

be described as an "introduction to the NT" rather than an "introduction to scholarly debates about the NT," the uninitiated reader may be left overconfident about the certainty of some of the statements made and unaware of many issues faced by NT scholars. Those who choose to use this book as a text must make the choice, as the authors have apparently done, to seek primarily to arouse a growing interest in the messages conveyed by the canonical texts and how they were shaped by the world in which they arose, rather than to view it as a source for informing readers of the current state of various historical debates.

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Barrett, David B., George T. Kurian, and Todd M. Johnson, eds. *World Christian Encyclopedia: A Comparative Survey of Churches and Religions in the Modern World*, 2d ed., 2 vols. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001, Vol. 1: xii+876 pp., Vol. 2: vi+823 pp. Hardcover, \$295.00.

In an attempt to answer the question, "What is the status of Christianity worldwide?" nothing even comes close to the extensive response provided by this massive work. Volume 1 looks at the world by countries and is geographically oriented. About 90 percent of the book consists of a country-by-country survey of the world's 238 geopolitical units. Each country survey includes general survey data, charts of religious adherents and organized churches/denominations, an exposition of the religious situation in the country with an emphasis on Christian activity, suggested future trends, and a bibliography. The volume also includes an introduction to the status of Christianity and religions in the modern world, concluding with an atlas that provides a visual explication of the data discussed in the book.

Volume 2 is people-oriented. It views the world in segments—religions, peoples, languages, cities and civil divisions. The last 180 pages consist of references: a dictionary of Christianity, a world bibliography, a directory of religions and ministries, and indices.

Everything about this encyclopedia is impressively large, from comprehensive world coverage to page size (10" x 12½"). It spans 167 statistical indicators for all 238 countries and incorporates ten million annual reports that form the raw material for this work. No wonder another large volume has been published to interpret the data contained in this set! The editors specifically state that this work is "empirical" (1: 1, vi) and that analysis and interpretation of the data is a separate task (1:1, vii). We will be pursuing that challenging task for a long time to come.

The work is also large-hearted and inclusive. Groups that many would not classify as part of the Christian family are given space—from ancient heretics such as Nestorians and Monophysites to modern Unitarians, Mormons, and Jehovah's Witnesses. So are African independent churches. No country is too small (Pitcairn Island with a population of forty-seven) nor any language/dialect too insignificant to study.

This set represents a major updating and expansion of the one-volume first edition of this work (1982). The new edition has more than 700 pages and has been reorganized. The biggest change comes in the ethnolinguistic area. The original work had eleven pages on ethnolinguistics, while the second edition has 230 pages on the

cultures of the world and 288 pages on “linguametrics” (2: v).

Undoubtedly, these volumes will be the standard reference work in this area for years to come. All seminary libraries should view this set as a “must buy.” Anyone who wants to study, work in, or visit any country or church in the world should come here for initial orientation and basic information.

A hard-core statistician would probably hope for more explanation regarding the dating of the latest numerical data and criteria for projections into the future. Most bibliographic sections for countries seem to have the cut-off date of 1996 (see, e.g., Japan) or 1997 (see, e.g., Kenya) or even earlier. When were the last bibliographic entries made, or does this vary by section or country?

Such questions detract little from this monumental work, which is a major contribution to the world church. Hearty congratulations and thanks to the editors, publisher, and the unsung contributors, who made it possible. One cannot help being amazed at the immense size, spread, and diversity of world Christianity.

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Burton, Keith Augustus. *Rhetoric, Law, and the Mystery of Salvation in Romans 7:1-6*. Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 2001. xiv + 159 pp. Hardcover, \$79.95.

This book represents a revision of a doctoral dissertation supervised by Robert Jewett and submitted at Northwestern University in 1994. The author is currently Associate Professor of Religion at Oakwood College in Huntsville, Alabama.

The passage treated in this study (Rom 7:1-6) is, by common consent, one of the more difficult in the Pauline corpus. After noting that the law “rules” a person as long as that person lives, Paul cites, by way of illustration, the case of a married woman who is bound to her husband by the law forbidding adultery. But though she is bound by the law as long as *she* is alive, in the illustration she is said to be so bound throughout the lifetime of her *husband*: should her *husband* die, she is free from the law and may marry another. Paul then tells his readers that they, by sharing in Christ’s death, have died to the law and are now free to belong to another, namely, to Christ, who has been raised from the dead. Here it is not, as in the illustration, the living spouse of a deceased partner who is free to enter a new relationship; rather, in keeping with the initially stated principle, freedom from the law is enjoyed by the one who has died.

Though the analogy is not very felicitous (but what analogy from everyday life *could* Paul have invoked that would illustrate how death sets one free to pursue a different way of life?), the main point is clear—believers, by sharing in Christ’s death, are freed from the law to serve God in the new life of the Spirit. Burton, however, is not prepared to concede either the standard interpretation or the implication that the passage betrays “Paul’s argumentative inadequacy” (xiii). Burton believes that when due attention is paid to “the correct understanding of the analogical form” and to the precise definition of (Greek) *nomos*, Rom 7:1-6 proves “a fine specimen of [Paul’s] rhetorical acumen” (17, 99).

The book begins with a rapid summary of previous interpretations of the