

Testament. But in covering such a large topic, the book inevitably has its limitations. Only the very large-scale questions about the relation of the Testaments are handled; and only a survey of the major positions is attempted. Moreover, the reader will be disappointed if he wants primarily arguments *deciding among* positions, rather than expositions of the positions.

Baker's own preferences, in my opinion, are generally good. But these preferences are not very well grounded within the limits of the book. A solid decision among the positions requires some reflection on the role of presuppositions. More specifically, a decision on an issue as fundamental as that concerning the relation between Old Testament and New cannot be grounded in modern scholarly consensus or in common sense or in one's notion of what Christianity or the Christian church requires, but only in the testimony of Scripture itself. Hence a fundamental advance cannot be achieved without awareness of the philosophical, apologetic, and hermeneutical problem of circularity. But such discussion is outside the scope of this book.

Moreover, another key factor in assessing the two Testaments is reflection on the relation between the Testaments as covenant documents on the one hand, and God's salvific-judgmental acts in history on the other. No non-evangelical work can produce a satisfactory answer at this crucial point. The value of Baker's book is in revealing what remarkably positive contributions have been made from standpoints largely outside the conservative evangelical community. I regret that there was not scope in the book to consider the way in which Meredith Kline's work (*The Structure of Biblical Authority*) points beyond such positions to a fully evangelical solution.

VERN S. POYTHRESS

Westminster Theological Seminary,
Philadelphia

Harry Boer: *Above the Battle? The Bible and its Critics*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977. 109. \$2.95.

Harry Boer holds forth the view that the Bible, the Word of God, is wholly reliable in the main points that it teaches, yet not inerrant. Writing in a fairly simple style, and from a Reformed background, he intends to make plain to theologian and layperson alike the reasons for relaxing commitment to scriptural details. As another straw in the wind, this book

is of interest to evangelicals. Yet it is at the same time a frustrating book, because in some ways it confuses rather than advances the discussion.

The key argument is that certain specific disparities in the Gospels are irreconcilable with inerrancy. Yet every one of the cases cited has a plausible harmonization. Most of the cases were faced by Augustine or Calvin. Boer appears to demand that, to avoid error, words must produce a photographically precise picture of the events; and, of course, he is disappointed. He would have done better had he viewed error as any element in contrast to the truth. Then, for example, the difference between two blind men mentioned in Matt. 20:30 and the blind man mentioned in Mark 10:46 and Luke 18:35 is not an error. Neither Mark nor Luke says, as Boer claims (p. 83), that there was *one* blind man, *vis.*, one in contrast to two. Both speak of *a* blind man, but neither says that there was "one."

The book's auxiliary arguments are, if anything, more confusing than the main argument. Boer argues from the analogy of lower criticism to higher criticism that both are legitimate. Two confusions govern this argument. First, "higher criticism" sometimes means "[inquiry] into the composition, style, authorship, possible sources, . . ." (p. 19), i.e., literary analysis. Literary analysis can be done responsibly or irresponsibly (p. 51). But later on Boer shifts the focus onto inquiring what we are obliged to believe about what the Bible says (after exegesis finds what it says). This second step might be called normative analysis. The lumping of the two together is illegitimate shifting of ground.

A second confusion revolves around the relation of presuppositions to "rational scientific inquiry." E. J. Young's high view of Scripture is reproached for its lack of scientific rationality (p. 94), while the humanists and liberals are reproached for their lack of proper presuppositions (p. 51). One cannot have it both ways, in spite of Barth. In fact, differing views of rationality and science are themselves determined by one's presuppositions or basic commitments. From Young's standpoint, for example, the unreserved acceptance of New Testament statements about Old Testament authorship is "rational" and "scientific" because it assesses the New Testament statements according to their true worth. Boer's desire to treat the New Testament in this respect as subject to "accommodation" is "irrational" devaluation of an all-important witness that is indeed human but also divine in all its parts.

A final confusion concerns Boer's descriptions of the nature of biblical trustworthiness or "infallibility." He consistently construes infallibility not primarily in terms of truth or objective validity but in terms of epistemology and faith (pp. 85, 87, 92, 98). Infallibility is not obvious but

is discerned by faith (p. 87). This is not a definition of infallibility at all, but rather of how we come to acknowledge it. All sorts of combinations of alternatives are possible: Van Tillians have a "strict" view of the *nature* of infallibility, plus a kind of "fideist" attitude to the *epistemology* of infallibility. Seventh Day Adventists and some evangelicals have a "strict" view of the nature of infallibility, plus a "demonstrationalist" attitude to the epistemology of infallibility. Boer appears to have a more "lax" view of the nature of infallibility, combined with a "fideist" attitude to epistemology of infallibility. And so on.

The mystery of divine-human interaction in inspiration should caution us from deducing too quickly the exact nature of scriptural infallibility (cf. pp. 99-109). Yet, in the end, Boer leaves us with an infallibility so undefined in its positive content that it will abet the church in rejecting or minimizing whatever in the Bible is personally or socially most unpalatable.

VERN S. POYTHRESS

Westminster Theological Seminary,
Philadelphia

Pius Wakatama, *Independence for the Third World Church: An African's Perspective on Missionary Work*. Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1976.

Pius Wakatama is a Rhodesian who is currently Dean of the Christian College of Southern Africa in Salisbury, Rhodesia. In this popular style book he discusses the moratorium issue, which found its roots in African soil, from a personal perspective. Himself a product of missions, Wakatama writes as one who has worked very closely with missionaries in various capacities. To this experience he added four years of study in the U.S.A. where he obtained a B.A. from Wheaton College and an M.A. in Communications from its Graduate School. From his interaction with missions on the "sending" end, coupled with discussions with international students from the Third World, he seeks to grapple with key missionary issues that cluster around the central theme of moratorium.

While the last voice from Africa has not been heard on the moratorium issue, even from the vocal minority, it is a commentary on the fast moving pace of development of issues in that continent that the moratorium issue received surprisingly little direct attention during the Fifth Annual Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Nairobi in 1975 and did not