

evolutionists alike will most likely continue to use many of their same arguments, flawed or not. People are rarely convinced by argument anyway. Deep convictions come through insight from God's Spirit—or from other spirits. When discussing irreconcilable worldview differences, it is wise to be clear on the basic precepts on each side (scriptural or not), to evaluate reasons they are accepted, to recognize how they shape perception of the data, and to let the Holy Spirit do the convincing.

Ratzsch did not intend to explicate Scripture. Nevertheless, in my view, his three main points effectively illustrate parts of Romans 1:18-25: God's invisible qualities (including Creatorship) are increasingly revealed as our study of nature deepens; critics on both sides of the debate, claiming to be wise in their arguments, have often become fools; and many have exchanged the truth of God for a lie ascribing creatorship to the created things themselves rather than to their Creator.

Of special interest to *AUSS* because of its connection with the Seventh-day Adventist Church, is the respect, yet disregard, given to Adventist scientists, Geoscience Research Institute, and their publications. The author credits Seventh-day Adventism with beginning the modern creationist movement (10), and recounts the career of the Adventist George McCready Price (1870-1963) as an "early-twentieth century creationist hero . . . whose views grew out of Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) theology" (62).

In a section entitled Return of Flood Geology (66), Ratzsch mentions parenthetically, "(In 1958 the SDA had already founded its own creationist think tank—the Geoscience Research Institute—which has probably done the best actual science within the creationist movement.)" Also, while describing (84) the "newly emerging upper tier of the creationist movement . . . undertaking to do the meticulous detail work that a genuinely scientific creationism requires," he notes, again parenthetically, "(The Geoscience Research Institute, which over many years has done much of the really legitimate creationist-related science, remains curiously invisible outside Seventh-day Adventist circles.)"

This inconspicuousness is perhaps the main reason he makes no further mention of Geoscience Research Institute or its scientists, and cites no GRI publications in his extensive bibliography: he focuses on popular arguments, and Adventist scientists have not participated in the popular debates. The numerous scientific papers published by Adventist scientists are not recognized as "creation research," because creationist implications must be deleted for the peer review process. Adventist scientists have not pressed their creationist views into the popular media.

Director of the Nature Center
Leoni Meadows Retreat
Grizzly Flats, CA 95636

KAREN G. JENSEN

Shaw, Mark. *The Kingdom of God in Africa. A Short History of African Christianity*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996. 328 pp. \$19.99.

With the publication of *The Kingdom of God in Africa*, Mark Shaw follows the lead of Elizabeth Isichei, Lamin Sanneh, and John Baur by providing another

contribution to the recent interest in the history of African Christianity. At first, the subtitle, "A Short History of African Christianity," gives the impression that the author intends to write an institutional history. However, the approach is more interpretive, and as a result "a number of denominations and agencies have . . . been neglected" (8). While some may be disappointed to see the omission of their particular faith community, I'm sure that Shaw's creative approach will be appreciated. The book is divided into four parts that parallel distinct periods of African church history. An appendix of maps, bibliography, and index follow the main body of text.

Part 1, "The Imperial Rule of God: Early African Christianity," (9-72) covers the period from 100-600 CE. Chapter 1 outlines the methodology of the study. Shaw begins with the premise that most African histories reflect the subjective biases of the author. On the one hand there are those authors who write from the standpoint of the mission-oriented triumphalist, and on the other hand are the African historians who write from a nationalistic presupposition that is critical of Europe. Shaw suggests that a subjective bias can be tempered if a history of Christianity in Africa were to be governed by H. Richard Niebuhr's Kingdom of God (KG) model: (1) KG as God's sovereign rule (providence); (2) KG as Christ's redemptive reign (salvation); and (3) KG as earthly utopia (eschatology and ethics). The second chapter traces the various phases of the "maturation" of Egyptian Christianity. Chapter 3 investigates Christianity in North Africa, which Shaw maintains was comprised mainly of native Punics. Chapter 4 covers Christianity in Nubia and Ethiopia, starting with the fourth-century conversion of the Axumite king, Ezana, and reporting the archeological excavations that have demonstrated a fifth century Christian presence in Nubia.

Part 2, "The Clash of Kingdoms," (73-124) examines African Christianity in the middle ages (600-1700). Chapter 5 surveys the impact of Islam on African Christianity as Shaw offers correctives to common "myths." Chapter 6 covers the demise of Christianity in Nubia and its survival in Ethiopia. Shaw reports that the legalism of this era gave rise to a Sabbath-Sunday controversy that resulted in a conciliar edict recognizing the sanctity of both days. Chapter 7 is concerned with the European "discovery" of Africa by the Portuguese and Dutch.

Part 3, "The Reign of Christ," (125-202) covers African Christianity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Chapter 8 leaves the African continent, as Shaw profiles the opposition to the slave trade by British and American evangelicals who saw slavery as an obstacle to the true gospel. Chapter 9 addresses the issues encountered by the earliest west African Christian communities comprised of repatriates and natives. Chapter 10 investigates a South African Christianity divided by racism. Chapter 11 addresses the "violent" nature of the church in East Africa.

Part 4, "The Kingdom on Earth," (203-298) explores African Christianity in the twentieth century. Chapter 12 investigates the high successes of the missions. In Chapter 13, Shaw examines "independent" Christian movements before 1960. Chapter 14 describes Christianity in post-1960 "independent" Africa in terms of theocracy, theology, and unity. The final chapter attempts to draw lessons from the "broken witness" of African Christianity. Shaw concludes that the story of the

African struggle for genuine kingdom identity has universal significance.

The Kingdom of God in Africa is engagingly written, and appears to have taken into account the needs of both specialist and novice. Throughout the work, Shaw presents remarkably clear summaries of people, places, and events. He also does well in working with Niebuhr's kingdom model which was consistently applied throughout. Unfortunately, the very kingdom model that provided the framework for this invigorating study has contributed to its flaws.

First is the assumption that one can speak of an "African Christianity." This term suggests that Shaw intends to write about the Christianity "of" Africa, when in reality the multifarious nature of African church history means that one can only write about Christianities "in" Africa. The very fact that North African expressions of Christianity evolved in a very different historical and socio-political climate than Christianity in the South or West mandates different assumptions.

Secondly, although Shaw's application of the kingdom model is utilized to avoid the pitfalls of European imperialist or African nationalist subjectivity, his sympathy for the first is subtly manifest. While he does not approach the subject matter with the blatant racism of earlier historians, he does make assumptions that are somewhat exclusive. He compares African syncretism with Christian orthodoxy, but does not critique the concept of who determines "orthodoxy." Isn't it true to say that the Catholic cult of the saints, and even the Christian embrace of Sunday is syncretistic? Further, how can he speak of the European missionary activities in East Africa as a "reintroduction" of Christianity (182) when the Ethiopian Church was very much alive and well. Additionally, in his critique of the "independent" church movements, Shaw contends that for many of the movements, "Jesus Christ . . . was often obscured by independency" (256). The problem comes with the concept of "independence." Independent from what?—from a European system that had already obscured Christ with its iconographic imperialism and colonial intolerance?

Thirdly, Shaw's interpretive approach has resulted in an over-reliance on secondary sources. Apart from Augustine's *City of God*, he does not appear to have consulted primary material. A work such as this should at least have included primary information from the Kebra-Nagast and the Quran.

Finally, Shaw has neglected a very important component of Christianity in Africa: the Sabbath. My own research as director of the *Sabbath in Africa Project* has uncovered that the sanctity of the seventh day in Ethiopian Christianity was not the result of medieval legalism, but a central recognition from the church's inception. In fact, seventh-day sacredness is a part of the Egyptian Coptic Church's constitution. Shaw also failed to mention that a significant number of the independent churches have rejected Sunday in favor of Sabbath.

In sum, Shaw's contribution to the growing body of literature on African Christianity is definitely welcome. The rich legacy of African church history has been omitted from the picture for too long. My only wish is that as historians of Africa attempt to temper their subjective biases, more attention will be given to the primary literature and oral testimonies of the "Kingdoms of God in Africa."