

functions a counselor performs during counseling. In chapter 1 he presents some important functions, such as hearing the meaning of events and problems (24), grieving (24), coping and functioning (29), and self-regard (32). In the rest of the chapters the author clearly presents a very humanistic approach to pastoral counseling. He sees the pastoral counselor as a provider of unconditional regard and support for the self (48). The pastoral counselor is basically a witness (chap. 3) that is conveyed through intense listening, remembering, and noticing, very focused and with undivided attention (91). And as a promoter of the humanistic approach, the issue and role of feelings during counseling is clearly presented (chap. 5).

I find of supreme importance the last chapter of the book, where Dittes deals with the spiritual aspect of pastoral counseling. The author begins by dealing with "God's benign sovereignty" as a remedy for guilt and failure, since the counselor and the counselee are both in God's hands (146), and ends with a very nice presentation of the pastoral counselor as priest and prophet.

I was a little disappointed with the general content of this book. I found the title to be misleading. It is not about the "basics" of pastoral counseling, as the title indicates. This book is more about the philosophy than the basics of pastoral counseling. I was expecting the ABC's of pastoral counseling, and I found instead another systemic effort to increase the reputation of the humanistic (Rogerian) approach to counseling. In this, I found the author to be extremely biased, especially when he presents Carl Rogers as "the eminent counselor" (121). Very briefly he mentions Freud's legacy and his contributions (139), but he sees his approach as a daunting model that is very intimidating because of its demands, especially with a huge investment of time (142), but fails to mention other approaches to counseling and their effectiveness and importance.

The title may attract those that are interested in the basic procedures to assist counselees, but this book is more for experienced counselors looking for a good philosophical and theological foundation for the work they are engaged in, and no one can do that any better than what Dittes does in this book.

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Fahlbusch, Erwin, et al., eds. *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*. Vol. 1, A-D. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999. xl + 893 pp. Hardcover, \$100.00.

Encyclopedic is the only word that can possibly capture the breadth of *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*. At present only the first of five projected volumes has been released in English, but if the other four maintain the scope and quality of the first, the finished product will be a major contribution to the understanding of world Christianity.

The *Encyclopedia of Christianity* is based on the third revised edition of the *Evangelisches Kirchenlexikon: Internationale theologische Enzyklopädie* (1986-97). The English version, however, is more than a translation. Many of the articles have been tailored to specifically meet the needs of English readers. In addition, several articles have been added just for English readers. Other articles have been expanded to provide more complete and up-to-date coverage. Beyond those modifications are updated and expanded bibliographies. Not only have the more recent works in

English been added, but English bibliographic information has been substituted in nearly all cases when books are available in more than one language.

With the publication of the *Encyclopedia of Christianity* English-only readers are getting their first exposure to a major reference work that has been of service to German researchers since the first edition appeared in 1950. The translation is on the cutting edge of a trend that is soon to be followed by the influential *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, which saw the first German volume of its fourth edition released in 1998.

When it is completed, the English edition of the *Encyclopedia* will contain over 1700 articles. There are 465 articles in the first volume. The *Encyclopedia* calls forth several descriptors. The first is breadth. It is difficult to conceive of a project that could be conceptualized more broadly and yet still find its basis in a Christian orientation. The *Encyclopedia* covers not only Christian bodies, personalities, and doctrines, but also non-Christian philosophies and religions. And where appropriate, articles treat regional expressions of Christian concepts and practices (e.g., African, Asian, Latin American, North American).

It matters not whether a person is looking for a concise introduction to such terms as abortion and agnosticism. They are all there. Readers can even find a concise article on cannibalism, appropriately cross-referenced to such related topics as human sacrifice, cultic meals, eucharist, and totemism. The *Encyclopedia* not only treats topics historically but also has one eye on the present and another on future implications. In many ways it combines the high points of encyclopedias in such fields as church history, missions, ethics, world religion, philosophy, practical theology, spirituality, and more. But the finished product presents more than a sum of the individual fields of study since the *Encyclopedia* presents an integrated perspective that builds on the interrelated insights of many fields.

A second apt descriptor is that the *Encyclopedia* is ecumenical. That is, it seeks to cover topics from the perspective of various Christian (and even non-Christian) perspectives. Thus the article on Christology not only has major sections on Christology in the NT, church history, and dogmatics, but also major sections on Christology in the Orthodox and Roman Catholic traditions and in the third world. As one might expect, it is in the latter category that Christ as Liberator is treated. In a similar manner, the article on apocalypticism not only treats the topic from Judaic and Christian perspectives but also introduces apocalypticism in Hinduism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, and Islam.

A third descriptor is up-to-date. Thus readers seeking information on the cutting edge of change will find both conceptual and bibliographic help. Take the topic of dispensationalism as an example. As in the standard treatments of the topic, the *Encyclopedia of Christianity* has major sections on J. N. Darby and American dispensationalism. In addition, however, it also provides cutting-edge information on revised dispensationalism and progressive dispensationalism.

Lastly, the *Encyclopedia* may also be described as authoritative. As might be expected, the authors are generally recognized experts in their fields.

No reference work is perfect. Due to the reductionist format of encyclopedic works, shortcomings are inevitable. This volume has not fully escaped from that generic shortcoming. On the other hand, *The Encyclopedia of Christianity* is a

monumental reference work that is a must for every library. Researchers will find it an excellent place to get an overview and bibliographic head start on a great number of topics.

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Fisher, Robert B. *West African Religious Traditions: Focus on the Akan of Ghana*. Maryknell, NY: Orbis, 1998. xv i+ 198 pp. Paperback, \$20.00.

Robert Fisher, professor of ethics at Prairie View A & M University, gained an interest in African religious traditions while living among the Akan in Ghana. In this work, which appears in the "Faith Meets Faith" series, Fisher focuses on these people as a lens for viewing African traditions. He recognizes that there is a multiplicity of religions in Africa but feels that there is a common thread among African "approaches" to religion. The book has a consistent format, with a working bibliography and a study guide appearing after each chapter. There are also recommendations regarding films, a helpful glossary, and an index. Four handy maps at the front of the book help to put the scope and importance of the work into perspective.

The first two chapters cover the basic religious symbols in Akan society. Chapter 1, "In the Beginning was the Dance," examines the religious and social function of dance in West African communities. Dance is seen as a means of communicating with the spirit world. Socially, dance is associated with warfare, death, and issues in societal life. Often the entire community is involved in dance, particularly at commemorative events. Chapter 2, "Every King Has a 'Talking Mouth,'" covers the symbolic emblems in African traditional religion. Fisher investigates the role of the drummer, who conveys the history of the community through his "talking drum." He then looks at libation and prayer as offerings to ancestors, after which he examines the theological function of folktales, songs, and myths. Textiles are also important, particularly *kente* and *adinkra*. The chapter ends with a discussion about the relevancy of stools for community leaders and the symbolism behind staffs and masks.

The next three chapters detail the foundational presuppositions of Akan religion. In chapter 3, "All People Are God's Children," Fisher suggests that the African universe is not theocentric but anthropocentric. Everything in the community was created for and exists for the human. For the Akan, the human is comprised of *'kra* (life source from God), *sunsum* (a spiritual personality that is independently mobile), *ntoro* (father's semen), and *mogya* (mother's blood). Both male and female have an important role in the community, and kingly succession is matrilineal. Chapter 4, "Every Spirit is Reflected on Earth," explores the belief that the spirit and physical worlds are interrelated. Death is seen as a transition to the spirit world as the *sunsum* crosses the "river." The ancestors have a close connection with God and have the ability to bestow blessings on their descendants. Sometimes the ancestors return to this life via reincarnation. In chapter 5, "The Mouth of the Elder Is More Powerful Than the Amulet," Fisher challenges the European charge that Africans are obsessed with fetishes as he argues that the symbolic amulets used in ritual are merely a means to an end. The amulets are simply instruments used to conjure or appease the spirit powers. Fisher