Black Christians and White Missionaries
by Richard Gray
(New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1990)£18.50, viii + 134pp, with endnotes and index.

Richard Gray is Emeritus Professor of African History at the School of Oriental and African Studies (London University). His rigorous skills as a historian, therefore, are evident in this volume. The author is also a committed Catholic layman, and his sympathetic interest in the unfolding story of Christianity in Africa is also apparent.

The book seeks to explore African appropriations of Christianity spanning three centuries. The chapters came into being first as separate essays, and not all the chapters fit easily within the one book.

Part One is the fruit of historical research in the Vatican archives in Rome and concerns mainly 17th Century papal responses to slavery in Africa. It makes fascinating reading as Gray ferrets out (largely from Italian and Spanish sources of that era) two early attempts to expose the horrors of the Atlantic slave trade. The first of these was made by Lourenço do Silva, of Afro-Brazilian origin, who sought to influence the papal curia in Rome by an impassioned plea against the massive violation of human rights that the slave trade represented. The second attempt was by the Italian priest Fra Girolamo working in the Soyo region near the mouth of the Zaire River. Rome responded with resolutions and orders against slave trade practices, but it all came to nothing, foundering on powerful vested political and economic interests determined to perpetuate slavery.

These two chapters would be of importance to any student of the slave trade in Africa, but they fit less well in a book whose main concern is to investigate African appropriations of Christianity.

The third and final chapter of Part One, however, still set in the 17th Century, explores the impact of the early penetration of Catholic Capuchin missionaries into the Soyo region of Lower Zaire. Gray contests the widely held view that the enthusiastic response to Catholic missionary endeavour in the Kongo region of Lower Zaire ws a temporary and superficial aberration. He warns against generalisations and shows why political, geographic and economic factors interplay locally or regionally to create distinct situations which need to be examined separately. The Soyo rulers found in the Capuchins' Christian rituals the political support and legitimation that they seemed to lack in their own

indigenous traditions. The Capuchins, for their part, created lay confraternities, which brought about a highly disciplined and committed lay training movement, whose leaders were influential in local government and made the alliance beween the missionaries and the people spiritual as well as political. Gray's research reveals that in two major areas of confrontation, marriage and indigenous religion (attachment to shrines, charms, public festivals, etc.) the evidence confirms a deep and widespread response to the missionaries' message, even if this response was gradual and cumulative rather than dramatic. If subsequent history records that this "closest encounter" with Christianity was to pass, the fact remains that it did take place and that the encounter was a profound one.

With Part Two, Gray moves from the past to the colonial period and the post-colonial present. Once again, the author takes issue with an opinion widespread both within Africa and elsewhere, that Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa has merely been the ideological superstructure of Western capitalism. He insists that such a view does not take into account the fundamental contributions of African Christians and of African cosmologies. He gives examples of how, even when missionary influence was greatest, "vital spaces" remained for African initiatives and responses. He thus refutes Robin Horton's reductionist thesis that the world religions of Islam and Christianity are little more than catalysts, i.e. stimulators and accelerators of changes which in Africa were `in the air' anyway. Rather, Gray seeks to show that, for instance, in areas relating to sickness and healing, evil and exorcism, death and eschatology, Christianity's penetration and influence have been deep and radical. Far from merely legitimating imperialism, Christianity, by its major emphasis on education and literacy (particularly the Bible), proved to be the "Achilles' heel of colonialism."

The final chapter discusses Christianity and concepts of evil in Sub-Saharan Africa. Traditional African perception would see evil as all that detracts from and seeks to destroy life. The missionaries' denunciation of sin struck a strong resonant chord, even if Africans did not immediately understand the missionaries' sense of sin as evil interiorized, involving individual responsibility and personal guilt. The Christian proclamation of the victory of Christ over sin seemed deeply meaningful to African hearers, especially when the Gospel narrative demonstrated Christ's power over sickness and evil - a theme of immense relevance to Africa, and particularly addressed by various prophetic leaders such as Kimbangu and Shembe.

Gray marshals evidence from the Watch Tower Movement in Zambia, Emmanuel Milango (Zambia), William Wade Harris (West Africa), Tukwadzano

Women's Movement (Zimbabwe), and the Kairos Theologians (South Africa), to reject the claim that the new religion (Christianity) has left untouched and unchanged traditional African cosmologies. At times there has been a "theocratic reorganisation of the cosmos" in which the African response to Christianity derives its force and vitality from indigenous models and experiences.

This in turn leads the author to discuss syncretism. Gray argues that a distinction should be made between syncretism and pluralism, In his view, syncretism is only syncretism when it is a deliberate attempt to create a new religion made up of elements from other religions. Theological pluralism on the other hand is the arena of a process of continuous dialogue by those who perceive themselves as Christians as they search to make sense of the new from within their world. Gray would maintain that such theological pluralism, if and when it is resolved, may lead to theological enrichment.

The debate throws up questions which would provide fruitful discussion among theological students. Evangelicals, with their deep concern for right doctrine, may well feel uneasy about possible implications for orthodoxy. They might protest that Scripture, which should the supreme authority in all matters of belief and behaviour, is being shunted to one side by religious and theological speculation. They might feel that syncretism is getting off too lightly. Certainly the definition that Gray borrows of what constitutes a Christian as "one who gives attention to Jesus whose achievement is contextualised by God" would seem to be woefully vague. Surely we can be more definite as to what consititutes a Christian. Having said that, an orthodoxy which is passively inherited from others can create a lethargic, wooden and static Christianity -- the very opposite of what Jesus said when He declared "You will know the Truth and the Truth will set you free." Not unthinking orthodoxy, but radical biblical Christianity should be the African Church's goal. "The task consists not primarily in thinking through the theological deposit of the West, -- it consists in thinking through faith in Christ" (Kwesi Dickson).

A College library of BTh-level and beyond would do well to acquire this book. It will inform, challenge, and stimulate thinking.

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Transforming Mission:
Paradigm shifts in theology of Mission
by David J. Bosch
(Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991) XIX + 587 pp., $24.95

Another missiological classic has burst on the scene. This book will remain a top shelf publication for years to come. Besides revealing brilliant research the data is assiduously documented, portraying the author as immersed in his subject. His skillful use of German, Dutch and South African authors is outstanding, as well as his knowledge of the more commonly cited American selections.

This book gives an overview of paradigm shifts in mission over the last two millennia. It is interwoven with the theology of mission-history, aspects of culture and glimpses into the future.

At first it is hard to determine the theological stance of the author because he presents his data so objectively. However, he does not hesitate in referring to evangelical fundamentalism which he portrays as an anachronism.

In Part 1 of the book he deals with the various New Testament Paradigms. Matthew's paradigm was that of `Missionary Discipleship.' He declares that the `road' of missionary discipleship to the Gentiles is now open requiring all disciples to practise God's justice for the poor.

The Lukan paradigm contains a pneumatological emphasis as well as the notion of suffering as a part of missionary service.

When arriving at Paul's missionary model, the author acknowledges the elusive nature of this missionary giant and then outlines the six main characteristics of his missionary life.

Part 2 of the book deals with the six historical paradigms of mission and here the author follows the historico-theological sub-divisions suggested by Hans Kung (1984:25; 1987:157). These are:

1. The apocalyptic paradigm of primitive Christianity.
2. The Hellenistic paradigm of the patristic period.
3. The medieval Roman Catholic paradigm.
4. The Protestant (Reformation) paradigm.
5. The modern Enlightenment paradigm.
6. The emerging Ecumenical paradigm.

The first of these is covered in Part 1 where an intensive examination is made of the New Testament documents. The second paradigm is enunciated most clearly and will surprise some evangelicals who may not realize the vital contribution made to the concept of mission by the Eastern Orthodox Church.

The third paradigm, viz. the contribution of the Roman Catholic Church to mission is perhaps better known. The primary place in conserving missionary theology during the period of this paradigm is attributed to the monastic movement. The essential scripture utilized by members operating within this paradigm is according to Bosch, Luke 14:23, "...compel them to come in."

The great importance of Vatican II (1962-1965) in promoting a major change in Roman Catholic theology of mission is underlined by the author.

The fourth paradigm cited is that of the Protestant Reformation. Here Bosch (pp. 241-143) outlines five main features of this movement which are:

1. Justification by faith.
2. Humanity seen from the perspective of the Fall.
3. The subjective dimension of salvation.
4. The priesthood of all believers.
5. The centrality of the Scriptures.

He then points out the ambivalence operating during this period. This was the fluctuation between the sovereignty of God and the sovereignty of human accountability.

A sizable section is given to mission in the wake of the Enlightenment and nine motifs are elucidated by the author in a masterly fashion. He unveils some of the misconceptions of missionary work carried out in the framework of the Enlightenment and concludes this section by saying:

> The only ultimately effective solution to the wide-spread missionary malaise of today, which is sometimes hidden from our eyes because of our apparent missionary "successes," is a "radical transformation of the whole life of the church." (p. 345).

Part 3 is entitled "Towards Relevant Missiology." For 158 pages the author discusses current issues of the emerging paradigm. Here he displays his breadth of reading and a balance between faith and praxis. This whole volume as a historical overview is invaluable, but Part 3 in particular will be a resource for

students and professors battling with the contours of the new paradigm, as it emerges. These are the issues right at the cutting edge of missiology and will, I believe, guide our thinking towards the end of the current century and beyond.

The author excels in sketching the contours of the ecumenical paradigm. He avoids dogmatic conclusions and gives space for developing patterns, utilizing his immense ability to weave his knowledge of both the ecumenical stream and the evangelical stream of church and mission conferences. This section is forward looking and would be an advantage for all mission leaders to study. The tragic death of the author since publication of this book is a great loss to the missiological world. May there be other great thinkers raised up like this most astute scholar.

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Passionate Believing: The Fundamentalist Face of Islam
by Bill Musk
(Eastbourne, E. Sussex, UK: Monarch 1992) 256 pp.£9.00/$13.50

Musk's previous book, *The Unseen Face of Islam*(MARC, 1989), helped the reader to understand folk Islam and to appreciate cultural patterns and power encounter possibilities as part of sharing one's faith with ordinary Muslims. Musk's latest book, turning in a new direction, seeks to help the reader understand the rising phenomenon of Islamic Fundamentalism.

The book is helpful not only for those who seek to minister to the household of Islam, but also for the lay person who is often perplexed by the seemingly `irrational' and passionate behavior of Muslim reformists. Musk constructs his treatise by first introducing the reader to the worldview which is foundational to Muslim Fundamentalism. It is an integrated worldview which does not compartmentalize life, which requires not only passionate belief but passionate behavior, and which has increasingly been on a collision course with both the humanistic West as well as the secular Muslim states of the post-colonial period.

As Musk illustrates the worldview of the Muslim reformists through models and vignettes of fundamentalism from Pakistan, Iran and Egypt, he comes to at least three sobering conclusions: (1) "Westerners and western culture have actually helped inflame and energize `Islamic Fundamentalist'"; (2) "modern Islamic `fundamentalists' adhere to a worldview far closer to the biblical norm than our Western aberration"; and, (3) until Western Christians come to terms with the issues underlying fundamentalism, "effective witnessing to Islamists remains a future dream."

Of disappointment to this reader is the fact that Musk, with his long-term experience in Africa, does not give us illustrations or insights into fundamentalist movements in their sub-Saharan expressions. Sudan, Somalia, Nigeria and an increasing number of countries across the continent have experienced a resurgence of Islam either against nominally Muslim national leadership or in opposition to secular governments. Yet, while the players and specific issues may vary by geographic region, the underlying passionate belief in a God-ordained unsegregated worldview are the same, whether in Africa, Iran, Pakistan or Indonesia.

Perhaps most significantly Musk, instead of pointing out bridges to fundamentalist Islam, challenges the corruption of western culture which has often been more the barrier to the gospel than has the person and work of Jesus Christ. He calls the reader to lay aside personal pride and prejudice, to empathize with the people concerned, and not to overlook the fundamentalist attitudes hidden in our own Christian sub-cultures, as we allow Christ's Spirit to indwell us and identify creative ways to share the gospel with a people who need--in addition to passionate belief--Christ's love.

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Grace Abounding: The Message of Judges

by Michael Wilcock.

(Nottingham, UK: IVP, The Bible Speaks Today series, 1992) 176 pp., £7.99

Judges is one of the most intriguing books in the Bible, in both senses of the word `intrigue.' It is a fascinating book, filled with memorable stories of unusual people; people who are involved in the plotting and overthrow of the foreign rulers under whose oppression they were suffering. The events take place in dramatic circumstances as the judges are raised up by God to deliver the Children of Israel from their oppressors.

These narratives provide marvelous material for Sunday School teachers, but seem to be less popular with preachers. Some of these stories lend themselves well to preaching, with their rich store of lessons to learn and examples to follow. But other chapters are rarely read, let alone do they form the subject of sermons. Perhaps we wonder why they are included in the Bible. They hardly seem to be `useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.' So what is their purpose? Why did God ensure that they are in the Bible? Where can we turn to for help in understanding them?

It only needs a glance at the bookshelves of College libraries, or even of bookshops, to realize that Judges is not well served by commentaries, whether evangelical or otherwise. For many years we have relied mainly on Arthur Cundall's fine commentary in the Tyndale Old Testament Commentary series. More recently the book by D. Davis has increased our resources. We are therefore grateful to Michael Wilcock for adding to the list with his new volume in IVP's Bible Speaks Today series. Wilcock has already written three fine `Expositions' for this B.S.T. series each of which reflects his depth of study, clarity of communication, and a perspective which sees Scripture from God's point of view and the message which He wants us to receive. I, therefore, began reading this book with a sense of anticipation which was amply rewarded.

The book opens with an introduction which highlights several of the themes found within Judges; the recurring pattern of rebellion, retribution, repentance and rescue; an emphasis on troubles more than on narratives of the individual judges; the consequences of making wrong decisions; the question of where authority lies when 'there is no king in Israel' and finally, the fact that it is God

the Judge (ch. 11:27) who stands behind the judges and is ultimately in control even when he seems to be absent.

It is this last point which provides the emphasis of Wilcock's book. He sees the opening section (ch. 1:1-3:6) in terms of three judgments made by God and their consequences. The first details God's military orders, the second brings God's legal accusation, the last he likens to a royal decree which reveals how God uses what is wrong and evil to `discipline and train' His people.

The narratives of the judges follow a recurring pattern which is seen in its most complete form in the account of Othniel. Wilcock suggests that the Othniel pattern with its eleven (11) points sets the standard for the stories that follow, even though many of them are often highly abbreviated. This very variety is seen as significant in showing that God is not tied to any single fixed method of saving Israel, but is ever free to surprise them, and us, with the unexpected.

Unexpectedness certainly characterizes Ehud's narrative which is so different to that of Othniel, and is followed by the tiny account of Shamgar. This serves to underline God's freedom to use many very different men and women, and a variety of oppressors in accomplishing His purposes. Despite the differences certain things remain unchanged. These include the sin of Israel, the temptation of Satan, and the purposes of God for Israel and the land. The point being made it that God is sovereign, and it is He who is in control of all that happens.

Two threads run through Judges to further strengthen its unity. There is no one like Moses or David in whom authority is invested; secondly, the original people of the land and their evil influence are always present. These two threads lay the foundation for the disintegration which is seen as the book progresses. However, this disintegration is that we notice that the emphasis is on what God is doing through the judges with His people, not on what He is doing with the judges. This explains why an approach which treats the judges as examples to follow overlooks an important thrust of the book.

The account of Abimelech shows that when relationships with God are broken (He is not mentioned by name in ch.9), then the result is that relationships between people disintegrate. Truth and integrity in the third chapter of Gideon's story, and develops still more at the end of the Jephthah narrative, reaches its climax in the final five chapters of Judges.

But before that comes the rather puzzling account of Samson. It he really a judge? He is hardly an example to follow! What are we to make of his exploits? Was God's Spirit really on him? The answer is clearly yes. But what then does it all mean? Here Wilcock's emphasis is invaluable. God is the Judge. If we see the

judges as those who delivered Israel we will be in danger of missing a vital aspect of the Samson chapters. Samson did not deliver the Israelites from the hand of the Philistines. The picture is one of `fraternizing readily with them, [so] that even intermarrying was acceptable' as Israel drifted away from the Lord. The incident at Lehi does not look like the oppression suffered previously, rather what we are shown is `accommodation to the world.' God is in control. He `harnesses the young man's self-indulgence for his own purposes.' God's purpose is to judge the Philistines. Dagon is defeated, God's purpose continues. God's grace shines most clearly in these chapters where it is least deserved.

How can we say that God's purpose continues in the final chapters when He is absent apart from one very brief mention. Again Wilcock is helpful here. The first story depicts everything as all right on the surface. The right procedures are followed, but in the wrong way and for the wrong reasons. We are shown religion without God. Although it is wrong it does not appear to be too terribly bad. The second story corrects that false impression. We are shown morality without God. The disintegration seen earlier has escalated to the point where Israel is trying to destroy herself. All her attitudes are wrong. The result is near chaos. However, God is still in control. Despite the attempted self-destruction God's purpose for the nation continues. The people cannot successfully destroy themselves.

There are two useful insights. The first concerns the 300 who lapped. God's purpose was not to choose the best soldiers, rather to reduce the numbers to an impossible level. The 300 were not an `elite' but were hopelessly `inadequate.' God was the victor, not Israel. He secondly reminds us that the most striking aspect of Jephthah was his ability to use words effectively. It is a story `full of the spoken word,' even though that lands him in his greatest trouble.

We have one criticism to make. In the story of Ehud Wilcock makes much of Ehud's left-handedness. He says that the word means `a man who cannot use his right hand' because it is `bound.' He then goes on to say that it was *perhaps* deformed (my italics). His surmise is then assumed to be a fact, so that he builds much on the withered hand of Ehud. Now there is no question that Ehud was left-handed, the story makes that quite plain. The word does refer to someone who is restricted as to his right hand. However, the inference that his right hand was withered is not valid. The word only occurs once more in the Bible, also in Judges. No one, not even Wilcock, would hold that the 700 elite Benjamite men had withered right hands (20:16). The word is used to refer to someone who is left-handed. Such a person's right hand is no more withered than the left hand of a right-handed person.

However, this minor criticism in no way detracts from the value of this fine book. A book that should certainly be in every College library, and is highly recommended to every pastor who can afford its moderate price.

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Recent Books on African Theology: a Bibliography

The list of new publications listed below is given as a service to our readers. Many thanks to Edward Murphy, SJ of Hekima College, Nairobi for compiling this list and sending it along to us.

AFRICAN BIBLICAL SCHOOL, *Universalism & Mission in the Bible.*
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ALL AFRICA CONFERENCE OF CHURCHES, *The Right Time for Change.*
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ALL AFRICA CONFERENCE OF CHURCHES, *Time to Make a Choice.*
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CHEXA, M. (ed), *Les Eveques d'Afrique Parlant 1969-1991.*
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Index for Volume 12 1993

Articles (by Author)

Editorial *Keeping Both Eyes: The Value of Church History,* 12.1 (1993) 1-2
Editorial: Dancing With The Devil 12.2 (1993) 87-88
Galya, Musa *The History of The Hausa Bible: 1980 Edition* 12.1 (1993) 54-65
Hofmeyr, J. W. *The Church History Society of Southern Africa: Indeed Coming of Age* 12.1 (1993) 41-53
Kavale, Festus, *A Biblical Study Of Witchcraft* 12.2 (1993) 114-133
McCallum, Mary, *The Family Planning Method Of The Kalenjin* 12.2 (1993) 132-147
Muthengi, Julius, *The Art Of Divination* 12.2 (1993) 90-104
Ndyabahika, James *The Revival Movement in Uganda: An Evaluation* 12.1 (1993) 18-40
Olander, Mark, *The Teacher's Role In Student Motivation* 12.2 (1993) 105-113
Pierard, Richard *Allied Treatment of Protestant Missionaries in German East Africa in World War I* 12.1 (1993) 4-17

Book Reviews (by Author)

Bosch, David, ***Transforming Mission*** (R. Gaskin) 12.2 (1993) 151-153
Gray, Richard, ***Black Christians And White Missionaries***, (Gordon Molyneux) 12.2 (1993) 148-150
Hesselgrave, David and Rommen, Edward, ***Contextualization: Meaning, Methods and Models***, (Steve Strauss) 12.1 (1993) 75-77
Murphy, Edward, ***Recent Books On African Theology: A Bibliography*** 12.2 (1993) 160-163
Musk, Bill, ***Passionate Believing: The Fundamentalist Face Of Islam*** (Robert Oehrig) 12.2 (1993) 154-155
Piper, John and Grudem, W. editors, ***Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism***, (Howard Ostendorff) 12.1 (1993) 78-80
Snook, Stewart , ***Developing Leaders through Theological Education by Extension*** (Mike Henderson) 12.1 (1993) 84-86
Stine, P. C. and Wendland, E.R. , editors, ***Bridging the Gap: African Traditional Religion and Bible Translation*** (Ronald Sim) 12.1 (1993) 70-74
Stott, John , ***The Message of Acts*** (Hill) 12.1 (1993) 81-83
Thornton, Margaret , editor,***Training TEE Leaders: A Course Guide*** (Ray Davidson) 12.1 (1993) 66-69
Wendland, E. R. ***Language, Society, and Bible Translation*** (Ronald Sim) 12.1 (1993) 70-74
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