of Exegesis" by defining exegesis as "the practice of and the set of procedures for discovering the author's intended meaning."¹⁵ Meaning, according to Kaiser, is changeless — even for the author, but significance "does and must change, since interests, questions and times in which the interpreter lives also

change." 16

Thus, the implication of distinguishing meaning from significance is that while meaning is one (as intended by the author) and changeless, the relationship of that one meaning to different ages will differ, not altering the meaning of the text but multiplying the significances of the one meaning. 17 In this way, the significances/applications are inexhaustible but the meaning remains changeless. True significance can, however, be derived only from accurate meaning. This is why it is so crucial for the African Biblical scholars to be exegetes before they become theologians. The warning of McQuilkin needs to be heard aloud: "To determine the single meaning is the objective of biblical interpretation. Otherwise, the fancy of the interpreter, or the preconceptions he imposes on the text becomes the authority." 18

Where is African theology then in light of this view of one meaning and many applications? The point which I would like to make in answer to this question is that it is to a great extent in the wrong camp. It has been placed in the area of meaning of the Bible text rather than the category of application. 19 This is seen both in what is at times set as the goal for African theology, and also what has been produced in its name. Just to give two specific examples, Nomenyo says, "It (African theology) must not see itself as heir to the system of values belonging to theologians foreign to Africa. It must rather try to bring in Christ (and not Christian doctrines) into this African universe. . . ." 20 This is a good caution but it raises the all-important question of what to do with Christian doctrines which have been worked out exegetically from the Scriptures before the arrival of the African theologian. If, for example, the context of Mark 10:45 requires that *anti* be treated in terms of Jesus giving his life in the place of the many, and that kind of exchange is called substitution in the English language, should the African theologian look for a term other than substitution just in fear of replaying the western theologians? Certainly not, for if *anti* as a Greek word can mean "instead of" and Mark so uses it, its true meaning, in the Markan context, will remain "instead of" in every case. The meaning of the text abides and in this sense Christian doctrines when expressing an exegetically based Biblical theme belong to the Christian church universally. It is only that element which is an attempt by the Western theologian to apply the meaning to his own situation which must not be inherited. African theology cannot, therefore, be a replacement of Christian doctrines as they have been formulated in the West. Rather, the crucial question is: How much of a given Christian doctrine has been formulated the way it has on the basis of cultural milieu and not exegesis? A second example is Appiah-Kubi's use of Luke 4:18-19 in his discussion of Jesus as a Liberator. 21 After quoting the text, Appiah-Kubi says, "To the untold number of refugees and displaced people in Africa this is more than a 'solace'." 22 How will this really give consolation to the refugees and the displaced in Africa - just because they are displaced, or because Jesus was talking about them, or why? It is crucial that the meaning of the text in its original context be sought first because it is only then that one can determine whether the significance one is deriving from the text has a foundation. The meaning of Luke 4:18-19 must be viewed in the context of Jesus' redemptive ministry, and for Appiah-Kubi to present a 'solace' by quoting this passage and excluding Christ's redemptive ministry is to offer to the refugees

and displaced a promise which won't be fulfilled. The application must be true to the meaning of a given text. African Christian theology belongs to the category of application/significance and not meaning of the Biblical text, and it must, therefore, be well founded on the meaning of Scripture for it to have Christian value.

This approach to the Bible text presents a difficult task. If one must first seek to understand the meaning of a text in light of what the author intended to communicate to his original readers, then there are many gaps to cross. There is, first of all, the historical gap because the writing of the New Testament itself is about two thousand years before our time, and more than this for the Old Testament books. Secondly, there is the linguistic gap. Three languages (Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek) were used in writing the Bible text and they have their own peculiarities. Then, there are the cultural (both the Israelites and the first century Christians had cultures of their own) and the philosophical (outlook of life) gaps. The existence of these gaps calls for study of history of Bible times, the cultures of the Bible people, the original languages (Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic), and the general thinking of not only the Bible people but also their surrounding neighbors. Viewed from the African perspective, such a realization is an overwhelming challenge both to the individual student of the Bible and the African Christian church, yet it must be done if Africa's authentic theology will remain true to the meaning of the Biblical text. Lack of many African theologians with this kind of preparation is acknowledged by Fashole-Luke in the words: "Unfortunately, there are few African theologians with the necessary source materials, of sufficient high quality, so that African Christian theologies will rise above the level of banal and peripheral."²³ Fashole-Luke expresses the suspicion that it is primarily because of this lack of good grounding in Biblical studies on the part of the African theologians that "consultations, conferences and seminars on African theology simply affirm the uniqueness of Christianity and the primary status of Scripture and then quickly pass on to African traditional religions and the impact of westernized Christianity upon them."²⁴ Unless the meaning of the biblical text has been researched and then the text applied in the African setting in light of its original meaning, African theology will be "sterile, bankrupt, and unworthy of the African tradition nourished by Tertullian, Cyprian, Tyconius, and Augustine."²⁵

Notes

¹P. D. Juhl, *Interpretation: An Essay in the Philosophy of Literary Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 197.

²The chief exponent of this approach to literature is Levi-Strauss, who applied it in the analysis of myth with no purpose of examining specific historical circumstances which led to their creation (Edgar V. McKnight, *Meaning in Texts: The Historical Shaping of a Narrative Hermeneutics* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), pp. 127, 128. This approach controls, for example, the Biblical works of J. Calloud, *Structural Analysis of Narrative* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press and Missoula: Scholars Press, 1976), pp. 47-108, and D. O. Via, "The Parable of the unjust Judge: A Metaphor of unrealized Self," in *Semiology and Parables: An Exploration of the Possibilities Offered by Structuralism for Exegesis*, ed. D. E. Patte (Pittsburgh: Pickwick Press, 1976), pp. 1-33.

³Juhl, *Interpretation*, p. 187

⁴T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," in *Selected Essays* (New York, 1932). Quoted from Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), p. 1.

⁵Alain Blancy, "Structuralism and Hermeneutics," in *Structuralism and Biblical Hermeneutics: A Collection of Essays*, ed. and trans. Alfred M. Johnson, Jr. (Pittsburgh: The Pickwick Press, 1979), p. 87.

⁶John C. Cobb, "The Authority of the Bible," in *Hermeneutics and the Worldliness of Faith: A Festschrift in Memory of Carl Michalson*, ed. Charles Courtney, Olin M. Ivey and Gordon E. Michalson (The Drew Gateway, 1974-75), p. 191.

⁷Appearing about the same time with Hirsch's works were also those of W. K. Wimsatt, especially his *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry* (New York: Noonday Press, 1966). While both Hirsch and Wimsatt advocated that meaning is what the author meant to communicate, Hirsch emphasized (more than Wimsatt did) that it was the speaking/writing author and not the biographical speaker/author who is involved in this definition of meaning (*Validity in Interpretation*, pp. 209-244). Also, before Hirsch's works came out, Emilio Betti wrote his *Die Hermeneutik als allgemeine Methodik der Geisteswissenschaften* (Tubingen: Mohr, 1962), in which he called back the interpreter's attention to differentiating between *Auslegung* and *Sinngebung*.

⁸E. D. Hirsch, Jr., *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967).

⁹E. D. Hirsch, Jr., *The Aims of Interpretation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976).

¹⁰Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation*, p. 163.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 26–37.

¹²Ibid., p. 31.

¹³Ibid., p. 46.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 8; also, *The Aims of Interpretation*, pp. 1–13.

¹⁵Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981), p. 47.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 32.

¹⁷McQuilkin, who advocates the same view as Hirsch, allows the possibility of a second meaning but then adds: "But for the interpreter to be dogmatic about a second meaning, the author must first have affirmed it." J. Robertson McQuilkin, *Understanding and Applying the Bible: An Introduction to Hermeneutics* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983), p. 66.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Acknowledgement must be made here of Mark Shaw's definition of African evangelical theology as an application of the evangelical theology to the African context (Mark Shaw, "What is African Evangelical Theology?", *EAJET* 2:1 (1983): 2. What, however, Shaw does not bring out strongly enough is that the application is of the exegetically gotten meaning of a Biblical text and not just evangelical theology by its own rights.

²⁰S. Nomenyo, "Theology in the Life of the Churches" in *African Challenge* (Nairobi: Transafrica Publishers, 1975), p. 69.

²¹Kofi Appiah-Kubi "Jesus Christ – Some Christological Aspects from African Perspective" in *African and Asian Contributions to Contemporary Theology: Report of a Consultation held at the Ecumenical Institute, Bossey, 8–14 June, 1976*, ed. John S. Mbiti (1977), p. 61.

²²Ibid.

²³Edward W. Fashole-Luke, "The Quest for African Christian Theologies," *JRT* 32.2 (1975): 80. The same article is published in *The Ecumenical Review* 27 (1975): 259–269 and *SJT* 29 (1976): 159–75.

²⁴Ibid., p. 80.

²⁵Ibid.

I BELIEVE IN THE BIBLICAL— HISTORICAL JESUS

Norvald Yri

Rudolf Bultmann (1884–1976), a German theologian, held that we do not know much about the historical Jesus. All ideas of supernatural nature in the Gospels, such as real incarnation, virgin birth, miracles and bodily-resurrection, are *ipso facto* unhistorical but mythological, Bultmann argued. Further, the Synoptic Gospels give such a theological picture of Jesus that they cannot be historical. The historical Jesus is nearly lost from sight behind the "geschichtliche" Christ of the church's faith. But this, according to Bultmann, is no loss for theology, for faith cannot rest upon the security of historical research.¹

However, not all NT students want to follow up such a radical scepticism of the Gospels. Not all agree that "quest of the historical Jesus" is of less importance.² It is nevertheless a matter of fact that a variety of Jesus-studies have strongly been influenced by principles drawn up by the German theologian J. S. Semler (1725–1791), often called the father of Biblical criticism. A main thesis in Semler's theology was that "The Word of God" is different from "The Word of Scripture". This led Semler to regard the inspiration of all Scripture a problem. He was opposing the trustworthiness of miracles and the supernatural in Scripture. No arguments were left for treating the Bible different from any other human book.³

In other words, a principle for seeking a canon in the canon had been established that plunged theology into an endless chain of perplexities and inner contradictions. A theological publication from 1970 for example, reveals this with high amount of clarity.⁴ The critical principle of trying to find a "word", "tradition", a gospel or a faith, that is behind and more original than the word of Scripture is followed up in much of the influential theology today. In other words, is it not possible to find a Jesus that is more trustworthy than the Jesus of the evangelists?

Scholars — *a priori* — having chosen a standard of how to interpret, for example the Gospels in search for "genuine tradition", are led into a practice of selection and subtraction of the gospel-material that has all the marks of being subjective. Hans Kung, a Catholic theologian, and one of the writers in "Kanon" (see footnote 4), follows a radical critical method of the NT material. However, taking up the question of "a canon in the canon", he claims that those who follow such a hermeneutical principle want to be more biblical than the Bible, more new testamently than the NT, more evangelical than the gospel, and even more Pauline than Paul. The true Paul is the entire Paul, and the true NT is the entire NT,

Kung holds. The bold program becomes "subjective arbitrariness".⁵ The outspoken John A. T. Robinson has also been challenging the validity of modern NT studies. He requests that the scholars be more concerned to call a thesis a thesis and a theory a theory, not objective findings. One example reveals the subjectivity Robinson is pointing out. One scholar regards, for example, the beloved disciple of Jesus to be John the apostle, but not the author of the fourth gospel (R. E. Brown), while another says the beloved disciple is the author of the fourth gospel, but not John the apostle; (O. Cullmann).

The danger of "subjective arbitrariness", to use Kung's expression, is not easy to avoid when a study of the historical Jesus tends to be more evangelical than the gospels. Because to distinguish the historical Jesus from the Jesus of the evangelists will, as the history of investigation reveals, open the field for a variety of Jesus-models. And the various results are sometimes so different that it is hard to understand that the scholars speak about the same Jesus.

We will in this article not only discuss some of the theoretical principles being used in NT scholarship, but we will also enter into a discussion of two of the christological dogmas we confess, namely, the birth of Jesus from a virgin, and his resurrection. We want to see how these dogmas are being treated in some part of NT scholarship.

It has been a general accepted theory that the Gospel of Mark represents the oldest Jesus-tradition, even though several scholars today are less dogmatic on this point. The strongest witnesses in the Old Church held that Matthew is older than Mark.

W.G. Kummel, also a German, belongs to those who find "no knowledge of the historical sequence of events underlying this (Mark's) presentation of Jesus' activity". A basic theological idea was binding the gospel together. One cannot draw historical conclusions of any kind from the sequence and arrangement of the individual texts in the context of the gospels at all, he argues. An oral tradition behind the gospels was being shaped and reshaped in the context of the proclamation and teaching of the Christian community. Therefore may we not simply calculate that the transmitted stories and sayings correspond to the historical actuality of Jesus' life and teachings. Thus, according to Kummel, the possibility of giving a historically reliable picture of Jesus' life and teaching is called into question.⁷

We see that the historicity in Mark as well as in the other gospels is being questioned. This also relates to the historicity of the birth of Jesus as it is reported in the nativity stories as found in Matt 1-2 and Luke 1-2. Kummel regards this material to be younger than much of the other material in Mt and in Lk.⁸ In characterizing this material, Kummel speaks about the conception that grew up that Jesus was born of a human mother without the assistance of a man, and the idea that Jesus was begotten without a father. The attempts to explain the birth of Jesus are slightly attested in NT, says Kummel: "because people at first apparently did not everywhere feel the need to develop further ideas at all about Jesus' essential sonship to God".⁹

W. Pannenberg, also German, calls the nativity stories, "legends". The story of the virgin birth bears all the marks of a legend that has been constructed out of an etiological interest. Theology, Pannenberg says, cannot maintain the idea of Jesus' virgin birth as a miraculous fact to be postulated at the origin of his (Jesus) earthly life. To that extent it is problematic that the virgin birth found entry into

the Apostles' Creed, he says.¹⁰

That the material in Matt 1-2 and Luke 1-2 is of a later date than other material in the gospels is not an obvious theory. I. H. Marshall (Scotland) comes to the conclusion that form and style in for example Luke 1-2 have character of being Hebrew-Aramaic, and thus not necessarily younger. This also corresponds to Luke 1:1-4 where eye-witnesses and servants of the word are being referred to, undergirding the author's claim that his findings about the historical Jesus are true and trustworthy information. No decisive objection exists to the Old Church's conviction that Luke wrote this gospel. He had opportunity to consult the apostles and other disciples. Why should he not also have contacted Mary, the mother of Jesus, and Joseph?¹¹

We cannot bypass the fact that both the apostle Matthew (who else?) and the apostle-disciple Luke intended to present the nativity stories as accepted facts. To characterize this material as only conceptional and ideal (Kummel), or as legends (Pannenberg), having been developed according to 'felt need in the primitive community, is to empty this biblical truth of historical validity and to detract from a realization of its theological importance. Without this truth our total understanding of NT theology is defective.¹²

Coming to the question of the resurrection of Jesus, we will first point out that J. Jeremias, who devoted much of his life to Gospel studies, argued that Mark 16:1-8, where we have Mark's record of the resurrection, must be held as a secondary construction, an "apologetic legend" which sets out to prove the reality of the resurrection of Jesus by the empty tomb i.e. the story of the empty tomb in Mark 16:1ff belongs to a late stage of the Easter traditions. The disciples, Jeremias points out, experienced the resurrection of Jesus, not as an unique mighty act of God in the course of history hastening towards its end, but as the dawn of the *eschaton*.¹³

Kummel, who regards the reports in the three other gospels as depending upon Mark 16, is also unable to look upon the material in that chapter as trustworthy. It is not conceivable that the woman intends to anoint a corpse on the third day after the death, he says, and not the custom to use spices in caring for the dead. "In view of these improbabilities it is hardly possible to regard this account as historically reliable".¹⁴

Outside the gospels, then, nowhere do we find the slightest hint of the knowledge that Jesus' tomb had been found empty, or that it was even regarded as important to emphasize the tomb's being empty when people spoke of belief in Jesus' resurrection, according to Kummel. The account of the discovery of the empty tomb developed only later and at the time of Paul obviously still was not known, according to Kummel.¹⁵

Both Jeremias and Kummel have chosen not to take the records of the Gospels at their face value. Both look away from the possibility that eyewitnesses and evangelists have written down the accounts as we have them in the four gospels. The material is regarded "secondary", "apologetic legends" and, "hardly historically reliable". The accounts of the empty tomb are said to have developed later. Scientifically, however, no result exists which should force us to believe that the resurrection record in the four gospels cannot have been written by the evangelists Matthew (also an apostle) Mark (also apostle-disciple), Luke (apostle-disciple), and John (also apostle) as strongly believed in the Old Church. And further, we have no reason for saying that the Mark 16 verses 1-8 is secondary, neither do we

know that the three other Gospels built upon Mark 16 in their resurrection accounts. Kummel's argument, that the account of the empty tomb was developed later even after the time of Paul, sounds rather curious. Taking the Gospels at face value we see that their common witness is that Jesus was not found in the tomb; the tomb was empty. It is also interesting to see that that the faith of the disciple Jesus loved was not created by the empty tomb as such, but he believed when he understood that Jesus was risen, and as he saw that the burial cloth of Jesus was left in the tomb (John 20:6-8). Kummel's argument is also strange seen on the background of I Cor 15, the resurrection chapter in Paul's writings. Paul argues strongly that the resurrection of Jesus is a historical fact, and that our faith and our salvation are dependent upon this fact. How is it possible to say that Jesus has been risen from the tomb and at the same time not know of the empty tomb?

Such a view is possible only by saying that a "resurrection faith" or an "Easter faith" is more at stake than a resurrection that was both bodily and historical.

Some have argued that the resurrection stories are impossible to harmonize. "The answer to that question depends upon the stance of the critic", says G. E. Ladd, an American NT Scholar who himself tried to set up a harmonization without intending to suggest that we really can know in what order the resurrection events happened. It is the purpose of no evangelist to give a complete history of the appearances, Ladd says. However, the fact that the evangelists present diverse accounts, show their independence of each other.¹⁶ It is right, the fact of the resurrection, as it is portrayed in the Bible is impossible for many modern men to accept. Ought we not, then, say that it is faith in the living God that vindicates our confidence in the resurrection of Christ? This is persuasive, Ladd says, but is contradicted by the course of Paul's thought. If Christ is not risen, faith is a futile thing. The reason for this is not obscure. The God who is worshipped in the Christian faith is not the product of that faith, nor the creation of theologians or philosophers. He is not a God who has been invented or discovered by men.¹⁷

Those who believe, then, that alterations and additions to the original tradition of resurrection have taken place, will have to count with various motives, ideas and conceptions created in/by the so called primitive church, and mixed into the resurrection accounts as we have them in the NT. The historical bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ will thus be presented with a large amount of uncertainty.

On the other hand, those who regard the Gospels to represent primary witnesses and apostolic authoritative information, will regard the accounts as trustworthy, even though it might be impossible to put it all into a system of resurrection facts. We should leave the accounts of the resurrection as true and also complementary.

Influential critical theology especially German has partly referred to Martin Luther's thesis: "*Was Christum treibet*" (What teaches Christ) in order to justify a selective methodology dealing with the question of the historical Jesus and NT writings.¹⁸

It is a fact that Luther followed the Old Church's questioning of the canonical value of writings like Jude, James, Hebrews, and Revelation.¹⁹ However, as also Althaus points: Luther's evaluations were by himself regarded as subjective; he did

not intend to require anyone to accept his judgements. Luther also omitted some of the sharpest phrases about James as well as softening others. Luther's main point, however, was more to prevent his Roman opponents from continually using James as an argument against the Reformation gospel, than to fight the letter of James as such.²⁰ But even though James "makes God's law the main thrust", as Luther said, it should not have been impossible for Luther from his renewed understanding of the difference between law and gospel, to also be able to agree that "the law of God" prepares the way for Christ and in that sense is also "preaching Christ".²¹ Whatever James contained, it had to be interpreted according to the sense of the rest of Scripture for the single reason that "the papists embrace it alone and leave out the rest".²²

Thus it is clear that Luther's criticism is strictly limited. The problems of the relationship of the Bible to natural science, to history, to anthropology and to philosophy, which have become such significant problems in much of theology since the enlightenment, did not exist for Luther. He was not critical in the name of reason or in the name of sciences (even what earlier was called science might today be regarded in several cases to be in way philosophy of science).²³

Luther basically accepted the Bible as an infallible book, inspired in its entire content by the Holy Spirit. It was the Word of God in everything it said; for example, all miracle stories were the Word of God, unquestionable truth, and to be believed precisely because they were contained in Scripture.²⁴ Luther regarded the apostles to have authority from Christ, and that this authority manifested itself in the gospel of the apostles.²⁵ And it was the office of a true apostle to preach of the suffering, resurrection, and office of Christ.²⁶ Speaking of the doctrine of the virgin birth, Luther says: "We shall hold to the word in faith against all temptations and speculations".²⁷ "We are not all apostles", says Luther, "who by the certain decree of God have been sent to us as infallible teachers. Therefore not they, but we, who are without such a decree, may err and fall in faith. So nothing but the divine words should be the first principles of Christians, but the words of all men are conclusions which are derived from there and must be led back to them and verified by them".²⁸ "We must let the prophets and apostles sit at the desk, and we seated at their feet must listen to what they say, and not say what they must listen".²⁹ Luther says also: "I have learnt that it is only the books called the Holy Scripture I have to show the honor of believing that none of their authors ever failed. All other books I study in this way that I do not believe them unless they are able to prove what they say from Holy Scripture or from obvious reason".³⁰

This principle, however, is not followed up in dominating NT studies today and much of the theology that is called Lutheran is far away from Luther's principles. Luther made no distinction between the authority of the Bible and the authority of the Word of God. He was not distinguishing between a "faith" or "an original tradition" and the form of the faith as we have it, for example, in the gospels.³¹ Althaus holds that Luther on this point failed to follow up "that understanding of the word and of the faith which produced Luther's reformation."³² He argues that this was a law, and the corresponding faith was a legalistic faith.³³ "The development of historical exegesis stands between us and Luther", Althaus says, "and we cannot simply go back to Luther as if it did not exist".³⁴

Kummel also points to this. It is recognized by modern theology, he says, that Luther held to Scripture as the highest authority in questions concerning

Christian teaching and conduct. The material in the Bible was being used as "proof texts" for the faith. However, this cannot be followed up, according to Kummel, and the reason is simply that the tradition we have in the gospels has been changed and altered in such a way that what we have in the gospels is not the same as the pure tradition of the historical Jesus.⁸⁵

In other words, modern NT exegesis and theology have difficulties in following the principle *Sola Scriptura*, for the simple reason that the accounts of the gospels have been deprived their trustworthiness as true witnesses to our Lord Jesus Christ. While the Catholic Church speaks of the Church's tradition in addition to Scripture, the modern theologian often speaks of "an original tradition" that frequently means something less and different from the accounts of the gospels of the evangelists.

I. H. Marshall also finds it impossible to lay any a *priori* emphasis upon the trustworthiness of the Gospels: "To assume that the 'biblical Jesus' or 'the Jesus of the Gospels' is the same thing as 'the historical Jesus' or 'Jesus as he really was' is fundamentally misleading because 'the biblical Jesus is an abstraction'. Even though we believe in the inspiration of the Bible, we must still face up to the question of what historical facts lie behind the Gospels. We cannot assume that everything happened exactly as it is recorded....".⁸⁶ Marshall is referring to scientific criticism as means of finding the historical Jesus. He agrees, however, that the path from the gospels to Jesus, according to this methodology, is a difficult one to trace.⁸⁷ We agree.

What, then, do we know about the Jesus Christ we confess and believe? We have seen that the answers from those who are seeking the historical Jesus vary.

Boiling down the question and taking a hard look at the methodology followed in NT studies we discover one important thing. The proof texts also used by the various critics of the gospel material are nothing else than what we already have in the accounts of the NT writers. This material, however, is taken and treated in a way contrary to the nature and intention of the accounts themselves. As Hans Kung also pointed out, the bold program becomes "subjective arbitrariness". Consequently, the various "Jesus-pictures" we are left with, are very often portraying a different Jesus, a Jesus not found by reading Scripture itself. This was crucial for the Fathers of the Reformation – *Sola Scriptura*, and this should be basic also for us.

Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth should lead the apostles in their testimonies about Jesus Christ (John 14–17). As John, the apostle, also states, "The man who saw this has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe" (John 19:35, comp. John 20:30–31 and 21:24–25).

Who, then is the historical Jesus? We have no other Jesus than the one witnessed to by the Scriptures, the one promised in the OT, the one who came as we see him in the NT, true God and true Man, born of virgin Mary, the one who on the third day rose again from the dead after having been an atonement for all our sins. This Jesus is Christ, he is the Son of God given us by God himself and witnessed to in the Scriptures in the way God himself wanted the testimonies to be written down.

We are not supposed to divide Jesus into a historical Jesus on the one hand and a supernatural Christ on the other. It is a false picture of the historical Jesus when it is said: his death was historical, but the resurrection is not. Here

"historical" tends to mean what can be explained in such a way that our reason understands it.

As Jesus was true God and true man in one and the same person, so also the testimony about him; our Saviour is both truly divine and truly human at the same time. A historical Jesus different from the Jesus Christ of Scripture is a false Jesus, a Jesus other than the one preached by the apostles (2 Cor. 11:4, Gal. 1).

Notes

¹See various writings of Bultmann translated into English, such as *Jesus and the Word* (London, 1935), *Jesus and Mythology* (London, 1960) *Theology of the NT* (London, 1956), *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (Blackwell 1963), see about Bultmann and his theology in W.G. Kummel: *The NT: The History of the Investigation of Its Problems* pp. 330 ff (Abingdon, 1970), see also in G. E. Ladd: *A Theology of the NT* pp. 22 ff (Eerdmans, 1981), and D. Guthrie: *NT Theology IVP*, (London, 1981), pp. 44ff.

²See for example writings of E. Kasemann, H. Conzelmann, J. M. Robinson.

³J. A. Semler: *Abhandlung von freier Untersuchung des Kanon* Vols. I–IV. 1771–1775 (*Treatise on the Free Investigation of the Canon*) See Kummel, "Investigation" pp. 62 ff and G. Maier: *The End of the Historical–Critical Method*, p. 8 and p. 11, *Eng. trans.* (Concordia, 1977).

⁴E. Kasemann, ed. *Das Neue Testament als Kanon* (15 essays written by 15 theologians), (Gottingen, 1970).

⁵*Kanon* p. 192, *Comp* pp. 403–407 and 331, 337, see also G. Maier, *ibid.*

⁶John A. T. Robinson, *Redating the NT*, pp. 310ff (London, 1976).

⁷W. G. Kummel, *Theology of the NT*, pp. 23–24 (Eng. trans. SCM, 1980).

⁸Kummel, *Introduction to the NT*, (Abingdon 1975).

⁹Kummel, *Theology*, p. 124.

¹⁰W. Pannenberg, *Jesus—God and Man*, pp. 144–150 (Westminster Press, 1968).

¹¹I. H. Marshall: *The Gospel of Luke*, (Paternoster, 1978).

¹²D. Guthrie, *NT Theology*, pp. 367–374

¹³J. Jeremias, *NT Theology*, pp. 311 ff (Vol I) (London, 1971).

¹⁴Kummel, *Theology*, pp. 100 f.

¹⁵*Ibid* pp. 101–102.

¹⁶G. E. Ladd, *I believe in the Resurrection of Jesus*, pp. 91–93 (London, 1979).

¹⁷Ladd, *Theology*, pp. 317 ff, comp. I. H. Marshall, *I believe in the historical Jesus*, pp. 242 ff. (Hodder and St., 1977).

¹⁸See Kasemann in *Kanon f. ex* pp. 403–407

¹⁹ See Paul Althaus, *The Theology of M. Luther*, pp. 82–86 (Phil., 1966).

²⁰Althaus, *Ibid.*

²¹Maier, pp. 31 f.

²²LW 34, 317 WA 39.2 187f.

²³Althaus, pp. 82–86.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

²⁵*Ibid.*, p. 82.

²⁶*Ibid.*, p. 82.

²⁷*Ibid.*, p.53 (WA 37. 55).

²⁸Luther, *De fide* 1535 *Von Menchenlehre* 1522 and *Seertio omnium* 1520, see ref. in E. Hirsch: *Hirsch: Hilfsburch zum Studien der Dogmatik 4* (aufl. Berlin, 1964) pp. 84, 88, 85. See also ref. in Maier, pp. 64f.

²⁹Luther's Works, 1:15 (Munich Ed).

³⁰*Grund und Ursache* 1521, see ref. f. ex. in Martin Luther, *Skrifter i Udvalg Intr. til Luther af Prof dr. theol C. Fr. Wisloff, a scholar in Luther's theology*, p. 30. ((Kobenhavn, 1981).

³¹Althaus, pp. 52–53.

³²*Ibid.*, p. 51.

³³*Ibid.*, p. 52.

³⁴*Ibid.*, p. 102.

³⁵Kummel, *Theology*, pp. 14–16.

Biblical Christianity in Africa
by Byang H. Kato
(Africa Christian Press)
pp. 54, £ 2

In every generation God raises up men of His choice who stand for Biblical fidelity and serve as the voice of God in calling the church to an uncompromising stand against deviant theologies aimed at destroying the purity and life of the church. In our generation, Dr. Byang Kato could be considered a modern day prophet echoing the concerns of God for His church.

Dr. Byang Kato was general secretary of the Association of Evangelicals of Africa and Madagascar (AEAM) and vice-president of the World Evangelical Fellowship before his death in 1975. He attended London Bible College and obtained the University of London B.D. degree in 1966 before returning to his home country, Nigeria. He later obtained his S.T.M and Th.D degrees in the United States.

In his preface to *Biblical Christianity in Africa*, Dr. Tite Tienou has this to say: "Byang Kato was a man of commitment and vision. His life was dominated by his devotion to Jesus Christ, and by his love for Africa. His whole ministry was directed toward the rootage and growth of biblical Christianity on the continent. He was especially troubled by evidence of theological indifference and deviation within the church, and sought by every means to strengthen theological life within Africa."

Biblical Christianity in Africa is a collection of papers and addresses by the late Dr. Byang Kato whom God used in warning the African church about unhealthy and unbiblical theological developments on the continent. The material developed in the five chapters of the book were from among Dr. Kato's major papers and addresses edited for this publication, and they serve as a clarion call for the church to be vigilant and wary of those who are allowing unbiblical concepts and philosophies to shape their theologies.

"Theological Anemia in Africa" is part of a paper that Kato presented on 4th February, 1973, to the Third General Assembly of the Association of Evangelicals of Africa and Madagascar, at Limuru, Kenya.

In Chapter I which focuses on "Theological Anemia in Africa," Kato observed that Biblical Christianity in Africa is being threatened by syncretism, universalism, and christo-paganism because she is theologically unequipped. He warned against some African theologians who in their desire to formulate an African theology reject the Bible as the basic source of Christian theology. They go as far as saying that there is salvation in African traditional religions. In response to this threat, Kato calls on the Evangelical church in Africa to train its leaders to the highest level of

Biblical scholarship as well as teaching the Holy Scriptures at the grassroots level in the churches.

In his discussion on "The Theology of Eternal Salvation" in chapter 2, Kato underscores the fact that the fundamental problem of man is sin against God. The only remedy to this is salvation through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. Because the work of Christ is sufficient for our redemption, "to seek salvation elsewhere than through the shed blood of Christ is heretical." Under the guise of contextualizing Christianity in Africa, some African theologians are sacrificing biblical Christianity on the altar of syncretistic universalism.

Kato also noted that even though the majority of Africans are confronted with the endemic problem of exploitation, disease, abject poverty, and the deprivation of the basic necessities of life, the alleviation of these does not deal with the root cause of these human tragedies. "All human tragedies, be they sickness, poverty, or exploitation, are mere symptoms of the root cause, which the Bible calls sin."

On the other side of the spectrum are those who claim that there is salvation in general revelation and therefore adherents of traditional African religions will be saved at the end of time. Kato affirms that, "general revelation does not, and cannot, bring salvation" because it is non-redemptive. Even though the African has some awareness of his creator, it is a distorted image of God because of man's original sin. The craving for spiritual reality in the traditional African worshipper is also turned into idolatry as people worship God's creation rather than the Creator.

The material in chapter 3, "Contextualization and Religious Syncretism in Africa" was an address that Kato gave at the International Congress on World Evangelization, Lausanne, Switzerland, 16-25 July, 1974. In this chapter Kato urged that the Christian Gospel must be made relevant in every situation everywhere, without compromising it. He also suggested several reasons why syncretism is growing in Africa. These include the teachings and writings of some liberal African theologians who have been groomed in liberal schools in the West, uncritical study of comparative religions in the departments of religion in many African universities, and emotional concerns for the ancestors by some theologians forcing them to call for recognition of the religious practices of pre-Christian idol worshippers. Kato then warned that the persistent urge for cultural revolution in Africa will continue to fan the flame of syncretism. His clarion call to Bible believing Christians is to be prepared to face persecution since "to stand for the uniqueness of Christ will not be popular as ungodliness increases in the world." Although there is a great need to make Christianity culturally relevant, African Christians must allow God's Word to judge African culture.

Kato however affirmed Africa and its rich cultural heritage. It is therefore wrong for anyone to suggest that he was anti-African or anti-African culture.

Is the claim that Christianity in Africa is an alien religion valid? Under the title "Christianity as an African Religion" in chapter 4, Kato discussed the historical relationship of Christianity and Africa using facts from both the Old and

New Testaments. This material was first given as an address at the Nigerian National Congress on Evangelization at the University of Ife, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, 21st April, 1975. In this chapter he observed that the first four centuries of our era produced outstanding African theologians including Augustine of Hippo, Cyprian, Athanasius, Tertullian, and Origen. "To claim that christianity is a white man's religion only because white missionaries brought the gospel two hundred years ago is not historically accurate." Christianity can rightly be called an African religion because it was thriving in Africa long before it reached the British Isles and North America, from where many protestant missionaries came to Africa.

In the closing chapter of the book, Kato focuses on "Theological Issues in Africa." He looks at the search for ecclesiastical and theological identity in contemporary Africa and some of the key issues revolving around this quest. These include, African cultural revolution, African theology, the ecumenical movement, and Black theology.

Kato calls on Christians to have a positive attitude towards cultural renaissance in Africa but admonishes that the Bible must be allowed to judge African culture. Where there is a conflict, the cultural element which is incompatible with the Bible must give way.

On the subject of African theology, Kato confirms the need for Christian theology to address itself specifically to the African situation. As far as Kato is concerned it is a noble effort if what is meant by African theology is contemporary African theologians making their own contribution to theology for the benefit of the church universal. "Unfortunately, many theologians spend their time defending African traditional religions and practices that are incompatible with biblical teaching." The careful reader will therefore notice that Kato was not against African culture *per se* rather he stood against those who taught that everything in our culture is right and must be accepted by the church. In this chapter Kato also devotes time to a discussion on Ecumenical Theology as well as Black Theology.

Biblical Christianity in Africa though written in down-to-earth English, stripped of high sounding theological terms is nevertheless scholarly and contains well researched material. The careful reader will sense not the concerns of a pessimistic alarmist craving to hit the news headlines with his pronouncements, but the cry and call of God for His church to be alert and vigilant not allowing wolves in sheep's clothing to devour the flock.

The material makes not only interesting reading but is thought provoking, and challenges African Christian leaders prayerfully to reflect on the issues discussed in order to respond maturely and appropriately. The phenomenal growth of the church in Sub-Saharan Africa demands a clear biblical direction and a sound Christian theology. The challenges facing the church for the growth and preservation of evangelical Christianity cannot be encountered by half-hearted devotion to the things of Christ. The "battle for the mind" of the general Christian populace is spiritual and can only be won by the use of spiritual weapons. One cannot win a battle if one underestimates the strength of the

opponent. Byang Kato has set the pace by analysing the influences threatening the survival of biblical Christianity in Africa.

Biblical Christianity in Africa will therefore serve as a window through which to look at some of the theological issues facing the Church in Africa. It will make useful reading as well as stir up your heart to prayer if you are concerned for the advancement and establishment of authentic biblical Christianity in Africa. At the end of the book, suggestions for further reading have been made and include some books published by Kato as well as an article on the legacy that Kato left for Africa.

Emmanuel S. A. Ayee, Publications Secretary of the Association of Evangelicals of Africa and Madagascar.

*1, 2 Thessalonians, 1,2 Timothy and Titus:
The Communicator's Commentary, Volume 9
by Gary W. Demarest
(Word Books: Waco, Texas, 1984)
pp. 333, \$14.95*

This book is one of a series of volumes entitled, *The Communicator's Commentary*, which is edited by Lloyd J. Ogilvie. As the title of the series suggests, the main intent of these volumes is to offer a commentary of the Bible that will be of particular value to individuals concerned with the task of effectively communicating God's Word to others. In this volume, we find an experienced pastor sharing his insights into five of the New Testament books.

According to Demarest, there are three major themes that run throughout these five letters of the New Testament: sound doctrine, quality in Christian living, and church government. The author stresses that these five letters make it quite clear to us that "the church organization is not an end in itself but is important as a means of maintaining the doctrinal tradition with integrity." (p 14). He emphasizes that this portion of Scripture cautions us against the danger of doctrine becoming an end in itself. Demarest maintains that doctrine is extremely important in producing an authentic Christian quality of life in the Christian community.

In his chapters dealing with I Thessalonians, the author makes an interesting point when he postulates that our "primary vocation" as Christians should be "to live a life that is pleasing to God and is alive and growing in personal relationships." (p 30). He suggests that our "other vocation" is how we make a living. Also, in his discussion of I Thessalonians, Demarest addresses the issue of church discipline and shares what he calls "six timeless principles" to be followed in exercising discipline in the Christian community. One of the most interesting of

these principles is the challenge of comforting the faint hearted or those who are experiencing fear and discouragement. I found the author's explanation of what it means to "pray without ceasing" (I Thessalonians 5:17) to be very helpful. He encourages us to convert our unceasing thinking into unceasing prayer. Demarest exhorts us to "live with a growing awareness that God is always present." (p. 97)

The portion of Demarest's book dealing with II Thessalonians stresses that he believes the central issue behind this New Testament letter is the erroneous view the Thessalonians had regarding the return of Christ. Obviously, the author addresses some of the differences in contemporary eschatological views. However, I especially appreciate the way Demarest concludes his discussion by saying, "Rather than trying to convince each other of the rightness of our particular views regarding His coming, we are called to comfort and strengthen one another in the light of His coming, even though we may disagree on the details." (p. 125)

Demarest devotes five of his chapters to a discussion of the book of I Timothy. One of the many interesting issues which he addresses in this section is the role of women in the church. He does a very good job of pointing out some aspects of the cultural, social, and historical setting that help us understand the reasons for the statements that are made about women in this New Testament letter. Demarest's conviction is that "we have no basis for relegating women to subservient roles in the church on the basis of the whole of Scripture." (p. 181)

This book's chapters dealing with II Timothy are quite insightful in terms of explaining the characteristics of an effective servant of God. For example, Demarest points out that the phrase "able to teach" (II Timothy 2:24) stresses the need for Christian leaders to learn how effectively to stimulate people's thinking so that they will respond to biblical truth. He further states that our central motive for faithfulness to God should not be fear but rather a desire to please Him.

Demarest spends the final three chapters of his book commenting on the book of Titus. He points out that he believes the theme of Titus is the relationship between doctrine and good works. One of his strongest points in these chapters is that he believes the essential role of any pastor is to develop strong and mature Christian leadership in the church. These three chapters in Demarest's book are invaluable in terms of providing insights for pastors of local churches.

I have thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to read this book, and I have found it to be extremely helpful to me in gaining a better understanding of the message of this portion of Scripture. As a former pastor, I appreciate the pastoral heart of the author which is quite evident throughout his book. As a Theological College teacher, I appreciate the biblical scholarship which the author shows in the writing of his commentary. In my reading of the book, I have observed a few weaknesses and many strengths.

According to my observation, there are three noticeable weaknesses. First of all, since the book seems to be written with an American audience in mind, the vast majority of the illustrations used by Demarest tend to be American-oriented. For example, there are illustrations of "USC" and "Notre Dame" which are

certainly meaningful to a person living in the United States, but which are not so helpful to a person living in an African country. Secondly, I found the author's discussion of the question of authorship of these five letters to be rather superficial. Although Demarest does refer his readers to Guthrie's *The Pastoral Epistles* for a detailed discussion of authorship, Demarest only touches this topic in his commentary. Thirdly, on a few occasions Demarest repeats information and illustrations used earlier in the book. Although the author may have chosen to do this for added emphasis and clarification, I personally found it to be redundant.

The strengths of Demarest's book are much easier to discover since there are so many. I will point out five of them. One major strength is the author's excellent explanations of the original meanings of key Greek words in these five New Testament letters. Readers will enjoy the way Demarest used these word studies to give light to the meaning of this part of Scripture. A second strength is the author's ability to be scholarly without being unnecessarily technical in his explanation of concepts. As a result, this book is very readable and understandable for average Christian workers who may not have had much theological training. When Greek words are cited, the English transliteration is given, which is helpful to those readers who are not very familiar with the Greek language. Another strength is the author's use of illustrations from his experience as a pastor. These illustrations are very helpful to the reader in increasing understanding of the biblical text. Also, I think the way the author uses ideas and quotations from other writers is a real strength. Demarest frequently cites the insights of people such as C. S. Lewis, Matthew Henry, Elton Trueblood, Festo Kivengere, Martin Luther and D. T. Niles. Finally, another strength is the author's creative outlines of these five New Testament books. Readers will appreciate his originality in this area.

African readers will find Demarest's occasional references to East Africa to be very interesting. Apparently he wrote part of this book while ministering at Christian conferences in Kenya and Uganda. Therefore, although the majority of illustrations used may be more meaningful to American readers, it is certainly true that some of his illustrations of situations in Africa will be even more meaningful to African readers.

I would certainly recommend this work to my fellow Christians. I think it is of particular value to local pastors and church leaders. Bible school teachers will find Demarest's insights into the meaning of the biblical text to be helpful as well. It has a strong and very needed message for Christian leaders in today's world.

Mark A. Olander, Scott Theological College

Marriage as God Intended
by Selwyn Hughes
(Kingsway Publications, Eastbourne, 1983)
pp. 182 Ksh. 43/50

Although it is not titled "How to Have a Happy Marriage", this book could be called a How-To book. We won't find a happy marriage instantly, but Hughes gives very practical applications of biblical truths which show us, from Scripture, how God intended marriage to be. It's obvious that such things as divorce, competition, and quarreling were not in God's plan for marriage when He instituted it so many years ago. But what was His intention?

Selwyn Hughes covers such controversial subjects as "Who's in Charge?", communication, conflicts, relationships with in-laws, extra-marital attractions, and commitment. He is completely biblical in his approach to the subject, and cites references to substantiate his points. Hughes, being a marriage counselor, gives many illustrations from his experience, and we are encouraged by the many "success stories" of people who have followed these biblical principles and improved their marriages.

In these days of "women's liberation" (so called), one of the issues hardest for modern women to cope with is that of authority in the home. What is the role of the wife? Of the husband? Who is in charge? Hughes begins the treatment of this question with an old Spanish proverb which states: "Woe to the house where the hen crows and the cock keeps quiet." God has given the spiritual leadership of the home to the husband, but, says Hughes, he must rely on the Holy Spirit, and be under the Lordship of Christ. Can a man love his wife as Christ loved the Church? Hughes suggests five things the husband should practice in order to make his love for his wife like that of Christ for the church.

In many marriage relationships, it is in the area of communication where breakdown occurs. Hughes suggests that honest and open talking and listening are important keys to understanding. But the use of appropriate words is important as well, as we are admonished in I Peter 3:10.

Hughes then tackles the question of friction in the marriage relationship. He concludes that friction is inevitable, but it can be handled in biblical ways.

The section on parents and in-laws is straightforward and forceful. For those of us from Western cultures, the solutions Hughes sets forth are reasonable and workable. But what about the African "extended Family"? Strong traditions prevail, and parents feel at liberty to exercise authority and control over their children even after they are married with children of their own. Genesis 2:24 is quoted, emphasizing the three verbs: 'leave', 'cleave', and 'become'. The leaving should be psychological as well as geographical. Not that parents should be

abandoned, but that the couple must now move out from under their authority, and establish a new authority structure. How possible this is for an African couple, I do not know.

The three steps of 'leave', 'cleave', and 'become one' must be taken in order, Hughes says. Marriage, as seen by some, is predominantly sexual, but he points out that "there can be no true intimacy in marriage until the steps of leaving and cleaving are understood."

One very important point Hughes brings out is that of the attempt of one partner to meet his/her basic personal needs in and through the marriage partner. There are five levels of human need, and one builds upon the other. The first is physical needs, then safety. The third is love. Then come purpose and self-actualization. The higher needs rest on the lower ones. Instead of relying on one's marriage partner to fulfil all these basic needs, one should let God meet them through our on-going personal relationship with His Son, Jesus Christ. Other human beings (our marriage partners) are insecure, as we are, and only in Christ can both partners find their needs fulfilled.

I found the book to be realistic and helpful. As an experienced counselor, Mr. Hughes has a lot to offer in the way of practical advice. His writing is interesting, spiced with real-life illustrations. Young people contemplating marriage will find it helpful, and married people will be inspired to improve their relationships by following the biblical principles set forth. Africans and Europeans alike can benefit, and have a marriage as God intended it to be.

Lois M. Draper, Ukamba Bible College, Machakos.

Living as the People of God: The Relevance of Old Testament Ethics

by Christopher J. H. Wright,
(Leicester, England, IVP 1983)
pp. 224, Ksh. 149/-

For the majority of Christians, the Old Testament is a much neglected book relegated to the Sunday school classroom where its well-known stories are able to keep our children occupied until the adults are finished with church. After all, we are living in the period of the New Testament, aren't we? If this has been your attitude or if the Old Testament still seems somewhat mysterious or hard to apply then Wright's book is for you.

As the title implies, he seeks to make the Old Testament relevant to the Christian life today. Apart from Walter Kaiser's book, *Toward Old Testament Ethics* (Zondervan, 1983), there is little written from an evangelical perspective on Old Testament ethics and Wright's book is a welcome contribution. His aim is not

to deal with specific ethical issues, although a number are touched upon, as much as it is to present a broad overview or "framework" as he calls it, of Old Testament ethics. It is this framework that underlies the specific laws and exhortations of the Old Testament.

The book is divided into two parts. In the first part, Wright puts forth the thesis that Old Testament ethics are based upon three interrelated parts – the "ethical triangle". These are 1) God, the theological angle; 2) Israel, the social angle; and 3) the land, the economic angle. A chapter is given to the development of each of these subjects.

The second part seeks to apply this framework to the broad areas of economics, politics, righteousness and justice, the law, society and culture, and finally, individual morality. As one can see a book could be written about each one of these areas and Wright realizes this. His purpose is confined to just furnishing the broad strokes hoping to motivate the reader to fill in the details through further study and hopefully writing.

If one wonders how all of this applies to the Christian today, Wright suggests and defends that Israel was to be God's model for mankind and that the basic principles underlying Israel's relationships and ethics remain unchanged. It is our task to uncover these principles and then apply them today. He gives a few examples of this in almost every chapter.

But lest one think that Wright believes that either the Christian or the church can completely transform society he goes on to clarify that the complete manifestation of these ethical values will not take place until the new heaven and new earth. Premillennialists might disagree with this amillennialist interpretation but this is a minor point as both see an eschatological fulfillment.

The book is well written, easy to follow, and not too technical. There is a good bibliography although most of the works listed are not available locally, unless perhaps at a theological school. For those unfamiliar with Old Testament theology this book will serve as a good introduction as well as a challenge to the reader to apply the Old Testament in his life today.

The laymen, pastor, theological student, and teacher will find this book both a good investment of time and money as well as a motivation to make the Old Testament a higher priority in both his study and life. African Christians and expatriates working in Africa will find that there is much in this book which relates to African culture. The stress on society and the extended family unit rather than the individual, the importance of land, responsibility for the poor, etc. make this a very relevant book. Perhaps the fact that Wright lives in India has made him even more aware of the similarities between the Old Testament and many Third World cultures. I not only enjoyed this book, I benefited from it and would recommend it to others.

Gary Fredricks, Nairobi International School of Theology

Skilful Shepherds
by D. Tidball
(I.V.P., 1986)
pp. 368, \$8.95

It is appropriate that we should have a book on pastoralia by a working pastor, who after a period of lecturing at Bible College, has now returned to the pastoral ministry. Derek Tidball has written an attractive and well researched book.

After having set out his plans in the Introduction, the author plunges directly into his theme by defining Pastoral Theology, and at once reveals his conviction that this cannot be other than an interaction between a sound Biblical Theology and the heart and experience of the pastor. Here is to be no theoretical approach to the subject reserved for seminary cloisters. "It is not theology in the abstract, but shepherding seen from the shepherding perspective." Doctrine is the only safe foundation for a true pastoralia. Tidball's contention is that the most practical and the correct way to pursue right shepherding is from a basis of Biblical and doctrinal understanding. Any other approach leads to disaster, of which there are many modern examples.

To demonstrate that he means business, the author embarks on a comprehensive Biblical exposition of the shepherding of God's people in the Old Testament. He draws upon the description of Moses as shepherd, the pastors of Israel, the use of the analogy of shepherd in the Old Testament, but above all he draws attention to the shepherding work of God. "God the Shepherd defines the relationship and function of the pastor to his flock."

In examining the pastoral teaching and value of the Synoptics and Acts, Tidball pursues a helpful line of study when he suggests that they have both an explicit and, as importantly, an implicit pastoral value. In this they not only teach about shepherding, but were originally intended, amongst other things, to be the very tools of that ministry. He pursues this line of study with a similar treatment of the writings of John and Paul and the General Epistles.

The section which follows is an examination of shepherding in the post New Testament era, through the Early Fathers, the Mediaeval Church, and up to the present. This is also a valuable study, though brief, and sometimes even sketchy — one hundred pages to cover nineteen hundred years of history. Nevertheless it is of value because in the first place it gives us a useful overview, which contains many a shrewd evaluation of pastoral understanding down the centuries. The copious footnotes will also lead the reader to further works of reference for a more detailed study. The brief but vital assessment of Martin Bucer's view of the ministry, for

example, whetted the reviewer's appetite to learn more of this man's contribution to pastoral study. And how could any pastor/teacher fail to pause for some self-examination on reading Tidball's evaluation of Charles Simeon's conviction that "Christianity was, to Simeon, not a doctrinal system to be accepted but a remedy to be applied: the primary evidence of regeneration was not the mental acceptance of facts, but a brokenness of life and a self-loathing humility."

The fourth and final part of the book finds the author "changing gear", when he selects five issues which he believes face the modern church, issues such as belief, forgiveness, suffering. These chapters are really essays, and the attempt is made to push the discussion forward along Biblical lines, but with varying degrees of success. I have little quarrel with what he includes, although some of my conclusions might differ from his. I wonder, for example, if his treatment of unity gives adequate sympathy and understanding to those heart-breaking but necessary occasions when, for the sake of truth and the liberty required to proclaim it, it may be necessary to break away. "We are always confronted with the dilemma of having to choose between truth and unity." (Harold Lindsell)

I find it disappointing that the writer has omitted to deal with such enduringly important matters as the pastor's own personal life, communicating the Word of God, and so on. Certainly he says that he has made "no attempt to cover every issue." Yet these seem to me to be among the essential issues for a manual on shepherding in any and every age. He clearly has such a high view of preaching and teaching the Word of God (for example, p. 54, para. 2; pp. 107, 120-122, 213,) and is capable of such stimulating writing (there is an appetizer on p. 528), that I for one would have valued his thoughts on the matter.

There is little doubt that books on Pastoral Theology are needed in Africa today. In 1985, EAJET published an article by the Rev. Yemi Ladipo which made it plain that shepherding in the African church is sadly lacking. He wrote, "because the African church has put insufficient emphasis on the need for shepherding the flock of Christ, the church in many ways remains under-nourished, uncared for and lacking in energy for a real and lasting impact upon their countries." (See also Underhill, *E.M.Q.*, - "Pastoral Care Lacking In East African Churches" - Vol. 11, No. 4.) *Skilful Shepherding* will provide a useful introduction to the subject. Derek Tidball writes vigorously, enthusiastically and with impressive erudition (The book's Bibliography runs to eighteen pages). The book begins well, and the first three parts will be of considerable value to pastors, theological students, and church leaders, though the final section leaves the feeling that much more needs to be said, and, if I could say it in the most encouraging and kindly fashion, that Dr. Tidball could very capably say it.

James Wood, *Ukamba Bible College, Kenya*

The Acts of the Apostles, An Introduction & Commentary
Tyndale NT Commentaries

I. H. Marshall

(Leicester IVP & Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980)

The Letter to the Hebrews. An Introduction and Commentary
Tyndale New Testament Commentaries

by D. Guthrie

(Leicester: IVP, and Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984)

The "Tyndale New Testament Commentaries" series, published by IVP in England and by Eerdmans in North America, has become a required fixture of reputable theological libraries world-wide, and a familiar aid to theological students everywhere. Produced in handy size and at affordable price, the series has eminently met the need for reliable scholarly treatment from an evangelical perspective midway between comprehensive technical commentaries and practical expository study guides. The principal concern of these commentaries has always been a lucid exegesis of the English text, presupposing no knowledge of the original languages by the reader but full scholarly competency by the commentator. Modern technical questions of background and criticism are handled briefly but knowledgeably in introductions and notes. Devotional and homiletical needs, on the other hand, are left almost entirely to the province of other series.

The first commentaries in the Tyndale series appeared in 1956 (Tasker on James, and Morris on Thessalonians), under the editorial direction of R.V.G. Tasker. The last appeared in 1974 (Morris on Luke). Along the way came commentaries that became classics in their class, including Guthrie on the Pastorals (1957), Bruce on Romans (1963), and Stott on the Johannine Epistles (1964). Many others have proved their solid worth through the years since publication. And, as in every commentary series, a few of the Tyndale Commentaries were judged by users to be somewhat less than successful, such as those on Hebrews and Acts. Beneficiaries of the series were therefore rightly pleased when the decision was taken to maintain the usefulness of the Tyndale NT Commentaries by upgrading and updating the series under the new general editor, Leon Morris.

Initially this meant replacing some of the weaker links. But now one of the strongest links has been revised and updated (Bruce on Romans), a solid link has been replaced (Carson on Colossians and Philemon, replaced by Wright on the same), and rumour is that all or most of the series will in due course either be revised or replaced. (Meanwhile the companion Tyndale OT Commentaries series, of comparable quality and utility, was launched with Kidner's pacesetting treatment of Proverbs in 1964 and of Genesis in 1967. The subsequent slow rate of publication in the series' first decade has thankfully in more recent years given way to steady and even rapid progress towards completion.)

The first fruit of the decision to upgrade and update the Tyndale NT

Commentaries series is Howard Marshall's significant new contribution on Acts. And if this is a promise of what is to come, it augurs exceedingly well for the continuing quality and usefulness of the series. The replaced volume had majored on the historical setting of Acts in the Greco-Roman world, as indeed its author, E M Blaiklock, a noted classical scholar, was well equipped to do. But studies in Luke-Acts have moved a considerable way since then. And the whole field became reordered in 1971 with the monumental commentary on Acts by Haenchen, a contribution which still dominates all discussion on Acts, not always for the better. Haenchen represented fully the overwhelming interest of recent times in the theology of Luke-Acts, and coupled this with almost total skepticism on the historical credibility of the record.

Marshall, professor of NT exegesis at the University of Aberdeen in Scotland, while working within the established framework of the Tyndale NT Commentaries series, also sets himself to provide a handy reappraisal of Haenchen's perspective on Acts, worked out within detailed exegetical discussion of the text. At all the crucial interpretive junctures affecting historical reliability, Marshall engages Haenchen's skepticism in a gracious, authoritative critique, while also responding constructively to the theological issues newly highlighted by Haenchen and others.

As such Marshall has provided the theological student with an urgently needed and exceptionally timely contribution, positioned at the cutting edge of the current debate. It is no criticism to observe that this very timeliness may, in the nature of the case, render this particular commentary even more quickly dated than its predecessor, given the rapid evolution of scholarly fashions. But this consideration is mitigated by recognition that this will surely not be Marshall's last word on Acts. There is every expectation that this is only the prelude, that Marshall is in position to produce the premier evangelical scholarly commentary on Acts of this generation, as he has already done for Luke.

Meanwhile Donald Guthrie, former vice principal and senior lecturer in New Testament at London Bible College, has deployed his formidable learning to furnish the theological student with a new classic in the Tyndale series. Replacing the earlier sometimes pedestrian commentary on Hebrews by Hewitt, Guthrie has remained more visibly within the established patterns of the series than Marshall, deftly guiding the reader through the contours of modern scholarly debate on Hebrews in a brief but adequate introduction and well-placed notes, while retaining the major focus on informed exegetical clarification of the text. Like Marshall he also devotes fruitful attention both in the introduction and throughout the text to the theological dimensions of the book. Everywhere there is evident that vast familiarity with the relevant literature and issues, judicious balance in interpretation, and easy readability, which readers have come to associate with Guthrie. This will undoubtedly rank now as the handiest learned commentary available on Hebrews for those lacking access to the original languages. And, for those with such access, it will prove a necessary companion and update for earlier comprehensive treatments, such as those by Bruce and Hughes.

Both commentaries imply that the revised series of the Tyndale NT Commentaries will continue the overall pattern and purpose of the earlier series,

while apparently sometimes permitting more substantial treatment (both Marshall's and Guthrie's commentaries are significantly longer than their predecessors), somewhat more engagement with the most recent discussion, and greater attention to theological dimensions, all certainly useful enhancements. Another notable improvement is that while most members of the earlier series were based on the Authorised (King James) Version, the new series is based on the RSV (or NIV in the case of Wright on Colossians), with attention where appropriate to other modern versions. And theological students will especially appreciate that the new Tyndale commentaries remain deliberately compact in format and modest in cost.

Altogether the first examples of the new series arouse much anticipation for the remainder. To the libraries of theological colleges in Africa I commend these commentaries as indispensable acquisitions, and to the students and lecturers of these colleges I commend them as reliable and convenient aids in interpreting the New Testament.

Paul Bowers, Deputy ACTEA Administrator, Nairobi

KESWICK BOOKSHOP

FOR ALL YOUR
BIBLE STUDY
NEEDS



CARRYING A FULL LINE OF:

- COMMENTARIES
- HANDBOOKS, ENCYCLOPEDIAS
& DICTIONARIES
- CONCORDANCES
- STUDY BIBLES
- THEOLOGICAL WORKS
- CHURCH HISTORY WORKS

INCLUDING MANY OF THE BOOKS REVIEWED IN EAJET
BOX 10242, PHONE 26047
PORTAL HOUSE, BANDA ST.,
NAIROBI, KENYA.