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The Netherlands

Review of Kaplan S., Parfitt T. and Trevisan Semi E. (eds.): 'Between Africa and Zion'
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Citation

Abbink, G. J. (1997). Review of Kaplan S., Parfitt T. and Trevisan Semi E. (eds.): 'Between Africa and Zion'. *Journal Of Religion In Africa*, 27(2), 217-218. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/9133>

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Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

were published in sections of the press, and thereby gained a much wider currency than they would have done otherwise. It would have been interesting for this fact to have been noted by Fr. Mejia. When republished, a different and more pointed set of questions for parish discussion was sometimes appended, apparently by the Kenya Justice and Peace Commission. Occasionally one of the later Letters made such a stir that it was reported in the international press, and it would have enhanced the usefulness of the collection if this too had been noted.

It is difficult to assess what effect these Pastorals had on the Kenya government, certainly not enough for the bishops' liking; they refer several times to the way in which their advice has been ignored. What the Letters may well have done was to stimulate thought and encourage other groups and individuals to make a public stand on the issues with which they were concerned.

Behind the more recent Pastorals lies a decision by Catholic bishops throughout the African continent to set up local Justice and Peace Commissions and to speak out more boldly about violations of human rights and the loss of democracy in their various countries. It was not only in Kenya that the Catholic hierarchy took an important stand on political issues. In Malawi, Cameroun, Sudan, Zambia and elsewhere the Catholic bishops have made principled statements on events in their countries.

The bishops' Letters are based on biblical and official church teaching, they are carefully argued and moderately expressed. Sometimes they seem over-deferential to government, though at times in the 1990s a note of near-desperation creeps in as the situation degenerates. The intervals between the Pastorals grows shorter, and one wonders if this method of expressing their concern might have been overused.

This is, then, a useful glimpse into the development of self-assurance in the Catholic Church in Kenya as the episcopate was Africanised, and into their developing understanding of the church's responsibility in a situation where democracy and human rights were under threat. One would now like to see an assessment of the effect of these Pastoral Letters at national and parish level, and a critique of the bishops' stand.

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KAPLAN, Steven, PARFITT, Tudor and TREVISAN SEMI, Emanuela (eds.), *Between Africa and Zion. Proceedings of the First International Congress of the Society for the Study of Ethiopian Jewry*, Jerusalem, Ben-Zvi Institute, 1995, pp. 257, ISBN 965 235 058 3

This book is a fascinating array of studies on the Ethiopian Jews (formerly 'Falasha' or Beta Israel) from diverse disciplines, among them history, sociology, anthropology, folklore, linguistics and ancient history. In Israel, where the field-research for most of the 25 chapters in the book was done, the Ethiopians are no doubt the most intensively studied ethnic community of the last few decades. The SOSTEJE (Society for the Study of Ethiopian Jewry) was founded in mid-1991, at a point when virtually all the Ethiopian Jews had left Ethiopia to start a new life in Israel. Accordingly, the various contributions focus either on remaining historical and religious-textual questions of Ethiopian Jewish life and culture, or on developments in the reconstituted community in Israel (health, women, 'absorption' problems). Studies about their Ethiopian setting can only be made 'at one remove': on the basis of informants' accounts and reminiscences, and on that of texts (mainly religious). Although critical appraisal is of course possible, both sources have serious limitations for an informed view of Ethiopian life 'like it used to be.' A good ethnographic reconstruction—as Kaplan remarks (p. 20) still lacking, and as such a 'painful gap'—would now be difficult to make, except perhaps by a historical anthropologist with a good knowledge of Ethiopian society and history.

The chapters in this book are of varying quality, often very disparate in outlook and orientation. In line with the move of the Ethiopian Jews to Israel, the book reflects the growing prominence of Israeli scholars in the field. S. Kaplan opens with a good overview of the 'state of Beta Israel studies,' discussing methodological problems and mapping out future tasks and challenges for the field. Echoes of the decades-long discussion about the Jewish identity of the Beta Israel are still reflected in a few papers, especially in one or two of 'Beta Israel partisans' of an earlier decade who feel the need to make an apologetic case for the solid and historic 'Jewish character' of the community, even though this question should now be considered as largely irrelevant.

Not all papers are directly about the Beta Israel—some speculate about possible historical parallels and connections (e.g. Parfitt, Kessler, Stenhouse). Many also circle around themes and insights which have been with us for many years now. Admittedly, the contributions do

add valuable new and up-to-date information, but it seems that 'Beta Israel studies' have reached a kind of plateau, where ideas and arguments come back in circles. For instance, in the chapters by Hertzog, Corinaldi, Grupper-Nudelman, Noam-Benita-Levy and Weingrod. Perhaps this is inevitable.

Some papers are theoretically ambitious but a bit incomprehensible (Trevisan Semi, pp. 28-32), others ignore the newest findings on Beta Israel history, presenting somewhat dated viewpoints.

Contributions with new and interesting material and/or arguments are: R. Pankhurst's study of the Balā Ejj-population (though not Beta Israel) in the Shāwa region of Ethiopia (this study is a pleasant surprise, based on the author's original fieldwork in recent years); Hagar Salamon's study of 'slaves' among the Beta Israel, and Shalva Weil's study of representations of leadership among Ethiopian Jews.

While unity of approach is lacking, as with any volume of conference proceedings, the book as a whole is a valuable survey of current Beta Israel research. It also gives evidence of an emerging new approach to the Ethiopian Jews: the study of this community seems to be gradually contextualized better in its historical-Ethiopian setting, and in its social and cultural setting. This would appear common sense, but this was not the case a generation ago.

Finally, recalling the unfortunate affair of the discarded blood of the Ethiopian Jews in Israel and the subsequent public upheaval (in early 1996), it would seem that they are an Israeli community with problems. There is still an annoying, systematic streak of paternalism in Israel towards the Ethiopian Jews. Such problems and the experiences and characteristics of this community merit continued scholarly study and respect. To be sure, there may be a danger of their being overstudied, and 'researcher fatigue' (diagnosed first among American Indians) is noticeable among them. One sometimes wonders how they feel when they hear that there is a special 'Society' to study them. In the meantime, the second conference of the SOSTEJE was held in early 1995.

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RUEDY, John (ed.), *Islamism and Secularism in North Africa*, Houndmills and London, Macmillan and the Center of Contemporary Arab Studies, 1994, 298 pp., £34.00 (cloth), 0 333 63097 1

The past two decades have seen an explosion of interest in contemporary Islam and in particular its more 'fundamentalist' manifestations. Frequently the subject of stereotypical journalist coverage, radical Islam and the states identified with it (particularly Sudan and Iran) often appear to be filling the place in Western democratic thought only recently vacated by the Soviet Union's 'evil empire'. Alongside this sensationalist and misleading coverage, there has also been a growing scholarly appreciation of the complexity and diversity of modern Islam. It is as an example of this latter, that the present collection is to be evaluated and valued.

In *Islamism and Secularism in North Africa* fifteen scholars from North Africa, Europe and the United States seek to explore the interaction of the secular and religious in the Maghribi countries of Libya, Tunisia, Morocco and particularly Algeria. Their essays have been divided into three sections: I. *Secular-Islamic Encounters in Historical Perspective* (6 chapters); II. *The Islamist Challenge* (5) III. *Reform or Repression: State Responses to the Islamic Revival* (4).

The authors and editor have chosen the term *Islamism*, rather than the more familiar *fundamentalism* to both narrow the terms of reference to a particular religious tradition and focus attention on political activism within that tradition. Used almost synonymously with 'political Islam,' *Islamism* is meant to specify 'a philosophy or point of view that holds that the realm of Islam should encompass all human action and that is willing to act upon this belief in order to erase the boundaries between the temporal and the religious' (p. xv).

Neither *secularism* nor *Islamism* as discussed in this volume are themselves monolithic phenomena. Not only do they vary from country to country, but even within the most important Islamic movements. Thus, Severine Labat (103-122) finds divergent even irreconcilable positions exist within Algeria's Front Islamique du Salut (FIS) with regard to the nation-state and the religious-political divide, and Hugh Roberts (123-147) finds its economic policies dictated as much by political opportunism as doctrine.

In contrast to many such collections which seek to impose (often artificially) a unity of approach or purpose of the different papers, this volume offers no such uniformity of vision. Indeed, the editor positively revels in the diversity as he notes that "The chapters assembled in this