

Sindima, Harvey J. *Drums of Redemption: An Introduction to African Christianity*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1994, xiv, 211 pp. Cloth, \$55.

_____. *Africa's Agenda: The Legacy of Liberalism and Colonialism in the Crisis of African Values*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1995, xvi, 256 pp. Cloth, \$59.95.

Both of the above books by Harvey Sindima, a Presbyterian theologian from Malawi, present an interpretation of the history of Christianity and missions in Africa from the viewpoint of what might be called an emergent African theology. *Drums* is comprised of two sections. The first and longer is a revisionary history of Christianity and missions in Africa from its beginnings in Alexandria and North Africa to the present, ending with a chapter on the development and significance of the independent churches. Sindima has collected and condensed a vast amount of information in all of this. The second part is comprised of a rather critical theological analysis of the missionary Christianity imposed upon Africa, of its failure to engage African culture, and of its dire consequences for African society, its values and sense of identity. Hence, argues Sindima, there is validity to the protest of African theologians who call for cultural retrieval and a theology that works from the bottom up. Several of these emergent theologies are reviewed and Sindima goes on to make suggestions regarding the theological reconstruction required.

The specific significance of the title *Drums of Redemption* escaped this reader, neither is the thesis or the purpose of the study specifically stated—perhaps it is to clarify the agenda and provide an historical background and foundation for the new wave of African theology.

In contradistinction there is no ambiguity about the title and purpose of *Africa's Agenda* and here the thesis is quite clear. Briefly stated, the charge is that the Christianity imposed upon Africa by missions in close collaboration with the colonial powers reflects the concerns of the Western enlightenment mind—rationality and doctrine, individualizing piety, and an ethical system related to private rights and property—more clearly than it does the mind of Christ or the communal Christianity of the early church. The legacy of exploitative colonialism and this “liberal” Christianity is the dislocation and corruption of traditional African culture and its value system—hence the “crisis of African values.” Much of this is in continuity with and is obviously built upon the historical exposition of *Drums* but is even more aggressively stated here.

The *Agenda* for African leaders—intellectual, political, socio/economic, and religious—is the retrieval and reconstruction of a compelling value system. Analysis of this task looks both forward and backward. A chapter is devoted to the struggle for authenticity and the currents of thought in the “Negritude” movement. Another examines the attempts of leaders of several African socialisms to find pragmatic answers to the problems of social dislocation and loss of identity. The problem is regarded in the final analysis as one of cultural and spiritual identity; and neither these movements nor the African independent church movement, which successfully deals with the political problems of foreign control but not adequately with the theological issues at stake, is judged to get at the heart of the problem.

In keeping with this analysis, Sindima next presents a survey and analysis of the thought of some leading African theologians who have wrestled with the African crisis of values, and outlines his own agenda and method for a theology from below to provide a framework for transformation. A question may arise in the mind of evangelicals here as to whether an African Christology from below, which builds upon African concepts of spirit and life and death and the ancestors, can adequately portray the true meaning and uniqueness of Jesus Christ. Perhaps it is too early to tell and we need to wait further exposition from Sindima.

The book comes to cumulative force in an appeal to the church and religious leaders to take up the battle for the retrieval of values of humanity and life and corporate bondedness which will promote the transformation of society. In fact, he goes further and affirms that inasmuch as Christianity played a major role in creating the crisis, it has a moral responsibility to do so.

With the publication of these two books, Sindima emerges as a significant voice in the wave of emergent African theology and deserves to be taken seriously. His analysis is perhaps one-sided and overstates the case; however, he deals with major issues and reflects the thought of other African intellectuals. Church leaders and missionaries who seek to understand the challenge facing the church and to faithfully respond to the needs of Africa's people stand to benefit from these studies.

These studies could be profitably read in conjunction with two other recent publications on the church in Africa. The title of John Parratt's *Reinventing Christianity: African Theology Today*, 1995, is both apt and significant. It is a careful study by one who has spent twenty years teaching theology in Africa. While Sindima is not specifically mentioned, this book will help to place his thought in theological perspective. Elizabeth Isichei, who also taught in Africa for many years, has produced an admirable one-volume history of Christianity in Africa which will also provide perspective for Sindima's work (Elizabeth Isichei, *A History of Christianity in Africa, From Antiquity to the Present*, 1995 [reviewed in this issue of *AUSS*]).

Drums and Africa's Agenda contain more typographical and other errors than one would expect in such otherwise well-produced books.

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RUSSELL STAPLES

Smith, Billy K., and Frank S. Page. *Amos, Obadiah, and Jonah*. The New American Commentary. Broadman and Holman, 1995. 304 pp. \$27.99.

The New American Commentary (NAC) series aims at presenting the Bible student with material which is "the finest in contemporary evangelical scholarship." This particular volume is number 19B and is authored by Smith (Amos and Obadiah) and Page (Jonah). One can say that in general the volume is reader-friendly in more than one way, and is very much in line with the rest of the NAC series.

The beginning of each book is accompanied by a map of Syro-Palestine to help locate the sites mentioned in the text. The introduction consists of a historical setting, questions of authorship, and a survey of the message of the book. A