

Kirche zur Religionsfreiheit zur Sprache. Gerade aus dem Anspruch, die überholbare Offenbarung Gottes in Christus zu sein, folgert Vf. mit H. FRIES, daß die Botschaft der Kirche zugleich die toleranteste sei. Beschlossen wird die Arbeit mit der Erörterung der Möglichkeiten des Weges der Kirche in die Welt ohne Religion bzw. in die Welt der Ersatzreligionen. Vf. sieht hier trotz mancher großen Schwierigkeiten immer noch eine Chance für die Kirche und ihre Botschaft. Die ganze Arbeit verwertet auf Schritt und Tritt die Aussagen des 2. Vatikanischen Konzils.

Aachen

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Mbiti, John S.: *African Religions and Philosophy*. Heinemann/London 1969; 290 p., s. 21/—

There is subject matter for exciting discussion on nearly every page of this well-documented study of tribal African world-view by a professor of theology and comparative religion at Makere College (Uganda). However, we confine ourselves to a few remarks bearing on the conceptual framework underlying the author's general argument. — One question highlighted by M. pertains to the validity of diffusionism as a sufficient explanation for similarity between the world-view of Africans and that of peoples elsewhere. Thus, after a short survey of early approaches to his topic, the author isolates two extreme positions in past research and proposes that there should be some sort of middle road for future research. On the one hand he presumes that early scholars — particularly the Germans — assumed that African beliefs (as well as many other cultural traits) were borrowed from outside Africa, especially from the Middle East and southern Europe. On the other hand, he observes that some modern writers have discovered the cradle of ancient Mediterranean civilization in Africa and have inferred that it was from Africa that later Western civilization acquired its original vigour. He cites J. JAHN and C.A. DIOP, respectively, as being the best-known representatives of these rather hazy and sometimes wild theories. But he does not specify the precise direction that he feels future research should take, thus it seems worth recalling here two fruitful approaches already taken by others.

For one, scholars in the German ethnological tradition drew on growing ethnographic evidence to piece together a universal ancient world-view, and it seems to us that this *Weltbild* can still be seen reflected in behavior, ritual, and symbolism of modern agrarian societies — as also, indeed, in many Christian religious symbols. In this conception, insofar as particular African peoples partake of agrarian traditions and condition, it is quite understandable that their world-view should resemble that of other peoples living in comparative conditions. JENSEN'S *Das religiöse Weltbild einer frühen Kultur* creatively sets forth this point of view, and moreover, compared with FUSTEL DE COULANGE'S classic *La cité antique*, opens up a wider and deeper field of comparative research.

For another, scholars in the French tradition, and particularly those espousing the line of thought of the late professor GRIAULE, have looked to universal symbolism as the path to defining unity and cohesion in the seeming kaleidoscope of African systems of thought. Because symbolism — its forms, meaning, and multiple cultural interpretations as associated with multiple socioeconomic environments — has for some time preoccupied both ethnologists and comparative religionists, one is a bit startled when the author introduces the notion time

as a new key to the African Pandora's box. The concept of time as *temps vécu*, *temps sociaux*, cosmic time, and so on, is far from new in ethnological literature.

The author sees differing religious systems in African tribes, but, "since there are no parallel philosophical systems which can be observed in similarly concrete terms" (p. 1), he adopts the singular to refer to "the philosophical understanding of African peoples concerning different issues of life" (p. 2). We do agree with the author that "philosophy of one kind or another is behind the thinking and acting of every people" (p. 1). A few pages later, he says that the Africans have their own ontology, which he divides into five categories. Amidst such sweeping statements, the reader feels somewhat at a loss. Why then, does the author so utterly reject TEMPELS *ontology*? One wonders if this so-called *philosophy* is not exactly that set or system of concepts — i. e. the complex of primary interpretations of reality (of the "Mitwelt", to use the current term) — which everywhere structures both religious systems and their institutionalized social or political concomitants to make them mutually intelligible. At this deeper level, one can support ELIADE'S assertion that religious phenomena everywhere, whatever their historical concomitants, show a common, essential structure. Here one recalls the name of REDFIELD, and, more recently and from another angle, THILS. — Rationalization cannot take the place of comparative analysis. It reminds the reader of the well-known pitfalls of the amateur linguist: folk-etymology and so-called common sense. — Much more might have been said on religion, magic, and sorcery. The author complains about the amount of "ignorance, prejudice, and falsification" on this subject, but, after going through the interesting 37 pages of the book where these topics are dealt with, one does not feel particularly relieved of one's ignorance in these matters. Moreover, his "few observations" are not always backed up by anthropological theory. — On the other hand, the chapters on "changing man and his problems" and on Christianity in Africa provide outstanding reading. One feels the author's personal concern and the basic ideas he propounds should be thoroughly discussed in any course on modern Africa. — In sum, handled properly and commented upon competently, this makes an excellent textbook, second to none among the *Introductions* already available.

Mortsels (Belgium)

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Müller, Klaus E.: *Kulturgeschichtliche Studien zur Genese pseudo-islamischer Sektengebilde in Vorderasien* (= Studien zur Kulturkunde, 22). Steiner/Wiesbaden 1967; 414 p., 4 Karten, 7 Tafeln; DM 72,—

Cette thèse est une étude d'histoire religieuse qui analyse la structure des sectes «pseudo-islamiques» suivantes: Takhtashi, Kysylbash, Bektashi, Nuşayri, Shamsiya, Druses, Ahl-i Haqq et Yazidi. Ces sectes constituent de petits groupes ethniques qui vivent en Turquie, en Syrie, en Irak et en Perse. La première partie de l'étude présente un exposé de la structure de chacune de ses sectes (p. 3-205). En analysant les divers aspects de leur culte (les objets utilisés, les fêtes, les assemblées, les cérémonies, les rites), l'A. montre que ce culte trahit la survivance de plusieurs couches religieuses. On doit par exemple considérer la doctrine de la provenance des dieux et du monde à partir d'un œuf originel, la croyance en la métempsychose, les orgies du printemps, la prostitution au service des hôtes, etc. comme des vestiges d'une vieille croyance de paysans méditerranéens mêlés de représentations et de rites de provenance mésopotamienne et d'éléments