

above provoke many questions. What "language" may we use to communicate the gospel? Should we prefer premodern or modern languages? Is there some universal language available? Is the simple repetition of Scripture language sufficient? Does apologetics need to translate the message of Scripture into contemporary language?

Some answers to these questions are suggested in the well-written chapters of this book. The multiplicity of authors leads to a lack of harmonious recommendations for a response to postmodernity. However, the various perspectives may facilitate the reader's appreciation of issues which must be considered in the construction of a theological response to postmodernity. Some have concluded that postmodernity is best ignored as a passing fad. However, the evangelical responses contained in this book illustrate the fact that contemporary Christians may not easily escape the challenge and opportunity of constructive engagement with postmodern thought.

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MARTIN HANNA

Phiri, Isabel Apawo. *Women, Presbyterianism and Patriarchy: Religious Experience of Chewa Women in Central Malawi*. Blantyre: Christian Literature Association in Malawi (CLAIM), 1997. 160 pp. Paper, \$10.00.

This is a recent publication of the productive Kachere Series, a line of books on religion and theology that is sponsored by the Department of Theology and Religious Studies of the University of Malawi. The author, herself a former member of this department, is currently Director of the Institute of Contextual Theology of the University of Durban—Westville, Republic of South Africa. The issue of the status and ministry of women in the Christian church is becoming one of increasing importance, and frequently controversy, in most denominations nowadays. Thus Dr. Phiri's detailed historical and sociocultural study of the matter in the context of the Presbyterian Church of Malawi (CCAP) comes as a welcome introduction to many of the relevant aspects.

The book begins with a valuable survey of the important role that women played in the ancient, traditional, religious practice of the Chewa people as spirit mediums and shrine leaders (chap. 1). The main body of the book then deals with the various struggles in which women have had to engage in order to have their voice heard and their talents utilized in a church that was initially characterized by a conservative "patriarchal theology" (43) and male-dominated administrative practice, even within their own fellowship group (Chigwirizano).

In her well-written overview and evaluation, the author considers such crucial topics as female initiation, bride wealth, child marriages, husband desertion, a widow's property rights, and remarriage. Current attitudes toward women in the church are explored on the basis of personal field interviews (chap. 4), and various ecumenical efforts at promoting a greater awareness of women's issues are reported (chap. 5). Dr. Phiri concludes her study (chap. 6) with a reflection of the ecclesiastical status of women in relation to several key scriptural passages that concern this subject. Here, in particular, is where the author expresses several potentially controversial opinions of a hermeneutical nature, and one wishes that

her exegetical position had been more fully delineated. Perhaps this task will be undertaken in a subsequent study.

This book is written in the vigorous style that would be expected from one who has been an active participant in many of the stirring events that Phiri is reporting. This text should be required reading in any seminary/theological college course that deals with the subject of the history and development of Christianity in Africa, especially with regard to issues of contemporary interest, concern, and debate.

Zambia Bible Society
Lusaka, Zambia

ERNST R. WENDLAND

Polkinghorne, John C. *Belief in God in an Age of Science*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998. xv + 130 pp. \$18.00.

This book is one of forty-two volumes that have been sponsored by the Dwight Harrington Terry Foundation Lectures on Religion in the Light of Science and Philosophy. The author, John Polkinghorne, writes from a rather unique position in that he is a renowned theoretical physicist, an ordained theologian, and a retired president of Queen's College, Cambridge.

Polkinghorne's primary focus throughout the book is the interface and similarities of science and theology when considering the holistic character of the physical world and how we, as occupants, relate to that world. In the first chapter the concepts of natural theology are developed as an insightful discipline. Theism is offered as a "best explanation" of the multileveled experiences of human encounter with reality.

In chapter 2, Polkinghorne examines the relationships and similarities of methodology used by the scientist and theologian as they pursue truth. Two examples of critical investigation are presented. From the scientific aspect, the study of the nature of light is examined, which resulted in the development of quantum theory; from the theological aspect, the christological controversies are examined, which resulted in the Chalcedonian definition.

Chapter 3 is devoted to a discussion of divine interaction. Various concepts and models of God are explored as to how best to acknowledge divine interaction within a scientific framework. The arguments presented here are not of the same nature as normally presented, but rather take a fresh approach to this subject, using insights gained from chaos theory. The chapter may be best summarized by the following quotation:

Thus a realist reinterpretation of the epistemological unpredictabilities of chaotic systems leads to the hypothesis of an ontological openness within which new causal principles may be held to be operating which determine the pattern of future behavior and which are of an holistic character. Here we see a *glimmer* of how it might be that we execute our willed intentions and how God exercises providential interaction with creation. As embodied beings, humans may be expected to act both energetically and informationally. As pure spirit, God might be expected