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RECENT CONTRIBUTIONS IN AFRICAN CHRISTOLOGY: A BOOK REVIEW ARTICLE

Ernst R. Wendland

The following review of recent books on contextualized Christology has been done by Dr. Ernst R. Wendland, lecturer in the Lutheran Seminary in Lusaka, Zambia. The reader would do well to refer to a previous article published by AJET (volume 10, No. 2, pages 13-32) where the author began his review of authors seeking to contextualize Christology in Africa.

JESUS In African Culture: A Ghanaian Perspective
by Kwame Bediako
(Accra: Christian Council of Ghana, 1990) 49 pages.

*Jesus Christ Our Muthamaki (Ideal Elder):
An African Christological Study Based on the Agikuyu Understanding of Elder*
by P.N. Wachege
(Nairobi: Phoenix Publishers, 1992) 271 pages.

*Jesus in African Christianity:
Experimentation and Diversity in African Christology*
by J.N.K. Mugambi and Laurenti Magesa (eds)
(Nairobi: Initiatives Publishers, 1989) 164 pages.

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One could not ask for a more diverse set of books to review with respect to both form and content. But as the three titles listed above indicate, they are all basically united as to their central topic and intent, that is, to offer an indigenous, contextualized, or "inculturated", perspective on the significance of Jesus Christ for contemporary African Christianity. I will begin with the briefest and, in my opinion, the best presentation of a context-sensitive Christology.

In his short study of Christ "from a Ghanaian perspective", Kwame Bediako confronts the problem of syncretism and people "living at two levels--half African and half European", who "are uncertain about how the Jesus of the Church's preaching saves them from the terrors and fears which they experience in their traditional world view" (p. 12). The key to his approach is to make a concerted attempt to "relate Christian understanding and experience to the

realm of the ancestors" (p. 12), which he considers to be the cultural focal point of the Akan people (and undoubtedly other Ghanaians as well). Accordingly, he deals with his subject in two concise and thought-provoking chapters, entitled: (1) "Christ and Spirit Power" and (2) "The Lordship of Christ Amid Sacred Power".

In the first unit, Bediako builds upon John Mbiti's notion of "Christus Victor (Christ supreme over every spiritual rule and authority)" (p.8) and proposes that by sovereignty displacing "The mediatorial function of our natural 'spirit fathers' (p. 18), Jesus Christ—who is "Lord over the living and the dead, and over the 'living dead'— provides a powerful alternative and antidote, as it were, that frees believers from "any terrorising influence they [the ancestors] might be assumed to have over us" (p. 19). To support this case, Bediako draws attention to "the universality of Jesus Christ", who is the Saviour of all people (p. 13), and to what he terms the "adoptive past" of African Christians, who are covenantally joined by faith in Christ through "the Abrahamic link" (p. 14).

In his second chapter Bediako begins by outlining the cultural and religious significance of "Kingship" in Akan society with the Chief playing a "crucial role as the intermediary between the state and the ancestors" (p. 22). The introduction of Christianity has therefore introduced a fundamental conflict "between two authorities— the Christian Church and the traditional state", one that is based upon "two [different] conceptions of power and differing views as to the source of power" (p. 25). One way of reducing the tension between these two forces in society, Bediako suggests, is to stress the "non-dominating" quality of Christ's "kingdom". This is a principle which, given a proper conception also of its spiritual nature, "ennobles politics itself into a service of our fellow human beings" (p. 29).

Another solution to the problem of both the relevance of Christianity to a specific society and culture and its relationship to the "various powers that be" (Rom. 13:1) is to provide an accurate and appropriate theological basis upon which to build a contextualized Christology. Bediako views the Epistle to the Hebrews as being crucial in this regard, especially in its presentation of Christ's high-priestly, mediatorial role (p. 33). In his excellent, but all too brief treatment of this subject, he discusses the corrective and transforming relationship of Christianity to three key aspects of the Akan religious tradition, namely, the concepts of sacrifice, priestly mediation, and ancestral function. His summary of the total superiority of Christ over the ancient ancestral cult (pp. 38-42) is indeed one of the best that I have read on this subject. This section alone would make anyone's efforts to obtain this little book well worth while!

As someone engaged in the ministry of Bible translation in Africa, I deeply appreciate some of the trenchant observations that Bediako had on this topic in his "concluding observations". In our effort to communicate Christ more effectively today, it is absolutely essential that accurate and meaningful translations be made in the language(s) of the people. Not only is "Christianity...among all religions, the most culturally translatable, hence the most truly universal" (p. 43), but competent renderings of the Word of God offer the opportunity of some creatively dynamic instances of a valid contextualization of the Christian message, e.g. in relation to the "purificatory rituals of Oduwira" (p. 45; cf. Heb. 1:3). Bediako's pointed challenge to the Church is noteworthy:

Hearing the Word of God in our own language, therefore, is not to be sneered at and left to 'illiterates'; rather it is what is required if we seriously seek growth in our understanding of Jesus Christ" (p.44).

How many so-called "Christian" churches in Africa today really make Bible translation a top priority—one that is supported not only by pious professions, but in concrete provision of men (and women), money, and materials?

I had only one major criticism of Bediako's work: his footnotes indicate that only studies prior to 1981 were considered. We look forward to an updating and a considerable expansion of this valuable application of Christology in an African setting!

The second study that I wish to comment on is P. N. Wachege's interpretation of Jesus Christ from the perspective of Gikuyu "Eldership" (*Uthamaki*) in Kenya. This is a very thorough and insightful attempt to inculturate biblical theology in an African setting. In many respects it is a model of how to carry out such studies in other ethnic contexts. Wachege's presentation is divided into two major parts. In the first he offers a rather detailed and well written anthropological survey of the "Agikuyu social and religious way of life" consisting of three chapters. In these he describes many relevant aspects of their historical and social background (1), their notion of "elderhood" within an indigenous world-view (2), and the on-going relevance of this key social institution (3). In the four main chapters which comprise part two, Wachege welds culture with Christology and ecclesiology as he describes the concept of "Elderhood" in the Bible, with particular reference to Christ (4), efforts at inculturation in the Church [largely a Roman Catholic perspective] (5), the various correspondences and contrasts between Agikuyu elderhood and that of Christ (6), and the spiritual, catechetical, and pastoral relevance of this contextualized approach to Christology (7). A short chapter (8) of "general conclusions," a helpful "glossary" of Gikuyu terms, and a substantial bibliography rounds out the book.

I will focus my comments on what I view to be the main strengths and weaknesses of Wachege's Christological application in part two. His survey of "elderhood" in the Old and New Testaments (ch. 4) is useful, but marred in places by certain higher critical notions, e.g. the outmoded JEDP "Source Hypothesis" (pp. 103-4) and doubts concerning the authorship of Luke-Acts (p. 108). Wachege's presentation of the "elder-like roles and qualities manifested by Christ during his earthly ministry (pp. 116ff) is very well done, especially in relation to the "reconciliatory and peace-making activities of Jesus Christ (pp. 121-5) and his "teaching, kingly, cultic and sacerdotal functions" (pp. 139-43). I had difficulties with Wachege's argument for the pastoral primacy of Peter (e.g. pp. 120-1), but fortunately he does not prolong this discussion. In general, I feel that he adequately supports his contention concerning the relevance of the Agikuyu notion of *Uthamaki* to the development of an "inculturated" Christology. I would therefore also agree that "it is justifiable...--according to both the Old and the New Testaments' concept of elderhood plus the [cited] characteristics in the bible (sic) applicable to Jesus Christ--to call Jesus Christ a *muthamaki*, but in a higher and more eminent sense" (p. 146).

Chapter 5 is rather disappointing. It begins with an overview of the major Roman Catholic "magisterial directives" that Wachege cites in support of his effort to "create an *Agikuyu Muthamaki Christology*" (p. 147). The problem here lies in his rationale, namely, that "in order to be truly Christian *this theological reflection must be guided by the Word of God* and by the teaching of the [Roman Catholic] Church... which has to be transmitted in a particular way to the Roman Pontiff and to the Bishops in Communion with him" (pp. 158-9, original italics). The second major difficulty arises in connection with Wachege's description of "various titles and categories [of] Christology" through the ages (pp. 163ff), particularly those emanating in the twentieth century (pp. 171ff). Here he does not clearly distinguish between orthodox approaches (very few unambiguous examples are cited) and those that espouse various heretical, contra-biblical notions, such as the neo-Arianism of Schoonenberg's "Christology from below" (p. 174). Finally, it is disappointing to note the absence of any works by evangelical scholars in the listing of representatives of those propounding various "African Christologies" (pp. 178-9). Must we conclude that none have actually been written? In this section it would have been interesting to learn more about how H. Sawyer's notion of Christ as "The elder Brother par excellence" (p. 179) differs from Wachege's own perspective of elderhood.

Chapter 6 gives the fullest account of Wachege's proposal for a "*Muthamaki Christology*". He makes a good case for this culturally contextualized approach through a detailed, systematic, and diagnostic

presentation of the similarities and differences (to his credit Wachege does not overlook or downplay the latter!) between the two types of "ideal" elderhood--that of traditional Agikuyu society and that of Christ as revealed in the Scriptures. However, in this generally reliable and insightful comparative analysis, one must watch out for the occasional questionable or even erroneous assertion. Some of these betray Wachege's ecclesiastical background, while others appear to be the result of an over-enthusiastic assessment of his own ethnic tradition. For example, the alleged supremacy of Simon Peter in the church is rather obtrusively brought into a discussion of the importance of an elder's last will and testament (p. 194-50, 210). Furthermore, a consideration of the supposed sacrificial character of the Eucharist is included in the section entitled "sacrifices and offerings" (pp. 217-9). Turning to an indigenous perspective, one wonders in what sense Wachege regards traditionally-minded Agikuyu elders to be "really godly" with respect to "status and merit" (p. 223), or why he concludes that "Christ was already among the Agikuyu before Christianity came to us by way of the missionaries" (p. 231). In addition, it is not at all apparent in what way the "church is also the sacrament of Christ's elderhood" (p. 241). It is lapses such as these which detract somewhat from the author's otherwise exemplary Christological study.

Similar biases tend to blur the presentation of the author's conclusions with regard to the "pastoral relevance of Agikuyu *Muthamaki* Christology" in chapter 7. It is not entirely clear, for example, how this inculturated approach "provides an invaluable impetus into a new way of doing liberation theology which is spiritually more enriching" (p. 246). It would seem that one would have to begin with a new definition of "liberation theology", one that differs from the humanistically oriented variety described on pages 177 and 196-200. There are also some debatable theological assertions in this section, such as our "moving towards fulfilment in the vitalistic community of the Trinity" (p. 244) through participation in an *Uthamaki* Christology, which is alleged to be "the surest way of entering into Godhead" (p. 248). Biblical theology must naturally be appropriately and dynamically incorporated into the liturgy of the church, but it is going too far to "suggest that the rituals connected with Agikuyu elderhood should be elevated to the level of the sacramentals of the Church" (p. 253). These and other examples illustrate an "inculturation" of another kind, namely, that imposed by one's adopted ecclesiastical traditions. But the preceding criticisms should in no way prevent one from reading and benefiting from Wachege's rich and rewarding Christological study--one that represents a systematic and an insightful reflection on many relevant aspects of Christ's mystery from the Agikuyu sense of elderhood" (p. 255).

The third book on Christology under consideration is collection of essays that were presented at an ecumenical symposium in Nairobi in 1989. *Jesus in African Christianity* is described in the preface as "the first in a series of volumes exploring various aspects of contemporary African Christianity and promoting creative theological reflection amongst African scholars." To be sure, this is a very worthwhile and necessary goal. However, on the basis of this initial volume in the proposed series, I would have to conclude that a great deal of evangelical input needs to be contributed to the enterprise. Furthermore, I would not recommend this book as a valid representative of African and Biblical Christianity, its Christology in particular. Indeed, I wonder whether Jesus would recognise himself and his salvific mission in this text. I have two basic reasons for this openly critical assessment: in terms of its overall aim, it is too "creative", in a radical, syncretistic sense; and at the same time it is not "theological" enough, from a biblical perspective.

One's unease with this volume begins in the very Introduction, where it is proposed that "the limits to theological creativity are endless" (x1v). Certainly that is true if the Scriptures (nowhere mentioned in the context) are ignored as the only source and norm of all church doctrine in any cultural context on earth. Although the essayists undertook to answer the key question: "Who is Jesus Christ for you, Africa?" (x), they were apparently not limited to the Bible in their search for a definitive answer, but were free to find him "in various manifestations of African culture in general: in its myths, rituals, beliefs, symbols, art, and language" (xiv). Thus, although it is claimed that "this book does not, in the main, engage in speculative, abstract theologising" (xv), an evangelical, Scripture-centred reader would come to a different conclusion after completing most of the included essays.

But I should rather allow the different authors to speak for themselves on the subject of Christology and its contextualization in Africa. I will thus select a few potentially controversial quotations from each essay to allow readers of this review to sample the various approaches and to judge for themselves whether my negative judgement of this collection is justified or not. These selections are not necessarily representative of a given author's main theme or interest, but they do suggest how even a good thesis or application can be seriously undermined by an uninformed--or just plain careless--use of the Word of God when dealing with some theological subject, whether in a "contextualizing" manner or not. Of course, my selection is biased in favour of my own opinion and evangelical theological position; therefore, readers are strongly encouraged to test and evaluate these essays for themselves. In fact, I do not wish to discourage a careful reading of this book. It is important that this be done so

that people become aware of the wide "diversity" that is present in African Christology today, and aware of the nature of some of the questionable "experimentation" that is going on (a phrase from the book's sub-title).

In her search for "The hidden Christ in African Traditional Religion," Judith Bahemuka begins with the assumption "that revelation is... a process [which] began at the time of our [African] ancestors... and will never cease" (p. 1). In a sense, then, every culture has the right to determine for itself what constitutes divine revelation; for example: "the African defines his own situation, and it is this situation which can lead one to the discovery of Christ" (p.4). Such culture-based freedom leads to many instances of naturalistic reasoning like the following:

"Christ, the Son of God, is one with the Father. If the father (Yahweh) revealed Himself to Africans, and they responded in faith, why could the same Africans not discover Christ in their 'Acts of Faith'?" (p.9).

Hence it is not surprising that Bahemuka can, for all practical purposes, dispense with the Bible altogether and come to the conclusion that "Christ becomes our brother because the African is [by nature] a child of God [and] this gives him the *right* (original italics) to belong to the royal priesthood" (p. 12).

In his survey of "African Christologies Today," Charles Nyamiti lumps all representatives into "two main types," namely, "those of inculturation and liberation theology" (p. 17). In this useful, but theologically undifferentiating, survey he includes much chaff with the wheat. On the one hand, Nyamiti rightly reaffirms "the importance of Trinitology for any Christology" because "Without the Trinity, Christ Himself (and hence, Christology) would lose His personality and *raison d'etre*" (p.31). But such statements are often coupled with those that are not only conceptually abstract and obscure, e.g.

"...The Holy Spirit is the ancestral ritual Offer (Oblation) and Eucharist between the Father and the Son in the Trinity" (p. 30),

but also patently incorrect from the point of view of accurate biblical exegesis, e.g.

"... the saints in heaven and purgatory are, in different degrees, our ancestors in Christ, ... [and] among these saints are the African ancestors who died in friendship with God" (p. 27).

Thus Nyamiti distorts his argument considerably through his concept of the "Christian ancestorship' of the saints" (loc cit) and related, ecclesiastically coloured notions.

In his search for an answer to the question, "Who is Jesus Christ for Africans today?" Douglas Waruta advanced the thesis that "a Christology which revolves around the three offices of Christ as Prophet, Priest and Potentate is

not only soundly biblical but will be the most comprehensible to African Christians" (p. 44). Unfortunately, he looks more to African theologians such as John Mbiti and Kofi Appia-Kubi than the Bible for an answer. This leads to a rather humanistic, secular description of Christianity:

"It is persons and not ideas or doctrinal tenets which captivate the masses of African people and bring them to faith. ... Africans are not interested in suffering through their problems now while waiting for the bliss of heaven. ... Africans want a leader who shows them the way to liberation now—liberation from disease, oppression, hunger, fear and death" (pp. 50-1).

Waruta claims that "this type of Jesus is the one presented in the Gospels" (p.51)—perhaps, but only if one skips over the final third or so of each evangelist's record, namely, that which details the events of "holy week" and beyond.

In his effort to portray "Christ as seen by an African" (p. 54), Zablon Nthamburi briefly outlines an argument for his "Anthropocentric Christology", contrasted with "Theocentric Christology" which he alleges creates a "Schizophrenic community" of Christians who are too preoccupied with their 'spiritual' welfare" (p. 55). Thus Nthamburi seeks to "concentrate on the functions of Christ rather than on His person" (loc cit). But undue emphasis on one or other of these two aspects inevitably leads in an unorthodox direction. How does the following, for example, differ from a contextualized Arianism or Adoptionism?

"By virtue of being a direct offspring of God, Jesus becomes our *Mudzimu* with powers of intercession. ... The act of God becoming flesh removes any dichotomy between humanity and divinity in our own experiences" (pp. 56-7).

In the end we are left, as so often in these essays, with the jargon of "liberation theology" and its predictable, unrealistic, and typically hyperbolic exhortations, e.g. "We should not forget that the only way in which we can understand Christ is through concrete historical experience of God's action which is always a liberating experience" (p. 58).

It is indeed interesting to compare contemporary, culturally syncretistic efforts at contextualization with "Christology in the East Africa Revival Movement" earlier this century (p.60). A historical and theological overview of the latter is provided by Hannah Kinoti, in what is perhaps the most helpful of all the essays contained in *Jesus in Africa*. What motivated and guided these early Christians in their efforts to make the Bible and Jesus Christ more meaningful and relevant in their lives? Kinoti contends that it was their predominant "focus on Christ and his cross [which] meant a fresh understanding about sin, repentance, salvation, Christian fellowship, evangelism and daily victorious

living" (p. 67). The spiritual (as distinct from worldly) "power of the cross" enables believers to discover and apply "the melting power of love" in their lives (p. 69), to seek the "place of humility" in one's dealings with fellow human beings (p. 70), and to find a "place of rest" in the midst of all the trials and troubles of this world (p. 71-2), including ostracization, persecution, and even death (p. 73). Indeed, here was "liberation" of a different sort, one that in its own quiet but persistent way managed to "[bring down] blockades of colour, class, status, ethnicity, sex and education, [and to merge] pulpit and pew" (p. 73).

After the rewarding experience provided by Kinoti's contribution, Laurenti Magassa returns us to exegetical controversy and the popular current brand of liberation in his essay entitled, "Christ the Liberator and Africa Today". Here "the Christ-Event, that act of salvation or redemption of the human race by Christ" is described in typically limited and limiting socio-political terms such as "liberty, the happiness of every human person, the breaking of every kind of chain that binds humanity--in a word, humanity's emancipation" (p. 82). The solution then is not really Christ, but powerful ecclesiastical (?) forces that would destroy the "state of peripheral capitalism" that binds "the entire Southern hemisphere", and put an end to "the unbalanced socio-economic and political relationship between the economic North and South" (p. 84). Magassa can distinguish "no difference" between Christ's spiritual and material concerns, for "He was concerned about nothing other than building bridges of friendship and dignity among people" (p. 88). The work of salvation ("soteriology") therefore involves an on-going, synergistic effort between Jesus and human beings which proceeds in "integrated movements towards the perfection of the eschaton to be effected by Christ" (p. 90). According to the liberationist agenda of Magassa and others, such a "struggle to overcome everything which condemns... [people] to remain on the margin of life" is "evangelization"-- "the very core of the meaning and significance of Jesus Christ Himself and His mission" (p. 91). We recall the crucial query from this book's introduction: "Who is Jesus Christ for you, Africa?" (x). It becomes ever clearer that the answer one gives will depend on just exactly where one is looking and how. Where the attesting record of Scripture itself is ignored, or is contorted to fit the mold of some secularised methodology, it is no wonder that spiritually voided responses can predominate.

John Waliggo's essay, "African Christology in a situation of suffering" is no different. After a survey of the "nature of suffering" (pp. 94ff) and "major aspects of suffering in Africa" (pp. 98ff), Waliggo advances what he considers to be "the root-cause of Africa's many-fold sufferings" (p. 100). Somewhat surprisingly, this turns out to be "*rejection*, both by powerful outsiders and powerful insiders" (p. 101). Not surprising, however, is Waliggo's assertion that

"Western Christianity" has been the greatest source of such suffering (pp. 101-2), but he goes on to include "the majority of African theologians... among the 'rejecters' of their own people" because they tend to "concentrate on theological academic gimmicks which are at the periphery of people's living experience of suffering and hoping" (p. 103). Waliggo feels that "the theme of rejection... becomes very important and indeed central in the entire biblical message" (p. 104). "Important", yes, one might grant that, but certainly not "central" in comparison with alternatives like "reconciliation" or "substitution", to mention just two possibilities.

A breath of fresh air is provided in Peter Kanyandogo's "biblical reflection on the exercise of pastoral authority in the African churches". The author first overviews the imagery of "God as a shepherd" in the Old and New Testaments (pp. 113-4) as well as usage of the Greek terms *dunamis* ('power') and *eksousia* ('authority') (pp. 114-5) in order to lay a foundation for "a few general points that must characterise the exercise of pastoral power in Christian communities" (p. 116). There is nothing exactly new here, but the message is worth reiterating none the less:

"As a shepherd, [the pastor] is to have special concern for people who have difficulties or have gone astray. ... A Christian leader exercises power in a spirit of service, simplicity, humility and compassion" (p.117).

The problems in Africa are compounded by the general lack of qualified pastors as well as by a laity who are not suitably trained to carry out certain pastoral functions (p. 118). Occasions of the abuse and misuse of power and authority by the leadership only add to the difficulty (pp. 119-20). The overall need for integrity, commitment, and flexibility in the area of pastoral ministry is not limited to Africa of course; it is a growing crisis facing the Christian Church almost everywhere in the world.

We shift perspectives somewhat in the study of "Christology and an African woman's experience" by Anne Nasimiyu-Wasike. In general, this is a useful survey of a subject that has been so long neglected in the Church, especially the section on "Jesus and women in the gospels" (pp. 126ff). There are a few traditional as well as modern biases that crop up toward the end however, such as the syncretistic notion that "the African woman ... needs the Christ who relates to God, the God who can be reached through the spirits and the living dead or through direct intercession" (p. 130). On the other hand, radical liberationism again displaces biblical theology in the flow of the author's African feminist discussion:

"In her undertaking against the oppressive structures [of her society] her struggle become

God's struggles. It is then Christ who suffers in her and works in her to give birth to new and better human relationships" (pp. 131-2).

This approach tends to divert Nasimiyu-Wasike's attention from the critical spiritual dimension of the problems that she is dealing with (i.e. repentance and reconciliation--which she indeed recognises, e.g. p. 128), and to over-emphasise its social aspects in the effort to get all people "to mutually participate in the creation of a better world for all" (p. 134).

The final entry in this volume of essays is "Christological Paradigms in African Christianity" by J.N.K. Mugambi. The author surveys the theological relevance of "various paradigms evident in the New Testament" (p. 136) according to the following topical categories: occupational, cultural, family, genealogical, theocentric, eschatological, ideological, liturgical, ritualistic, ontological, charismatic, mystical, aristocratic, anthropocentric, juridical, homiletic, epistemological, therapeutic, counselling, normative, ecclesiological, pneumatological, dialectical, festive, and historic. As the preceding listing would indicate, Mugambi's perspective is quite wide-ranging and diverse, and offers a generally useful overview of the various ways in which Christology may be contextualized within a given African society. But every now and again he comes out with some debatable assertions. For example, while it may be true to say that "the controversy at the Council of Nece... was more than doctrinal" (i.e., certain "philosophical, ontological and cultural presuppositions" were also involved), the following conclusion does not necessarily follow:

"Contemporary African Christology needs to be as ecumenical as possible in order to promote as great a theological consensus as can be attained" (p. 142).

Indeed, what might have been the result for *biblical* Christianity if the preceding guideline had been applied to Arianism? In his inevitable nod to liberation theology, Mugambi claims that the (overly) familiar text of Luke 4:18-9 (cf. Isaiah 61:1-2) is to be interpreted literally and not metaphorically (p. 146). However, such an assertion would seem to be contradicted by what Christ goes on to declare by implication shortly thereafter in Luke 4:24-27, namely, that his mission to humanity could not be thus limited by human prejudices and preferences. Mugambi proposes that Christian theology be recast "within the philosophical framework of African ontology and cosmology" (p. 149). One becomes a bit apprehensive, however, concerning the outcome of such an exercise if the following statement is any indication of what is likely to emerge:

"Traditional African cosmology is monistic, and these doctrines [i.e., about heaven and hell] have a different meaning in a world where 'heaven' and 'hell' are here and now" (loc. cit).

On a cultural-linguistic note, one wonders whether it is reliable to generalise and conclude that "the titles of Jesus as *King and Lord* are alien to traditional African theologising" (p. 152). While "monarchy" as it was known in biblical times may not be the same in many respects as the "chiefdoms" of Africa (Many would object to the possible pejorative tone of that term itself), the concept certainly was, and is, widespread enough to permit a considerable measure of conceptual overlap (cf. Bediako, pp. 21-2).

Such criticisms aside, Mugambi should be commended for adopting such a broad, inclusive, and integrated approach towards the development of a more indigenized expression of Christology in Africa. He offers many keen insights and possibilities in this regard. There is no doubt that such study can serve to edify the Church (p. 161), but only if equally diligent attention is paid to the sole foundation upon which all theologising must be built and according to which it must invariably be judged--namely, the Holy Scriptures. Many of Mugambi's collaborators in this volume of Christological essays that he edited forgot this fundamental fact. Kwame Bediako and to a great extent also P.N. Wachege did not, and they would therefore serve as much more reliable "models" in this vital exercise of contextualizing the Christian faith and life for contemporary Africa.