

Indeed, "Black" does not necessarily mean Christian; neither is Christianity a "Black man's religion" in the sense that it addresses African-Americans alone or will be embraced by the majority of the African-American population. But Christianity is an important part of the African-American heritage and it can address serious problems and crises experienced in communities. The Black church can be a dynamic source of refreshing renewal in the land shared by all who are called "Americans."

This book makes an important contribution to the discussion of the heritage and role of the Black church in the American context. It represents tedious and painstaking research, paying close attention to details and history (fully 110 of its 249 pages are choked with end notes, bibliography, and indexes). This book is recommended for anyone who questions the purpose and function of the Black church in America. It also serves as a useful resource for anyone interested in race relations in this country.

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Klaiber, Walter. *Call and Response: Biblical Foundations of a Theology of Evangelism*. Translated from German by Howard Perry-Trauthig and James A. Dwyer. Nashville: Abingdon, 1997. 272 pp. \$19.95.

Walter Klaiber's *Call and Response* has been made available to the English-speaking world by this translation of the German work. While writing from the background of the European church, Klaiber offers a detailed and definitive theology of evangelism. His work, while technical, provides a much-needed theological reflection of the basis upon which evangelistic methodology is practiced. The tragedy of much evangelistic praxis today is that it is based more on consumerism than on biblical theological reflection. Klaiber attempts to provide the needed balance.

Klaiber first attempts to define evangelism, and does so broadly in contrast to McGavren, who defined evangelism narrowly. While claiming that all that the church does has missional implications, he also emphasizes that not all that the church does is evangelism. While recognizing this broad understanding, he defines evangelism as the preaching of the message of salvation, the implication being both to believers and to unbelievers.

Klaiber continues his theological evangelistic reflection by focusing on the content of the evangelistic message. The announcement of the kingdom by Jesus was not judgmental, but the good news of the arrival of God's salvific rule. "'To lead someone into the kingdom of God' is . . . 'to direct someone to his or her place in the discipleship of Jesus.'" (43). For the church to practice Jesus' evangelistic praxis is to be involved in the ministry of restoration and healing, liberating and freeing people from the shackles that have bound them. The preaching of the message of Christ is proclaimed to provide people hope from their fears and anxieties.

In defining the evangelistic message, Klaiber declares that the work of evangelization has already been accomplished through Christ's salvific act on

Calvary. Therefore, all that the church does in evangelism is a follow up of the redemption already accomplished for humanity on Calvary. Evangelism thus does not commence at zero when it impacts humanity; it begins at the proclamation of the completed work of Calvary. Klaiber's attempt to develop a theology of judgment in relation to the soteriological implications of the gospel creates tension with the gospel. Klaiber asserts that Christ has already received judgment on sin and there is therefore no real judgment for those outside of Christ. They need to hear the good news that Christ has already borne their judgment. In this sense Klaiber questions the implication that those outside of Christ or who have never heard of Christ are lost. They may ultimately suffer the pain of eternal separation from God, but Klaiber is very hesitant to declare them lost because of the implications of such a saying on non-Christian religions. One could easily assume from this that Klaiber doubts the uniqueness of Christianity, although this is not his intention.

Since humanity has been saved solely by an act of God's grace with no human effort, Klaiber questions the necessity of a human response to God's offer of salvation in Christ. "A person can say 'no' to God's 'yes.' But must someone say 'yes' in order for God's 'yes' to accomplish its purpose? Is it sufficient not to have rejected God's gift, or must it also be accepted—or would this question itself already pose an unacceptable condition?" (154). Conversion, to Klaiber, does not consist of a change of life, but a restoration of fellowship that was lost. (143). Klaiber further claims that Jesus' call to discipleship is not the same as the call to salvation (145), thus separating salvation from the discipleship process. This understanding of human response is further elaborated by Klaiber to include a rejection of free will, since that would make salvation dependent upon human free will, rather than God's grace. The ultimate end of Klaiber's theologizing is to indicate that clergy should not make too much of evangelistic preaching (191) especially that which seeks to elicit a decision from the person, since that is a human response and not a proclamation solely of the grace of God.

Klaiber's final chapter attempts to develop a praxis based on the theological reflection that he has conducted throughout the rest of the book. He reacts negatively to most of the theological rationale for missionary effort expressed by previous studies, concluding that all missionary activity must arise out of the local church, since all that it does is missionary enterprises.

This reviewer appreciates Klaiber's attempt to develop a theological foundation for mission in the church of today. Certainly our praxis needs to be based on sound theological reflection. Yet, Klaiber's theology of mission is almost solely conditioned by his understanding of the absoluteness of the free grace of God with no human response. In this, he steps out of his Wesleyan heritage and seems to accept a more Calvinistic view of predestination, which thereby colors his understanding of mission.

It is Klaiber's final chapter that particularly troubles this reviewer. In his attempt to develop a praxis of evangelism based on his theological reflection, he offers little in concrete praxis. Most of the chapter debunks other methodologies, such as the church growth movement. His analysis of the church growth movement as primarily dealing with numerical increases, reveals a failure on his

part to clearly understand the church growth movement. Klaiber's recommendation that the seminary training of pastors should include less praxis and more theology, with each presentation of theology containing a theology of evangelism, is strongly opposed by this reviewer. It is valid that all theological presentations contain the elements of missional concern, but it is not correct that the practical application of that theology not be taught, when the practical application is what most pastors must spend most of their life performing.

If I were to believe the message of this book, I would conclude that there is no urgency to proclaim the message of Christ and that I have little part to play in its proclamation. On his final page Klaiber basically declares this concerning his own missional responsibility. If this is the theology espoused by most main-line churches, it is little wonder that these churches are in the process of decline.

On another note, this reviewer wished that Klaiber had spent more time exegeting the text rather than analyzing different theologians and their statements on evangelism and mission. A biblical theology must be developed out of the NT text itself, rather than out of a discussion of theological views. Also, the book is written in a style that is difficult to follow at times. This may be due to its being translated from the German, but it is not a book that is likely to be read by pastors.

This reviewer did appreciate Klaiber's attempt to point out a need for a theology of evangelism that drives our praxis, but the theology espoused here fails to ring true to the biblical text as understood by this reviewer. One can appreciate and commend his desire for the church to be more evangelistic, but a failure to see humanity as lost without Christ, of necessity limits the commitment to evangelistic persuasion.

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Leschert, Dale F. *Hermeneutical Foundations of Hebrews: A Study in the Validity of the Epistle's Interpretation of Some Core Citations from the Psalms*. Lewiston, New York: Edwin Mellen, 1994. 286 pp. \$99.95.

This book is a well-crafted doctoral dissertation that investigates the validity of the way the author of Hebrews interprets the OT. Leschert's introduction provides an informative and critical appraisal of the views of a formidable array of scholars. He argues that "if, indeed, it is true that the writer of Hebrews uses inferior methods of interpretation to distort the meaning of the OT, the credibility of his message must also be called into question to the extent that it rests upon a faulty foundation" (4).

However, in spite of all the criticisms leveled against the author of Hebrews, Leschert contends that "the issue of its hermeneutical validity has still not been adequately addressed" (4). He notes background studies that have been aimed at comparing Hebrews' hermeneutics with first century works such as Philo's "Alexandrian school of Platonic thought", rabbinic-midrashic interpretations, and even the "apocalyptic exegesis of the Qumran community" (5). But all these studies, despite their valuable contributions, "have not addressed that issue in more than a passing way" (6).