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BOOK REVIEWS

Integrative Theology:
Volume 1. Knowing Ultimate Reality and the Living God
by Gordon Lewis and Bruce Demarest
(Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987)
394 pages; \$19.95

Some people view theology books, especially systematic theologies, as an alternative to sleeping pills. To those who suffer from such a terrible misconception this book offers something new in its methodology. Lewis and Demarest, both professors of systematic theology at Denver Seminary in the United States, have developed a new approach to studying theology. Gordon Lewis is the author of the well known book, *Decide for Yourself: A Theological Workbook*, and the conception of that small book is expanded and enriched in this volume.

This is the first volume of a projected three volumes series. I will first review the content of the book and then the methodology it uses. This initial volume covers the standard subjects of bibliology and theology proper. There are no unusual conclusions in these sections. The authors believe that general revelation is not salvific, and that special revelation was progressive but not bound by time, so that it speaks to all cultures and ages. They also hold that the Bible is verbally inspired and inerrant in all that it affirms. The second half of the book deals with the character of God, the Trinity and the providence of God. The chapter on the Trinity is exceptional for carefully defining the oneness of God and giving illustrations of oneness that included diversity, such as the nation Israel, the tabernacle and marriage. The authors believe that God has predestined some to salvation but they reject the view that others are predestined to eternal death. The reader would be advised, however, to have a good dictionary nearby, since words such as 'ectypal', 'aseity' or 'immanental' occur with regularity.

While the conclusions that the authors draw in each chapter are not revolutionary, their methodology is certainly unique. The first chapter of the book explains what they mean by 'integrative theology'. The three volumes are meant to draw together the disciplines of biblical theology, historical theology, apologetics and practical theology, and to apply them to each topic. The format for each chapter is as follows. First, the problem is identified and defined and its significance shown. Then various answers to the problem are

presented from historical theology and from views prevalent today, such as process theology or neo-orthodoxy. The third step is to examine the biblical evidence from Genesis to Revelation, and then to state an answer based upon the data of historical theology and biblical theology. This answer is then defended by interacting with contrasting viewpoints. And finally the answer is applied to life by showing its relevance in a variety of situations. Also included in each chapter are review questions and ministry projects which are intended to help apply what has been studied. Unfortunately these review questions and ministry projects are exactly the same for each chapter. It would be much more helpful to have specific questions and projects for each chapter.

These six steps constitute what the authors call the 'verificational' method of arriving at the truth. It differs from the inductive and deductive methods in that it presents several hypotheses from historical and contemporary theology and reviews the data to arrive at an answer. It does not presume to have a blank mind as it studies the data (as does the inductive method), nor does it begin with an assumed truth and study the data to prove or disprove it (as does the deductive method).

Lewis and Demarest admit that this approach to studying theology does have limitations. These three volumes will not replace systematic, biblical or historical theology books. It is impossible to draw together all of these disciplines and apply them in depth to each problem. Another disadvantage is that you must page through the book to find all of the authors' views on a particular topic. For example, to find what they say about the neo-orthodox view of Scripture you must read their summaries under revelation and under inspiration (which are two separate chapters), and then their conclusions in each chapter as they relate the biblical evidence to neo-orthodoxy. But this volume is certainly an excellent beginning and a model to consider both for future theology books and also for teaching theology.

But what value does it have for the African church? There are certainly enough theology books written by Western scholars, so that we cannot recommend it merely because it has a novel approach to presenting theology. Its value lies in displaying a *model* that African evangelicals may wish to emulate. The book's interaction with various viewpoints and theologies, while important and beneficial even here in Africa, functions in a decidedly Western milieu. What is needed is a book produced in similar fashion to this, but with discussion of African traditional religion, modern African thinking, Islam and the variety of cults in the African context. The attempt to help apply theology by means of questions and projects is excellent, but those questions and applications should be different for the situation here. For example, much more needs to be said about dealing with Muslims who deny the Trinity than this volume offers.

Having noted that, it should be understood that this book is worth the cost. Perhaps the systematic theology classes taught at most Bible schools and colleges should be patterned after this format, integrating historical and systematic theology with apologetics. This book should be bought by theological libraries, and should be carefully considered by teachers and students as an appropriate model for studying and teaching theology in Africa.

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A Reader in African Christian Theology
TEF Study Guide 23
edited by John Parratt
London: SPCK, 1987
178 pages; £3.50

John Parratt, Professor and Head of the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at the University of Botswana, calls this collection of articles from African theologians across the continent an introduction to *some* Christian theology in Africa, with a focus on major theological questions. He claims neither comprehensiveness nor definitiveness. African Christian theology, defined as "Christian theology as done by Africans," is represented by Parratt in Roman Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, Lutheran, Reformed and Aladura contributions. There are many other Africans, and many other expressions of theology, not represented in this collection.

The readings are divided into three parts. The first part deals with theological method, which functions as foundation for the remaining two sections, respectively on aspects of doctrine, and on the church and the world. Parratt himself has written the introductory and concluding chapters.

The theological method set forth in this text points to African traditional culture and religion as important sources, and continuity as an important aim. Two methodologies are highlighted and illustrated, namely 'political theology' with its concern for Christian relationship to political power, and 'cultural theology' with its concern for Christian relationship to African culture. The former method is found primarily in South Africa, with 'black theology' being its most radical expression. It is lacking in the rest of the continent, according to Parratt, because most churches have been cooperative with African independent governments. Tutu provides an article in Part I that shows this

method's understanding of the theological task. 'Cultural theology' is more apparent in the rest of the continent, where theologians have shown interest in the past African heritage. 'Cultural theology,' says Parratt, "begins from the conviction that all cultures are God-given, and are part of the natural revelation of God to mankind" (p. 7). It provides a genuine but limited knowledge of God. Sawyerr, Pobee and Tshibangu contribute in Part I from this perspective. Parratt's own view is that 'political theology' and 'cultural theology' must be married and interwoven. Parts II and III show how theologians accomplish some of this interweaving.

Part II, with its attention to aspects of doctrine, is therefore composed of the contributions of both kinds of theologians. 'Political theology' is expressed by Buthelezi, for whom salvation is liberation not just of the soul but of the whole man. It is liberation from oppressive political and social forces. 'Cultural theology' is represented by Nyamiti on the subject of God, by Appiah-Kubi on Christology, and by Dickson on the Cross. Salvation is more understandable, they say, if related traditional concepts are viewed sympathetically. All agree that the old African concepts provide insights by which biblical ideas can be made more real to the African experience.

Part III is also representative of both kinds of theology. 'Political theology' is expressed in articles by Nyerere and Boesak. Nyerere, typical of those religious intellectuals north of the Limpopo who do speak out politically, calls upon the church to cooperate more fully with national governments. Boesak, out of his South African experience, calls for radical change in the structure of society and government. 'Cultural theology' is expressed in articles by Ntemtem and Aina. For them a sympathetic relating of liturgy and healing to traditional understandings of worship and personality are the issues that deserve attention.

Parratt's introduction and conclusion are helpful. In the introduction he attempts to give a brief overview of theology on the continent and to set the course for the volume. In the conclusion he reflects on the contributions, and attempts to show other trends. Parratt points out that not all theologians agree on the place of African traditional religion. For Idowu, ATR concepts are equal to Christian doctrines; for Setiloane, they are better; for Mbiti and Nyamiti, ATR concepts are preparations for Christian doctrine. General revelation, he asserts, is the main issue. He admits that those who accept God's activities in ATR cannot explain how God so acts, cannot agree on the criteria for recognising God's activity, and cannot determine the exact nature of the revelation. In regard to African independent churches, theological interest has been subordinated to historical and sociological studies. Speaking of the socio-political context of theology, Parratt repeats a previous point that, while there has been much criticism of South Africa's white government, criticism of other political systems has been fairly muted among African theologians.

In the conclusion Parratt offers a good section on methodology and the Bible, and ends by calling attention to the centrality of Christ in all the effort.

The principal contribution of this book has to do with its description and illustration of 'political theology' and 'cultural theology'. While we join Parratt in recognising that these are not the only expressions of theology on the continent, it is obvious that they are a very public expression with which evangelicals need to be familiar. Both Parratt and his contributors sometimes give the impression, however, that the theologians contributing to this exercise all speak as one and that they speak for all of Africa. Over-generalisation is one of the greatest errors of these writers. As is to be expected, the text basically ignores evangelical African theology. Byang Kato is the only evangelical theologian listed in the suggested readings, and he is dismissed as a "fundamentalist". This neglect is not altogether surprising since evangelical African self-assessment acknowledges the inadequacy of its academic contributions (cf. e.g. Tiénou, AJET 6.1 (1987) 3- 11).

Even though the theological representation is limited, this text has a valid usefulness to evangelicals. In most cases, Parratt has chosen articulate spokesmen, who are mostly well known in both religious and secular circles. He has chosen short, precisely written articles, making them very readable. To further enhance readability, the editor introduces each article with a brief description of the author and a brief explanation of the contents. In addition, Parratt offers a helpful glossary with definitions and explanations of selected words, which are highlighted by an asterisk (*) as they occur in the text.

Also at the end of each article Parratt has provided discerning and astute questions, as well as suggested readings. The questions are divided into three sections, addressing terminology, contents and application. Moreover, the questions for application often require the reader/student to look seriously into his own situation to relate it to the comments made by the author. For example: "What points of contact, direct or indirect, if any at all, are there between the rite of Baptism . . . as practised in your own Church and traditional forms of initiation in your country?" (p. 109). Parratt also causes readers to compare specific issues as addressed by the different contributors. For example, he challenges them to compare the "total liberation" sought by Boesak with the "human wholeness" of Buthelezi. This helps readers to look with more discerning criticism at the authors. To stress further the importance of discernment in study, and perhaps also to indicate his own neutrality toward the views expressed, Parratt often requires readers to look at further biblical evidence to critique a comment or a usage by an author. For example, not satisfied with Appiah-Kubi's use of John 10:10, Parratt advises study of twelve other scriptures deemed likewise important. In fact, Parratt admits that one thing that is missing in much of the political and cultural theology is good biblical exegesis.

The Bible receives special attention in the editor's conclusions. There he points out that, though the Bible is acknowledged by his selected contributors, yet serious biblical studies are neglected by the same. He calls for more Greek and Hebrew scholars on the continent. More work is necessary, he says, "which takes intensive study of the Bible as a starting point" (p. 150). He calls for greater attention to problems of translation, the necessity of linguistic and critical tools, exploration of the relationship between the biblical world and African cultures, and right hermeneutical methods. Though Parratt and his contributors avoid inflammatory comments about evangelicals, it is significant that he puts some of the blame upon them for the indifferent attitude towards the Bible. The neglect of biblical studies by such theologians, he says, is due somewhat to a fundamentalist domination of mission. They are too literalist, reject the critical method, are divisive and are hostile toward ATR.

I would recommend this book for libraries and teaching staff. I would also commend it for classroom use, provided lecturers can also make available (otherwise missing) evangelical perspectives on the issues raised. The book usefully highlights the issues which demand attention and provides good background information for evangelical assessment. Is another such reader in African theology needed? Emphatically, yes! Not one to compete with this book, but one that supplements and extends it, not least by allowing evangelical African contributions to be heard as part of the wider discussion.

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African Heritage and Contemporary Christianity
by J. N. K. Mugambi
(Nairobi: Longman, 1989)
207 pages; Ksh 125/

Adopting a historical and sociological approach, Dr Mugambi argues for an authentic expression of Christianity in Africa, and seeks to motivate African Christians to undertake theological reflection on their faith in their own context. The cross-cultural missionary is also encouraged to understand the culture he has chosen to work in, to identify with it and to seek to present the Christian faith in forms and symbols familiar and understandable to the people of his adoptive culture.

The book is well-researched and contains useful notes and references at the end of each chapter. Those interested in further study in the areas covered will appreciate the extensive bibliography, as well as suggestions on what to

explore. Dr Mugambi is chairman of the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Nairobi. His experience in teaching comes through in the latter sections of the book as he presents ways for teaching the 'African heritage' not in propositional but in categorical terms. Theological students and staff, as well as those interested in African Christianity, will glean a wealth of information from the book, especially on the African heritage.

The author is not hesitant in pointing out some of the mistakes of the modern missionary enterprise in Africa, and examines some of the failures in the introduction of the Christian faith to East Africa, as well as some of the approaches and objectives adopted by various missionary groups. On a continent as extensive as Africa, it is not easy to address several issues with the same relevance and depth. This is acknowledged by the author, and the examples he cites from the East African context are instructive in this respect.

The weaker aspects of the book relate to biblical facts and theological issues. For example, referring to Luke 23:18 the author states that this Barabbas is one of the men crucified with Jesus, whereas of course the biblical account states that Barabbas was the one released instead of Jesus. In discussing the Trinity in relation to African thought, Dr Mugambi asserts that the "best and most relevant way to understand the Trinity . . . is in terms of modes of God's manifestation to Man." While acknowledging the author's genuine desire to make this uniquely Christian doctrine as understandable as possible, this conclusion of course cuts across the affirmations of historic Christianity on the Trinity. Historic Christianity affirms not only the deity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, but also the eternal existence of each, as well as their eternal distinctiveness.

The shortcomings aside, the book is a worthy addition to the literature of recent years calling on Africans to develop relevant theologies out of their own contexts. The author achieves his aim by looking at institutions, values and beliefs, and some practices as they relate to the Christian faith.

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The Ethiopian Tewahedo Church: An Integrally African Church
by Archbishop Yeschaq
(New York: Vantage Press, 1989)
xxiv, 244 pages

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC) claims to be the oldest in Africa after the Coptic Church of Egypt. As such, its followers have a great sense of

heritage and uniqueness, often feeling that non-Orthodox believers have little to offer them. With the present large numbers of Ethiopian refugees in countries surrounding Ethiopia, there are significant ministry needs among EOC adherents outside the borders of Ethiopia. This book can help introduce the EOC to all those who are called to minister among EOC followers, both within and outside of Ethiopia. It should also serve as a basic reference on one important and ancient form of African Christianity.

Archbishop Yesehaq, a member of the EOC, has provided us with an insider's viewpoint. As such, it must be remembered that the questions that an outsider asks do not always touch on what an insider considers important. Thus the author raises many issues about which outsiders may not know even to ask, such as the theological controversy concerning Christ's "two births" or "three births", or the recommended schedule and practice of prayers. At the same time, outside scholars will be disappointed at the scanty coverage on issues that interest them, such as the EOC's practice of the veneration of saints, or the number and nature of books considered canonical or of special spiritual importance.

Given the insider's viewpoint, the types of evidence offered for various positions are also different from what an outsider would expect. For example, many points of doctrine and practice are given with a reference only to a church father, or no reference is given at all. From the EOC point of view, tradition and the authority of the church carry much more weight than they do for most outsiders. Therefore, points which the author thinks he has argued strongly will seem inadequately supported to outsiders.

The word *tewahedo* in the title means 'united' or 'unified', referring to the belief in Christ's single unified nature, 'monophysitism' (rather than a belief in Christ's two natures co-existing). It is common to refer to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC) as 'Coptic', but this is no longer correct. The term 'Coptic' refers to the church of Egypt, under whose patriarch the EOC functioned until 1971, when it became 'autocephalic' (self-headed). The review of the EOC's history will contain little that is new to those who have studied it, but it is a good introduction for those not familiar with the topic. The history of the EOC's relations with the Coptic church of Egypt, and her eventual autonomy, are prominent topics. The author also provides a significant EOC clarification of monophysitism.

The book will help evangelicals better understand the deep-rooted suspicion which they face from EOC followers. The author tells of early Catholic mission efforts, with their temporarily successful attempt to convert the emperor to Catholicism, and of the efforts to coerce the EOC under the Fascists in the 1930s. The author also complains of foreign efforts to 'proselytise' people whom he considers to be already followers of Christ.

Of importance to students of EOC's history is the author's account of the growth of the EOC in other countries, including the establishment of congregations in Nairobi, Khartoum, Djibouti, Europe, North America, and most importantly in the Caribbean. The expansion of the EOC into the Caribbean is unique, in that it was not a mission outreach to 'unbelievers', but a church responding to a call from a large group of people (Rastafarians) who already felt (more or less) that they were a part of the church. Archbishop Yeseshaq's coverage of the EOC's expansion is particularly valuable since much of it is a first-person account of his own early contacts and ministry in the Caribbean, among the Rastafarians, but also a clear disclaimer of some streams of their theology (p. 225).

The genre of this book (except the Caribbean sections) is more folk-history than the documented research of a historian. It presents the self-image of the EOC telling how the EOC understands its own history, without outside sources. As such, the union of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba producing the first in the long line of Ethiopian emperors is asserted rather than argued, as are the presence of the original Ark of the Covenant hidden in a church in Ethiopia to this day, and the location of the realm of Candace (Acts 8:27) within the modern borders of Ethiopia. Statements about the number of EOC adherents, the high degree of esteem in which the rest of Africa holds Ethiopia and the EOC, and the extent to which fasts are observed by ordinary believers are first of all statements of self-image.

The very brief discussion of Protestant missions in Ethiopia (p. 95-96) contains two errors of fact. First, Mekane Yesus is not a "mission" but an Ethiopian church. Secondly, the Presbyterian missionaries have not "maintained the name of their mission"; rather their personnel work under the Mekane Yesus church. There is a call for churches to work together, but no mention of the several Protestant groups that have worked closely and fruitfully with the EOC.

The book gives a few glimpses of the EOC's use of Scripture. To evangelicals these few glimpses are jolting, especially if one assumes they are typical of the EOC's approach to Scripture. Several times the author carefully distinguishes "the Bible teaches" and "the Church teaches". Other times he shifts from one to the other without pointing this out, e.g. he refers to Genesis 3:1-8 in saying that Adam and Eve left paradise, but then continues on with an account from an extra-biblical document of their bondage to Satan (p. 125-126). The author's use of Scripture varies significantly from most evangelical exegesis. For example, Biblical passages are cited that obliquely mention topics, but do not seem to give any support to the point under discussion, e.g. Psalm 114:3,5 (p. 125). Many teachings are simply given with no citation, such as the teaching that the apostles "decreed" Wednesday and Friday as days of fasting (p. 133). For outsiders looking for a serious explanation or defence of the EOC's

teachings, this book will only add to their impression that at many points these are based solely on tradition.

Many readers will be confounded by the repeated mixing of Julian (Ethiopian) and Gregorian (European) dates, e.g. "the sixteenth of September (September 27, European calendar)" (p.146). It would have been better to refer to the Ethiopian months by their proper names, rather than to try to equate them inaccurately to the Gregorian months.

The author lays great emphasis on the EOC's membership in the World Council of Churches and other broad ecclesiastical bodies. The author sees the recognition given by such groups as a strong confirmation of the EOC's legitimacy and importance, leaving him baffled and upset at those Christian groups who see EOC followers included among those in need of the Gospel. However, the book itself is unlikely to dissuade such groups from this perception. As an insider's view of the EOC, this book will prove helpfully revealing to the discerning reader, but a much better introduction for the outsider would be Timothy Ware's well-known book, *The Orthodox Church* (1963).

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No Stranger in the City
Ian Coffey, et al.
(Leicester: IVP, 1989)
159 pages; £2.95

In Africa the city is commonly seen as the place where people "get lost", a place where they can be strangers. Yet here is a book with a title that challenges such a notion—*No Stranger in the City: God's Concern for Urban People*. Although the city is a place where many people are strangers, they are not so to God and neither should they be to the church. Even so, reports from both East and West Africa indicate that city dwellers are largely strangers to the church. That, and the fact that cities on the continent are growing at a world-class pace, challenge the church to shake off any lethargy in her response to the city. They challenge her to prepare as best as she can for effective ministry in such a non-traditional setting. Books like *No Stranger* can help do just that.

In this small volume are collected nine short chapters written in a popular style by various well-qualified contributors (e.g. Harvie Conn, Ray Bakke, and

Floyd McClung). Since most chapters started out as presentations to student mission conventions in the United States, the resulting very readable English also makes it an attractive resource in places where many people work with English as a second or third language. Much of the material has been previously published.

Though small in size, the book touches on many of the important urban ministry concepts and issues being discussed today. The importance of Christian presence in the city, urban demographics, people groups, and the sociological complexity of the city are mentioned. Case studies and testimonies of ministry in city settings are also included.

One section challenges God's people to recapture their historical heritage in the city. It also tells us that in the period AD 500-1500 "we lost African urban churches and gained European rural ones" (p. 99). This historical dimension is a very relevant issue to Africa, and is further supported by a soon-to-be-published article by Jonathan Hildebrandt, that explains how African church history has been strategically related to urban areas on the continent. So African churches need to recover their urban heritage just as churches elsewhere do.

Another current topic developed in *No Strangers* is the biblical and theological dimension of urban ministry. A full 20% of the book is given to Ajith Fernando's exposition of Jonah's ministry in Nineveh, and topics like prayer and spiritual sensitivity are also key points throughout. Although the overwhelming theological emphasis is a concern for evangelising the lost, word and deed are not separated, since the emphasis on evangelisation is presented together with the need to minister to the whole man with the whole gospel.

The applicability of *No Strangers* to the African context is diminished by the book's orientation to the white North American context. The emphasis is understandable, since the original presentations were to a predominately white North American audience. However, the "white fright, white flight" syndrome has not been a relevant factor in Africa in the same way it has been in North America. On the other hand, the churches of Africa often see the city in a primarily negative light, so the message to white North Americans that God has not abandoned the city also applies to African churches.

Teachers will find this a useful class resource even if it requires adaptation to Africa, and others will find it an appetiser enticing them toward more thorough treatments of the subject.

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Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation
 by Peter Cotterell and Max Turner
 (London: SPCK, 1989)
 348 pages; £9.95

In the preface of this new book the authors express their dissatisfaction that “our system of higher education seems designed to keep the disciplines of biblical studies and linguistics isolated from each other, and few theologians have been exposed even to those aspects of linguistics which are of most obvious relevance to them” (p. 9). Although the authors are speaking of higher education in Britain, the remark is just as relevant elsewhere, and certainly in Africa.

The book has been written to supply that lack. As the authors state:

[Our book] introduces the interested student in a non-technical way to some aspects of linguistics which are relevant to biblical exegesis. We explain why some approaches to biblical texts may give misleading results, and how linguistics sometimes points the way to better methods (p. 9).

Cotterell and Turner have turned out a volume that ought to be in the library of every theological college, and on the bookshelf of every exegete who wishes to be taken seriously, including both lecturers and students. It is not the last word, but it does fulfil its claim: it helps to bridge the gap that prevents the interpreter of biblical texts from employing even the most basic insights of linguistics. And it should prevent biblical interpreters who are ignorant of basic linguistics from feeling comfortable in their work. From the viewpoint of this reviewer, these would be important achievements. Cotterell brings linguistics expertise and missionary experience gained in Ethiopia to bear on the problems addressed in this book, while Turner brings a professional theological and exegetical background.

The authors write in a fairly literary style, rather than in an informal, popular level of English. The text is generally clear, but they are sometimes guilty of cramming too much information into a sentence, especially by the use of heavy parentheses. They avoid introducing technical linguistic language without explanation, although occasionally a term slips through the net: for example, ‘metalinguistic’ (p. 22). They do tend to require a great deal from what they call the reader’s ‘presupposition pools’ (see pp. 90-97); for example, they make unnecessary reference to Scylla and Charybdis (p. 165) for stylistic effect. I say unnecessary – but of course, if the reader does have the required presuppositions in his/her pool, the authors do achieve the effect they are after!

These problems will perhaps make the book a bit heavy going for undergraduate students, but it really does repay any effort made.

The book is well-produced and well-organised. I noticed only two typing mistakes. Each chapter has useful section-headings and a plentiful supply of endnotes. This has the effect of keeping the page uncluttered, which will please many readers. And the book is reasonably priced.

Chapters 1, 2 and 3 introduce basic linguistic concepts about 'meaning', as a foundation for the rest of the book. The next two chapters are devoted to the use and abuse of word studies in biblical exegesis. Various biblical scholars have recently addressed this problem area, but it has rarely been approached from the viewpoint of linguistics. Cotterell and Turner are remarkably successful in doing this. Using our knowledge of how human language works, they take time to explain both the faulty exegesis which is still too often employed in word studies (chapter 4), and the corrective that linguistics can offer (chapter 5). Readers who have already encountered the criticisms raised by James Barr (1961), or by Donald Carson (1984), will not find chapter 4 too difficult. Chapter 5 is the longest in the book, and requires a bit more attention, taking up ideas introduced in chapter 3. This is a very careful discussion, packed with information, and will repay the close attention it demands of the reader.

Chapters 6, 7 and 8 are given over to a consideration of *discourse*. Discourse study is concerned with stretches of language larger than a single sentence. Obviously, most human communication is of this kind, and therefore it is important to study how longer stretches of coherent speech communicate. Linguists who are involved in translating the Christian Scriptures into non-European languages have been prominent in research efforts into discourse. Their struggle in particular to unravel the complex, dense argumentation of the New Testament letters has concentrated on the relationship of each proposition to the others, and on clarifying the contribution each makes to the total argument (chapter 6). Plot (or argument) structure is dealt with in chapter 7. Chapter 8 introduces some of the fascinating insights that underlie human conversational exchanges.

Finally, chapter 9 discusses non-literal, or figurative, language. Chiasmus, parable and allegory are included here, and will be familiar to most theological students. The discussions on parable and allegory especially provide good, concise reviews of the major interpretive issues. Indeed, for that reason, chapter 9 could be read first on picking up the book, and is even worth reading alone. The affective (that is, emotive or evocative) value of non-literal language is discussed, and there is a short but useful introduction to metaphor.

The fact that English and French play a dominant role in the higher levels of education across Africa (including theological education), and in the more prominent urban pulpits, could betray us into over-confidence. The reality is

of course that the linguistic diversity on the continent is great. Who can doubt that African languages provide the major means of communicating the Christian gospel in both urban and rural areas, from Sierra Leone to Somalia, from Cape Town to Cairo? If that is a correct assessment, then the sooner our Christian centres of learning begin to take account of the place of linguistics in biblical interpretation and proclamation, the better it will be for the Church of Christ in Africa.

A final warning is in order. This book is not designed to teach either linguistics or interpretation. Nor is it even designed to teach one how to apply linguistic insights to interpretation. The art of exegesis requires expertise in various disciplines, maturity of thought, the careful weighing of alternative opinions, and the skill that comes only from engaging in the struggle for truth. Linguistics has a contribution to make in this quest, a contribution till now largely unrecognised in traditional theological education. To teach how the biblical text may be approached with sound insight from linguistics will require more attention to linguistics in the school curriculum than is commonly practised. The real contribution of Cotterell and Turner is that they demonstrate the kind of assistance linguistics can offer us. If the book is successful, it should encourage many theological colleges to reconsider the place of semantics (and other aspects of linguistics) in their curriculum. The book should also make student readers eager for a better knowledge of linguistics as they prepare for Christian ministry.

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God, Language and Scripture
Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation vol 4
by Moisés Silva
(Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 1990)
160 pages; £7.95

It is not very often that one thinks of a book on hermeneutics as “delightful”, but that is the first word that came into my mind as I read *God, Language and Scripture* by Moises Silva. Silva is professor of New Testament at Westminster Theological Seminary, and a frequent writer on the relationship of linguistics to hermeneutics. This is the fourth volume in the new hermeneutical series “Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation”, also edited by Silva. The purpose of this new series is to explore the contributions of seven different

academic disciplines to biblical hermeneutics. Three previous volumes in this series have already been reviewed in AJET (9.2 [1990] pp. 56-61). This latest volume discusses the contribution of general linguistics to interpreting the Bible.

Silva begins his book with an imaginary story of the discovery in the twenty-eighth century of a twentieth-century English language text. In this imaginary story, an exegetical commentary (which looks much like a typical, present-day commentary on the Bible) is published to analyse the text. The illustration vividly and humorously shows how much modern exegesis is an over-interpretation of the text, based on a false idea of how language works. Anyone who has used a commentary or heard a preacher refer to "the original Greek" will identify with Silva's introduction and will be anxious to read the rest of the book.

Chapters two through four each introduce a different perspective on language. Chapter two presents a brief but balanced biblical theology of language, though Silva is careful to note that "we should not expect the Scriptures to provide a complete and well-defined philosophical framework for every intellectual discipline". Chapter three overviews some basic principles of linguistics. Chapter four gives the reader a historical perspective on the biblical languages. Each of these chapters is simply written with abundant illustrations, providing an excellent introduction for the reader with little background. For example, chapter three gives clear explanations of synchronic and diachronic description of language, and argues persuasively for the priority of synchronic description. By the end of the chapter even the beginner will understand what these terms mean and why the synchronic description of language is more important for proper hermeneutics. However, the chapters do end abruptly. They would have been even more clear and useful if they had concluded with a summary of the relevant principles for actually interpreting the Bible.

Chapters five and six are the heart of the book. Here Silva introduces the reader to how sounds, words, sentences and paragraphs work together to communicate meaning in the biblical languages. Frequent illustrations drive home Silva's basic message: Scripture must be interpreted in its historical and literary context. Far too often students misuse language by ignoring a plain reading of the text in favour of building exegetical arguments that hang on a questionable word study or a misunderstanding of verbal tense and aspect. Instead, "the biblical books were meant to be read as wholes and that is the way we should read them" (page 125).

Silva's last chapter is a brief look at the transmission and translation of the biblical text. This section seems even more brief and simple than the rest of the book, and rather weakly integrated into the larger themes of the book. As with some of the earlier chapters, the book as a whole ends abruptly. It needs

a concluding chapter that clarifies and summarises the practical suggestions for hermeneutics touched on earlier in the book.

Overall this book is strongly recommended as a simple introduction to the role of linguistics in hermeneutics. Its overall message – that people communicate through unified, whole propositions and that the Bible should be read that way – is badly needed in current biblical exegesis. Teachers of biblical introduction, Old and New Testament, exegesis, and hermeneutics will find it full of fresh ideas and illustrations for their courses. Its readability would make it good supplementary reading for a course in hermeneutics on the first degree level. As with other books of this series, its price makes it accessible for the libraries of African theological schools. It is a worthy addition to this useful series on interpretation.

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Galatians
Word Biblical Commentary
by Richard N. Longenecker
(Dallas: Word, 1990)
cxix + 323 pages; \$24.99

Scholars and pastors have been well-served by commentaries on Galatians over the last century and more. The older works of Lightfoot (1865) and Burton (1921) continue to reward careful study, while the recent volumes by Betz (1979) and Bruce (1982) provide thorough, more up-to-date analyses.

Despite such riches of scholarship, yet another commentary on Galatians is justified for two reasons. First, Betz's analysis of Galatians in light of ancient rhetorical practices marked a significant advance in New Testament studies and awakened the scholarly community to a method of study long ignored to their own detriment. However, while Betz's application of rhetorical criticism to Galatians broke new ground, it proved only partially satisfactory. Longenecker, taking advantage of study since Betz's commentary appeared, applies the tools of rhetorical and literary criticism with renewed profit for understanding Galatians.

Second, Galatians lies at the centre of a swirl of studies instigated primarily by E.P. Sanders' book *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (1977). Sanders called into question the traditional understanding of first century Judaism as a legalistic

religion seeking justification through accumulating good works. While Sanders' views have been criticised, they have nevertheless sparked a reassessment of the traditional understanding of Paul's doctrine of justification by faith. That understanding has long been viewed by Protestant Christianity as the heart of Paul's message – a message finding its clearest expression in Galatians. As a result, a number of crucial questions have resurfaced. Who exactly are Paul's opponents in Galatians? What is their false 'gospel' which Paul so venomously attacks? What is Paul's view of the 'Law' in light of all of this? The issues are many, as are the journal articles, books, and dissertations rolling off the presses in an attempt to resolve them. But these issues also lie at the heart of our understanding of the very essence of the Christian faith. Though Bruce and Betz appeared after the publication of Sanders' volume, Longenecker's work marks the first evangelical commentary on Galatians to take seriously this important debate (in contrast for example to the recent NIC volume by R. Fung).

Longenecker writes as one well-acquainted with Pauline and New Testament studies. He has published several volumes, notably *Paul: Apostle of Liberty* (1964), *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (1975), the section on Acts in the *Expositor's Bible Commentary* (1981), and *New Testament Social Ethics for Today* (1984). He currently serves as professor of New Testament at Wycliffe College, University of Toronto, Canada.

The introduction of the commentary will serve marvelously as preliminary reading for first-time students. Longenecker provides a fair overview of the history of interpretation, epistolary and rhetorical structures, date, addressees, opponents and situation. Longenecker argues both for an early date for the letter (before the Jerusalem Council) and for a south Galatian destination. He sees a two-fold problem in the Galatian churches – difficulty with outsiders who preach another gospel, plus ethical problems within the churches themselves. The author understands these outsiders in the context of escalating Jewish nationalism in Palestine during the time Galatians was written. Josephus tells us that during this period nationalists in Palestine were persecuting Jews with any hint of Gentile sympathy, forcing them to follow Jewish customs more closely. Following the lead of R. Jewett, Longenecker posits that Paul's opponents were Christian Jews from Palestine who were undergoing such difficulties. They came to Galatia in order to stress "the need for Gentiles to be circumcised and to keep the rudiments of the cultic calendar, both for full acceptance by God and as a proper Christian lifestyle" (xcv). If these Gentile believers would submit to the Jewish law, the Jewish Christians from Palestine would therefore cease to be persecuted for leniency toward Gentile adherents of a group that many still perceived as a Jewish sect. Paul's statement in 6:12-13 that his opponents wanted the Galatians to be circumcised in order that they themselves may "avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ"

therefore provides an essential clue for understanding these opponents and their message.

While Paul had no theological difficulties with “covenantal nomism” (Sanders’ phrase meaning submitting to the Law as an *expression* of one’s relationship with God rather than as a *means* to establish such a relationship) when that concept concerned an appropriate lifestyle for Jewish Christian believers, any attempt to force *Gentile* believers to submit to the *Jewish* law as part of their Christian lifestyle would result in legalism. For Paul such legalism violated the very foundations of the new covenant. In this way, the author attempts to accommodate the contention that first century Judaism was not *characterised* by legalism, while at the same time maintaining that Paul does argue against legalism. While this reconstruction remains hypothetical (as much of our reconstruction of early Christianity must), this is a positive attempt to work all of the evidence into a coherent whole. At the same time, one could ask for a more thorough explanation regarding *how* the position of the “Judaizers” constitutes legalism. Paul employs some of the most vitriolic language in the New Testament against his opponents’ position. Longenecker’s description of that position seems too mild to warrant such a response. Here we must admit that while Longenecker helps us along the way toward understanding the situation in Galatia, more work remains to be done.

Regarding the internal ethical problems, Longenecker cites evidence in Galatians which indicates these churches endured ethical problems from the beginning (5:21). Paul’s opponents may have felt submission to the details of the Law would resolve such troubles, while viewing Paul’s disregard of the Law as part of an antinomian cause of the trouble. Paul develops his own response to these ethical issues in 5:13-6:10.

Several additional points of strength merit comment. With the exception noted above, Longenecker coherently develops a unified understanding of this epistle on the holistic basis of literary, theological, and historical considerations. He persuasively argues that Paul moves to exhortation beginning at 4:12, rather than at 5:1 or 5:13 as most commentators propose. He views Galatians as consisting of multiple rhetorical conventions rather than purely the forensic model proposed by Betz. He also provides the reader with many of the best insights from the commentaries of Betz, Bruce, Mussner, Burton and (to a lesser extent) Lightfoot.

On the negative side, the pastor or teacher in the local church will find little application here. While Longenecker concludes each explanation section with a sentence or two in the general direction of application, the reader is largely left alone in this task. In addition, although the bibliographies are ample, they are not as thorough as in other volumes in this series. For example, though Longenecker emphasises literary and rhetorical analysis, he makes no reference either in the text or in the bibliographies to D. Aune’s *The New*

Testament in Its Literary Environment. Several recent journal articles relevant to issues under study also escape notice. Four indexes include Ancient Sources, Modern Authors, Principal Subjects, and Biblical Texts. A partial sampling of only three modern authors uncovered two errors!

Nevertheless, this is a helpful commentary on what may be our earliest Christian writing. Longenecker grapples with current issues and provides a lucid understanding from an evangelical perspective. As such, well-worn copies of this work certainly belong in theological libraries and on the shelves of NT lecturers.

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INDEX TO AFRICA JOURNAL OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY Volumes 1-10 (1982-1991)

Notes and Corrections:

- (i) The first issue, vol 1.1-2, was a double issue for 1982.
- (ii) Vol 6.2 (1987) was mis-labeled on the cover as "9.2".
- (iii) Vol 7.2 (1988) was mis-dated on the cover as "April 1989".
- (iv) Commencing with vol 9.1 (1990), the journal's name was changed from EAST AFRICA JOURNAL OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY to **Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology**.

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