

Resensies

BYBELWETENSKAPPE/BIBLE SCIENCES

K Holter, *Yahweh in Africa: Essays on Africa and the Old Testament*, Bern: Peter Lang. 2000; viii + 162 pp (Series: Bible and Theology in Africa; 1). Price SFR 76.00.

This collection of nine essays by Knut Holter is the introductory volume to a new series "Bible and Theology in Africa". Holter is the series editor and the driving force behind BOTSA. Each of these activities forms part of a wide ranging and deep interest in African Old Testament scholarship. Holter is not only involved in creating a communication network among African Old Testament scholars, he is also a keen student of their writings. He believes that the absence of African scholars from meetings like those of the SBL and IOSOT, can be ascribed to economic reasons and not to the fact that they have nothing to offer. On the contrary, Holter states that the social awareness of African scholars can do much to help the somewhat sterile Western Old Testament practice out of its misery.

The book is divided into two parts. The first part is devoted to the theme "The Old Testament in Africa" and comprises six articles. The theme of the second part is "Africa in the Old Testament" and it comprises three articles. Almost all the articles were written for other collections or were previously published in various journals. This aspect of the collection leads to my most serious point of criticism: While I was reading through the articles, I experienced it as a loose collection of articles, rather than a systematic dealing with the subject of Yahweh in Africa (or even of Old Testament scholarship in Africa).

From the outset it is clear that Holter did not mean to rewrite the articles into chapters of a monograph. In each article the footnotes and references are retained, as it was originally published. This is the case to the extent that several arguments, quotations and a wide range of bibliographic references are repeated in successive articles. I found these repetitions somewhat distracting, but ascribe it to a decision by the author not to tamper with the article character of each contribution.

As far as the contents are concerned, the book contains a spirited appeal to take African Old Testament scholarship seriously. Problems, such as the European or North American training of scholars and their endeavour to contextualize their knowledge, the lack of funds for post graduate studies, the ecclesiastical and congregational situation in various countries and approaches to moral issues and to scientific Bible reading, are all confronted and discussed. At no point, however, does the

reader get the impression that Holter thinks he has the final answers for his African audience. Contrariwise he engages in discussion with many African colleagues, by taking their writings as the basis for some of his articles. In the process he does not only engage in serious discussion, but he also introduces the uninformed reader to scholars from the African continent. This causes a need to become acquainted with the authors and the journals in which they publish, to get a first hand experience of their scholarship. Throughout the book the concepts "African scholarship" and "sub-Saharan Africa" mean Africa with the exclusion of South Africa. The disadvantage of such an approach is that it does not really cover all of Africa, south of the Sahara, (but the reason for this exclusion is given in the introduction to chapter 2, p 27). One advantage of the approach is that many South African scholars are introduced to their northern colleagues with whom, for a variety of reasons, they do not have firm relationships. I have no doubt that many copies of *Yahweh in Africa* will find their way into South African libraries and the offices of South African scholars.

In part one, on the Old Testament in Africa, Holter focusses on Old Testament scholarship as it manifests itself today on the African continent where the most remarkable growth of Christianity is experienced. The result of this development, compared to the secularisation of Europe, is that the Bible is not only used in congregational contexts, but that it is also studied in a growing number of University departments of religion and/or theology. Characteristic of this engagement with the Bible, specifically the Old Testament, are two kinds of foci: firstly comparative studies between customs or conceptions in Africa and in the Old Testament and secondly the engagement with societal issues and problems. Holter indicates various cases where the theme of a scholarly congress was a social problem, for example the 1995 theme of the NABIS (Nigerian Association of Biblical Studies) which was: "Biblical principles as moral foundation for the Nigerian society".

Holter tackles two relevant themes himself: firstly the relationship between "Ancient Israel and Modern Nigeria" (61-76) and secondly "Relating Africa and the Old Testament on the Polygamy Issue" (77-90). In the first case he evaluates two articles by Nigerian authors (G O Abe and C U Manus) and interprets them in terms of a wider debate. In the second article he draws attention to the fact that African scholars dealing with the polygamy issue, do so from a context where polygamy is not merely a theoretical issue, but where "it touches the lives of human beings of flesh and blood" (p 90).

The second part of the book would have benefited most from a reworking of the three articles into a single chapter dealing with Africa in the Old Testament. The issue of Kush in the Old Testament is dealt

with in each of the three articles. The many repetitions inevitably has a distracting effect on the reader.

Knut Holter has been active in the field of creating a network of relationships among African scholars and other interested scholars world wide for some time now. With this collection of articles, and with the launch of the new series 'Bible and Theology in Africa', he took a further step in his endeavour to render a service to Old Testament scholarship in Africa. Anyone interested in the Old Testament and its interpretation in Africa, or any scholar doing his or her work in Africa, should read Holter's reflections on this situation. It is worth much more than a passing glance.

W S Boshoff

J A Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*. Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, (Paperback Edition) 1999, 544 pages. Price: 14.99 English Pounds.

This commentary on Isaiah is the result of over thirty years of studying the book Isaiah. Alec Motyer sees this publication in very modest terms as "a very small mouse nibbling heroically at a very large cheese" (p 10). His heroic effort at writing a commentary on a book with the scope of Isaiah indicates exactly the opposite of mere nibbling activity.

He chose to write a commentary which focuses on explanation of the meaning of the text, rather than contributing to the debate on different issues, or giving exposition on the present meaning of the text. His explanation works first and foremost with the structure of the text. His study is a holistic one with a synthetic view of the Isaianic literature. In his view the book is the product of an Isaianic school of writers/preachers/thinkers who, over a period of three hundred years, were so self-conscious in their unity that they maintained not only theological identity but also identity in presentational skills and in the minutiae of literary styles and figures (cf p 25). A huge mosaic of prophecies are arranged in the book of Isaiah according to a careful schema which generally dates back to the prophet Isaiah himself.

Reading Isaiah as one single book, he divides the contents into three sections:

Isaiah 1-37. The book of the King.

Isaiah 38-55. The book of the Servant.

Isaiah 56-66. The book of the Anointed Conqueror.

Each of these sections is sub divided into smaller units. In each of these units an obvious schema was used. At the start of each unit Motyer provides an exposition indicating the structure of that unit. His explanation is then based on word studies discussing the individual Hebrew terms found in each verse or smaller cluster of verses. He refers to other parts of the Hebrew Bible where the same terms are used and uses the basic meaning of each term to explain its meaning within the context of the specific verse/ cluster of verses.

Motyer indicates five “unifactory lines” (p 13) which bind all of the Isaianic literature together: the Messianic hope, the motif of the city, the Holy One of Israel, history and faith, literary and structural features. The main theme, however, on which the Isaianic literature centralizes is faith.

Although Motyer refers to the historical background of the prophet Isaiah and his book, he rather focuses on the literary aspect of the text. The contents of the book is no longer bound to the historical circumstances which gave birth to it. It is woven into a fresh presentation giving new meaning to it within the schema which was followed to compile the materials.

Motyer’s commentary is monumental in its scope. It is accessible to both the scholar and preacher. One of its largest advantages is that he works with the Hebrew text. The Hebrew terms are given in transcription form, so that it can be read even by those having no knowledge of Hebrew. This commentary falls in to the category of synchronic-structural analysis of the book of Isaiah. It should be used along side diachronic and reader orientated commentaries when studying the book of Isaiah. The book, however is highly recommended, especially as regard to the author’s erudition of the Hebrew text of Isaiah.

P M Venter

G D Fee, *Exegese van het Nieuwe Testament. Een praktische handleiding*, Uitgeverij Bockencentrum: Zoetermeer, 208 pp. Prys: onbekend.

“Exegese van het Nieuwe Testament” is ‘n vertaling van die [1983] 1993 (revised) Engelse publikasie, getitel “New Testament Exegesis: A handbook for students and pastors”. Die reeks “Evangelicale Theologie” is juis gemik op die beskikbaarstelling van Angelsaksiese materiaal in Nederlands.

Fee is ‘n bekende Nuwe-Testamentikus en hierdie boek staan in die teken van sy deeglikheid. Hy bied sy materiaal in vier dele aan. Die eerste deel gaan oor riglyne vir eksegeese. Fee gaan die verskillende

“stappe” van eksegetiese sistematies deur. Sy doel is om ‘n geheeloorsig oor die proses van eksegetiese te gee. Hy behandel nie die stappe in detail nie. Die tweede deel van die boek bevat ‘n detail behandeling van die verskillende stappe. Deel een en twee moet dus saam gelees word.

Deel drie is met die oog op preekvoorbereiding geskryf. Fee sien dit as ‘n eenvoudiger, maar in essensie dieselfde proses. Daar kom ‘n groter fokus op die boodskap en die formulering daarvan.

Deel vier bevat lysie van hulpmiddels en naslaanwerke wat deur die student gebruik kan word. Dit sluit lysie van die bruikbaarste kommentare op elke boek in.

Fee werk deeglik, maar oorweldig nie die student met feite nie. Deurgaans verskaf hy literatuur vir verdere leeswerk indien die student sou belangstel. Sy teoretiese aanbieding word deurgaans met voorbeelde verhelder. Ten spyte van die deeglikheid van die boek, raak dit tog gedateerd. Die boek bied baie hulpmiddels en verwys na baie boeke (relevante Nederlandse boeke is in die Nederlandse vertaling bygevoeg) maar die boeke dateer feitlik deurgaans uit pre-1990. Boeke oor nuwer benaderings, of nuwer boeke oor ouer benaderings ontbreek. Selfs Louw en Nida ontbreek. Indien die boek voorgeskryf word, sal hierdie probleem in ag geneem moet word.

Alle stappe in die eksegetiese proses is nie ewe belangrik nie. In ‘n boek, soos dié van Fee, mag die indruk gelaat word dat elke stap ewe veel tyd en aandag verdien. Dit sou voordelig gewees het as Fee die relatiewe “gewig” van tekskritiek teenoor byvoorbeeld woordondersoek kon aandui. Ek het al in onderrigssituasies gesien dat ‘n student ure aan ingewikkelde tekskritiek afstaan en ander stappe feitlik nalaat.

Hierdie boek kan ek sonder voorbehoud as teksboek in onderrigssituasies aanbeveel. Dit is ook nie te lank of te ingewikkeld nie. Ek verstaan waarom hierdie boek in Nederlands vertaal is.

J G van der Watt

A König, *Die helpje is my nooit oor Jesus vertel nie: ‘n Nuwe kyk op Een wat jou lewe verander*, Kaapstad: Lux Verbi 2001; 200 pp. Prys: onbekend.

Daar is twee maniere waarop ‘n mens na Jesus kan kyk. Vanuit ‘n historiese perspektief óf vanuit ‘n dogmatiese perspektief. Die historiese perspektief het te doen met hoe die leef- en denkwêreld van Jesus gelyk het. Dit het ook te doen met wie Jesus as mens was. Die dogmatiese perspektief het te doen met wat die Christelike kerke oor die eeue aangaande Jesus geglo het.

Toe ek van die boek van Adrio König gehoor het, het ek gehoop dat hy 'n keer vanuit 'n historiese perspektief na Jesus gaan kyk. Die boek dra immers die titel: Die helfte is my nooit oor Jesus vertel nie. Ek was egter teleurgesteld toe ek die boek opgeneem en begin lees het. Dit handel oor die helfte wat aan my vertel is sedert my Sondagskool- en katekisasiejare in die sestigerjare van die vorige eeu. Die boek kyk dus nie na Jesus vanuit 'n historiese perspektief nie, maar vanuit 'n dogmatiese perspektief. Anders gestel: die boek bied aan die leser 'n Christologie. Dit handel dus oor die kerk se belydenis dat Jesus die Christus, die Seun van God is.

Adrio König bied sy boek aan as 'n poging om vanuit die hele Bybel (maar veral vanuit die Ou Testament) na Jesus te kyk. Hy probeer dus om sy Christologie nie net eensydig vanuit die Nuwe-Testamentiese geskrifte op te bou nie. In sy poging om dit te doen, hanteer hy die Ou Testament as 'n eenheidsdokument wat reeds in Jesus se tyd volledig bestaan het en wat die skrywers van die Nuwe-Testamentiese geskrifte na hartelus kon raadpleeg.

Hierdie is een van die paar historiese onwaarhede in die boek. Die Ou-Testamentiese kanon, soos ons dit binne die Protestantse en Katolieke tradisies ken, het toe nog nie bestaan nie. Die eerste tree in die rigting van 'n volledige kanon van gesaghebbende Joodse godsdienstige geskrifte is eers gegee ná 70 nC. Dit is wel waar dat alle Jode op daardie tydstip die Pentateug as gesaghebbend aanvaar het en dat sommige Jode ook reeds 'n profetiese "kanon" erken het, maar 'n Ou-Testamentiese kanon soos Protestante dit tans ken, het nog nie in Jesus se tyd bestaan nie. Geen Joodse sinagoge het iets besit soos 'n volledige Ou Testament of 'n Tenak nie.

König neem nie net die Ou Testament as 'n eenheidsdokument nie, maar die ganse (Protestantse) Bybel en meen dat daar duidelike lyne uit die Ou Testament oorloop na die Nuwe Testament. Sy hele boek is 'n poging om die belangrikste lyne van die Ou Testament met Jesus in verband te bring. Volgens hom het hy in die Ou Testament gaan delf om die lesers meer van Jesus te vertel. Dis die helfte wat die leser dan nog nooit sou gehoor het nie. Hy noem dit ook nege vensters geopen op Jesus. Die nege vensters is: (1) Profeet, (2) Dienaar (Kneg van die Here), (3) Seun van die Mens, (4) die Here, (5) Seun van God, (6) Verlosser, (7) die Woord, (8) Hoëpriester, (9) Messias.

Volgens hom gaan dit eintlik om fasette van die Ou Testament wat Jesus óf voortsit, óf vervul, óf verryk. Die eerste twee (profeet en dienaar) is fasette wat Jesus voortsit. Die volgende vyf (seun van die mens, die Here, seun van God, verlosser, die woord) is fasette wat Jesus vervul. En die laaste twee (hoëpriester en messias) is fasette wat Jesus verryk.

Na my mening sal weinig Ou-Testamentici hom hierin gelyk gee. Die benamings wat hy gekies het, hou verband met sy dogmatiese vertrekpunt. Die gereformeerde dogmatiek het nog altyd vasgehou aan die siening dat Jesus drie “ampte” beklee het, te wete: profeet, priester en koning. König brei slegs hierop uit deur ses ander benamings daaraan toe te voeg: Seun van die Mens, Verlosser, Kneg (Dienaar), die Here, Seun van God, die Woord.

My ongemak met Adrio König se boek lê in die oorvereenvoudigde prentjie van die ontwikkeling en groei van die Christelike godsdiens wat die boek aan lesers voorhou. Hy laat alles so eenvoudig lyk. Daar was ‘n messiaanse verwagting in die Ou Testament, Jesus het dit kom vervul en dit ook uitgebou en die kerk het slegs hierop voortgebou. Na regte is die prentjie baie meer ingewikkeld. Die godsdiens van Israel het na die Babiloniese ballingskap ‘n radikale verandering ondergaan. Die godsdiensleiers van die Persiese provinsie Jehud het dit beklemtoon dat die ballingskap die gevolg was van Israel se ongehoorsaamheid aan God. Hulle het nie gelewe volgens God se gebooie nie. Om weer so ‘n ramp te voorkom, moes die volk gelceer word om noukeurig volgens die wette en voorskrifte te leef. Monoteïsme, die Sabbat, die besnydenis, die diëetvoorskrifte het al hoe belangriker geword.

Wat ons gedurende die tweede Tempeltydperk (515 vC-70 nC) vind, is ‘n vroeë vorm van die Judaïsme. Bybelwetenskaplikes verwys hierna as Judaïsme van die Tweede Tempeltydperk. Dit is nie laat-Jodedom soos Adrio König dit tipeer nie. Hy praat ook nog van “die laat-Joodse apokaliptiek” of “laat-Joodse literatuur” (vgl pp 26, 68, 92, 96, 100, 121, 184, 194). Geen moderne Bybelwetenskaplike wat sy sout werd is, gebruik nog hierdie terme nie. Tans verwys ons na hierdie tydperk as die tydperk van die Tweede Tempel en tipeer ons die Joodse godsdiens van hierdie periode as vroeë Judaïsme. Sy benaming wys daarop dat hy nie op hoogte is met die navorsing rondom hierdie tydperk nie. Wanneer Christenskrywers die navorsing oor hierdie tydperk ignoreer, verteken hulle dikwels die gebeure rondom Jesus en die ontstaan van die Christelike godsdiens.

Aan die begin het ek dit gestel dat König aan lesers ‘n Christologie bied. Uit die voorafgaande bespreking behoort dit duidelik te wees dat dit ‘n Christologie is wat nie erns maak met die resente navorsing op die terrein van die Ou- en Nuwe Testament en die Tweede Tempeltydperk nie. Volgens sy weergawe het die Joodse geloof (waarvoor hy die benaming “Ou Testament” gebruik) sonder enige krisis, spanning of groot omwenteling oorgegaan in die Christelike godsdiens. Dis soos ‘n papie wat ‘n metamorfose ondergaan en ‘n skoenlapper word. Die papie is die Joodse godsdiens soos weerspieël in die Ou Testament en in die titels wat Adrio König kies. Die skoenlapper is die Christelike godsdiens soos

weerspieël in die Nuwe-Testamentiese skrywers se interpretasie van Jesus. Na Jesus se geboorte het mense Hom geleidelik aanvaar as die beloofde Messias, Profeet, Kneg, ensovoorts. Kort na sy kruisiging het die Christelike godsdiens wortel geskiet en was dit vir gelowiges duidelik dat die Joodse godsdiens iets van die verlede was. Die Jodedom het sy eindpunt bereik. Daarom gebruik König nog die uitgediende term “laat-Jodedom” om die godsdiens en tydperk kort voor en tydens Jesus se lewe, te tipeer. Volgens hom het die Christelike godsdiens die plek van die Joodse godsdiens ingeneem. Dit het daardie godsdiens vervang.

Moderne studies van sowel die Judaïsme as die Christelike godsdiens het hierdie prentjie as ‘n vertekening van die werklikheid uitgegrys. Die Romeine se inname van Jerusalem en hulle vernietiging van die tempel in 70 nC het ‘n ingrypende invloed op die Jode gehad. Uit die smeltkroes van daardie gebeure het twee godsdienste ontwikkel: (1) Rabbyne Judaïsme, en (2) die Christelike godsdiens.

König skryf op bladsy 33 hierdie waar woorde: “‘n Mens moet soms bereid wees om regtig nuut te dink en nuut te begin”. Ek wil dit graag beaam, maar dan ook sê dat hy nie regtig nuut gedink en nuut begin het toe hy die boek geskryf het nie.

Daar is ruimte vir ‘n eenheidsverhaal oor Jesus, maar eers nadat die verskillende evangelieverhale en die sienings van Paulus en die ander skrywers van die Nuwe Testament vertel is en mense meegedeel is dat die Christendom nie ‘n vervanging van die Judaïsme is nie.

I J J Spangenberg

König. *Die helfte is my nooit oor Jesus vertel nie. 'n Nuwe kyk op die Een wat jou lewe verander*, Kaapstad: Lux Verbi 2001, 200 pp. Prys: onbekend.

Hierdie werk van Adrio König is vir mense wat insig wil kry in die veelbesproke “historiese Jesus”-debat ‘n begaanbare weg. Daar is in die “Jesus”-debat nog veel meer as waarvan König in sy boek vertel. Die groot wins van die boek is dat dit die volheid van Jesus in die lig bring. Oor al die belangrike Christologiese titels word inligting gegee. In ‘n boek wat so baie wil medeel oor Jesus, gaan dit soms net te vinnig. Om te beweer dat die vierde lied in die Jesaja boek “‘n veel ryker inhoud” as die ander liedere het, kan bevraagteken word. Die liedere staan in ‘n bepaalde konteks in die Jesaja boek, en ook in ‘n interkontekstuele verband met mekaar. Wat wel duidelik is, is dat König die Ou Testament in eie reg respekteer en dit nie blindelings op die Christologie van die Nuwe Testament oordra nie. Ten opsigte van sekere Ou-Testamentiese

tekste sou ek meer diepgang wou sien (byvoorbeeld die ebed Jhwh liedere). Die Godheid en die mensheid van Jesus Christus is egter ononderhandelbaar.

Adrio König se boek is tydig en nuttig as inleiding tot die “historiese Jesus”-debat. Maar hierin word alles nog nie vertel nie. Ek beveel die lees van die boek graag aan - veral vir persoonlike en groepsstudie.

C J A Vos

DOGMATIEK/DOGMATICS

A König, *Fokus op die 300 geloofsvrae wat mense die meeste vra*, Kaapstad: Lux Verbi 2001, 400 pp. Prys: onbekend.

In sy voorwoord maak Adrio König sy oogmerke met die boek duidelik. Dit gee ‘n eenvoudige oorsig oor die Christelike geloof. Verder is dit ‘n verwysingsgids wat lesers lei om by die kernsake uit te kom. König slaag op ‘n uitnemende wyse daarin om al twee hierdie oogmerke te verwesenlik. Die “eenvoudige oorsig” moet egter gekwalifiseer word. König kry dit reg om oor ingewikkelde sake op ‘n bevatlike manier te skryf. Dogmatici soos Karl Barth en Hendrikus Berkhof het in dié opsig ‘n navolgenswaardige voorbeeld gestel.

Dit spreek vanself dat ‘n ywer om ‘n eenvoudige oorsig aan te bied, die gevaar loop om soms aan diepgang in te boet. König ontkom nie aan dié gevaar nie. Sy behandeling van “Die Kanon” is ‘n voorbeeld hiervan. Daar kan nog voorbeelde genoem word. Maar weer eens: König wil ‘n leesbare en toeganklike boek “vir elke huis” beskikbaar stel. Die sentrale teologiese posisie wat die skrywer aan die **verbond** toeken, is geldig. Die rykdom van die begrip sal egter in elke konteks waarin dit voorkom, toegelig moet word. Dié begrip is nie onder een noemer tuis te bring nie. Om die verbond in die tweede skeppingsverhaal, soos König doen, in te lees, is ‘n oorspanning van die begrip. Laat elke verhaal eerder sy eie storie vertel.

Oor God se liefde en vryheid skryf König helder (vgl Berkhof in dié verband). Ook oor God se almag kom duidelike perspektiewe aan die lig. Om God se almag op die toekoms van Jesus Christus te konsentreer, maak sin, maar dit los nog nie die sinloosheid van sekere gebeure in die geskiedenis op nie. In die leerstuk van die voorsieningheid gee König hieroor meer klaarheid.

König skram nie daarvan weg om brandend aktuele sake onder die soeklig te plaas nie. Voorbeelde hiervan is: die feminisme, menseregte en aborsie. Oor die sonde skryf König so helder as wat ‘n mens maar oor

die groot paradoks kan skryf. Sy siening eggo die nadenke van onder andere Barth en Berkhof. Oor siekte as teologiese vraagstuk het die skrywer 'n duidelike en aanvaarbare standpunt, hoewel dit té kripties weergegee is.

Daar is nie 'n saak wat in die Christelike geloof voorkom, wat nie deur König aangeraak word nie. Hy doen dit deurgaans op 'n verantwoordelike wyse. Die boek eindig op 'n hoë noot: die toekoms. Hieroor skryf König glashelder.

Daar is nie 'n meer bevatliker, toegankliker en deurtastender boek oor die vraagstukke van die Christelike geloof as dié een van Adrio König beskikbaar nie. Die skrywer nooi die leser uit om saam na te dink oor die Christelike geloof én om uit die geloof te leef. Ek beveel die lees en herlees van die boek van harte aan.

C J A Vos

GODSDIENS EN SENDINGWETENSKAP/RELIGIOUS AND MISSIONARY SCIENCES

M Prozesky & J de Gruchy (eds), *Living faiths in South Africa*, London: Hurst & Company 1995, 241 pp. Price: unknown.

Much has been written about the “new” South Africa since 1994. However, one story has been largely neglected, viz. the story of religion in South Africa. This is highly surprising, since almost all South Africans profess some or other of its wide variety of faiths. Religion was and still is an important social force in South Africa, though not always for the better; especially not where Christianity was concerned. The main aim of this book is therefore to “meet the pressing need for a better grasp of the full range of South Africa's faiths and their histories, and for a more critical interpretation of Christianity in South Africa” (p 1). It does so through a variety of scholars from different religious traditions and with different outlooks, backgrounds and geographical locations, so as to ensure that all voices are equally well heard. It includes chapters on African Traditional Religions, Settler Christianity, Mission Christianity, the impact of white settlement on African Traditional Religions, Christianity in twentieth-century South Africa, the African Independent Churches, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Chinese Religion, Buddhism, and Jains and Parsees in South Africa. It also includes a list of important events in the history of South Africa's religions, and tables showing religious affiliation in South Africa. As such, it neatly complements David Chidester's *Religions of South Africa* (Routledge, 1992), which

offers a single, connected interpretation of South African religious life. It does the same with its predecessor, *A Southern African Guide to World Religions* (David Philip, 1991), which provided a world map, and not a specifically South African map, of religions over a different period. All the contributors follow a “phenomenological method”, i.e. “a policy of accuracy, clarity and fairness” (p 2) in their descriptions of the past and present of the various religions respectively. These descriptions seriously consider the geographical context, but also the national and international political, cultural, historical, economic, and religious contexts within which each religion developed. More specifically, “the central theme of conquest, resistance and liberation associated with the arrival of settlers from Europe” (p 11) was chosen as the basic contextual reality to periodise the development of South African religions. This generated important critical questions, such as: To what extent did religions facilitate rather than criticize oppressive ideas and practices? And, perhaps more importantly, will religions play a constructive or (yet again) divisive role in post-apartheid South Africa?

D J Louw

A Wessels, *Secularized Europe: Who will carry off its soul?* (Gospel and cultures: Pamphlet 6), Geneva: WCC Publications 1996. 48 pp. Price: un-known.

How should the “one” gospel be related to the many cultures of the world? Or, as Antonie Wessels specifically asks: How should it be related to a modern, secularized, “de-Christianized” Europe? He convincingly illustrates that, from its early beginnings in the Roman empire, the church effectively “Christianized” Europe through appropriating the sacred places, times and persons of Old European and Indo-European culture. According to Wessels, contemporary Christians should follow this lead. More specifically, the church should seek to connect the “old, old Story” and the “audio-visual culture” of modern Europe. However, he warns, not anything goes. Not all stories convey “the Story” (p37). The contextualization of the gospel can go wrong (p 44); hence the double meaning of the word *Aufhebung* when used to depict the interplay between the gospel and culture. It means both “abolition” (rejection) and “raising to a new and higher plane” (affirmation) (p x). Christians should affirm myths or stories only in so far as they convey the basic themes of “reconciliation, redemption, absolution and forgiveness” (p 46). Stories should also be affirmed in so far as they foster a respect for “the beyond”, including “non-scientific” ways of knowing and becoming

convinced (p 42). “For the heart of the matter”, Wessels claims, “is still a ‘Story’, a ‘Mystery’, of ‘what no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him’” (p 45). Many “non-Christian” stories, including “secular” ones and those from other religious traditions, meet Wessels’ criterion – as he aptly illustrates in his quest for “the truth of contemporary myth” (p 35). But, one may now want to ask, if this is so, do we then still need to take the Christian story more seriously than other “agapeistic” stories? Why, for example, should contemporary Africans (p 44) specifically concern themselves with the Christian story? Could they not just as well embrace indigenous myths of liberation, forgiveness and reconciliation? Should they not do so, given the colonial and neo-colonial connotations of the Christian myth? Does making “Mystery” the “heart of the matter” not inevitably rob the Christian story of its “uniqueness”, i.e. of its alleged and cherished ultimate authority? These are only some of the teasing questions which this pamphlet prompts. As the saying goes: dynamite comes in small packages.

D J Louw

PRAKTIESE TEOLOGIE/PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

O Meyer, *Die heelheid van gebrokenheid. 'n Nuwe styl van kerk- en Christenwees*, Kaapstad: Lux Verbi 2000, 112 pp. Prys: onbekend.

Hierdie werk van Ockert Meyer is ‘n bydrae tot die praktiese Homiletiek. Met die oog hierop kies Meyer tekste uit Jesaja. Die teksaanbod is helder en meevoerend. Die teks praat met mense van ons dag in hulle worsteling met gebrokenheid. Meyer maak ook ruimskoots van anekdotes en verhale gebruik om sy teks toeganklik te maak. Hierin slaag hy uitnemend.

Dit is ‘n leemte dat Meyer se teks nie genoeg teologiese boustof verwerk nie. Die Jesaja boek wortel tog in ‘n bepaalde konteks ten opsigte van taal, geloof en die sosiaal-kulturele omgewing. Indien Meyer dit in ag geneem het, sou sy teks soveel ryker gewees het. Die skrywer kyk met ‘n té skerp Christologiese oog na Jesaja (veral Jes 42).

Die boek is nuttig vir ‘n mens se geestelike opbou.

C J A Vos