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# Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology

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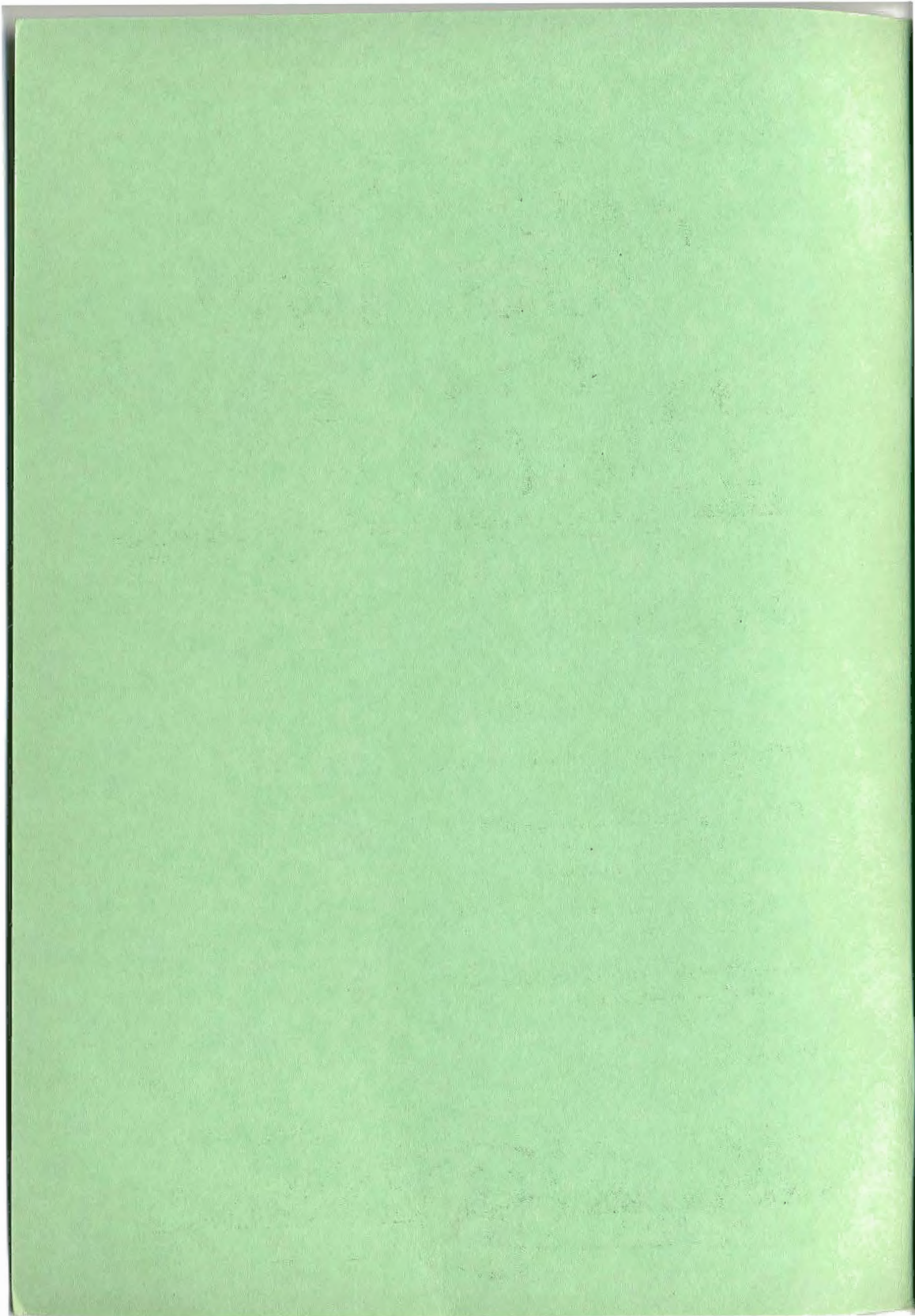
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## AFRICA JOURNAL OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

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### Purpose:

AJET is published twice a year by the staff of Scott Theological College, Machakos, Kenya, on behalf of the ACTEA Consortium of Theological Colleges, in order to provide African evangelical theological educators and students with articles and book reviews related to theology and ministry.

### Editorial Policy:

We welcome articles and book reviews from an evangelical perspective. Material should be typed, with endnotes, and submitted to: The Editor, AJET, PO Box 49, Machakos, Kenya.

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The emblem of Scott Theological College, shown on the cover, features the Mumbu Tree, a historic and cultural landmark on the College grounds. The Mumbu Tree is used by AJET as a symbol of the gospel in Africa. The good news of Christ, like the Mumbu Tree, is ageless, enduring and firmly rooted in African soil.

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The opinions expressed in the articles and reviews are those of their authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the editors or sponsors.

#### CHANGE OF NAME

Beginning in 1990 with its ninth year of publication, this journal – until now known as the *East Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology* (EAJET) – will from now onward appear under the new name: the *AFRICA JOURNAL OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY* (AJET). AJET will continue to be published by Scott Theological College, Kenya, but now as a continental journal under the sponsorship of the ACTEA Consortium of Theological Colleges, an association which links 42 theological colleges and graduate schools throughout Africa.

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# **CONCEPTS OF PASTORAL LEADERSHIP IN AFRICA: A CASE STUDY**

Victor Cole

The traditional method of ministerial training is based on a schooling approach whereby people get thrust into church leadership as a result of credentials and training received in a formal theological institution. In African contexts, the leaders of the people are traditionally old, experienced and married. However, in the church a role reversal often occurs because of this schooling approach. When the sole criterion for attaining church leadership is the amount of schooling one has received, then pastoral leadership inevitably tends to rest with the young, inexperienced and sometimes unmarried.

In the early 1980s a study was conducted among the Evangelical Churches of West Africa (ECWA) in Nigeria to find out the expressed concepts of pastoral leadership within this group.<sup>1</sup> ECWA, then estimated at a half million in membership, is the indigenous church founded as a result of the labours of the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) in Nigeria since the beginning of the century. While the results of this study of one church constituency in Nigeria are of interest in their own right, they may also be found to bear significant implications for other parts of Africa, and may suggest the usefulness of similar studies in those contexts.

## **Purpose of This Study**

The study was to answer the following questions:

1. What kinds of pastor-leaders do specified church groups find desirable?
2. What concepts do these specified church groups employ in describing pastoral leadership?
3. What are the sources of these concepts of pastoral leadership employed by these specified church groups?



### **The Research Questions**

In this study, an attempt was made to answer the following research questions:

1. What methods of selecting and removing the pastor-leader do ECWA members prefer?
2. What conceptual descriptions of the pastor-leader exist among ECWA members?
3. What concepts of pastoral leadership are to be found in ECWA with respect to the following:
  - a. the desirable personal characteristics of the pastor-leader?
  - b. the desirable leadership styles of the pastor-leader?
  - c. the desirable ministry skills of the pastor-leader?
  - d. the desirable civic duties of the pastor-leader?
4. What are the sources of these concepts of pastoral leadership found in ECWA?

### **Importance of the Research**

In the study, an attempt was made to find out the concepts of pastoral leadership espoused by ECWA members and the sources of these concepts.

Anticipated differences of opinion in the findings were expected thought to be quite helpful in informing the judgment of church leaders in appointing pastors for specified church types. In addition, the findings were expected to assist the judgment of those responsible for curricular development in ECWA theological institutions, since they would be able to take into account the opinions of the constituency in the task of training pastor-leaders for the church.

### **Research Design**

A demographic approach to the determinants of opinions was adopted through the use of a cognitive response pattern to the study of attitudes.<sup>2</sup> In the research, the concept of "culture-contact" was assumed.<sup>3</sup> Based on this assumption, respondents in the study were expected to express pastoral leadership concepts that are derived mainly from traditional and acculturated values. The extent to which respondents had moved away from traditional values was expected to be reflected in the amount of schooling. Thus the concepts of pastoral leadership expressed and the sources of those concepts were both examined.<sup>4</sup>

### **Selection of Churches**

Using intact local churches as the unit of analysis, representative church types were selected non-randomly. The church types classified were:

1. Ethno-rural churches – found in rural sectors across Nigeria, using either a major Nigerian language or a local dialect in worship. Membership in this type of church tends to be older and less acculturated. Three such church types participated in the study.
2. Ethno-urban churches – found in urban sectors across Nigeria, using a major Nigerian language in worship. Members are largely migrants, have a fairly balanced proportion of old and young, and both highly acculturated and less acculturated. Four such church types participated in the study.
3. English-using churches – found in urban sectors across Nigeria, using only English language for worship. The members are largely migrants, but tend to be young and highly acculturated. Two such church types participated in the study.

The selection of the participating local churches was based on their representative distinctions and their credibility in ECWA, largely due to their length of history or their general wide acceptance as local churches representing ECWA opinion.

### **The Instrument**

A fifty-two item questionnaire was developed for probing the concepts of pastoral leadership and the sources of those concepts. As a result of a preliminary study, four areas of concern were identified, namely the personal characteristics, leadership styles, ministry skills and civic duties of the pastor-leader. The items were refined in accordance with the preliminary study until validity and reliability coefficients reached .80 level by the use of Jury procedure.

### **The Approach**

Three independent variables were employed. They are: a bipolar age grade of the subjects within each local church; a seven-point, non-continuous interval scale measuring the subjects' level of acculturation; and the locales of the subjects. These variables constituted the demographic subdivisions of the study.

Four categories of dependent variables were also used. They are the personal characteristics, leadership styles, ministry skills and civic duties of the pastor-leader.

Data analyses were performed using chi square and qualitative methods of analysis.<sup>5</sup>

### **The Major Findings<sup>6</sup>**

The major findings were in three areas: the conceptual description of the pastor-leader; the concepts of pastoral leadership espoused; and the sources of the concepts of pastoral leadership espoused.

#### *The Conceptual Description of the Pastor-Leader.*

Generally, ECWA members tended to see the pastor as a resource person; that is, one who serves as a source of information, guidance and instruction. In the hierarchy of preference, the next descriptor of the pastor was that of an authority figure. The respondents with more formal schooling preferred to describe the pastor as a resource person, while those with little or no schooling preferred to describe the pastor as an authority figure.

#### *The Concepts of Pastoral Leadership found in ECWA.*

*Personal Characteristics of the Pastor-Leader.* Most respondents from all levels of acculturation,<sup>7</sup> from all age grades and from the three church types tended to prefer pastoral experience in the pastor-leader above any other choice given them. Next to experience, ECWA members valued high education for a pastor. In short, the ideal for a pastor was that he should be experienced, highly educated and married. The matter of experience was so significant to the respondents that many of them indicated reluctance to seek counsel from a pastor who is young, inexperienced and unmarried.

When the analysis by church types was taken into consideration, the following was discovered: both the ethno-rural and ethno-urban churches preferred a pastor who is over forty years of age and highly educated. For their part, the ethno-rural church would still readily welcome a pastor who is over forty years of age but has little education. The English-using churches, however, preferred a pastor who is under forty years of age, highly educated and has some pastoral experience. Not one church type, nor any single respondent for that matter, favoured a young pastor who also has little formal education.

On the issue of ethnicity, both ethno-rural and ethno-urban churches would readily welcome a pastor from their own ethnic group. This matter was considered quite unimportant by the English-using churches.

*Leadership Styles of the Pastor-Leader.* In the matter of planning church affairs, both ethno-rural and ethno-urban church types tended to prefer a joint pastor-elder decision. Respondents who were younger and had more formal education wanted the generality of church members as well to be given a say in decision-making. The English-using churches wanted a participatory form

of leadership style far more than either of the other two church types. They wanted the pastor to allow gifted members also to perform some of the duties normally associated with the pastor-leader.

*Ministry Skills of the Pastor-Leader.* Most ECWA respondents saw ability to teach and preach the Bible as the priority skill most needed by the pastor. The least acculturated respondents felt slightly more so than all others, maybe trying to compensate for their own personal deficiency. When the data was examined in terms of church types, the English-using churches felt more this way than the other two church types.

Some of the other skills strongly favoured in a pastor were as follows. The ethno-rural church wanted the pastor to be able to give them good advice and to have skills in controlling the members. The ethno-urban and English-using churches saw ability to get along with members, and ability to listen to members' point of view, as the most important skills needed by the pastor.

*Civic Duties of the Pastor-Leader.* Most ECWA respondents, in particular the youths, felt that the pastor-leader should be aware of local customs and politics.

It was of interest to find that the older respondents with very little formal education felt the need for the pastor to instruct them in matters concerning voting rights, civil rights and how the civil government operates.

On social concerns, most respondents expressed the need for the pastor in a rural setting to be involved in rural development projects. They also wanted the pastor in an urban setting to get involved in issues of social reform. Respondents with the most formal education felt more so than all others.

Most respondents strongly felt that the pastor-leader ought to keep up with the news media. This concern was stressed most strongly among the younger respondents who have had more formal education.

#### *The Sources of Pastoral Leadership Concepts Found in ECWA.*

The four categories of the concepts of pastoral leadership found in ECWA churches were further probed to ascertain their sources. The following findings emerged.

*On the Personal Characteristics of the Pastor-Leader.* Pastoral experience was reported as the most preferred quality in a pastor-leader. The reason most frequently cited was that an experienced pastor would have a better knowledge of the Bible and would be better able to teach and preach the Bible. This response pattern was classified to be stemming from a combination of traditional and acculturated values.

Next to experience, high education was preferred in a pastor-leader. The major reason given by respondents with little formal education was that formal training will help the pastor in acquiring principles of teaching, preaching and counselling. For their part, respondents with more formal education felt such a pastor would have a sharp analytic mind to enable better communication with the more enlightened audience. All of these reasons stem from acculturated values.

Most of the respondents placed high importance on marital status of the pastor-leader. The major reason given was the need to avert susceptibility to temptation. Another reason was that a pastor who is married is qualified to advise members on marital issues. These reasons given could somehow be derived from traditional, acculturated and normative biblical values.

Many respondents felt some reluctance to approach a young pastor for counselling. The main reason was that such a one was regarded as inexperienced and would not be able to give sound advice. Many of the older respondents who also had little formal education regarded such a pastor as still a child. Even many of the youths in the study and those with more formal education felt such a pastor himself stands in need of someone to give him advice. We may trace all of these reasons in large part to traditional values.

On the other hand, most respondents felt that they would be very free to seek counsel from an older pastor-leader, merely because he was old, and because he was regarded as having experience and having knowledge about the facts of life. All of these reasons are traceable in large part to traditional values.

*On Leadership Styles of the Pastor-Leader.* Most respondents felt decision-making by the pastor and church elders should be arrived at on the basis of consensus. The two main reasons for feeling this way were these: (i) since the decision affects all, each one had a right to express an opinion; and (ii) in the course of reaching a consensus, everyone would have been pacified, thus giving an air of unity. These reasons are traceable in large part to traditional values.

Most respondents expressed aversion to the pastor-leader leading his members like traditional leaders do, or like business executives lead their employees. The reasons given include the following: the church is not a worldly organisation, nor is it a profit-making organisation. The respondents wanted the pastor to lead with a servant attitude and with love, not as a ruler or dictator or by compulsion. All of these reasons are traceable to biblical values.

*On Ministry Skills of the Pastor-Leader.* On what was regarded as the major skill-enhancing resource needed by a pastor-leader, most of the respondents identified schooling. The major reason given was that training in the theological institution will equip the pastor with the needed training (skills) and knowledge for pastoral work. We may attribute this reason to acculturated values.

*On Civic Duties of the Pastor-Leader.* Among other civic-related duties desired for a pastor-leader was that he should keep up with current events in the news. Most respondents felt the pastor should keep up with the news over radio and through print more often. The major reason for feeling this way was that the information gathered would help the pastor to be aware of the world around him and that such awareness would be helpful in application to the ministry. This stated reason is largely traceable to acculturated values.

In summary form, the following pattern emerged on sources for concepts of pastoral leadership:

1. ECWA members' concepts of pastoral leadership were derived most often from traditional values (such as age, marital status and experience). These values were generally applicable in assigning roles and status.
2. In their description of concepts of pastoral leadership, ECWA members tended to give allegiance to professed biblical values if those values are plainly contrasted with traditional or acculturated values.
3. A popular notion among ECWA members was that, in order to do an effective job as a pastor-leader, one needed to attend a theological institution.

### Conclusions

Whereas the findings stated above have wider application than may at first meet the eye, it is appropriate to draw conclusions that have both policy and curricular dimensions.

As a matter of concern for policy makers in the church, these findings would clearly warn against treating the different church types at the same level.

In the very late 1980s, some parts of ECWA's northern church districts made it a matter of policy that each ethno-urban church in some big city centres should make a conscious effort to establish an English-using church. As more of the English-using churches are established by the turn of the century, church leaders would be under increasing pressure to adopt different styles of leadership. Whereas the ethno-rural churches may not mind being told what to do, the ethno-urban churches are already questioning. And the English-using churches clearly want to have a say in their own affairs. An authoritarian style of leadership in the churches situated in urban areas will continue to meet with resistance. In consonance with the theory of culture contact and the resultant acculturation effect, an ethno-rural church of today that wants to be told what to do may tomorrow want to have some say in its affairs.

Since this study was first conducted, ECWA has witnessed the appointment of more and more younger and better schooled pastors in the churches. The recommendation that bigger churches appoint assistant pastors is gradually being adopted. For the time being, pastors who are over forty years and hold a B.Th. or equivalent are few and far between. ECWA will have to await the turn of the century to have this type of pastor in the numbers desired. The irony of the present days is that ECWA seminaries continue year after year to turn out young trainees with high qualifications, who then end up serving as teachers in government employment, while the church continues to be in need of manpower.<sup>8</sup> Whereas the young and highly credentialed graduates lack experience, this experience can only be gained within the context of service within the church. This is why we have recommended that the young graduates be given appointments to serve as assistants to the more mature and experienced pastors. In that way the younger generation of pastors would continue their training beyond the classrooms, and the church would have retained them instead of losing them to government service. We are convinced that more and more urban churches are able to afford two or more pastors. There are a number of churches with attendance of two thousand or more and yet they do not have more than one pastor.

As a matter of concern for those setting the theological curriculum, a traditional approach to training which is very heavy on Bible and theology but light on human relations and social awareness must be corrected. Graduates of our theological institutions must be knowledgeable about their social and contextual milieu. The servant model of leadership taught by our Lord must be evidenced in our curricula – both by precepts and by example. The curricula of our theological institutions must also reflect the needs of the different church types. All trainees should be made aware of these needs and characteristics right from the time of their training. This calls for integrated programmes.

We would, however, sound a note of warning in conclusion, namely that this study does not guarantee on-the-job effectiveness of the type of pastor desired by each church type. That is a matter for further study.

#### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>This article is a summary of a doctoral dissertation submitted by the writer in 1982 at Michigan State University, in the Department of Administration and Curriculum of the College of Education.

<sup>2</sup>For an elaboration, consult: Milton J. Rosenberg, Carl I. Hovland, William J. McGuire, Robert P. Abelson and Jack W. Brehm, *Attitude Organization and Change*, Yale Studies in Attitude and Communication, Vol. 3 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960).

<sup>3</sup>Some of the aspects of the process of acculturation applied in this study were adopted from Linton Redfield and M. J. Herskovits, "A Memorandum for the Study of Acculturation" *Man* 35 (1936) 145-48; M. J. Herskovits, *Acculturation: The Study of Culture Contact* (New York: J. J. Augustine Publisher, 1938).

<sup>4</sup>Three basic sources from which pastoral leadership concepts could be derived were anticipated before the study. These were: traditional values, acculturated values and normative biblical values. In the course of the study, a fourth source was detected, namely "idiosyncratic" responses. A response was classified as stemming from traditional values if it is in accord with value statements so recognised from the literature on cross-cultural studies specifically geared to the Nigerian society. Similarly, statements that conform to acculturated values as known in the literature were so classified. A response was classified under normative biblical values if it clearly betrays underlying values derived from Scripture. Responses that were clearly subjective in nature and do not go beyond self-derived standards of justification were classified as idiosyncratic.

<sup>5</sup>For the quantitative portion of the study, a helpful treatment of the statistics could be found in Sidney Siegel, *Nonparametric Statistics for the Behavioural Sciences* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1956). For the open-ended responses that were designed to probe for source, qualitative data analysis involved pooling of the universe of the range of responses both within and between groups, the classifying of responses into sources, and comparison made between group sources to test the relevant hypotheses.

<sup>6</sup>For the purpose of this presentation, I have deliberately avoided presenting findings in tabular form but have simply given in prose the results of the study.

<sup>7</sup>Levels of acculturation are hereinafter used to describe the amount of formal schooling received by a respondent. Seven such levels were categorised.



<sup>8</sup>ECWA Theological Seminary at Jos in Nigeria (JETS) has been perceived by some to have a better than usual success rate of graduates employed in church-related ministries. Nevertheless, a study done in August 1990 examining the breakdown of placements for the 156 JETS graduates of the regular programmes from 1983 to 1989 revealed that only 57% were in church-related ministries as indicated in the following table. For the other JETS graduates, 9.6% were pursuing further studies, and 12.8% were in civil government service. However, the placement of 16% was unknown at the time of the study.

**Placement of JETS 1983 - 1989 Graduates as of August 1990**

Further Studies	Church-related ministries					Government service		Placement unknown	Unemployed	Private business	Non-church lifestyle
	Pastor chaplain	Evangelism & church planting	Church school teacher	Church administration	Parachurch ministries	Teaching	Administration				
15	48	6	19	14	2	17	3	25	3	1	3
9.6	30.7	3.8	12.1	8.9	1.2	10.8	1.9	16.0	1.9	0.64	1.9

N = 156

Upper figures - raw scores

Lower figures - in %

**THE HEALING OF THE DEAF AND DUMB MAN  
(MARK 7:31- 37),  
WITH APPLICATION TO THE AFRICAN CONTEXT**

Scott Cunningham

**Introduction**

Mark's account of the miraculous healing of the deaf and dumb man occurs in the first half of his gospel, where Jesus' mighty deeds and words identify Him to His followers as "the Messiah" (1:14- 8:30). Within this larger section three cycles can be identified, each recounting Jesus' miracles and preaching, with the first two cycles ending in rejection and the last climaxing in the disciples' confession of Jesus as Messiah.<sup>1</sup> It is this last cycle which is the setting for the healing of the deaf mute.

The miracle is found only in Mark's gospel. This alone would constitute a striking feature for the New Testament student who knows that almost all of Mark's material is found in Matthew and/or Luke. The details of the healing are also certainly unusual. Some of the details are found in other miracle stories as well, but it is the cumulative effect of them all coming together in this one story which produces one of the most fascinating and stimulating accounts of all the miracles of our Lord. Although we will mention other details as the discussion progresses, our attention is immediately drawn to Jesus' use of his saliva and to the Aramaic expression associated with the healing. Others have pointed out the similarity between Jesus' healing technique and magical practices current in the ancient world. How should we understand the unusual features of this miracle? And how may these features contribute to the miracle's distinctive application in an African context?

We will bypass the usual introductory problems dealing with the history and development of the story in the gospel tradition. Most scholars agree on its "primitive" character.<sup>2</sup> Cranfield remarks that its "claim to be regarded as reliable is very strong, its details being of a sort more likely to be dropped than invented in the course of the development of the tradition."<sup>3</sup>

### Source Critical Concerns: The Uniqueness of the Markan Account

We begin by investigating the uniqueness of the miracle in the gospel records. Assuming the Markan Hypothesis for the moment (i.e., that Matthew and Luke used the gospel of Mark as one of their sources in composing their own gospels), this uniqueness in the gospel tradition is particularly noteworthy.<sup>4</sup>

The reason for Luke's omission of the miracle is bound up with his treatment of that section of Mark's gospel in which the miracle occurs. This section (Mark 6:45-8:26) is known as Luke's "Great Omission" and is his most lengthy omission of Markan material. Although following Mark's outline before and after, Luke skips directly from the Feeding of the Five Thousand (9:10-17) to Peter's Confession (9:18-21). Several reasons have been offered for Luke's omission, but none have thus far gained widespread support.<sup>5</sup> A suggestion that deserves further study is that Luke has omitted this material because it emphasises Jesus' ministry in Gentile areas. Although Luke was interested in the salvation of the Gentiles, he was also interested in a geographical presentation that located Jesus' ministry exclusively in Judea and Galilee (Acts 10:37-39), whereas that of the apostles in Acts progressed from Jerusalem, the centre of Judaism, to Rome, the centre of the Gentile world. Thus the healing of the deaf mute, occurring as it does in the region of Decapolis (Mk. 7:31), falls outside of the geographical boundaries Luke has set for himself and is therefore omitted.

The omission of the miracle by Matthew is likewise significant. Matthew follows Mark's order pericope by pericope from the Feeding of the Five Thousand (Mt. 14:13-21 = Mk. 6:32-44) to the Feeding of the Four Thousand (Mt. 15:32-39 = Mk. 8:1-10). However, when Matthew comes to the point in his gospel where this miracle would occur following this order, he begins with a geographical note that has several verbal parallels to Mark (Mt. 15:29 = Mk. 7:31), but then continues with a substitution. Instead of Jesus' healing of one deaf and dumb man, we find a summary statement of Jesus' healings of many people with various ailments, dumbness (but not deafness) being only one of the many mentioned (Mt. 15:29-31).

What could have prompted this kind of omission and substitution on the part of Matthew? Schweizer suggests that the omission is possibly because Matthew has already recorded a similar incident in 9:31f.<sup>6</sup> But a comparison of the two accounts reveals little similarity. There are certainly greater differences between the two than between the two miraculous feedings that Matthew puts almost side by side. The reason for the omission is more than likely to be found in noting another similar omission by Matthew. It is well known that Matthew incorporates almost all of Mark's material. Barclay observes that the substance of only 55 out of Mark's 661 verses is missing from Matthew. Significantly, 11 of these 55 missing verses contain two miracles: this healing of the deaf mute, and the healing of the blind man in Mark 8:22-26.<sup>7</sup> These two

miracles are alike in that spittle is used in both healings. Spittle is used in no other miracle in the synoptic tradition.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, the most obvious explanation for the omission of these parallel miracles would be that for some reason Matthew was uncomfortable with Jesus using spittle in a miraculous healing (or, if he was not, that he suspected his readers would be). It may be that he associated the use of spittle in healing with magical practices, or perhaps with just conventional healing methods, associations which Matthew wished to avoid in his presentation of Jesus as the Messiah.<sup>9</sup>

Besides the use of physical means associated with the cure, there are other features in Mark's account which may have entered into Matthew's decision to omit it. Allen notes the following characteristics, any or all of which may have played a role in Matthew's omission.<sup>10</sup> The healing occurs in private.<sup>11</sup> If not magic, the sigh of Jesus might seem to indicate emotion or effort on the part of Jesus. Matthew elsewhere omits statements concerning the disobedience of the people to commands of Jesus.<sup>12</sup> There is the tendency in Matthew to describe miracles as taking place with a simple word or command. The conclusion, then, is that Matthew omitted the healing of the deaf mute for reasons that likely had to do with features within the story itself which he wished to avoid, the use of spittle being one of them.

As we will discuss below, some of the very features that apparently gave reason to Matthew to omit the passage are the ones that speak most deeply in the African context. At least with regard to this miracle, the African finds himself more in harmony with the affections of Mark than of Matthew. We can be glad that Mark did not feel the same embarrassment or demonstrate the same caution which Matthew apparently did in regard to the details of this miracle.

#### The Interpretation of the Miracle

The account of the miracle begins with a geographical note: Jesus left the vicinity of Tyre (where he had healed the Syro-Phoenician woman) and journeys by way of the region of Sidon to the southeastern side of the Sea of Galilee where Decapolis was located. A look at a map of Palestine will reveal the circuitous nature of this route. To go from Tyre to the Sea of Galilee would require heading in a southeasterly direction; instead Jesus heads north to Sidon. The difficulty of these geographical references has not gone unnoticed. Schweizer in fact refers to the "impossibility" of this route<sup>13</sup> Even the early copyists tried to remove the difficulty by substituting "He came from the borders of Tyre and Sidon" for what is no doubt the original: "He came from the borders of Tyre through Sidon."<sup>14</sup> We find Cranfield's assessment of the problem judicious: the route "is certainly roundabout, but there is no particular reason why Jesus should not have made it."<sup>15</sup>

Neither are we told why Jesus would have gone this way. Some have suggested that He was avoiding the direct route which would have taken Him into

Galilee. In skirting Galilee He would have avoided possible conflict with Herod Antipas (6:14-16)<sup>16</sup> and the Pharisees (3:6). Another suggestion is that this itinerary would have provided Him the privacy necessary for the training of the Twelve.<sup>17</sup> But as Taylor points out, none of these reasons is supported by the text itself.<sup>18</sup> The question of Jesus' motives in His route must remain unanswered.

We can be somewhat more definite as to why Mark bothers to record the geographical references. His purpose apparently is to locate this episode in a predominantly Gentile area such as Decapolis was.<sup>19</sup> Thus Mark gives another example of a healing in Gentile territory, which also serves to connect it to the previous story.

The miracle itself, if examined form critically, incorporates the following elements:

- Request for healing
- Healing action by Jesus
- Healing immediately accomplished
- Command for silence
- News of Jesus spreads
- Response of the crowd

In form the miracle is very similar to that of the man healed with leprosy (Mk. 1:40-45).

After the geographical reference, Mark tells how the deaf and dumb man is brought to Jesus, and Jesus is asked to lay His hand upon him. We can surmise a few of the details concerning the malady of the man. Mark's description suggests that the man is completely unable to hear. However, the word used to describe dumbness, while possibly meaning "mute, dumb," more likely means that he had some sort of speech impediment. He could not speak clearly but he could make some vocalisations.<sup>20</sup> This is supported by 7:35, which says that after the healing he began to speak "clearly" or "properly." We do not know how long the man had been in this condition. He had probably spoken before, since he knew how to speak upon being healed. Possibly the speech impediment was only the sort caused by deafness. The gospel writers, however, in other places seem to distinguish between the two ailments.<sup>21</sup>

The word Mark uses to describe the speech impediment, *mogilalos*, has more significance for Mark than simply as a description of the man's condition. The word is quite rare, occurring in the Greek Bible only here and in the Septuagint translation of Isaiah 35:6. The Isaianic passage is in the context of a poetic account of what will take place in the Messianic Age. The rarity of this word

in the biblical vocabulary, and the other verbal and conceptual similarities between the Isaianic passage in this story (cf. Isa. 35:5f and Mk. 7:37), make it clear that Mark has this Old Testament passage in mind. The allusion to Isaiah suggest that for Mark this miracle was evidence that in Jesus the Messianic salvation of the new age had dawned (and here in a Gentile area).

The request for Jesus to lay His hand on the man should be taken to imply that those who brought the man were requesting Jesus to heal him, being familiar either with Jesus' methods of healing in particular, or perhaps only with healing practices in general. Lane offers the suggestion that the Jewish practice connected with blessing is what was in their minds, and their astonishment in verse 37 shows that "they had not expected healing, but had brought the man to Jesus for blessing."<sup>22</sup> Form critical observations, however, argue against this understanding. Normally a request for healing precedes the healing action by Jesus.

Instead of laying His hand upon the man, Jesus' method of healing this time is much more unusual. Mark describes Jesus' action with seven verbal forms. Linguistically, they occur in three pairs (each with a participle followed by a finite verb), leading to the final unaccompanied finite verb (in a different tense than the others) which climatically completes the action. In an effort to demonstrate this pattern, the Greek could be laid out thus:

Taking the man away from the crowd, He placed His fingers into the  
man's ears;  
spitting, He touched the man's tongue;  
looking up to heaven, He sighed;  
he speaks to him.

The observation is often made that the actions of Jesus were common to magicians or wonder-workers in the ancient world.<sup>23</sup> There was the use of touch and saliva, the look up to heaven, and the uttering of a sigh and a foreign word. Although these parallels are unfamiliar to most contemporary Westerners, Africans can easily see the affinities to traditional healing practices. Parallels to each of these actions done by Jesus can be found in ancient texts dealing with magic.<sup>24</sup>

But Jesus was no magician. His power came from His own person and not from magic. And in this miracle, although the affinities to magic are demonstrable, the actions of Jesus are due to the nature of the victim's condition and not to the practice of magic on the part of Jesus. Since the man was deaf, Jesus had to communicate through the use of signs. The gestures done by Jesus were not means to convey the healing but signs to show the deaf man how the healing would come. Essentially, they were symbols intended to encourage and inform the faith of the afflicted.<sup>25</sup>

Each of the actions can now be examined individually. The first mentioned is Jesus taking the man away from the crowd.<sup>26</sup> This does not necessarily mean that no one else was present or saw the miracle actually happen, but simply implies some degree of privacy and separation from the multitudes. It has been suggested that Jesus took this action to call as little attention to the miracle as possible during this period of retirement in His ministry.<sup>27</sup> Perhaps we should also see here a concern by Jesus to establish a personal relationship with the man. Away from the crowd Jesus could focus His attention on this one individual. Likewise, the man would not be distracted by the movements of the crowd and would thus be able to pay attention to the signs Jesus was about to make. For Mark this act of Jesus reinforces his secrecy motif which becomes prominent in verse 36.

The two gestures of placing his fingers in the man's ears and of touching the man's tongue were signs to the man that it was these two areas that Jesus intended to heal. His ears would be opened and his tongue would be loosed. Although Jesus heals with a touch in other miracles, here the healing comes not through touch but through a word of liberation.

The use of saliva has been mentioned as one of the more unusual features of the miracle. The text is not specific as to where Jesus expectorated. It is possible that he simply spat on the ground and that the touching of the tongue was an unrelated action. If this be the case, the act of spitting could symbolise the exorcism of a demon.<sup>28</sup> Lenski believes Jesus simply spit on the ground, and with the touching of the tongue tells the man "that Jesus wants to centre his attention on his mouth and on his tongue."<sup>29</sup>

The text, however, seems to relate the two actions of the spitting and the touching together, so that Jesus is seen to be spitting directly on the man's tongue or, more likely, on his own hand which he then touched to the man's tongue.<sup>30</sup> It is unlikely that Jesus intended the saliva to be actually therapeutic in value. It was certainly not used by Jesus as an instrument of magic, even if it was so used by others. And if the saliva had a medicinal value as a natural remedy,<sup>31</sup> this was no doubt the quickest and surest natural cure which saliva ever effected!<sup>32</sup> Taylor's suggestion that the therapeutic value of the spittle was of a psycho-therapy nature has convinced few others.<sup>33</sup>

Instead of therapy, Jesus meant the spittle as a sign. The saliva was not an instrument of healing but symbolised the healing power that would come upon this man's tongue from Jesus himself.<sup>34</sup> Of course, the reason saliva could represent healing power was because it was commonly used as a healing agent in natural remedies and in magic. The effectiveness of the symbolic use of the spittle would depend on both Jesus and the afflicted man having this knowledge.

The glance upward by Jesus was also a sign to the man. Heaven was representative of the abode of God. It was normally conceived as being "up." The

point, of course, was that the transcendent God was the ultimate source of the healing.<sup>35</sup>

The significance of Jesus' sigh is debatable. Part of the reason is that the Greek word occurs only here in the gospels and only a few other times in the New Testament. And the context in this miracle is not determinative. Although other suggestions are possible,<sup>36</sup> we should probably see here, along with Taylor,<sup>37</sup> a sign of the compassion of Jesus for the man (comparable to his emotions at the tomb of Lazarus [Jn. 11:33, 35]).<sup>38</sup>

The climactic action of Jesus is the utterance of the word *ephphatha*, a Greek transliteration of an Aramaic word which Mark translates as "Be opened."<sup>39</sup> Again, the use of this word is taken as a parallel to ancient magic practice. However, magical formulae were composed of foreign (left untranslated) or unintelligible words, names of gods, and the like. But here the word is in the mother tongue and common language of Jesus and was likely understood by many of the people in His audience. "It is not meaningless magical formula like abracadabra but an intelligible performative utterance."<sup>40</sup> Although Jesus could have healed through any of His actions, in this miracle it is solely and simply the word of Jesus which effects the cure. The command could be understood to be addressed only to the organs of hearing, but was probably directed by Jesus to the healing of the whole person.

The result of the healing was dramatic and instantaneous.<sup>41</sup> The man's ears were opened (described by using a Greek word similar to the one used in the command), "the bond of his tongue was released," and he began to speak properly. There is no question as to the results of the miracle. The man's faculties of hearing and speech were completely restored. There is some question, however, as to whether the miracle included release from demonic activity.

Based upon his study of ancient magic formulae in papyri, Deissmann concluded that the phrase "the bond of the tongue was released" was a technical expression referring to the release from the bondage of demonic activity which caused the dumbness.<sup>42</sup> There is some support for Deissmann's view. A very similar phrase is used in Luke 13:16 to refer to the crippled woman whom Jesus released from the bond of Satan. Several elements within our pericope could be interpreted in such a way as to point to demonic activity. The spitting could symbolise the demon coming out of the man. The sigh could be an expression of the strong emotion of Jesus as He wages war against the power of Satan.<sup>43</sup> And the command *ephphatha* can be understood as "the command that shatters the fetters by which Satan has held his victim bound."<sup>44</sup> However, the significance attributed to these terms seems overly subtle. If Mark had intended the ailment to be understood as having demonic origin, he could have made this clear (as he does by referring to the deaf and dumb spirit in 9:25). It is better to understand the release from the bond of the tongue simply to be



a figurative expression for the cure of the speech impediment, with no demonic activity implied.<sup>45</sup>

The miracle accomplished, Jesus issues the command for silence. Those who have seen the healing should not tell anyone about it. Similar commands are found throughout Mark's gospel.<sup>46</sup> It was commands such as these that led William Wrede in 1901 to his famous theory known as the "Messianic secret." According to this theory Jesus did not claim to be Messiah during His ministry. And yet after the cross his disciples came to believe that he was indeed the Messiah. How could it be that people did not recognise Jesus as Messiah during his earthly ministry? To answer this question the early church read back their post-Easter faith into the life of Jesus by inventing the "Messianic secret." Jesus knew he was Messiah, and he revealed it to his disciples (who were spiritually blinded until after the Resurrection), but he commanded silence about it. This theory is now widely discredited in the form in which Wrede proposed it, but his work is still important in that it brought the secrecy motif in Mark under investigation.<sup>47</sup>

Although the reason for the command for silence may be slightly different in each occurrence, the main motivation seems to be that Jesus did not want people to understand him as a wonder-working Messiah. Jesus' messiahship was that of the suffering Son of man, and discipleship meant following Jesus along this way. This could not be fully comprehended until after the resurrection. The messianic secret was not so much a secret as a misunderstanding. Its origins are not to be found in the theological imagination of the early church but in the very nature of the life and ministry of the historical Jesus.<sup>48</sup>

Despite the command the crowd cannot keep the healing quiet. The more Jesus urged silence the more the crowd kept talking. There is not only a *secrecy* motif in Mark, but there is also a balancing *publicity* motif.<sup>49</sup> The authority of Jesus is such that it cannot be hidden.

Mark describes the crowd's response to the healing as one of overwhelming amazement. In fact, the effect the author wished to convey was so extraordinary that he had to coin a Greek word to express it. They were *exceedingly* amazed. The word occurs no other place in all of Greek literature. Alexander calls the word a "superlative superlative, formed by prefixing a particle expressive of excess. . .to an adverb expressive of the same idea."<sup>50</sup>

The cry of the crowd is "Jesus has done all things well. He makes the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak." We have already noted with the word *mogilalos* the clear echo of Isaiah 35:5-6, as Mark sees in the healing miracle evidence that the kingdom of God has drawn hear. Here the allusion is continued with the same effect. The crowds identify Jesus as the One who brings the salvation of the Messianic age.

The assessment of the crowd that Jesus has done all things well is a fitting summary of the miracles which Jesus had done up to that point in the region of Decapolis, including the healing of the Gerasene demoniac (5:1-20). If Jesus had done other miracles on this occasion, as Matthew records, then the "all things" would refer to them as well.

#### **The Application of the Miracle in the African Context**

Matthew, we earlier noted, probably omitted this miracle from his gospel out of a concern that his audience might misunderstand those details which bore similarities to common magical or healing techniques of the day. The Western reader of the twentieth century likewise feels uncomfortable in reading Mark's account, but perhaps for reasons other than those which we have attributed to Matthew. The Westerner finds in the use of saliva something unhygienic and repugnant. Especially repulsive to the Western reader is the picture of the saliva of one man being intentionally conveyed to the mouth of another.

However, whereas saliva in Western culture is consistently associated with negative connotations, in the African culture saliva can also be associated with positive values. In traditional African society saliva is used by healers to symbolise the idea of authority and power. The healer mixes his saliva with other medicine before it is given to the victim to ingest. In a form of "African injection" the spittle of the healer is applied to a therapeutic cut on the body of the sick man with the idea that it will mix with his blood and thereby effect a cure. After an incantation the healer commonly expectorates, the seal of authority on the healing process much like the pronouncement of an "amen." One's own saliva can be applied medicinally to a small wound. If a farmer scratches himself with his hoe, he can mix his saliva with the dirt from its edge and apply it to his wound. Besides its therapeutic use, saliva can also be a sign of blessing. In Yoruba traditional culture, before a newly married daughter leaves the house of her father for the last time, the father will expectorate lightly on the hands of his daughter who then rubs her moistened hands on her face to receive her father's prayer blessing. The procedure is repeated three times.<sup>51</sup>

These positive values attributed to saliva in the African culture provide a more appropriate setting for the understanding and application of this miracle than the values of the Westerner. The Westerner, unfamiliar with the positive use of saliva, finds the miracle enigmatic and disconcerting. Therefore the African more easily discovers the Jesus that Mark meant to portray in this story: the compassionate Messiah who, while using familiar healing techniques to communicate according to the special needs of the afflicted, heals with uncommon effect.

There is another important application of this miracle story. We have previously noted the similarity between this miracle and the other in Mark in which

spittle is used, the healing of the blind man in 9:22-26.<sup>52</sup> Through the parallel nature of these miracles, Mark is pointing out something about how the disciples come to understand who Jesus is. It is a message that continues to have relevance for those today who wish to follow Jesus. By juxtaposing the second of the pair of miracles immediately before the confession of Peter, Mark wishes to compare the restoration of sight for the blind man with Peter's recognition of who Jesus is (though still incomplete at this point). This interpretation is confirmed by Jesus' rebuke of the disciples, which is sandwiched between the two healing miracles: "Do you still not see or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear?" (8:17f). The spiritual blindness and deafness of the disciples is pictured by those who had the same disabilities in the physical realm in the two miracles. Cranfield notes that

... at last he had opened their ears – by a miracle which had been costly and gradual. They had been blind, but he had opened their eyes, so that they recognised him as the Christ. They had been dumb, but he had loosed their tongues so that they were enabled at last to confess him.<sup>53</sup>

Those who wish to follow Jesus in Africa, along with all those of all times and of all places, must allow Him to work the same miracle on their eyes, on their ears, and on their tongues. And then, perhaps, the world will say, "He does all things well," and will even enter into the same path of discipleship.

#### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Cycle one: 1:14-3:6; cycle two: 3:7-6:6a; cycle three: 6:6b-8:30.

<sup>2</sup>So H. Anderson, *The Gospel of Mark* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976) p. 192.

<sup>3</sup>C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Gospel According to Saint Mark* (Cambridge: CUP, 1966) p. 150. V. Taylor agrees (*The Gospel According to Saint Mark* 2nd ed., reprint [Grand Rapids: Baker, n.d.] p. 352).

<sup>4</sup>I have written previously in favour of Matthew's priority to both Mark and Luke, but I must admit that the omission by Matthew and Luke of this miracle is easier to explain than an addition by Mark (see Scott Cunningham, "The Synoptic Problem: A Summary of the Leading Theories," *African Journal of Biblical Studies* [1986] pp.48-58).

<sup>5</sup>B. H. Streeter, the populariser of the Four Document Hypothesis (i.e., that in composing their gospels, Matthew and Luke each used Mark, the sayings source Q, and their own special materials, respectively M and L), suggested that this section was missing from Luke's copy of Mark. Most scholars today find the theory incredible.

<sup>6</sup>E. Schweizer, *The Good News According to Matthew* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1975) p. 331.

<sup>7</sup>W. Barclay, *Introduction to the First Three Gospels* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975) pp. 92f.

<sup>8</sup>We do find spittle used in the miraculous healing of the blind man in John 9:6.

<sup>9</sup>The healing of the blind man has the additional difficult feature of being a two-stage miracle (the first stage appearing ineffective?).

<sup>10</sup>W.C. Allen, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew* 3d. ed. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1912) p. 170.

<sup>11</sup>Compare Mt. 9:25 with Mk. 5:37.

<sup>12</sup>Compare Mt. 8:4 with Mk. 1:44f.

<sup>13</sup>E. Schweizer, *The Good News According to Mark* (London: SPCK, 1971) p. 154.

<sup>14</sup>Cf. B. M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (Stuttgart: Biblia-Druck GmbH, 1975) pp. 95f.

<sup>15</sup>Cranfield, p. 250.

<sup>16</sup>This is a common suggestion by the commentators. Cf. H. B. Swete, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (London: Macmillan, 1920) p. 159.

<sup>17</sup>So A. Plummer, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, reprint (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982) p. 190; and Swete, p. 159.

<sup>18</sup>Taylor, p. 352.

<sup>19</sup>Decapolis means "Ten Towns." It was the name given by the Romans to a region southeast of the Sea of Galilee which had special privileges under the Romans. The population was mixed, Jew and Gentile. It is likely the crowd in the story was also mixed. It is difficult to know the racial background of the afflicted man. It is likely that all the inhabitants of the area were bilingual (Greek and Aramaic), so that Jesus' use of Aramaic is not determinative. Mark's positioning of the miracle along with the geographical notices suggests that he believed the man was a Gentile.

<sup>20</sup>This understanding is favoured by the standard lexicon BAGD (2nd ed. 1979) p. 525. We will continue to refer to him as "mute" or "dumb," however, for the sake of convenience.

<sup>21</sup>Cf. Mt. 9:33; 11:5.

<sup>22</sup>W. L. Lane, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974) p. 266. The practice of blessing through the laying on of hands is certainly known by Mark (cf. 10:16).

<sup>23</sup>Cf. Anderson, p. 192.

<sup>24</sup>On the topic of the relation of Jesus to magic a standard work is J. M. Hull's *Hellenistic Magic and the Synoptic Tradition* (London: SCM, 1974). For a brief sober assessment of Jesus and magic with extensive bibliography, see C. Brown, "Magic," NIDNTT (1981) vol. 2, pp. 560f.

<sup>25</sup>"Here the man could not find in the pitying tones of the voice of the Healer that on which his faith could fasten, and the acts came in to fill up the void" (E. H. Plumptre, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1957] p. 103). So also R. Earle, *Mark: The Gospel of Action* (Chicago: Moody, 1970) p. 68; A. F. Hort, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (Cambridge: CUP, 1907) p. 114.

<sup>26</sup>Cf. 5:37 and 8:23 for similar actions.

<sup>27</sup>E. P. Gould, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Mark* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1896) pp. 137f.

<sup>28</sup>Whether in fact Mark portrays this man's affliction as being caused by demonic activity will be considered below.

<sup>29</sup>R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Mark's Gospel* (Columbus OH: Wartburg, 1946) p. 310.

<sup>30</sup>This is supported by the parallel miracle in 9:23, where the saliva is applied to the afflicted part.

<sup>31</sup>Vespasian is said to have cured a man with saliva (Tacitus, *Histories*, IV. 8).

<sup>32</sup>Cranfield admits the possibility that Jesus may have intended some "natural effect of the spittle" (p. 251).

<sup>33</sup>Taylor, p. 354.

<sup>34</sup>So R. C. Trench, *Notes on the Miracles of Our Lord*, reprint (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1949) p. 221.

<sup>35</sup>Anderson, p. 193. Plummer sees in the upward look a prayer for help from God (p. 191).

<sup>36</sup>BAGD understands the sigh as probably "an expression of power ready to act" (*stenazo*, p. 766). Rejecting the connection of the sigh with magic in the acts of Jesus, Schneider says it "is preparatory in Jesus. It establishes the inner relation with God and represents explicit prayer for the power of healing" (J. Schneider, "stenazo," TDNT [1971] vol. 7, p. 603). For Lenski the sigh is a sign

to the man that "heavenly help . . . should be sought with the sigh of earnest longing" (pp. 310f).

<sup>37</sup>Taylor appears quite confident in his opinion: "Although sighing and groaning belong to the technique of mystical magic . . . , only a love for the bizarre rather than sober exegesis will find in the groaning of Jesus anything other than a sign of His deep feeling and compassion for the sufferer" (p. 355).

<sup>38</sup>The comparison is made by Plumtre, p. 103.

<sup>39</sup>Although the word *ephphatha* has traditionally been understood as Aramaic, recently scholars have entered into debate over whether or not the word is Hebrew. For literature on the questions see Lane, pp. 264f.

<sup>40</sup>C. H. Peisker and C. Brown, "Open, close, key," NIDNTT (1981) vol. 2, p. 729.

<sup>41</sup>The textual evidences for omitting the Greek word translated "immediately" are strong. But even if we follow them here, the idea of immediacy is certainly implied by the story. Cf. Metzger, p. 96.

<sup>42</sup>A. Deissmann calls this "the clearest example of the use of technical expressions taken from magic" (*Light from the Ancient East*, reprint (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978) p. 304. He is followed by J. Behm ("Glossa," TDNT [1964] vol. 1, p. 721) and Cranfield (p. 252).

<sup>43</sup>Cranfield, p. 252.

<sup>44</sup>Cranfield, p. 252. Similarly Anderson takes it to imply that Jesus is acting here as an exorcist (p. 193).

<sup>45</sup>So Lane, p. 267; Plummer, p. 191; Taylor, p. 355; Trench, p. 219; D. E. Nineham, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1963) p. 204. It is possible that, although Mark did not consciously see demonic involvement in the ailment, in his description of the cure he used language that would have been appropriate for the release from demonic activity. In so doing he would have been unconsciously reflecting a world-view that saw most, if not all, sickness as having a supernatural cause. That world-view would not differ considerably from traditional Africa.

<sup>46</sup>Mk. 1:44; 3:12; 5:43; 8:30; 9:9.

<sup>47</sup>For an excellent survey of contemporary study on the Messianic secret, see C. Tuckett, ed. *The Messianic Secret* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983). The book contains significant articles written in the past thirty years on the topic.

<sup>48</sup>So Taylor, pp. 122f.

<sup>49</sup>Cf. 1:28, 45; 3:20; 5:19f; 6:2f, 14ff, 31; 7:24; 8:28.

<sup>50</sup>J. A. Alexander, *Commentary on the Gospel of St. Mark*, reprint (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, [n.d.]) p. 204.

<sup>51</sup>The examples given above come from conversations with those within the Yoruba culture. The positive use of saliva in other African cultures could provide a similar context for the miracle's interpretation and application. On the religious beliefs surrounding saliva among various ethnic peoples, including its protective, therapeutic and magical powers, see W. Crooke, "saliva" in *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. by James Hastings (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1920) vol. 11, pp. 100-104.

<sup>52</sup>Other similarities between the two miracles include the request for healing by those who bring the afflicted; the private nature of the healing; the prolonged method of healing; the allusion to Isaiah 35:5f; the command for secrecy; and the position of each of the miracles soon after a feeding miracle.

<sup>53</sup>Cranfield, p. 254.

## SEVEN BIBLICAL EXCLUSIONS FOR MARRIED LIFE

Titus Kivunzi

Marriage is one of the most intricate experiences to be encountered in a person's lifetime. A man and a woman meet, develop friendship, and if they are serious they take each other by faith, not by empirical research, and hope to find each other to be suitable marriage partners.

After marriage begins, it does not take long before they realise that they are each very different from the other. An average man or woman will soon begin to think that the other person is undergoing a serious change for the worse. Very few people appreciate the experience, and the majority hardly know what is happening.

This perceived "change" is nothing else than a beginning of a better acquaintance and intimacy between the two, rather than a change in personality, appearance or attitude of one or the other. In fact, if one does not notice any "change" in one's partner, there must be some degree of abnormality or of ignorance about the intricacies of personality. For in every normal relationship there must be learning, discussion and appreciation. This last factor – appreciation – is often missed in the midst of the struggle to find out why so-and-so is "changing". Since such discovery is inevitable due to proximity and interaction, the mistaken learner (husband or wife) begins to withdraw from the "changing" partner. One begins to look for other company, where one will not encounter such "change", and the road to separation or divorce has begun.

We ought to understand that the longer two people live together, the more each begins to understand their partner truly and realistically, resulting in an increase in love and appreciation. It would be unhealthy to live for years with someone whom in fact you do not understand. How can one keep on loving and appreciating a person whose strengths and weaknesses have not been recognised? The discovery of one's partner as that partner really is, is in fact the key to a better relationship. During the time I have been involved in premarital counselling, I have discovered from Scripture seven necessary exclusions for a successful marriage, seven factors for which there can be *no room* in a godly marriage.



**1. No Room for Careless Presumption towards One's Partner –  
Genesis 2:18-25.**

Marriage was instituted by God the Father before the Fall, and was meant to last for life. It represents God's mind and act, and therefore transcends human initiative. The only part that human beings play is to accept the other person by faith, since faith is the only adequate basis of perception for God's children. This conclusion was confirmed by the first father, Adam, when he said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, for she was taken out of man." After Adam's response, the final statement is made: "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh."

No man or woman should take marriage for granted as if it were a product of human effort. Instead, both should live to thank, praise and serve God together in a way that will always express gratitude to Him for the provision of partnership. For if man's satisfaction were to be in fauna or flora, God would not have said, "It is not good for man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." Man was placed by God in a wonderful climatic condition, where agriculturally speaking he had everything he needed. He had every kind of animal, bird, reptile and marine life under his control, and freedom to eat from every tree in the garden but one. Yet with all this comfort, Adam was alone, and God said this was not good. By the creation of Eve, Adam was presented with what was designated as good for him. And so it is today. Our partner in marriage is a gift from God, and we must not treat such a gift with careless presumption, but with loving honour.

**2. No Room for Comparing One's Partner with Others –  
Song of Solomon 2:2,3.**

In the love poetry of the Song of Solomon, the wife is said to be a lily to her husband and the husband is an apple tree to his wife. The rest of the women are thorns, while other men are the unnamed second class trees which cannot be compared with an apple tree. This means that the marriage partner is taken to be of a superlative degree, above which there is no human comparison.

One of the concerns of the time in which we live is comparison of everything: who is taller, who is shorter, who is wiser, who is more handsome or beautiful, who is more active, and so forth. It happens that very cunningly this attitude has crept into the popular outlook on marriage, to the extent that a man or woman invites ridicule if they seem satisfied with the status quo of their spouse's appearance and abilities.

Comparing alternatives to what God has granted is sinful, and therefore condemned. Instead of such comparisons, one should always take time to thank God and to rejoice in the distinctiveness of the marriage which God has provided. This must be acknowledged by the couple and lived out in their daily

life. There can never be two lilies nor can there be two apple trees at the same time – only one of each while they live. Therefore, whatever disturbs our sight, whether we go by sensory system or not, there is no room for comparisons.

### **3. No Room for Breaking Faith with One's Partner – Malachi 2:10-16.**

Malachi analyses a situation in which a man and his bride do not live up to the expected behaviour. Whenever marriage partners break faith with each other, the prophet says they are profaning the marriage covenant. Faith can be broken through hypocrisy by one or the other partner, through lack of trust, or through mistreatment. When such attitudes or behaviour are allowed to permeate married life, the relationship begins to break down, and the consequence may be divorce, which God hates (2:16). When God says that He hates something, He is not suggesting dislike but rather an extreme enmity or abhorrence. This may lead to cutting off the guilty party from the fellowship, irrespective of one's responsibilities in the church (2:12). Therefore, let us be warned, and let couples remain carefully faithful to each other in all aspects of their life together. The Lord is a witness between a man and his covenant wife.

### **4. No Room for Divorcing One's Partner – Matthew 19:3-12.**

The Pharisees came to Jesus to inquire about the possibility of dismissing their wives any time they feel like doing so. "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?" Actually these people did not ask anything at all, since the phrase "for any and every reason" leaves no need for legal rulings. Jesus responded in plain language that their first problem was ignorance of God's word. Had they not read that when God created male and female at the beginning, He meant that the two should be united together as one flesh. "They are no longer two but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate" (19:4-6).

The second problem of the Pharisees was unbelief. This is spelled out in our Lord's response to their next question: "Why then did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?" Jesus replied: "Because your hearts were hard." But, as it was intended in the beginning, even now no one can divorce his wife (19:8,9). I realise that Jesus said, "except for marital unfaithfulness." But since immorality is not part of Christian behaviour, we may conclude that there is no room for divorce among believing Christians.

At this point the disciples spoke up. They too held to the Pharisees' opinion that the wife should be disposable. Having heard the Lord's response to the Pharisees, they said, "If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry." It is sad that many Christians of today have picked up this attitude. Marriage is undesirable if it does not include an option of

disposal. God the Father did not intend that those He joined should separate, and God the Son did not allow it. Therefore in Christian marriage there is to be no room for divorce.

**5. No Room for an Egocentric Attitude in the Marriage Partnership – Ephesians 5:21-33.**

The basis for relationship between a husband and wife is established by Ephesians 5:21: “submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.” The only way a husband and wife can live together in this way is by means of the Spirit-filled life of those who have been cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ. Other than that, there is no way for a man and women to cleave together for life in this evil and confused age.

The wife’s submission to her husband and the husband’s love of his wife are both to be based on the relationship between Christ and His Church. Note that this qualifying reason is given for every command in this passage, stated in phrases like: “as”, “so also”, “in the same way”. If we miss this basis for our behaviour, we will not make it in our married life, since the husband will keep on demanding submission from his wife, while the wife keeps on demanding love from the husband. But marriage is not a matter of placing our demands before our partner, but a matter of fulfilling our own responsibilities before Christ. The husband should love his wife in the manner that Christ loves the Church, cares for it, and protects it from danger. The wife likewise should respond to such love in the same manner as the Church is expected to respond to Christ’s acts of love. We cannot live on mere human traditions, by which in some parts of the world the woman is treated as an “animal of burden” or as “property”. To be able to live as expected, one must be Spirit-filled and not wine-filled (5:18).

**6. No Room for Camouflage in the Marriage Partnership – 1 Peter 3:1-7.**

Peter warns both husband and wife against camouflage. The wife is commanded to show submission to her husband as a means of gospel testimony, “so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behaviour of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives.” This is an unusual type of evangelism, given only to the wives in this case. Unfortunately, wives can miss this opportunity through the pursuit of equality. The issue of equality should not arise among the true children of God, because the Bible is very clear that both husband and wife are equal before God spiritually speaking (Gal 3:28). The wives should take courage in marriage lest they miss the opportunity to portray Christ in their demeanour.

The warning to the wife is that she should not assume that she will win her husband’s heart by external physical appearance. She may adorn herself by braiding hair, or by wearing gold jewellery and fine clothes. All these have their

proper place and the Bible is not against them. But if they are used as a substitute for fellowship with God in the inner person, they are a misleading camouflage and wrong. For even the prostitutes use such things, and may appear even more beautiful than the faithful. But this is mere disguise, for within they are corrupt. What counts is the development of the inner person after the manner of Sarah, who lived an exemplary life with her husband Abraham, calling him "master". Such a pattern of life is not camouflage, but the manifestation of true beauty.

The husband likewise is commanded to be considerate in living with his covenant wife, because the wife is a weaker partner (this refers to physical weakness, not spiritual). The husband is to be considerate as well because his wife is an heir of life jointly with him. Sometimes we men behave as if we are the only recognised kingdom-heirs. Such thinking is faulty in view of God's word. Furthermore, Peter says that if considerateness does not mark the couple's relationship, then their prayers will be hindered. If prayers are hindered, spiritual suffocation will result. So there can be no place for camouflage in their lives. Both of them must reflect in daily outward bearing the true grace of a Spirit-filled person, rather than maintain an outward appearance that does not match up with the inner reality.

#### **7. No Room for Gloom in the Marriage Partnership – Revelation 19:1-10.**

Marriage was instituted by God the Father in Eden before the Fall. This means that marriage is a creation act rather than a product of merely human device. And God instituted marriage for mankind's fulfillment and joy. Any attempt to change its intended joyful pattern and purpose is sinful. Marriage should portray not only the joy of eternity past, but also of eternity to come. For in the passage before us, marriage is likened to the second coming of the Lord to take His bride the Church home for eternity. Married couples should reflect in their life together the characteristics appropriate to that final celebration, of which they are meant to be a picture. Hence their lives should be filled with praise (19:1-3), worship (19:4,6,10), and rejoicing in righteousness (19:7,8).

Husband and wife should show to the world the joy of marriage so that no one may despise the wedding supper of the Lamb. For if we live a life of married gloom, we paint a picture that life in heaven is not going to be any better. Note that righteousness is singled out as the only acceptable attire for the wedding supper of the Lamb, and blessed are those who are invited to it because they have the right dress: well-fashioned, glittering and clean. Marriage should be characterised by joyful righteousness, as it plays its role between eternity past and eternity to come, announcing to the world the Great Marriage of the Final Day, which will unite the Lord Jesus with His own forever.

### **Conclusion**

Marriage is a relationship between two grown-ups, and they need to behave as such before the Lord. While the husband is said to be the head of the family, God does not suggest that he is superior to his wife, nor does He suggest that the wife is inferior to her husband simply because she is commanded to be submissive. The nature of this relationship must have its basis in the unity in the Godhead. Among the Persons of the Trinity there is both full fellowship and cooperation, and also differing functions, yet without any question of superiority or inferiority. Therefore, we should cease from a utilitarian attitude, often times expressed by the husbands, and take marriage with biblical seriousness. For whether we like it or not, Scripture reminds us that there is no room in marriage for: presumption, comparison, breaking of faith, divorce, egocentrism, camouflage, or gloom.

# ACQUAINTED WITH GRIEF: THE SPECIAL CONTRIBUTION OF THE BOOK OF LAMENTATIONS

Paul Bowers

Set off in a remote corner of the Old Testament is the perplexing, disquieting little book of Lamentations. Here in the form of a desolate funeral dirge is memorialised the great national tragedy of ancient Israel, the sack and destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar in the sixth century before Christ.

Especially problematic for this little work is the question how it possibly accords with the New Testament affirmation that *every* Scripture is profitable for the complete equipping of the man of God. One wonders what contribution this obscure book can make towards such equipment. To what purpose is it included in Scripture?

The special contribution of Lamentations cannot principally lie in a distinctive message, for the message of the book is largely paralleled in other parts of Scripture. The contribution of the book is better sought, I wish to suggest, in the distinctive *method* by which it undertakes to convey its message. A helpful way to clarify this method is to consider another book, a modern lamentation, amazingly parallel to the Old Testament book, not only in theology, content, and form, but especially in the distinctive way in which it seeks to convey its message.

## A Modern Lament

The well-known Christian thinker and author C. S. Lewis, a bachelor for the most part of his life, surprised his friends (and doubtless himself) by falling deeply in love at the age of 57 and getting married. Within a very short while it was discovered that his wife Joy had an advanced case of cancer and seemed only to have months to live. Special prayer was made, resulting in an apparent miracle. Good health seemed for a time to be restored. Joy was able to take long walks with her husband and to resume a normal life. She had always wanted to visit Greece, so the two made a memorable trip there together. Joy died soon after their return to England. She was forty-five, and they had been married only a little more than three years.<sup>1</sup>

The following year a slim volume, *A Grief Observed*, appeared in England under a pseudonym.<sup>2</sup> Here in short, compact paragraph on paragraph was all the hollow despair that had wracked Lewis in the weeks and months immediately following his wife's death. Reading the book is an experience in itself, an intensely discomfiting experience. Lewis uncharacteristically lays bare his soul in all its anguish, as he struggles with the reality of his loss and grasps out for some understanding. The book reflects a great mind shocked, baffled, and prostrated. Indeed, Lewis begins to write in a daze:

It feels like being mildly drunk or concussed. There is a sort of invisible blanket between the world and me. I find it hard to take in what anyone says (p. 7).

The stark finality of death jostled itself into his awareness:

This cold truth, this terrible traffic-regulation ('You, Madam, to the right—you, Sir, to the left') is just the beginning of the separation which is death itself (p. 15).

God's apparent designs in the marriage seem cruelly dashed:

Oh, God, God, why did you take such trouble to force this creature out of its shell if it is now doomed to crawl back—to be sucked back—into it? (p. 18).

The intensity of the grief numbed the sense of God's presence:

Meanwhile, where is God? This is one of the most disquieting symptoms. When you are happy, . . . if you remember yourself and turn to Him with gratitude and praise, you will be—or so it feels—welcomed with open arms. But go to Him when your need is desperate, when all other help is vain, and what do you find? A door slammed in your face, and a sound of bolting and double bolting on the inside. . . . Why is He so present a commander in our time of prosperity and so very absent a help in time of trouble? (p. 9).

Stout words. Desperately he continued:

What chokes every prayer and every hope is the memory of all the prayers [Joy] and I offered and all the false hopes we had. Hot hopes raised merely by our own wishful thinking; hopes encouraged, even forced upon us, by false diagnosis, by X-ray photographs, by strange remissions, by one temporary recovery that might have ranked as a miracle. Step by step we were 'led up the garden path'. Time after time, when He seemed most gracious, He was really preparing the next torture (pp. 26-27).

The agonised thoughts were not all in one direction. After this last bitter entry, Lewis thought better: "I wrote that last night. It was a yell rather than a thought" (p. 27). He arrives quietly, perhaps with a touch of sad humour, at his own true state. Someone had quoted to him "Do not mourn like those that have no hope".

It astonishes me, the way we are invited to apply to ourselves words so obviously addressed to our betters. What St. Paul says can comfort only those who love God better than the dead, and the dead better than themselves (pp. 23-24).

Lewis begins to sense a confused value system being uncovered beneath the exterior of his own till then apparently profound faith. He becomes sharp with himself:

The case is too plain. If my house has collapsed at one blow, it is because it was a house of cards. . . . If I had really cared, as I thought I did, about the sorrows of the world, I should not have been so overwhelmed when my own sorrow came. It has been an imaginary faith playing with innocuous counters labelled 'Illness,' 'Pain,' 'Death' and 'Loneliness' (p. 31).

If his faith was a house of cards, then it required knocking down. His previous bitterness in new light appeared as an abusive attempt to strike back at God. As for his sensation of God's bolted door, it was his own frantic "hammering and kicking the door like a maniac that made it seem closed." Can God give to one who is grabbing? "After all, you must have a capacity to receive, or even omnipotence can't give. Perhaps your own passion temporarily destroys the capacity (p. 38)."

When I lay these questions before God I get no answer. But a rather special sort of "No answer". It is not the locked door. It is more like a silent, certainly not uncompassionate, gaze. As though He shook His head not in refusal but waiving the question. Like, 'Peace, child; you don't understand' (pp. 54-55).

#### Relation to the Book of Lamentations

There are certainly differences between the book of Lamentations and C. S. Lewis' *A Grief Observed*. While Lewis writes out of an intensely personal loss, Lamentations reflects a collective tragedy. Lewis grieves the death of his wife; Lamentations grieves the destruction of a city and a people. In *A Grief Observed*, the thought progresses, tortuously but discernibly; in Lamentations the thought rotates. One expresses itself in prose, the other in poetry. Lewis wrote in the midst of his despair; the Lamentor reflects afterward upon the bitter experience. And at the end Lewis acknowledges to God: "I needed this experience as a lesson"; Lamentations prays: "We deserved this experience as a punishment."

But the concurrences between these two laments, one ancient and the other modern, are far more striking. Let me list eight points of contact:

(1) *In both instances the tragedy was the sudden destruction of a central point of meaning for life.* The loss to Lewis was so shattering because he had focused so much of his life in the new happiness found in his marriage, and in the meaning which that gave to his being. His wife's death hollowed him out.

The people of Israel suffered a similar inward devastation. They had been taught to understand their true core significance in terms of God's redemptive action toward and through them. Now they were unexpectedly overwhelmed and extinguished. George Knight puts it vividly:

The book of Lamentations is the book of Israel's Easter Saturday. That is to say, we find in it a cry from the heart of men and women who are facing the astounding fact that God had deliberately (as it seemed) undone the plan of cosmic salvation upon which he had long determined, and had destroyed of his own volition the instrument he had already taken over a millennium to educate for his use.<sup>13</sup>



Tragedy in any form is bitter. Yet not all tragedy wipes out life's very point of meaning. The tragedies underlying *A Grief Observed* and *Lamentations* were both precisely of this most crushing form.

(2) *In both instances the sufferers chose to express their numbed grief through writing.* Lewis defends his action to himself: "In so far as this record was a defence against total collapse, a safety-valve, it has done some good (p. 47)." The same intention, for himself and for his people, would appear to underlie the Lamenter's literary expression. Norman Gottwald writes:

This total expression of grief, wrung from the hearts which only reluctantly have submitted to the decisions of God, has all the earmarks of a liturgical catharsis. . . . It can readily be seen that the public recital of the poems of *Lamentations* on the appropriate memorial day . . . must have been an effective outlet for all the pent-up emotion of a people who had lost practically everything that belonged to their previous mode of life.<sup>15</sup>

(3) *In both instances the incongruity of the tragedy numbed the sense of God's presence.* Lewis thought he heard the door bolted and double bolted within. The writer of *Lamentations* grieves:

He hath walled me about that I cannot go forth;  
He hath made my chain heavy.  
Yea, when I cry, and call for help,  
He shutteth out my prayer (3:7, 8).

(4) *In both instances there is a bitter realism.* Lewis recounts how God deceived his wife and him, giving hope while He only prepared "the next torture". *Lamentations* is no less stark in expressing its grief over the brutal events of Jerusalem's siege and fall:

See O Lord, and behold  
To whom thou hast done this!  
Shall the women eat their fruit,  
The children that are dandled in the hands?  
My virgins and my young men are fallen by the sword:  
Thou has slain them in the day of thine anger;  
Thou hast slaughtered, and not pitied (2:20-21).

The accusations against God are not minced:

He hath led me  
And caused me to walk in darkness  
And not in light (3:2).  
He hath bent his bow like an enemy,  
He hath stood with his right hand as an adversary;  
The Lord is become as an enemy,  
And hath swallowed up Israel (2:4-5).

(5) *In both instances the grief and complaint are overwhelmingly theocentric.* Here is anguish of the believer when the unbelievable happens. Look, O God, see what you have done! How could God have done this? The incongruity is experienced precisely because of an intense awareness of the reality and

control of God. The staggered faith itself resides within a faith. Lewis wonders if God is good – but the very problem roots itself in a conviction of the reality of God. Lamentations complains, and asks, and grieves, but always, significantly, *to God*. The grief is theocentrically experienced.

(6) *In both instances the writer comes to accept the suffering as necessary.* Lewis senses that his faith had been a house of cards, which required knocking down. Throughout Lamentations the writer reveals the conviction to which he had come, that the tragedy was a punishment justly deserved:

Jerusalem hath grievously sinned;  
Therefore she is become as an unclean thing (1:8).  
For the Lord hath afflicted her  
For the multitude of her transgressions (1:5).  
The Lord is righteous;  
For I have rebelled against his commandment (1:18).

(7) *In both instances grief remains intense.* Near the end of Lewis' book, just as he is regaining a measure of emotional balance, the entry appears, "Tonight all the hells of young grief have opened again; the mad words, the bitter resentment, the fluttering in the stomach, the nightmare unreality, the wallowed-in tears. For in grief nothing 'stays put'" (p. 46). Nor did the writer of Lamentations ever outlive the awful sensations; the very last words of the book are a painful sob:

But thou hast utterly rejected us,  
Thou art very wroth against us (5:22).<sup>5</sup>

(8) *In both instances a hope emerges in the midst of the grief.* Lewis did not hear answers to all the questions of his pained and probing mind, but he did speak of a "silent, certainly not uncompassionate, gaze". And he heard not a door being bolted but "Peace, child; you don't understand". The writer of Lamentations also re-met his Lord in the midst of his grief. The daily freshness of God's personal lovingkindness swept through him as he penned certainly one of the most beautiful passages in the Bible:

This I recall to my mind,  
Therefore have I hope:  
It is of the Lord's lovingkindness  
That we are not consumed,  
Because his compassions fail not.  
They are new every morning;  
Great is thy faithfulness (3:21-23).

#### **The Special Contribution of *A Grief Observed***

*A Grief Observed* and the book of Lamentations present ancient and modern literary expressions of theocentric grief with remarkable parallels in form and content. The crucial question for our inquiry, however, is why each of these authors chose to publish his work. No doubt many diaries of sorrow have been kept, only to have their privacy jealously guarded. Why did these two authors

make their feelings public? What value did they expect to accrue to others through their cathartic efforts?

In commenting on *A Grief Observed*, Kathryn Lindskoog makes an illuminating observation: "In spite of its attractive clarity, brevity, and ultimate hopefulness, this is hardly another gift book for the bereaved. It is too vivid, ruthless, and startling. . . . Just to read the record is a racking experience."<sup>6</sup> *A Grief Observed* is not in fact appropriate for comforting those in grief. Rather, it is appropriate for those who are not grieving. And it is appropriate for this purpose not because of its message, which can be found elsewhere, for example from Lewis' own earlier book, *The Problem of Pain*. The special contribution of *A Grief Observed* is rather in the way its message is given: the dreaded experience of the loss of life's very core of significance presented truthfully, compellingly, emotionally, so that one cannot help but pass with the writer through some of the agony, the questioning, the hollowed-out feeling, ultimately back toward God—a vicarious passage fraught with painful education for the reader. No theological treatise could contribute this possibility in any way comparable to the harrowing experience of reading *A Grief Observed* and passing through the tragedy with C. S. Lewis.

#### **The Special Contribution of Lamentations**

The book of Lamentations is ancient and culturally foreign to us. Perhaps the extended demonstration of close parallelism with the modern lament, *A Grief Observed*, suggests what that brief, neglected, but powerful Old Testament book was meant to provide. Like its modern counterpart, Lamentations is gravely unsettling to read, therapy not usually appropriate for those in sorrow. Perhaps, like *A Grief Observed*, Lamentations was not really meant to comfort the grieving, but rather to discomfort the ungrieving—to acquaint them with grief; to offer an in-depth emotional understanding of this unavoidable aspect of life by means of the stark, aching memory of one such experience poetically expressed. No analytic reflection, no prophetic utterance, no historical account could ever contribute a comparable opportunity.

How then is Lamentations to be used? Not merely as a source for historical information on the fall of Jerusalem. Not only for theological reflection on great catastrophe. For the person who would be "fully equipped for every good work", Lamentations is meant not least to be used as an experience, as an emotionally-shared experience in theocentric grief—shared so that we might achieve in some measure an existential understanding both for our own inevitable journey through sorrow, and for giving help to others about us who may be caught in raw tragedy. Lamentations will offer its most substantive contribution when it is *felt* as well as read. The equipping it will thereby provide is of no trifling import.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>The story of the love and marriage of C. S. Lewis and Joy Davidman has now been made the subject both of a BBC television film, *Shadowlands*, and of a book by the same title written by Brian Sibley (London: Hodder, 1985). More recently the material was turned into a highly acclaimed and very moving play, written by William Nicholson, also titled *Shadowlands*, which had its first performance at Queens Theatre, London, on 23 October 1989. Amidst the wealth of additional material, see especially Lyle Dorsett, *And God Came In: The Extraordinary Story of Joy Davidman* (New York: Macmillan, 1983); Douglas Gresham, *Lenten Lands: My Childhood with Joy Davidman and C. S. Lewis* (New York: Macmillan, 1988); and the standard biography by R. L. Green and W. Hooper, *C. S. Lewis* (London: Collins, 1974).

<sup>2</sup>N. W. Clerk, *A Grief Observed* (London: Faber, 1961). In 1964, the year after Lewis' death, the book was reissued under his own name.

<sup>3</sup>George A. F. Knight, *Esther, Song of Songs, Lamentations* (London: SCM, 1955) p. 104.

<sup>4</sup>Norman K. Gottwald, "Lamentations" *Interpretation* ix. 3 (July 1955) p. 322.

<sup>5</sup>Whether taken as a question or, as given in the text here, as a statement, the impact is the same.

<sup>6</sup>Kathryn Lindskoog, Review of *A Grief Observed* by C. S. Lewis, *Eternity Magazine* xv.7 (July 1964) p. 42.

## 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.

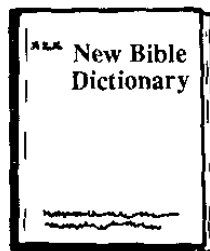
These three books do a good job of introducing new ideas from related academic disciplines to provide creative answers to difficult hermeneutical questions. These books are only introductions, but they serve as excellent bridges for readers who have little or no background in the contributions that other 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.

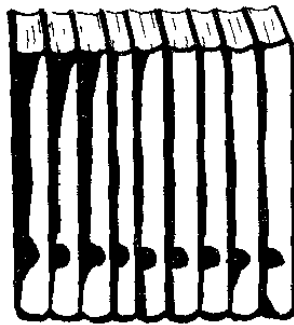
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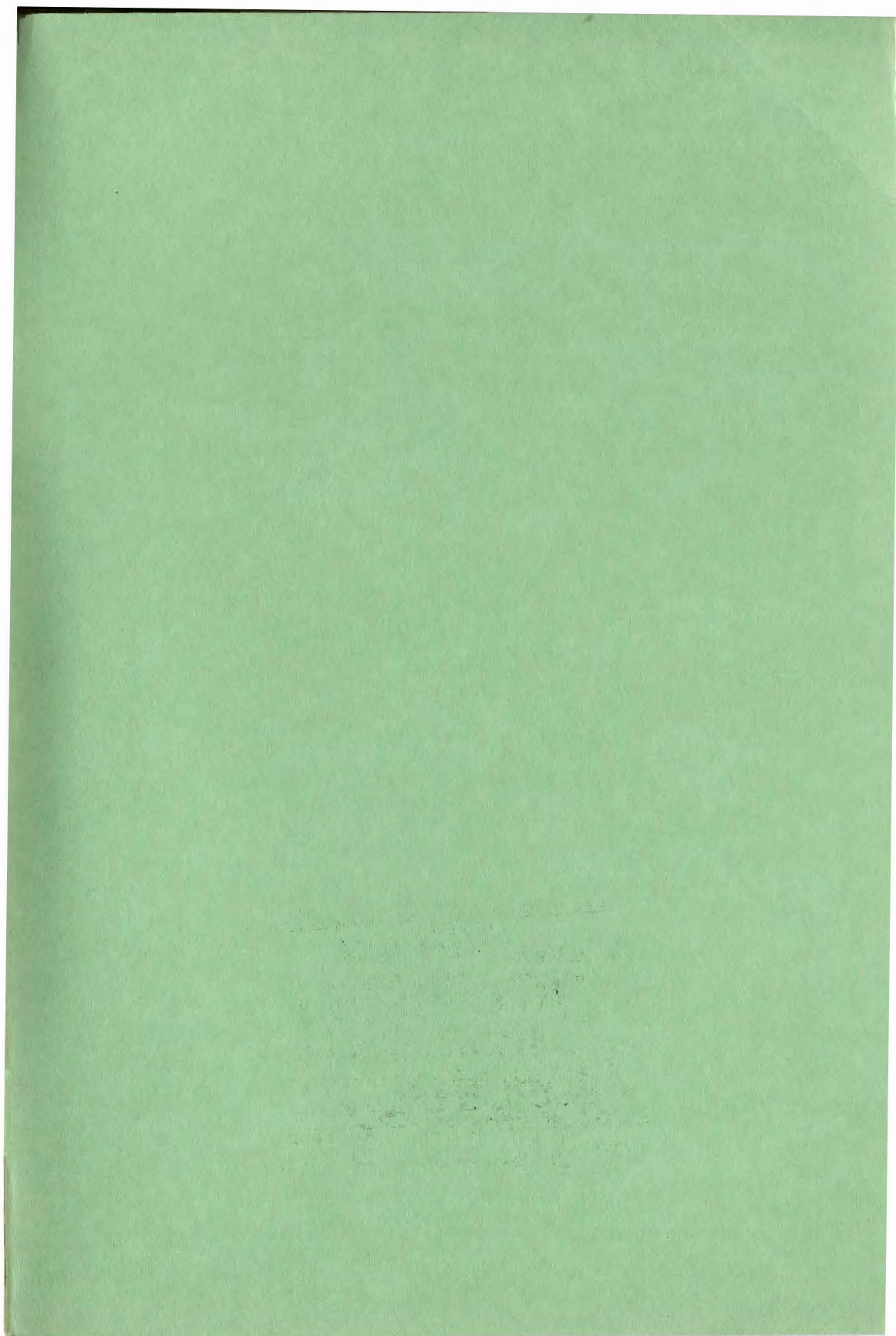
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