

Dyrness, William A. *Learning about Theology from the Third World.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990. 221 pp. Paperback, \$12.95.

Dyrness' book is a general introduction to the way Christians outside North America think about their faith. The author's interest in the topic is understandable in light of his own missionary experience in the Philippines and his position as dean of the influential School of World Mission at Fuller Theological Seminary.

The author notes the well-documented fact that the heartland of the church is shifting rapidly from Europe and North America to Latin America, Africa, and parts of Asia. If the theology of the majority is what matters, then the theology of the third world is worth caring about.

Attempting to avoid the pitfalls of ethnocentrism, xenocentrism, and relativism, Dyrness opts for what Charles Taylor calls "the interpretive view" (p. 121). This method calls for both sides in the cultural encounter to question and challenge their own culture in a productive dialogue.

The difficulty in cross-cultural theology is describing how the Scripture message relates to particular cultures, or what is commonly called "contextualization." Dyrness rejects what he calls anthropological, praxis, and translation models proposed by others in favor of his model, which he labels "the interactional model" (p. 29). In it, contextualization is an on-going process in which Scripture is read and obeyed by a body of believers. Meanwhile, ongoing faith dialogues with culture, which progressively comes under the analysis of Scripture. Out of this hermeneutical circle comes a genuinely contextualized theology.

The bulk of this book deals with general descriptions of African, Latin American, and Asian theologies. Dyrness believes the opportunity and challenge of African theology is to root faith in its own specific setting and history, and in the process to see life as a single reality. Latin American theology, on the other hand, deals with social and political issues. Thus, much of Dyrness' discussion revolves around liberation theology and the quest of oppressed peoples for justice and peace. Moving to Asia, Dyrness finds the task of interaction more diverse and difficult. Possible avenues for evangelical and biblical dialogue with the Asian setting lie in an emphasis on religious experience and ties between the biblical description of the human plight and the Buddhist emphasis on human life as marked by change, decay, and suffering.

The book concludes with a case study in Christology, with each of the three major third-world areas bringing insights to the topic. A final chapter is entitled: "Where do we go from here?"

Dyrness is to be applauded for his serious introduction to a key topic. For too long evangelicals have avoided the issue of contextualization and rejected the very idea that there might be an African or Latin American

theology. The author describes these third-world theologies, accepting them as true Christian efforts. He also lays a philosophical and methodological foundation for future dialogue and evaluation.

The most creative part of the book is Dyrness' introductory chapter, which proposes his methodology for doing cross-cultural theology. Dyrness claims that the more specific a third-world theology is to its setting, the more power it has. If this is true, the way we go about doing theology is of vital importance. The author has done much to point us in the right direction by his "interactional model," which has its roots in Robert Schreiter's earlier work.

The sections describing third-world theologies are long, involved, and in places difficult to follow. A shorter, crisper description, followed by more case studies, like the one on Christology, would have been helpful. Given the importance of third-world theology, and its future importance to the church, more space needs to be given to the wide-ranging implications of such a theology for the North American church. Surely doctrine, hermeneutics, mission, and church polity and practice in the West would be heavily impacted. At this early stage, however, too clear a delineation of implications for western Christianity may not be possible or might prove too frightening.

All four models suggested for contextualization, including Dyrness' own "interactional model," fall short in one area. Contextualization is not simply a dialogue, but rather a three-way conversation. Not only are Scripture and the local culture involved, so is the missionary culture. Even if the "missionary" comes not as a person but as a copy of Scripture in the local language, the fact that it comes written in a book as a translation is already a third cultural involvement. Thus Scripture and its original culture, the mediating missionary culture, and the receiving culture are all involved in a three-cornered dialogue. This is the birth milieu of third-world theology.

This book is a sign that evangelicalism is becoming involved in a crucial issue for an increasingly international Christian family. It deserves wide and careful reading.

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Efird, James M. *A Grammar for New Testament Greek*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990. xvii + 168. \$19.95.

Greek grammars are relatively plentiful in the market, but if one can improve what is available, there is always room for one more. Each new author of a grammar feels that way. The bottom line is whether such an improvement makes it worth adding another.