

**Conversion to Christianity:
Historical and Anthropological
Perspectives on a Great
Transformation.**

Edited by Robert W. Hefner. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1993, Pp. x, 326. \$45; paperback \$15.

This is an invaluable collection of multidisciplinary essays and diverse case studies on the social and individual processes of Christian conversion. Hefner is associate professor of anthropology at Boston University; early versions of some of the chapters were presented at the conference Conversion to World Religions, held at Boston University in 1988. He has deftly edited the rewritten papers and added a useful theoretical introductory chapter on the rationality of conversion that questions Robin Horton's series of essays in *Africa* in the 1970s.

Howard Kee's perceptive chapter "From Jesus Movement to Institutional Church" summarizes his previous observations in his *Understanding the New Testament* and leads into the case studies.

Apart from Kee and Terence Ranger, Oxford historian of Africa and African Christianity, most of the contributors are anthropologists teaching in North American universities. Surprisingly, only one is non-Western. A chapter from a mission theologian would also have provided a stimulating missing dimension.

The case studies, using the insights of the disciplines of history, psychology, anthropology, politics, economics, and ethics, cover southern Africa (Ranger), Java (Hefner), Mexico (Merrill), Amazonia (Pollock), Papua New Guinea (Barker), Australia (Yengoyan), Thailand (Keyes), and China (Jordan). An afterword by Peter Wood attempts to draw together the various themes, and each chapter has excellent bibliographic references.

The chapter that sparked for me was by Ranger. He challenges Ikenga-Metuh's thesis concerning the essential contrast between Christianity and African religion that the former was macrocosmic in its focus and the latter microcosmic. Ranger shows that *both* of them were macrocosmic and microcosmic.

This fine, coherent symposium, though lacking a theological critique in the case studies, should be read alongside Lewis Rambo's *Understanding Religious Conversion* (Yale, 1993).

—Graham Kings

Graham Kings, a contributing editor, is the Henry Martyn Lecturer in Missiology in the Cambridge Theological Federation, England, and Director of the Henry Martyn Hall. From 1985 to 1991 he was vice-principal of St. Andrew's Institute, Kabare, Kenya.

**Bridging the Gap: Evangelism,
Development, and Shalom.**

By Bruce Bradshaw. Monrovia, Calif.: MARC (World Vision International), 1993. Pp. vii, 183. Paperback \$6.95.

Books that seek to break down the dichotomy between evangelism and social concern are always welcome. The division between word and deed has profoundly weakened the church's witness to the reign of God in Christ. Bruce Bradshaw, director of holistic develop-

ment research for MARC, brings to this book his experience as a teacher and development practitioner in East Africa. Bradshaw believes that underlying the tension between evangelism and development is the spiritual/physical split in the modern worldview. He seeks to bridge

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this separation with a holistic worldview from Scripture that provides a larger context in which to resolve the conflict between evangelism and development. More specifically, Bradshaw advances the idea of shalom—God's redeeming and healing work of the whole creation—as a resolution to the separation. He works out this insight concretely in the areas of management, education, environmental issues, economics, healing, and the powers.

However, this tremendously fruitful insight—redemption restores the whole

creation—is partially obscured by several factors. Bradshaw's formulations often continue to be dependent on the very dualism from which he is seeking to break free. Furthermore, there is inadequate analysis and articulation at crucial points in his argument. For example, there is little discussion of a biblical understanding of shalom, even though this is the central category that bridges the gap between evangelism and development.

For this reviewer the best part of the book is the numerous illustrations taken

from his own experience in Africa of the problems encountered when one is concerned for holistic mission. As we continue to struggle with these issues, it is hoped that Bradshaw's call to hold fast to the biblical insight that redemption is restorative in nature and comprehensive in scope will be the context for such reflective action.

—Michael Goheen

Michael Goheen is Assistant Professor of Missions and Worldview Studies, Redeemer College, Ancaster, Ontario.

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Towards a Trinitarian Theology of Religions: A Study of Paul Tillich's Thought.

By Pan-Chiu Lai. Kampen, the Netherlands: Kok Pharos Publishing House, 1994. Pp. 181. Paperback. No price given.

Pan-Chiu Lai, lecturer at Middlesex University and minister of the Rhenish Church, London, makes a valuable contribution to Tillich studies and to the theory of interreligious dialogue.

Criticizing Christocentric theologies of religion as exclusivistic and theocentric philosophies of religion as relativistic, Lai proposes that Tillich's theology, viewed developmentally and in its Trinitarian fullness, offers the foundation for a more adequate alternative. Emphasizing the inadequacies of Tillich's Christocentric Logos Christology, method of correlation, and theology of the cross as developed in the first two volumes of *Systematic Theology*, he holds that the pneumatocentric approach of volume 3, if consistently followed, suggests a Trinitarian theology of religions that allows genuine interreligious dialogue to take place, involving substantive contributions by all participants, the recognition of particular claims of each participant, and serious mutual criticism between participants. The Trinity, characterized by Lai as the "hidden foundation of [Tillich's] theological system as a whole" (p. 148), would be explicated in such a way that "Christ is the centre of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity in an epistemological sense, whereas the Spirit is in an ontological sense the starting point or centre of the Trinitarian principle" (p. 153).

This book leads the reader into further reflection. Two questions might be mentioned here. First, even if one recognizes the chronological development in Tillich's thought, might Logos and Spirit Christologies be more organically related than Lai's epistemological-ontological distinction indicates? For Tillich, the knower participates in the known; the epistemo-



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