

Beckmann, David M. *Eden Revival: Spiritual Churches in Ghana*. St. Louis: Concordia, 1975. 144 pp. Paperback, \$3.95.

If I were asked to select one of the many recent books that have been published on the independent church movement in Africa to give the general reader a feeling for both the extent and intensity of the movement, I would probably recommend *Eden Revival*.

Several reasons justify my selection. First of all, *Eden Revival* is not an anthropological or technical study, which is not to say that it is not scholarly or reliably grounded in fact. Scholarship has many dimensions; and the value of clear, penetrating description, based on thorough investigation and understanding, should not be minimized. From beginning to end it reads almost like a novel; and if some academicians should perchance feel it is a little lacking in social science analysis and theory, this is more than amply compensated for by the lucidity and clarity with which it portrays Eden Revival Church, its services, congregation, and leader.

The second reason for my selection is that it admirably fulfills two basic requirements for an introductory study. It combines a macroscopic study in historical dimension of the development and status of the spiritual church movement in Ghana with a microscopic study of Eden Revival Church. The survey section moves rapidly, yet does not fail to touch the main characters, events, movements, and mission background of the spiritual church movement. The reader feels adequately informed to commence a closer look at the Eden Revival Church when the end of this section has been reached. The section which deals specifically with Eden Revival Church rapidly and vividly tells the reader what he most wants to know about Eden: who the adherents are, why they come to Eden, how they worship, what the church teaches, how the collectivity is organized, and something about its finances and leader, Yeboa-Korie. It contains the most intimate and vivid character description of a spiritual church leader of which I am aware in the whole literature on the independent church movement in Africa. The intensity of the total picture is one of the things that make this book distinctive.

Beckmann concludes his study with a summary of the major characteristics of the spiritual church movement and enlarges upon its significance for the rest of Christianity. In doing so he notes some striking similarities, particularly a participatory style of worship service and methods of spiritual healing and exorcism, between the Ghanaian spiritual churches and some Pentecostal churches in the U.S.A. Beckmann also outlines his theory of a basic continuity between some aspects of trance in African traditional religion, African independent churches, and the phenomenon of glossolalia in Pentecostal churches. This brief section appears to be somewhat speculative and possibly even controversial. It is not intrinsic to the major thrust of his argument and might perhaps have been better relegated to a separate publication.

Certainly, Beckmann's insights regarding the significance of the spiritual church movement for the understanding of the future of Christianity, in Western society as well as Africa, are worth taking seriously; for it is no longer a peripheral development of peculiar interest to missionaries and specialists alone. It is an important expression of Christianity and has some-

thing to say to each of us. Nobody crystallizes this message more distinctly and compellingly than does Beckmann.

Andrews University

RUSSELL STAPLES

Beegle, Dewey M. *Scripture, Tradition, and Infallibility*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1973. 312 pp. Paperback, \$4.95.

Dewey M. Beegle's *Scripture, Tradition, and Infallibility* is not just a revision of his *The Inspiration of Scripture* (1963). As even the new title might suggest, the present work is a thoroughly revised and expanded presentation of the same basic thesis, but with important inclusions. Seven of his original twelve chapters show major expansion, bringing the discussions up to date and filling out their coverage. Two original chapters are combined in the 1973 work. An entirely new chapter has been added (chap. 4), which deals with recognizable traditions in the biblical period. The remaining original chapters have been worked over to one degree or another.

In the main, the newly added material in *Scripture, Tradition, and Infallibility* addresses Roman Catholic discussions of inerrancy, tradition, and infallibility since Vatican II, in addition to the Protestant views. For readers not familiar with Beegle's earlier work, the purpose of both volumes is to bring evidence from many relevant areas to bear on the nature and operation of inspiration/revelation. Of special concern for him are concepts of biblical inerrancy which he feels are not only untrue to the claims of Scripture for itself, but may virtually block out some of the richness which God's word might otherwise bring to us.

Several points in this worthwhile volume merit probing. Beegle's view of Moses' inspiration seems to suffer from his general ambiguity about the nature of revelation. At Sinai, Moses combines a knowledge of Hittite suzerainty treaties with insight into Yahweh's sovereign care for Israel—and the result is the Ten Commandments (p. 35). A bit later in the book, however, Beegle suggests that the death of a Sabbath-breaker is directly decreed by God (p. 78); Moses is there reduced to a rather passive role. Inspiration is admittedly dynamic, and does in fact operate in a variety of ways in Scripture. But perhaps a more thorough inductive appraisal of those various ways would bring to view a more biblical concept of the divine in Scripture.

The distinction in Beegle between primary and secondary revelation is not altogether clear. Primary revelation appears to enjoy the distinction of superior originality (p. 71), though it is unclear who will judge this relative quality. Secondary revelations, on the other hand, "involve more of the rational activity of the channel of revelation" (p. 71). I am rather sure Beegle does *not* mean to imply that those elements in Scripture that are less rational are more inspired. He and I are both unsure how to distinguish between these two areas of revelation. The problem becomes acute, Beegle admits, if one tries to extract secondary revelation from the fabric of Scripture (p. 118). The subtleties of this admission should perhaps lead Beegle to drop or greatly down-play the distinction in the first place. At any rate,