

BOOK REVIEWS

African Traditional Religion in Biblical Perspective
by Richard Gehman
(Kijabe, Kenya: Kesho Publications, 1989)
310 pages; \$5.00/Ksh 120

African traditional religion has been and continues to be the concern of evangelists, church planters, theologians and all those who seek the impact of the Gospel of Jesus Christ on Africa today. For all such people, Dr Gehman's book will prove a welcome and valuable addition to the already large collection of books dealing with African traditional religion.

Dr Richard Gehman was born in 1935 in the United States. He received a BA in anthropology in 1960 from Wheaton College, an MS in New Testament from Wheaton College Graduate School, an MDiv in 1963 from Gordon Divinity School, and a Doctor of Missiology in 1985 from the School of World Mission, Pasadena CA. In 1966 Gehman and his wife joined the Africa Inland Mission in Kenya, where he served as principal of Scott Theological College for eight years. Gehman is now coordinating the Theological Advisory Group of the Africa Inland Church in Kenya, a body assigned to promote the development of theological reflection in the Africa Inland Church context.

The author's research in African traditional religion [*hereafter ATR*] began in 1973, when he took a sabbatical from his professorial position at Scott Theological College in order to prepare a syllabus for the teaching of ATR. A mimeographed version of *African Traditional Religion in Biblical Perspective* resulted, and this became a textbook used in seven Bible schools and colleges in Kenya and Tanzania (p. 12). This material was completely reworked and rewritten for the present publication in 1989.

Gehman arranges his work in five parts. Part one deals with "Foundational Issues." This includes a survey of recent study on ATR, the issue of the origins of religion, and the special focus of ATR on man. Part two treats the "Mystical Powers" while parts three and four deal respectively with "The Spirit World" and "The Supreme Being." The concluding part five offers pertinent observations on the relationship of Biblical Christianity to ATR, on syncretism, and on a Christian attitude to ATR. In each of the three central parts of the book, the first chapter surveys the general beliefs and practices of ATR on the designated topic. This is followed by a chapter giving a relevant case study of

the Akamba tribe in eastern Kenya, and a chapter on the worldwide situation. By doing this the author hopes to avoid the pitfalls of over-generalising or over-particularising – pitfalls into which many writers on ATR fall. The author concludes each of these central parts with a chapter on the Biblical perspective, in which truth and error are judged in light of Biblical teaching.

Gehman's purpose in this study is to produce "a textbook for serious students interested in learning ATR from a biblical perspective" (p. 10). Assessing ATR "from a biblical perspective" leads the author to emphasise two elements: "1) ATR as traditionally practised in Africa and 2) ATR as interpreted by the Holy Bible" (p. 10). In the preface Gehman states explicitly that his method is "to expound relevant biblical teaching and apply it to the issues in our study" (p. 10). The central thesis of the book is that "the traditional belief in God is both the great strength of ATR as well as, paradoxically, its chief weakness." The goal of the book is "to help in the development of mature Christian thinking about African Traditional Religion" (pp. 10-11). To reach this goal, the author examines some of the crucial issues in ATR under the spotlight of God's Word, discerning between truth and error.

In the introductory section entitled "Foundational Issues for African Traditional Religion," Gehman gives five reasons why we should study ATR: 1. "ATR should be studied for its own sake"; 2. "ATR is the religious background of African peoples whom Christians seek to evangelise today"; 3. "Many professing Christians rely on ATR in times of crisis"; 4. "The Christian Church in Africa needs to contextualize faith so that it becomes truly rooted in the life of the peoples"; 5. "The revival of ATR brings a sense of urgency to this study."

While man remains the focus of the traditional African culture, mystical powers such as magic, sorcery and witchcraft affect everyone for better or for worse (p. 67). Access to these mystical powers by the ordinary African was through specialists who served either the interests of the community or the malicious designs of individuals (p. 78). Through traditional means ATR provided protection and guidance in a world filled with malice and greed. Despite the availability of professional help from the medicine man, fear and suspicion were prevalent. It was this, providentially, that prepared many Africans for the preaching of the gospel which offered security and hope through Jesus Christ to those living in fear (p. 96).

Concerning the Supreme Being, Gehman states that there are both strengths and weaknesses in the traditional knowledge and worship of God. The author affirms that "the ATR notion of God in many ways forms a continuity with biblical revelation" (p. 193). God is omnipotent, omniscient, almighty, transcendent, everlasting, spirit, kind, merciful and good, holy and unique (pp. 191-92). God created the world which He protects and saves (p. 192). Gehman examines the truths in ATR and sees them as God's witness of Himself among the African people (p. 223). "However," he says, "we ought not overrate ATR,

for the traditional religion in Africa is representative of natural religion throughout the world" (p. 223).

Dr Gehman warns his readers against any uncritical acceptance of traditional beliefs: "If in fact you would embrace en toto what ATR has taught and practices, you would then become an adherent of ATR. But even those ardent nationalists who call for a return to traditional African culture make their own discrimination between what they are willing to accept and follow and what they reject. Thus there must be some other criteria by which we make a critical judgment of ATR" (p. 106). This criteria is not natural science as advocated by modern man but the Scripture which provides a necessary corrective to evaluate ATR from the divine perspective.

The table of contents is somehow confusing, since the main points of the book (*Mystical Power, The Spirit World, and The Supreme Being*) are but three of the five parts. However, Gehman's book undoubtedly accomplishes its purpose. Its primary strength is in what it claims to be, namely an analysis of ATR beliefs and practices in the light of Biblical truth. Throughout the book the author shows a good knowledge of materials written on ATR. His "Survey of Literature on ATR" (p. 292) is helpful for those who want to do more research on this field of study. The book includes hundreds of OT and NT references; review questions and suggested readings after each chapter; a survey of literature on ATR; six pages of bibliography, and on each major category of beliefs and practices a comparative study of the Akamba, the African scene generally, and the worldwide situation. It is indeed a valuable volume for scholars, pastors and evangelists who want access to a work which is responsible both in its treatment of ATR and in its attention to the Bible. This work should not only be read but also owned and kept near at hand.

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Foolishness to the Greeks

by Lesslie Newbigin

(Grand Rapids: Eerdmans/London: SPCK, 1986)

156 pages; \$7.95/£5.95

The Gospel in a Pluralistic Society

by Lesslie Newbigin

(Grand Rapids: Eerdmans/London: SPCK, 1989)

244 pages; \$14.95/£8.95

The Western expressions which clothed the gospel as it came to Africa have hindered the development of an authentically African Christian theology. That influence continues in Africa today in the form of Western teachers and textbooks. What is needed is a filter through which Christians on this continent can sort out the cultural factors from the gospel. These two books by Lesslie Newbigin provide a starting point for that task by an authoritative examination of the underlying value systems of the contemporary West in relation to the Christian gospel.

Newbigin worked in India for nearly 40 years before returning to live in England. Doubtless those years of third world residence helped sharpen Newbigin's insights on first world problems. In the West his two incisive studies are becoming classics of contemporary Christian discussion. For somewhat different reasons they can assist current Christian reflection in Africa as well.

Borrowing the concept of "plausibility structure" from sociologist Peter Berger, Newbigin defines it as those ideas which a culture unquestioningly assumes as true or plausible. These ideas hold powerful sway within that culture. Traditionally, a central assumption in the West was a firm belief in the reality of the Christian God and the moral tenets of the Christian faith. Newbigin contends that since the Enlightenment this structure has gradually and imperceptibly been replaced. In its stead, Western culture now assumes a radical dichotomy between fact and value. Public "facts", those matters assumed as true and unquestioned in the culture, involve items which can be demonstrated by the scientific method. On the other hand, issues of "values" – moral issues and especially religious beliefs – are relegated to a strictly "private" sphere of individual choice, since the "truth" of these beliefs cannot be empirically verified. These individual choices are not binding on anyone other than the individual who chooses. Religion, particularly Christianity, by definition no longer has any authority other than in a strictly personal sphere. The end result is a culture proclaiming "pluralism", but one which is pluralistic only in matters of "value" not in matters of "fact".

In *Foolishness to the Greeks*, Newbigin establishes this thesis, and then explores how these cultural roots bear fruit in disciplines such as economics, science, politics, work, education, ethics, and theology. In the process, he provides a scathing critique of these modern assumptions. Newbigin concludes with a chapter on the church and how it can speak of spiritual truth for all within a culture in which its voice is relegated to only personal matters.

Whereas *Foolishness to the Greeks* lays theoretical foundations and begins to develop the groundwork for an apologetic in light of this evidence, *The Gospel in a Pluralistic Society* briefly restates Newbigin's thesis but then goes on to develop a much fuller apologetic and agenda for proclaiming the gospel within a Western context. Here Newbigin goes beyond the scope of his first work to

discuss topics such as election, philosophy of history, contextualization, religious pluralism, principalities and powers, and the theology of missions.

Due to the broad sweep of Newbigin's discussion, a point by point evaluation of his argument is not within the bounds of this review. Nevertheless, a few general comments are in order. One cannot but be impressed by the agenda Newbigin lays before the reader. He lays bare hidden Western cultural assumptions and traces their manifestations in numerous aspects of society. This is certainly the most valuable contribution made by these books. Yet he goes beyond diagnosis to prescribe a general but wide-ranging Christian response. Due to the sheer variety of issues involved, his suggestions will no doubt provoke scattered disagreement. The value of this portion of his work, however, is the scope of matters he opens for discussion. Disagree we might, but we cannot ignore his arguments.

Second, Newbigin spells out that in a society which denies the existence of absolute religious truth (other than the absolute religious truth that there is no absolute religious truth!), the community of believers must recognise that the gospel will not be accepted as true when it is merely spoken. The church must be the place where the gospel is displayed as truth in the lives of those who believe.

My chief frustration with these books is the lack of definition in some parts of the author's discussion. In chapter seven of *Gospel*, for example, Newbigin seems clearly to advocate universalism. Yet he concludes the chapter with a paragraph acknowledging that while his views do sound like universalism, he wants to distance himself from that view. What exactly does he believe? Here the discussion is muddled. In the same chapter, he states that thinking of salvation in terms of what happens to a non-Christian after death is "the wrong question and that as long as it remains the central question we shall never come to the truth" (177). Yet there is never any explanation of why that issue is of such little significance. While some views left undefined in *Foolishness* are clarified in the second book, these and others are never completely resolved to the reader's satisfaction. *The Gospel in a Pluralistic Society* would also be enhanced with the inclusion of endnotes, indices, and a bibliography (other than the five books cited in the preface).

Even so, Newbigin's analysis of the disease infecting Western culture far outweighs any weaknesses found in these books. For African students of theology such an analysis is critical for several reasons:

1. Western culture has permeated Africa in myriad ways (including assumptions concerning theological education). Its influence will only increase as urbanisation grows and the global village shrinks. We cannot prevent it – cultures will blend. If Africa is to develop *African* Christian theology, it must have the necessary tools by which to critique the *assumptions* of the largely Western theological traditions it has received. Without these tools, the African church

is not equipped to sort the wheat from the chaff. If Newbigin's assessment of Western culture and therefore theology is correct, and I believe it is, it is precisely in those unspoken assumptions where the chaff lies.

2. Many young theological students are eager to study abroad. But an education in the West without an understanding of the assumptions which underlie that education can prove to be dangerous indeed. Furthermore, Western textbooks and missionaries (like myself) still often predominate in theological education on this continent. Neither we nor our textbooks can be totally divorced from the good and the bad in our culture. Newbigin's books can help both teachers and students recognise these factors.

Foolishness to the Greeks should be required reading as part of any course treating modern Western theology. I assigned it to a BA third year class in historical theology, and, while some students found the reading difficult, the experience was an eye-opener once they began to grasp its basic thesis. *The Gospel in a Pluralistic Society* is more involved reading. I recommend that at student level it be read by a group and discussed, not read and digested individually. It deserves careful reading by those of us in teaching roles and belongs in every theological library.

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Islam in the Modern World: A Christian Perspective
by Norman Anderson
(Leicester: IVP, 1990)
280 pages; £12.95

Books by evangelicals about Islam have proliferated in the last decade. While one is tempted to look askance at yet another title on this subject, several features set this book apart from many other recent publications in the field. Sir Norman Anderson was Professor of Oriental Law and Director of the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies at the University of London before his retirement. *Islam in the Modern World* represents a compilation of his writings over the past decades. The author explains in the preface that he was asked by friends to gather together some of his non-technical writings on Islam, update them, and add new material in order to produce this book. Thus the chapters on Muslim mysticism and the epilogue are totally new, while the other chapters represent revisions of previously published material.

As one of Britain's leading lay evangelical theologians, Anderson brings an erudite perspective to the topic. He divides his treatment into two sections: "Islam today" and "The Christian response." The latter section focuses on incarnation, cross, and resurrection. Unlike some more superficial accounts of Islam by Christian writers, Anderson takes readers on an in-depth historical journey. His introductory chapter sketches the founding of the religion by Muhammad, with its later development under the Caliphs and the Sunni/Shi'a schism. Anderson gives a brief sketch of the four main legal schools within Sunni Islam and traces the development of Islamic theology until "the door was shut" on theologising less than four centuries after Muhammad's death. After a discussion of the five pillars of Islam, the author describes the present crisis as Muslim people try to deal with the modern world. His analysis of this dilemma is skillfully presented; the law of apostasy, the rights of non-Muslim minorities, the basic desire for a theocracy based on application of Sharia law, and the rigid nature of Islamic theology are explained clearly.

Anderson goes on to devote a chapter to theology and law. These he terms, "the twin sciences that have dominated Muslim education." He compares Islamic concepts of law and scripture with Jewish and Christian notions. Some of the more significant controversies in the development of Islamic theology are analysed, with special attention to the love and transcendence of God. The chapter on Sufism traces the reaction of many Muslims to the sterile legalism of orthodox Islam and their attempt to find a closer relationship with God via various mystic practices. Anderson points out that the early Sufis were influenced by Hellenistic and Christian thought and tended towards asceticism; later Sufi practice emphasised more the ecstatic contact with God via certain forms of dancing and chanting, with a corresponding disinterest in morality. The first half of the book is concluded by a chapter on Islamic fundamentalism. Here Anderson endeavours to explain why modern Muslims from Morocco to the Philippines fight for a return to Sharia law. The author soberly concludes this chapter with these words:

Rampant Islamic fundamentalism—when it comes to power, or even contends for power—is far from an attractive phenomenon. On the contrary, it represents a recurrent menace in the world today, for its fanaticism embodies the very spirit of jihad. It has already had, and it may well continue to have, local victories which result in anarchy or autocracy, confusion or bondage. We can [be] sure, however, that it will never prevail.

In the second half of the book, Anderson focuses on what he terms the great theological differences between Islam and Christianity. He points out that Muslims feel the Quran is the basic revelation of God, while Christians view the greatest revelation of God in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. Anderson's initial chapter on the incarnation revolves around two complementary approaches: the "upward" approach, using inductive reasoning from the accounts of Jesus in the Gospel writers to arrive at Christ's divinity, and a "downward", deductive approach that begins with the doctrine of God.

Following this, Anderson reviews the history of Christology, with particular emphasis on the councils of the early church and the later contributions of the Reformation. Some of this material becomes rather technical, yet the author's style remains readable. References and comparisons to Islamic theology are made at appropriate places. However, while the next chapter entitled "The incarnation and other religions" is thought-provoking, it contains few specific references to Islam. Its inclusion seems somewhat outside the scope of this book.

Anderson concludes his section on the Christian response by examining the relationship between the doctrine of the incarnation and one's personal faith. Here he emphasises the importance of the doctrine of atonement – a very significant difference with Islam. The author paints a sharp contrast between the God of Scriptures that is capable of emotions and the philosophical abstraction of Islamic theology, a contrast between a Heavenly Father and an utterly transcendent deity.

In his Epilogue, Anderson summarises his main points and suggest areas for possible dialogue with Muslims. Again, he stresses the practical expressions of God's love for fallen sinners as expressed by the crucifixion. An appendix that briefly exposes the fraudulent *Gospel of Barnabas* is also included.

The strength of this book is its scholarly, yet well-written, summary of Islam in terms of history, law and theology. The careful reader will scarcely find a clearer exposition of the topic in so few pages as in Part I of *Islam in the Modern World*. The second part of the book dealing with the Christian response is not quite as lucid, yet certainly reviews some of the key differences between our faith and that of our Muslim neighbors. At times it almost seems as much an apologetic against non-evangelical European theologians as an attempt to describe key areas of Muslim-Christian divergence.

Anderson tends to assume a "dialogue" with Muslims will be the natural application for his book. Whether this form of witness is actually very effective (or possible, given the current mood in the Muslim world) may be questioned. However, for students who wish a deeper analysis of what many observers deem Christianity's greatest challenge, this book can be recommended. *Islam in the Modern World* is appropriate for use at first degree or at graduate levels, either as a text or as a reference work. This book would also make a worthy addition to the libraries of schools which include courses on Islam in their curriculum.

While not specifically geared towards an African audience, Anderson's book is of direct relevance to Christians on this continent. The last few decades have seen unprecedented Islamic missionary activity as a result of Arab oil wealth. This has had the effect both of increasing the number of adherents to Islam, and of weakening the syncretistic "folk Islam" throughout both North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa. Today's young, educated African Muslim has much

more in common with the rigid Sunni orthodoxy of Arabia than his parents. Militant Islam is finding adherents throughout the continent, and as urbanisation and contact with the Muslim mainstream continues, the influence of "folk Islam" will correspondingly diminish. This volume will be helpful in acquainting African Christians with beliefs of their Muslim neighbours. It is not a "how-to" manual on witnessing, but nonetheless it will stimulate thought on ways to proclaim the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ.

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*The Invention of Africa:
Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge*
by V. Y. Mudimbe
(Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 1988)
241 pages

Most readers of AJET are probably interested in relating Christian reflection to African realities as specifically as possible. But what is Africa and what does it mean to be African in the present world order? While many people have dealt with these questions, and continue to do so, few African scholars have devoted as much time and energy to them as has V. Y. Mudimbe. The purpose of the present review is therefore, in part, to call the attention of AJET readers to Mudimbe and to his work.

V. Y. Mudimbe is from Zaire. At present he is Professor of Romance Languages and Comparative Literature at Duke University in the United States. A multi-talented individual, his literary output includes works of poetry, novels, philosophy, sociology, anthropology, linguistics and philology. So far Mudimbe's works display a remarkable unity in their theme. They all deal with the possibility of an authentic African discourse on Africa. Throughout his writings Mudimbe insists that such a discourse must necessarily begin with a thorough critique of the academic disciplines which seem to denounce Western ethnocentrism, namely anthropology and the social sciences (see Manthia Diawara, "Reading Africa through Foucault: V. Y. Mudimbe's Re-affirmation of the Subject" *Quest* iv.1 [1990] p. 76).

The Invention of Africa represents Mudimbe's maturing scholarship and it is his first book-length essay written originally in English. English language readers now have access to the themes Mudimbe explored in his earlier works such as *L'autre face du royaume* (1973) and *L'odeur du père* (1982).

The Invention of Africa is subtitled "Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge". The subtitle is appropriate since, as the author explains, "the book evolved . . . , as a result of an invitation to prepare a survey of African philosophy" (p. x). The book is therefore focused on the process involved in creating African philosophy. In that sense Mudimbe's purpose is to investigate the very "foundations of discourse about Africa" (p. xi). Mudimbe is not afraid of tackling the complex issues of knowledge, power and scholarship on Africa. These issues are inextricably linked with the question of identity. Consequently, for Mudimbe the basic question is: what does it mean "to be an African and a philosopher today" (p. xi).

It is a well-known fact that the modern discussion on African philosophy began in the contexts both of Western anthropological discourse and of Christian missionising. Any critique of Western social science has therefore inevitable implications for Christian ministry in the continent. In five chapters in *The Invention of Africa*, Mudimbe manages to conduct a vigorous and stimulating assessment of what he calls the Africanist discourse on Africa. Chapter three, entitled "The Power of Speech", compares missionary and anthropological ideas on Africa and on Africans. Mudimbe contends that "anthropology, as well as missionary studies of primitive philosophies, are . . . concerned with the study of the distance from the Same to the Other" (p. 81). That is, in the case of Africa those studies do not acquaint us with African philosophies but with a deviant Western philosophy.

While we may feel comfortable with Mudimbe's critique of Western ethnocentrism seen even in anthropology, we need to remember that *The Invention of Africa* is also a serious indictment against some aspects of Christian theologising in Africa (see the charts on pages 50 to 60). Mudimbe forces us to re-examine some of the assumptions which influence us when we attempt to establish an authentic African form of Christianity. He reminds us that the intellectual tools we often use are not as neutral as we like to think.

Beyond *The Invention of Africa*, readers should familiarise themselves with Mudimbe's other works as they become available in English. He may be one of the most innovative African thinkers to be actively engaged in writing today (see Bernard Mouralis, *V. Y. Mudimbe ou le Discours, l'Écart et l'Écriture* [Paris: Présence Africaine, 1988] pp. 9-15).

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Christian Ministry: Patterns and Functions within the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus
by Johnny Bakke
(Oslo: Solum Forlag A.S./New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1987)
297 pages; \$11.00

This study was a doctoral dissertation presented in 1986 to the Faculty of Theology at Uppsala University, Sweden. Unlike many theses and dissertations which major on technical minutia, Dr Bakke has produced a very succinct and readable book.

Christian Ministry is presented in three parts. Part One examines various religious leadership roles among two indigenous people groups (the Sidama of southern Ethiopia and the Oromo of western Ethiopia), as well as the ministerial role of the clergy within one of the ancient churches of Christendom, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Part Two analyses the ministerial patterns introduced into the Mekane Yesus Church by three different Lutheran groups working within Ethiopia, namely the Swedish Evangelical Mission, The German Hermannsburg Mission, and the Norwegian Lutheran Mission, all three of which had 19th Century pietistic roots. Part Three attempts to describe the dynamic interplay within the matrix of the independent national Mekane Yesus Church. Such factors as rapid church growth, generous development funds from outside, and a society going through the throes of a Marxist/Leninist revolution, challenged the ministerial training programme which had been largely shaped by European models.

Those involved anywhere in Africa in the exciting venture of training men and women for the ministry would greatly benefit from the reading of Dr Bakke's book for the following reasons:

1. The book sensitises the reader to the importance of religious leadership models within primal cultures. The 'luba' institution of the Oromo is carefully described. This chosen leader functioned both as priest and chief. Bakke asks if the function of the 'luba' could not have been better incorporated into the very warp and woof of the evangelical ministry.
2. Theological educators will find a rich resource of relevant material in the deliberations which lie behind the founding and formation of the Mekane Yesus Seminary. Bakke sensitively but candidly shares the sharp debate that took place within their ranks over several decades.
3. The book also highlights the significance and centrality which the church must have in theological training. This may seem self-evident. But so many theological training centres in Africa represent imported foreign structures which have been imposed upon the churches, rather than training centres

developed from within the fellowship of the church and expressing felt needs of the body.

4. The reader may interact with the heart-felt plea of Bakke for the training of a full-orbed, diversified ministry for the evangelical church. He has been connected with the Mekane Yesus Seminary for over twenty years, half of which time he has served as principal. But during these two decades the role of the evangelists within the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY) has diminished, as has their number. He says, "In a period when pastoral education greatly improved, the standard of training evangelists remained the same as before" (p. 208). He laments the fact that the evangelists who deserved tribute for having built the EECMY in Ethiopia are now being forgotten.

I would have found Bakke's study even more helpful if the following were included:

1. A chart indicating how many students were graduated from EECMY training centres such as Tabor in southern Ethiopia, Onesimus in western Ethiopia and Mekane Yesus Seminary in Addis Ababa, and the kinds of ministry in which these graduates are now involved.

2. Some indication as to the cost effectiveness of ministerial training within the EECMY. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church has managed to train her clergy for over a millennium and a half with meagre assistance from outside resources. Quality theological training in Africa does have a price tag. But what percentage from outside funding agencies is pumped into the EECMY ministerial training programme and how much is contributed by the students' sponsoring churches?

3. Day to day reports or diaries of several pastors serving in different synods. What are pastors called on to do for the life of the church? How do they spend their time during the week? From what texts do they preach? What function do they fulfil in the community at large?

In conclusion, I highly recommend a careful reading of *Christian Ministry*, and concur in Dr Bakke's own wish, that "the result of this study will be a strengthening of the evangelical ministry and its role in a modern African society" (p 24).

[Copies may be ordered directly from the author, at: PO Box 1247, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; \$11 plus postage.]

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Crossing Cultures for Christ
 edited by Robert J. Oehrig, Rhena Taylor, and Diane Omondi
 (Nairobi: Daystar University College, 1987)
 110 pages; Ksh 40/

This book is a full report of the African Missionary Seminar which was held 15-25 September 1987 in Nairobi, Kenya. The collection includes a dozen papers by ten authors, focusing on the challenges of doing mission work in Africa, by Africans, the African way.

Sometimes the scope is a bit enlarged. For example Rev Yemi Ladipo writes on "The African Missionary in England," and G. Sasikumar has two papers on the Indian scene (on the missionary movement in India, and on creating mission awareness in the Church). These could be used to compare with the African situation. Another paper gives statistics on world Christianity (reprinted in EAJET vii.1 [1988] 3-9, as "The Future of World Christianity").

The remaining seven papers speak about Africa, dealing with the challenge of missions in East Africa, emerging missions, gifts from the African missionary to the rest of the world Church, mission models for the African Church, designing an African missionary structure, and funding the African missionary movement.

Reports from group discussions on mission topics (i.e., structures, selection and training, partnership, raising mission awareness) are given from an African point of view. The opening devotion by the Rev Ibrahim Omondi is given in full as a paper. Daily devotional talks are summarised. The book concludes with a list of the participants, and the report of a resolution to form a follow-up committee, while pictures of participants are added on a separate sheet.

Compared with stencilled conference reports, this typed but printed book is more inviting to the reader. The language is easy and understandable. Subtitles, and sometimes the very clear structure of the papers, help in reading and assimilating the contents. In some of the articles typing errors are not absent, as is often the case in stencilled reports.

The importance of this book goes beyond that of reporting on a particular conference. It is, as far as I know, the first presentation of African missiology. Certainly it does not cover all the ground, which would make for a long and expensive book. But it treats the relevant questions, is task-oriented, gives bibliography for further reading, and is affordable. It poses a certain theoretical base but has application in mind. Since it is the report of an event, it has a certain liveliness which a normal textbook would not have.

Crossing Cultures for Christ will be of interest to African missionaries, mission leaders, and mission candidates. Since church leaders often have to cultivate a missionary awareness, they should not neglect this book either. I would also recommend it for courses in missions at theological schools. It treats relevant questions that need to be addressed in such a course. It is clear and interesting, gives topics for group discussions, is short enough, and introduces the student to the names of several emerging African missiologists. In a future edition a note about each contributor could be given. In view of its potential use as a textbook, for a future edition the whole could be worked over and a few papers added, for example on the topic of adapting to other African cultures. Things that only concerned the conference in particular could then be left out.

Pages 35 to 74 constitute the main teaching part of the book. Dr Jones Kaleli speaks there about the gifts of the *African* church, which is important since many are still looking for Western technology or missionaries instead of moving ahead with the gifts God has given to the church in Africa. In a further paper, Dr Kaleli states briefly the biblical basis for mission and gives, against the backdrop of Western missionary models, proposals for the African Church, stressing interdependence. Rev Yemi Ladipo not only speaks about a desirable African missionary structure but shows what hinders it both from within the church and from the outside (reprinted, with improvements in style, orthography, and layout, in *EAJET* viii.2 [1989] 19-24).

The article by Donna R. Downes, based on an MA thesis by A. Dei- Awuku on indigenous funding, is the largest contribution (20 pages), and gives good and up-to-date details that can stimulate organising the financial support of missions. At the same time, four main reasons are shown why the churches so far often do not sufficiently support missionary efforts.

The group reports (pp. 89-106) take a special interest in application and therefore put forward many proposals to Church leaders. The desire for an interdenominational training centre for missions is expressed, a possible curriculum given, and steps are proposed for a partnership of theological schools in missionary training. Proposals for corporate financing and for creating mission interest in the churches call for action as well.

Several African churches have sent out missionaries; others have to think about doing so to become fully mature. This book can help in the necessary reflections and planning, stimulate thinking and give some ideas. It is a necessary purchase for any theological or church library in Africa, and recommended reading for anyone working or intending to work in the church and her mission in Africa.

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Baptism with the Spirit: The Teaching of Martyn Lloyd-Jones
 by Michael Eaton
 (Leicester: IVP, 1989)
 253 pages; £8.95

Michael Eaton is known to many in Africa for his skill as an expositor of the Scriptures, a skill he has exercised with great impact in Kenya as well as in central and southern Africa. His commentary on Ecclesiastes in the Tyndale Commentary series published by Inter-Varsity Press has been well received. Those expecting to enjoy Eaton's expository skills in this present work will not be disappointed, though now the text for exposition is not that of Scripture but rather the writings of Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones [hereafter *MLJ*], the Welsh minister who preached at Westminster Chapel in London for thirty years and enjoyed one of the most remarkable preaching ministries in the English-speaking world in this century. The specific subject that Mr Eaton addresses, in this rewritten MTh thesis presented to the University of South Africa, is *MLJ's* teaching regarding a second baptism of the Spirit in the life of the believer, separable from and subsequent to conversion.

To display *MLJ's* distinctive views, Eaton divides his study into four parts. Parts one and two give us the author's general approach to the subject (supportive of *MLJ's* views) and trace the historic influences on *MLJ's* view of Spirit baptism (John Calvin, Richard Sibbes, Thomas Goodwin, John Owen and Jonathan Edwards). Part three describes *MLJ's* understanding of the biblical teaching on Spirit baptism. The final part offers the author's assessment.

What was the view held by *MLJ*? Eaton seeks to show that *MLJ* taught that the baptism *with* the Spirit was "*primarily a 'sealing' of one's salvation* [author's emphasis]. It is an intensification of the assurance of salvation, a *direct* assurance from God of one's salvation, not a *sylogistic* assurance (i.e. an assurance which one deduces from the fact that one has believed)" (p. 29). *MLJ* came to this conclusion by his reading of the Puritans and by his careful study of Scripture. Thomas Goodwin exerted the most influence on *MLJ* among the Puritan writers. Goodwin held to a two-stage model of the Spirit's work, though Eaton admits he did so in contrast to Calvin and Owen. *MLJ's* view mirrors Goodwin's to a great extent.

But *MLJ* was more deeply influenced by the New Testament than he was by Goodwin. For *MLJ* the baptism with the Spirit (different from baptism *by* the Spirit in 1 Cor 12:3) as a second and subsequent experience is based largely on six passages in Acts (chapters 2; 8; 9; 10-11; 18; and 19). Having made this decision, he then interpreted the important passages about assurance in Romans 8:16 (witness of the Spirit) and Ephesians 1:13-14 (seal and earnest

of the Spirit) in light of this two-stage model of the experience of the Spirit. Full assurance directly mediated by the inner testimony of the Spirit apart from normal means is identified as the baptism with the Spirit.

What is the significance of this second baptism for MLJ? This baptism with the Spirit is to be prayed for and sought by the believer for it brings with it the most wonderful benefits and Christian graces. The sense of God's presence and majesty, the fullness of joy and the assurance of God's love flood the Christian's soul. Power in ministry is the inevitable result. Who of us does not desire this deeper experience? MLJ was not in agreement with Charismatics that this baptism brings with it extraordinary signs and wonders. MLJ was primarily concerned with the renewing of one's love for God and joy in sonship. "The inevitable result of a knowledge and an assurance of the love of God toward us," wrote MLJ, "is to fill us with this great joy" (p. 175). Eaton shows how MLJ's view of this second experience of the Spirit shaped his view of revival and inspired his opposition to any form of antinomianism.

What are we to make of this careful study of MLJ's views on assurance and Spirit baptism? One can appreciate the careful scholarship, the fine analysis of texts and the warm fervour for the experience of the Spirit that underlies this book. Yet one also shifts about uneasily over a number of other features of this book. Much of the book *assumes* the truth of R. T. Kendall's understanding of Calvinism, Puritanism, the extent of the atonement, assurance, conversion, faith and related matters. Kendall is never scrutinised, merely accepted as the last word. Yet his study of these questions in *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649* (1979) is open to major criticisms, especially his increasingly improbable opinion that Calvin held to universal atonement and pointed to this as the foundation of his theology of faith and assurance (cf. Calvin's own comments on 1 John 2:2 for a decidedly different view). The work of Richard Muller in particular, in *Christ and the Decree* (1986), has seriously challenged the conclusions of Kendall. Furthermore I am not convinced of the soundness of MLJ's understanding of the six passages from Acts, and must confess that J. Dunn's *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, which views this experience as part of the complex of conversion-initiation, is much more convincing to me.

Yet the greatest service this book provides to the churches of Africa and elsewhere is to cultivate a greater longing for the ongoing ministry of the Holy Spirit, whether one prefers the terms 'filling' or 'baptism'. We need to hunger for a full assurance of God's love in Christ; we need the sense of God's presence and majesty to fill our souls; we need in greater measure the joy in God that alone can satisfy our deepest longings. This is the great value of MLJ's teaching and of this appreciative study of that teaching. Eaton's comments about John Owen remind us that believers do not necessarily need to agree on the theology of the Spirit's baptism(s) in order to enjoy the experience of the Spirit and the full assurance of faith He imparts. Eaton notes that while Owen moved away from the two-stage model of the Spirit's work taught by Goodwin

(and followed by MLJ), they continued to share a crucial common conviction: "Both Goodwin and Owen maintained throughout their ministry the possibility of wonderful experiences of assurance and joy for the Christian, and both inherited the Puritan tradition of linking such experience with the terms 'sealing', 'earnest', 'witness' and the like" (p. 103). Even if this book does not convince the reader of MLJ's model of Spirit baptism, may it pass on to each reader the passion for the Spirit's fuller ministry which animates its pages.

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Has the Church Misread the Bible?

by Moisés Silva

(Grand Rapids: Zondervan/Leicester: IVP, 1987)

136 pages; \$12.95/£5.95

Literary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation

by Tremper Longman III

(Grand Rapids: Zondervan/Leicester: IVP, 1987)

164 pages; \$12.95/£6.95

Science and Hermeneutics

by Vern Poythress

(Grand Rapids: Zondervan/Leicester: IVP, 1988)

184 pages; \$12.95/£7.95

Evangelicals today are in a hermeneutical crisis. The explosion of knowledge in today's world has exposed the difficulties of interpreting *any* document correctly. And that has forced us to ask serious questions about how we understand the Bible.

Seeking to answer some of these questions is a new series of hermeneutical studies, "Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation," in which these three titles are the first to be published. The series has an ambitious goal: each volume will interact with a different academic discipline to identify the problems that have led to this hermeneutical crisis and to provide fresh ideas toward solutions. The series is written for seminary students who have some background in theology and hermeneutical issues. The authors seem to have done a good job in hitting their target audience. These three books are a bit too advanced for undergraduates but would be very useful as supplementary

reading in a graduate level hermeneutics course. Anyone teaching or thinking about hermeneutics, exegesis, or contextualization will profit from reading them.

The first book in the series, *Has the Church Misread the Bible?* by Moisés Silva, introduces the series and identifies just why evangelicals face this hermeneutical crisis. Silva, Professor of New Testament at Westminster Theological Seminary (USA), is also the general editor of this new series. He is well qualified for the role, having authored several essays on hermeneutics and the book *Biblical Words and Their Meaning*. He opens his book with a survey of the six academic disciplines that will be examined in succeeding volumes: philosophy, literary criticism, linguistics, history, science, and theology. This taste of good things to come whetted my appetite for future volumes in the series. It also served as an excellent survey of some of the issues in hermeneutics today.

The heart of the book is a look at current hermeneutical questions through the lens of the history of hermeneutics. This is not intended to be a history of biblical hermeneutics. Rather Silva finds help from the past in reflecting on the current debate. He returns to one of the earliest students of hermeneutics, Origen, and finds that he “anticipated virtually every substantive hermeneutical debate in the history of the church,” especially in articulating the difficult “tensions” we face as we interpret Scripture (page 36). The most fundamental tension is that the Bible is both *divine and human*. That tension raises more specific tensions which Silva examines in the light of the thinking of Origen and others in church history.

The first of these more specific tensions is that the Bible is both *literal and figurative*. The history of biblical scholarship has been a history of abandoning allegorical interpretation. Yet Silva finds the pressure to allegorise Scripture alive and well today. The key problem with allegorising, whether ancient or modern, is that it separates the relevance of the text from the historical message intended by its author and so leaves no controls on interpretation. Silva’s solution is that we “develop historical and textual sensitivity” and read the text for its relevance to ourselves (page 75). However he leaves unanswered the question of how we bring the Bible and culture together. Hopefully this will be addressed in a later volume of the series.

Silva’s second hermeneutical tension is the *clarity and obscurity* of the Bible. Though the Reformation was built on the idea that Scripture could be understood by the average person, vast differences in interpretation and the specialised knowledge of scholars have raised anew the question: Does the Bible really speak clearly enough so that all can understand it in the same way? Silva shows that the Reformers have pointed the way to an answer. They limited the clarity of the Scriptures to essential, foundational truths and emphasised the illuminating ministry of the Holy Spirit. He then gives a brief

but very good explanation of the role of advanced biblical scholarship and of church tradition in making the Scripture clear. Again, Silva has accurately identified the problems and has begun to identify sound solutions.

The last tension in interpretation that Silva discusses is the *relative or absolute* nature of the Bible. Because we all understand new things based on what we already know, and because we naturally begin to fit the Bible into our own life situation as soon as we read it, is it really possible to separate the original, absolute meaning of the text from its relative significance for us? Silva concludes that, though the distinction between meaning and significance is not absolute, responsible contextualization requires that we begin by understanding the passage in its original context. Furthermore, it is possible for the reader to gain a true understanding of the text even if he can only understand it through his own world view—but Silva only hints at the reasons why. He recognises that his discussion is inadequate and promises that book 7 in the series will address the issue.

Anyone who has wrestled with problems of contextualization will appreciate the value of Silva's book. He raises the problems in a way that makes the student think. He offers sound, balanced insights from church history that give a helpful framework for coming to some answers. It was refreshing to realise that our problems are not new; godly men throughout church history have reflected on them and have offered valuable ideas toward a solution. This is one of the strengths in Silva's use of church history to introduce hermeneutical problems.

However, the book is also likely to frustrate some readers. Silva discusses many of the related issues of a problem without always clearly showing how they relate to each other. He circles his way to a general conclusion, but one point does not necessarily lead to the next one. This format has its strengths. It allows the reader to think through the problems himself and it stimulates many valuable thoughts. However, it also makes it harder for a reader who is new to this subject to organise and remember what he is learning. If this book is designed to introduce current problems in hermeneutics to readers with little background, then more summaries and clearer transitions would be helpful.

Biblical scholars have studied the literary features of the Scriptures since the days of the Church Fathers. But the last few decades have brought many fresh ideas to literary analysis of the Bible. In *Literary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation*, Tremper Longman III, Associate Professor of Old Testament at Westminster Seminary, focuses on these recent advances in literary analysis and shows how they can be applied to our study of the Bible.

Longman's book is useful and balanced. He has a sound approach, conservatively guarding the historicity of Scripture while attempting to give full weight to literary analysis. The book is divided into two parts: theory and application. Longman begins with a historical survey of literary analysis of the Bible,

concentrating on recent contributions. He groups modern schools of literary theory into author-centred, text-centred, reader-centred and deconstructionist, introducing many difficult terms for the reader unfamiliar with the field. Longman's groupings serve as a helpful, accurate introduction to the field, but his explanations are a bit thin in places. Sometimes he gives excellent illustrations of the new ideas. However, in other places I needed to reread what he was saying very carefully to grasp his explanation. Even for a survey, this chapter needs more illustrations of the concepts being introduced.

Longman then analyses strengths and weaknesses of a literary approach to Bible study and lays down his own principles for literary analysis. This is an excellent section in which he isolates the positive insights offered by each school of literary theory and emphasises the multifunctional purpose of the Bible. I do feel that his explanation of the relationship between the intention of the divine author and the intention of the human author needs more development. Though it is true that "God is the ultimate author of the Scriptures, so it must be said that final meaning resides in His intention" (page 65), the only way to know the divine intent is through the human authors. Longman's simple dismissal of Walter Kaiser's position is inadequate; this is a complex issue that demands a fuller discussion.

In the second half of the book, Longman applies his principles for literary analysis to prose and poetic portions of the Bible. He both identifies the tools for analysing prose and poetry, and illustrates how these tools should be used, by analysing two biblical narratives and five poetic sections. This is a very good explanation of the features of biblical literature that the interpreter should be conscious of, such as genre and style in prose, and parallelism and imagery in poetry. Longman's examples are strong in pointing out these features in the Scripture but weaker in showing how these observations contribute toward understanding the meaning and message of the passage.

Longman's book gives many valuable insights. It will be most useful for either a teacher or a student (at the graduate level) who has had an introduction to hermeneutical theory but has had little background in literary analysis.

In *Science and Hermeneutics*, Vern Poythress explores the contribution which science can make to biblical interpretation. Poythress, Professor of New Testament Interpretation at Westminster Theological Seminary, has a PhD in mathematics from Harvard University and a DTh in Pauline theology from the University of Stellenbosch, and hence is well qualified to write this book. His study centres around the ideas presented by Thomas S. Kuhn in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, published in 1962. Kuhn's theses is that scientific study has not advanced simply by adding up facts discovered through objective, inductive study. Rather, scientific research has always taken place "against the background of assumptions and convictions produced by previously existing science. In mature science, this background took the form of

paradigms, a cluster of beliefs, theories, values, standards for research, and exemplary research results that provided a framework for scientific advance within a whole field" (43). However, if many facts are discovered that do not fit this framework or paradigm, a scientific revolution takes place, and people begin to look for a new paradigm that will better explain the facts.

Poythress acknowledges that there are clear differences between scientific research and biblical interpretation, the main difference being that the believer has had a personal encounter with God and therefore has a biased commitment to biblical religion. However, there are also important similarities between biblical interpretation and Kuhn's understanding of scientific research. "What makes Kuhn so interesting and potentially fruitful is his claim that knowledge does not always change by piecemeal additions and subtractions. . . . Rather, what we know is coloured by the framework in which we have our knowledge. . . . Knowledge is contextually conditioned" (79-80). Poythress uses Romans 7 to show how one's interpretation of the "facts" of the passage is conditioned by the overall framework of one's theology and one's basic values. Furthermore, if an interpreter approaches the passage with an entirely different framework in mind, it opens the interpreter's eyes to see details that he had never seen before. This, in turn, leads to a deeper understanding of the passage. Poythress encourages studying the Bible through different frameworks as a means of enriching our understanding of God's revelation: "I conclude that, since we do not always observe everything and see all the angles, it is perhaps better not to put all our eggs in one basket. . . . It is better not to use only one analogy or theme as the route by which we approach biblical interpretation. If we do, we may miss something" (142).

Poythress' emphasis on knowledge as contextually conditioned has several valuable applications for theologians and expositors. First, it will make us more dependent on the Holy Spirit in our own Bible study and equip us for dialogue with competing interpretations of biblical problems. Second, it will help us communicate effectively to people in their own cultural framework without compromising the biblical message. I was disappointed that Poythress did not develop this point more, as it has obvious implications for the contextualization of theology. Third, Poythress suggests that we use different analogies to reorganise our study of Bible passages and to give us new insights. This is a useful suggestion, but it left me with the feeling that I could take any biblical analogy or paradigm and extend it throughout the Bible, regardless of the context of the individual passages. Can I read any Bible passage with any analogy or any paradigm in mind? Does the Bible establish its own analogies and paradigms that should govern the study of certain passages? Should certain paradigms be emphasised in passages where they are contextually established, and avoided or de-emphasised in others? Poythress does not answer these questions.

Throughout the book Poythress returns to Romans 7 to illustrate his points. Besides providing excellent illustrations of difficult concepts, this gives the book much needed continuity. Although Poythress' subject is complex, his helpful summaries together with this use of Romans 7 as a common thread adequately hold his discussion together.

These three books do a good job of introducing new ideas from related academic disciplines to provide creative answers to difficult hermeneutical questions. These books are only introductions, but they serve as excellent bridges for readers who have little or no background in the contributions that other disciplines can make to hermeneutics. Their excellent bibliographies also point the way for those who want to dig deeper in each area. All three will be useful reference works. Instructors in hermeneutics, exegesis and contextualization will find many helpful sections to stimulate and broaden thinking. Individual sections within each book might be assigned to students as outside reading. This would help students identify current problems in hermeneutics and would provide a catalyst for discussing possible solutions.

The price of these books makes them affordable reference works for the libraries of theological schools. Their size makes them easy reading for the busy teacher who wants his mind stimulated by fresh ideas. Their scholarship assures the reader that he is tasting the most useful fruit of current thinking. Their theology guarantees the reader a sound evangelical perspective. All three books will help evangelicals to think their way more clearly through the current crisis in hermeneutics.

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