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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Living as the People of God: The Relevance of Old Testament Ethics
by Christopher J. H. Wright,
(Leicester, England, IVP 1983)
pp. 224, Ksh. 149/–

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

James Wood, Ukamba Bible College, Kenya

The Acts of the Apostles, An Introduction & Commentary
Tyndale NT Commentaries
I. H. Marshall
(Leicester IVP & Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980)

The Letter to the Hebrews. An Introduction and Commentary
Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
by D. Guthrie
(Leicester: IVP, and Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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