

Book reviews

Elphick R 2012. *The Equality of Believers: Protestant Missionaries and the Racial Politics of South Africa*. Charlottesville & London: University of Virginia Press. X+416 pages. ISBN 978-1-86914-239-1. Price \$32.00.

This is an original, substantial and welcome contribution to South African mission history at a time when a more balanced view of the missionary enterprise is sorely needed. For the first time we have a volume which deals with the Protestant mission in its entirety (including the Dutch Reformed Church mission) giving a more comprehensive picture than ever before, encompassing history, theology and culture and embracing both the black and white, and English-speaking and Afrikaner contexts.

The book is arranged in three sections: The missionaries, their converts and their enemies; the benevolent empire and the Social Gospel; and the parting of the ways. Since the inception of mission work at the close of the eighteenth century, missionaries of many Protestants denominations exercised a liminal existence between the majority black and minority white populations of South Africa. The author analyses the racial discourse in an attempt to demarcate the missionary contribution to South Africa's historical development and concludes that their Christian universalist and egalitarian ideology was subsequently subverted by the settler community, its churches and even the missionaries themselves. This led to identification of Christianity with white racial identity and the emergence of segregated churches even within the same denominational tradition in which there were frequently secessions of black communities. The promulgation of segregationist laws and the introduction of apartheid was a 'Christian logical' (?) outcome! The development of 'benevolent' mission Christianity through mission institutions offering educational, medical, agricultural and industrial mission guaranteed the missionaries a voice in any engagement regarding race. The growth of industrialisation produced a more urgent need to deal with the 'Native Question'. And yet, the situation of rural poverty engaged the minds of missionaries, pre-eminently James Henderson of Lovedale. The General Missionary Conferences (1904-1932) exposed the dreadful state of affairs in the black population but was helpless to relieve the symptoms.

One of the major claims of the missionaries was: 'The seed of South African egalitarianism was the theological proclamation of the early missionaries: that Jesus died on the cross for people of every nation and race, not for whites alone; and that, in consequence, all who accepted him were brothers and sisters' (:2). Yet missionaries had an ambiguous

relationship with the concept of the equality of believers. Two main points emerge here. The first is that the systems which linked members of South Africa's different racial and cultural groups are not of recent origin, but have their origin much earlier in South African history; and that, in trying 'to understand the religious origins of apartheid historians should ... see the Dutch Reformed Church as a predominantly evangelical church, closely akin to British and American Protestant churches, which was determined to shape its policies in constant dialogue with the English-speaking world' (:9). This book fills an important gap in South African general/mission/church historiography. It highlights correctly the deficiency of any history that fails to take sufficient account of the religious sphere. It also offers some insights into the delicate nature of church-state relationships which were exacerbated in a racially polarising situation and the surprising yet not well articulated collaboration and co-options that sometimes resulted. It is a must for all serious and committed scholars who want to have a holistic understanding of South African history, particularly in the first half of the twentieth century.

Reviewer: Prof GA Duncan, Faculty of Theology, University of Pretoria, PRETORIA, 0002.

Burrows WR, Gornik MR & McLean (eds.) 2011. *Understanding world Christianity: The vision and work of Andrew F Walls*. Maryknoll: Orbis. ix +294 pages. ISBN 978-1-57075-949-9. Price US\$30.00.

I was studying divinity at Aberdeen University when Andrew Walls was Head of the Department of Religious Studies. By that time he was persona non grata in Church History having violated the codes of tradition by suggesting that change was an option. As I was preparing for service overseas, I thought I would take his course on 'Missionary and Ecumenical Studies' as an Honours option but was advised against it. What an error of judgment! The only time I experienced Walls first hand was in the Honours Practical Theology class!

The tale of university ineptitude is exemplified in Andrew Walls experience, but then, so is one man's ability to transcend prejudice and the vagaries of institutionalisation. The late Prof Ogbu Kalu described Andrew Walls as one (along with Brian Stanley) of the two leading historians of world Christianity. Sadly, much of our teaching is still stuck in an anachronistic paradigm.

The first section of this book locates Walls not only as a world renowned scholar but as comfortable in the context of rural Africa and as a citizen of Aberdeen where he made a significant contribution to its civic and cultural life in addition to the university. Chapters are devoted to his contribution as

a mentor, teacher and preacher. His role in teaching and learning were never subsumed under a research career. It was fully integrated.

The second part is devoted to Walls development of new approaches to Christian mission historical scholarship which take serious account of the contribution to the Christian cause of the non-western world. Particular attention is given to the establishment of centres by walls for the collection, preservation and study of documents, in addition to the remarkable contribution he made in the formation of study institutes and journals. All of this is characterised by an approach which, according to Wilbert Schenk, is international, integrative and cooperative (:48-49). Lee notes how Walls distinguished between the western approach which guided the goals, tasks and methodology of Christian studies in the non-Western world and emphasises the priority of local Christians determining a reoriented approach relevant to their specific contexts based on the incarnation of Christ, conversion and culture. Transformation is as important as cognition in this approach. With regard to mission, the focus is changing to consideration of the spiritual quality of those who promoted the Gospel, both overseas missionaries and local agents of mission. This reorientation of the historical method will have positive results for the ongoing missiological task.

Lamin Sanneh continues on the theme of the transmission of Christian faith by suggesting a number of fields for research including the locus of new emerging communities in contrast to the declining centres of power, their motivations, hopes and aspirations and their meaning in contemporary missio-historical terms. The term 'translation', associated with Sanneh, resonates with integration of Christian culture and local cultures in new areas of relationship and mutual interdependence in discipleship to Christ. This is the function of Christian mission in the post-Western world. Burrows draws on Walls' Methodist background to account, at least in part, for his commitment to renewal and revival as Walls claims it to be 'the great adventure of Christian faith. It's always taking new shape as Christ enters new territory, as he takes flesh again where he has not walked in flesh before' (:112). It is about the transformation of individuals and communities as they adopt Christianity and orient their lives and cultures towards God. Burrows summarises his and Walls' position succinctly: 'World Christian studies that move beyond empirical realities and take their cue on what conversion means in the Christian life will be driven to reflect more deeply ... on how Christians in their present state as the world's most truly world religion can deepen their communion and become a blessing for all the world's peoples' (:126).

Bevans pursues Walls' 'subversive' ecclesiology so termed because it is a missionary and ecumenical ecclesiology which challenges the church as an agent of the West. Walls does this by adding the marks of vulnerability and

suffering to the essential nature of the church. Focussing on the work of two eminent American predecessors, Robert demonstrates Walls' continuity with them based in a vision of a worldwide Christian community. Poon opens up the contested matter of archives and the documentation of world history as an area of growth and development which has geopolitical and theological significance in a situation which is more fluid than ever before. Nowhere is this fluidity seen more clearly than in Christianity's encounter with primal and other religions where the material for and method of research is cross-cultural.

Asamoah-Gwadu and Gillian Bediako emphasise the necessity of taking account of African Christianity in any account of world Christianity. The process of indigenising is derived from the principle that as a result of the life, work and witness of Jesus of Nazareth, God accepts people as they are, citizens of their local communities and of the church (kingdom community), and turns them towards the beings in Christ he desires them to become. The African continent becomes the place where this conversion is manifested to the highest degree through the witness of ordinary believers, not missionaries. This led, in time, to the development of African Initiated Churches (AICs), offering distinctive African forms of Christianity; these to be superseded by African Pentecostal initiatives from the 1960s. What is important for Walls is that all of these initiatives are integrated into contemporary world Christianity and not seen as aberrations.

Hanciles' contribution focuses on Walls' understanding of migration as central to the universal spread of the gospel and particularly to the re-emergence of Christianity as a non-Western faith. Migration and mission are linked from the outset of the Christian faith, prepared for by the existence of the Jewish Diaspora, although migration has not always had positive effects. These current migratory flows impact on the nature of Christianity in the west is significant an offer opportunities, as well as threats, to linking Christianity as an emerging expression of Western and non-Western contexts operating within a new interpretative framework.

Kwame Bediako's paper is concerned to demonstrate the connection between the emergence of world Christianity and the remaking of theology in terms of 'a reconfiguration of the cultural manifestation of the Christian faith in the world, a phenomenon that one may also describe as a shift in the center of gravity of Christianity' (:244) where 'no Christian history anywhere ever ceases to be a missionary history, in which Christians never cease to be called upon to apply the mind of Christ to the realities, questions and dilemmas of that time' (:247-248). In this new approach of redefining World history as a theological discipline, Bediako lists three priorities: 'a recovery of the religious dimension to theology that can provide a confident basis for courageous Christian witness amid religious pluralism; second, the recognition of the critical importance of the living church for doing

theology; and third, a recovery of spirituality in theology' (:252). He points to twin problems in Western Christianity: 'Western Christian thought lacked the regular challenge to establish its conceptual categories in relation to alternative religious claims' (:252). Then there is the situation where Western Christians are well informed concerning religion but uncommitted to a faith position. This is not the situation in the non-Western world where Christianity is encountered as a living faith. Here is the norm – challenging the supremacy of the Enlightenment. The West displays the aberrant form of Christianity! It has been oblivious to the existence, relevance and value of 'persisting indigenous cultural traditions of wisdom, knowledge, and spiritual insight that make the world of the Christian Scriptures and the depths of Christian apprehension of reality so evidently luminous with meaning' (:254).

This book is a testimony to a man who was well ahead of his time in the context of British universities and in the interface between the disciplines of Church History and the History of World Christianity. The contributions offered as a testimony to his ministry of faithful teaching, research and pastoral care witness to his enduring legacy. Andrew Walls brought a breadth of scholarship to this emerging discipline that made him a practical theologian in the truest sense – a reflective innovative practitioner and a prophet.

Reviewer: Prof GA Duncan, Faculty of Theology, University of Pretoria, PRETORIA, 0002.

Bosch, DJ 1991, 2011. *Transforming mission: Paradigm shifts in the theology of mission. 20th Anniversary edition.* Maryknoll:Orbis. xxv +630 pages. ISBN 9778-1-57075-948-2. No price quoted.

'Magisterial' is a word often associated with David Bosch's *Transforming mission*. It is entirely appropriate since this has become a source of understanding and inspiration to students of missiology for the past twenty years and looks set to maintain that positing into the foreseeable future, notwithstanding the fact that times and contexts have changes considerably since its first publication. All of this despite the notable omission from the original including a significant section on the Old Testament, the role of women and the rise of Charismatic, Pentecostal and African Initiated Churches. A testimony to its global value is indicated by the number of translations which have been made of the text.

In addition to the original text, there are a preface to the new edition by William Burrows, an 'In Memoriam' by Gerald Anderson and a conclusion to the new edition by Martin Reppenhagen and Darrell Guder.

Reppenhagen and Guder's conclusion offers much to reflect on in the period since first publication in 1991. Fortunately, they were able to take into account Kritzingner and Saayman's *David J Bosch: Prophetic integrity*,

cruciform praxis (2011) in evaluating Bosch's life and work in mission. They correctly emphasise Bosch's commitment to the necessity of a missional hermeneutic approach to scripture as the foundation for mission. We are reminded that it was in the process of mission in the early church that the church began to theologise at the integrated level of *theoria*, *poiesis* and *praxis*. The paradigm shift approach has endured through the 'shading' of one era into another and contributes to an understanding of the history of Christianity as the history of the mission of Christianity, of a community *in transit*. The role of the Christian community remains fundamental to the *mission Dei*. Though Bosch has been critiqued for not giving greater attention to the role of Africa as a major field of Christian growth this does, on the other hand, remove it from the domain of the regional/parochial and helps to contribute to its universal appeal. A one hundred and eighty degree shift has taken place in mission as a result of growing secularisation in the West and the stabilisation of, for example, the African diaspora in Europe. This has occasioned the introduction of the term 'Missional Church' to reflect the emergent and energising nature of recent developments where the subject of mission has become the object of mission while often wishing to remain the subject. In the present context the integration of mission and evangelism is vital. The concept of 'alternative community' can be problematic, particularly in diaspora communities if they remain inward looking and comfortable transportations from their original contexts. Sanneh (:551) reminds us that 'the gospel exist not to alienate but to invigorate and transform' through faithful discipleship. We are reminded of the integrative function *Transforming mission* has performed since its publication. This alone has provided a great service to theology as a corporate discipline in itself which relates to other disciplines. In this it performs a unifying function.

Though much has been written in the topic of mission since 1991, nothing has substantially gone beyond it. This is a timely re-presentation of Bosch's *magnum opus* and a stimulus to students who have not yet been introduced to Bosch's work. What is missing to a South African reader is a contribution from Bosch's closest friends and colleagues, Willem Saayman and Klippies Kritzinger, who along with his many distinguished former students were his prime academic interlocutors in the development of this text. They have made important contributions to our understanding of the person, work and scholarship of David Bosch.

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Busch E 2010. *The Barmen theses: Then and now*. Grand Rapids:Eerdmans. xii +101 pages. ISBN 978-0-8028-6617-2. Price: £10.99.

This book is a reflection on the *Barmen Declaration* which was a product of the German Confessing movement in the mid 1930s. It provided the fundamentals for theological discussion in contexts where collaboration had become a *modus operandi* for Christians under the threat of persecution in many contexts. Its origins constitute a response to the pressure from National Socialism to conform to its ideology manifested in devotion to a human person (other than Jesus of Nazareth) and a culture of a particular Aryan/Nordic race. As with many now historical confessions, this document originated in the context of dissent, in this case a small group from the German Evangelical Church This declaration was thoroughly founded upon scripture and has become a standard for contemporary confessions against modern and postmodern challenges to the faith. It was ecumenical in that it dealt with an issue that all Christians had and have to face and has been adopted by many churches all over the world. A contextual example is the South African Belhar Declaration written from within the Reforming Tradition yet, relevant for the entire nation. In this edition, the author examines each of the theses in the declaration in their original context and demonstrates their relevance to significant cultural and political challenges faced by Christianity today. In this sense it was and remains a missionary document, in particular in its relevance for the relationship between Christians and Jews as members of one covenant community.

An introductory chapter outlines the construction and importance of the declaration and its authorship under the hand primarily of Karl Barth as a witness to the sole priority of scripture. It discusses the definitions of ‘confession’ (an occasional text) and ‘to confess’ (continuous witnessing). Despite their positive intention, confessions automatically stand as rejections of certain principles. The introduction to the confession outlines the context in which it grew – a church under threat partly from within its own body – and the historical confessional milieu in which it originated, including a survey of the available literature on the Theses.

The author then proceeds to examine each thesis of the Declaration in detail under the headings: Jesus Christ as the one Word of God and the Jews as the elect people of God; the rigorous gospel and the gracious Law; one Lord in the fellowship of humanity; responsible church membership; the public worship of God in the political world; and the mission of the Church in the world of religion. These theses begin and end with Jesus as Lord of all life and also with the reminder that even Christians are in need of constant conversion. The place of ‘heathens’ both within and beyond the Christian fellowship demonstrates that truth is also to be found ‘outside the church’ in

Karl Barth's words: 'they are witnesses of the truth that is the foundation both of the political service of God as well as of the missional sending of the church' (:101).

The contemporary relevance of this book is first that this is an ecumenical document which brought together Lutheran, Reformed and United Christians; second, it offers a space for reflection on ecclesiology through theology, missiology and practical theology; and third, that it reminds us that we all stand under the lordship of Jesus Christ who governs the whole of life and calls us constantly to respond in repentance and obedience to life's challenges.

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Haustein J 2011. *Writing religious history: The historiography of Ethiopian Pentecostalism*. Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz Verlag. xvi +295 pages. ISBN 978-3-447-06528-3. Price €38.00.

This book appears at a time when there is an increasing interest being shown in the growth and development of the Pentecostal movement in Africa. It focuses on the Ethiopian context where Pentecostalism and charismatic Christianity have become prominent features of religious history in an area where traditional Ethiopian orthodoxy has remained aloof from the upsurge of both Islam and alternative forms of Christianity for many centuries. Apart from two early histories, this is the first recent substantial history of Ethiopian Pentecostalism written from a contemporary historical perspective.

What is distinctive about the author's methodology is its use of anthropological theory and terminology to communicate his 'Being There' approach which asserts authorship and authority ('author-ise') as it signifies his presence and his distinction from the others present and also provides a different form of representing past events. Here we have a form of participant observation which aspires to a certain kind of reflectivity through observation despite linguistic disability. This is employed alongside multifarious traditional historical methodologies including interviews, documents and personal impressions. This resulted in a move beyond traditional historiography whereby Pentecostal identities are constructed and maintained in the Ethiopian church scene, both past and present.

The first chapter explores the parameters of Ethiopian Pentecostalism which appeared only in the mid-twentieth century, first of all as an underground movement and from 1991 as an active expression of Ethiopian Protestantism which interacted with its denominational neighbours and as a separate entity within diverse political, legal, ideological and historical contexts which are examined in which Pentecostalism experienced both oppression and liberation. This is followed by a discussion of the history of

Pentecostalism and its sources. Prior to the Ethiopian revolution in 1974 there were no histories. Post revolution, the first histories were produced by expatriate missionaries; these were quickly followed by indigenous histories. They all reflect the oppressive situation under the empire and the relative freedom following the 1974 revolution and relate to the contemporary context. More recent histories indicate that the rise of a many voiced Pentecostalism needs to be situated within a broader narrative of Protestant growth as well as the transition from an imperial government to a pluralist democracy. The issue of linguistic representation as a basis for historical fact has received scrutiny from a number of perspectives eg. postcolonial studies and is integral to historiography as a source for material evidence and the manner in which it is represented are fundamental to historical discourse since the fact and its narrative give meaning to one another.

Chapter two discusses histories relate the growth and development of the Pentecostal movement to the earlier missionary endeavour. The missionary contribution may be summarised as a study of legacy and influence alongside the historical idea of missionary independence as emancipation from the missions. Chapter three looks at how these histories use revival movements to form a consolidated account of the origins of Pentecostalism. Chapter four analyses the narratives of the persecution of Pentecostals under the closing years of Haile Selassie's rule and how persecution and politics are represented. Interestingly, in all its engagements with the state authorities the author discerns three foundational narratives – a foundational critique of the system integrated into a persecution plot, a deep spiritual endurance based in the conviction that this is part of a divinely determined history and the call to negotiate a resolution within the established political dispensation. Chapter five examines the period following the revolution and attempts to relate the persecution of the charismatic movement to its overt expression. The conclusion focuses on historiographical questions.

This volume is a significant contribution to African historiography and an important addition to our knowledge of the Pentecostal scene. It unfortunate, however, that it does not live up to its early promise to focus on an approach based in 'being there'. This would have provided an innovative dimension that could enhance many such histories that are in process. Nonetheless, this does not detract from its value.

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