

Book Reviews

Divided by the word: Colonial encounters and the remaking of Zulu and Xhosa identities.

Arndt JS 2022.

Johannesburg: Wits University Press. xv+326 pages. ISBN 978-1-77614-802-8. No Price quoted.

Once again, the colonisers are to blame for it was they who designated the difference between the Zulu and Xhosa people ably aided by the missionaries, the religious soldiers of colonialism. It was they who classified South African people according to colour and language, and indigenous agents helped the missionaries translate scripture into local languages. In this way, they created differences between Zulu and Xhosa speakers, which became fixed in the twentieth century.

This book results from extensive research using archival sources that penetrate the historicity of both language and ethnic identity in South Africa. It also reconstructs how colonial powers shaped, reshaped, and imposed ethnic markers, which have endured devastating consequences for indigenous people. The critical issue is that it was not the indigenous people themselves who created and developed their identity, but aliens with totally different world views. This is seen in the terms we use to create written forms, e.g., ‘reducing’ the language to written form. This suggests a form of diminishing the language and circumscribing it. The same is true when using the term I use of ‘committing’ it to writing, which implies a degree of power over the language and the power to divide people. However, it was not as straightforward as that for the indigenous communities “negotiated, renegotiated, constructed and reworked their collective identities” (p.8) as a response to the developing political milieux as power bases in postcolonial and nationalist terms. The construction of these ideological identities was a project in which the missionaries participated enthusiastically by choosing the most ‘proper’ forms of expression. It becomes easy to see how, over time, these imposed identities were (ab)used by an Afrikaner nationalist government in order to pursue divisive, racist policies. This movement began with the innocent movement of indigenous people into southern Africa and their encounter with the long-resident Khoisan-speaking people.

These identities have had significant power in recent political events, with their power being a derivative of the blending of indigenous and foreign ideologies as

they provided an impetus for the violence experienced in the 1990s and into the period of the new South Africa.

This book is a worthwhile study of many language issues we take for granted, not least its political power. Students of South African history need to read this.

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This monastic moment: The war of the Spirit and the rule of love.

De Gruchy JW 2021.

Eugene, Or: Cascade. ISBN 978-6667-0234-7. xiii + 216 pages. No price quoted.

This book is John de Gruchy's contribution and response to the time made available to him as a result of the COVID-19 lockdown. It shows that he was not cowed into submission to the pandemic, but it inspired him to commit to writing some of his long-term thinking on the topic of Monasticism, which we have far too quickly relegated to the mists of time in early church and medieval history. Here, we have the result of creative thinking, lucid explanation, and powerful synthesis typical of de Gruchy's theologising, along with personal reflection when appropriate and the contribution of significant twentieth-century theologians. This provides us with a novel take on Monasticism under the innovative title: *This Monastic Moment: The War of the Spirit and the Rule of Love*.

The book is introduced with a Prologue, which contextualises the topic in his own and our South African situation, making it a study of contemporary Christianity in action in a world lacking spiritual awareness. This is not only a historical issue; it is and has always been a work in progress – it is mission. As with the other chapters, it begins with several relevant quotations. The first three chapters give a competent overview of the history of Monasticism, which reflects the history of Christianity and the history of mission. Chapter 1 firmly locates the birth and early development of monasticism in Africa with lasting benefits. Chapter 2 reveals the immense role played by Monasticism during the Medieval period as an integrating force promoting education, health services, social services, agriculture, industrial projects, and foremost, hospitality – these emphases were a prelude to nineteenth and twentieth-century mission approaches. Chapter 3 reveals the durability of Monasticism, even in a context where medieval Christianity was rejected and where the Reformers' work confirms their commitment to reform and not the destruction of the church by its replacement with new churches. Chapter 4 brings us into the con-

temporary period, focuses on the magisterial work of twentieth-century Reformed theologians Karl Barth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and offers guidance.

This clearly denies the long-held view that Monasticism was distinctive from Roman Catholic and Orthodox traditions. De Gruchy enables us to see it as a universal approach to spirituality in time and space. All of this is focussed on the ongoing value of Monasticism at this time based on the heritage of the past. This volume introduces us to and helps us develop a path to our personal spiritual growth grounded in communal solidarity based on significant historical developments. In some ways, it is a handbook for mission. Not for some time has an academic and a pastor with a historical sensitivity brought the past into the present with a view to the future so skilfully.

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Christ among the nations: Narratives of transformation in global mission.

Edwards SG, Gallagher RL, Lewis PW & Rance DL 2021.

Maryknoll: Orbis. Xxxv+219 pages. ISBN 978-1-6983-70-0. No price quoted.

This book is a contribution to the contemporary history of mission. It is related mainly in narrative form gathered from oral sources, people on and in the field of missionary endeavour in Charismatic and Pentecostal perspectives. It is based on a view of mission as “the effort to effect passage over the boundary between faith in Jesus Christ and its absence” (p.xv) through dialogue, witness, service, worship, liberation, and nurture. It considers cross-cultural and religious plurality issues in the context of human participation in mission. Its source in Pentecostalism is expressed by conformity with the theology of salvation, sanctification, healing, and Christ’s coming experienced through baptism in the Holy Spirit.

The book aims to express the transformative power of the gospel through a personal relationship with Jesus, who transforms individuals and communities, leading to reconciliation with God and one another. This is vital for Pentecostals who participate in this missionary exercise empowered by the Spirit. Then, they can move from doctrine to attitude, belief into practice and scripture into lived experience.

The book is structured on the four principle themes of the Full Gospel movement. The first part relates to Christ our Saviour and Redeemer; the second to Christ our empowerer (the one who sanctifies and redeems); the third, Christ our healer; and

finally, Christ out hope (the one who is coming soon). Each part has an introductory chapter to establish the key motifs, followed by chapters to consider the Christological themes by examining biblical, historical, and contemporary narratives, which allow readers to enter into the event and hear God's voice. This will enable the missionary Spirit of the Trinity to "impassion, educate and empower" (p. xxxv) and encourage readers to participate in mission in their own particular contexts.

Despite being written from the particular theological standpoint of Pentecostalism, this study offers an opportunity to reassess our own specific attitude towards mission as an opportunity to re-evaluate how we can enter into this activity in our own contexts, for this is our Christian calling. This is not a dreary theological text but an inspiring attempt to broaden and deepen the mission of God. The person in the pew will certainly value it, and I recommend it for study, perhaps in fellowship groups.

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Protest at midnight: Ministry to a nation torn apart.

Storey P 2022.

Eugene, Or: Cascade. xviii+262 pages. ISBN 978-7252-9356-4. No price stated.

If I were asked to propose a new title for this book, it would be *Protest at Morning, Noon and Midnight*, for that exemplifies the life and witness of Peter Storey, whose autobiography this is. Here, we have a racy, lucid and faithful rendering of the history of South Africa written from a Christian Methodist perspective. However, the book is much more than that. It is a primer for mission in the context of the struggle against apartheid, which was a struggle towards reconciliation, the ultimate goal of mission.

This is the story of a man who was almost broken by his commitment to challenge oppression and keep the candle of hope alive in those who suffered all the forms of dehumanisation which characterised apartheid. At many points, Storey recounts personal details in order to maintain the integrity of his narrative, including the death of his wife, Elizabeth (p. 258-260). Still, in dealing with others, he is relatively circumspect. He takes us through the many areas of his involvement with religious (read political) events during his lengthy ministry without promoting himself as a messianic character.

Storey's ecumenical credentials are impressive, but the final chapter sadly belies his support as, along with other churches, he was deeply involved in the formation of the Seth Mokitimi Methodist Seminary following the Methodists' withdrawal from

the Federal Theological Seminary, along with the Anglicans and the PCSA, which led to its closure in 1993, without any attempt to investigate the ecumenical possibilities in ministerial formation in a democratic South Africa. This task has now been revived and is ongoing.

One irritating feature is the constant use of USA values (e.g., dollars) due to the book being published in the USA. However, the overall story contributes to an authentic account of one person's perception of a substantial period of the apartheid era.

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African Conceptions of Human Dignity. African Consortium for Law, Religion and Society

Scarffs BG, Green MC & Ilesanmi SO (ed.) 2023.

(ACLARS). xxv+178 pages. ISBN 978-1-991260-24-6. Stellenbosch: SUN Press. No price indicated.

This book is a product of the African Consortium of Law and Religion Studies (ACLARS) conference held in Gaborone in 2019. The conference was held in the wake of celebrations of the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Punta del Este Declaration on Human Dignity for Everyone, Everywhere (2018). Central to the discussion was the African concept of ubuntu, harmonious relationships within a community in which individuals are nurtured as integral parts of their communities. This concept developed in rural nuclear communities and was a value which defined them. However, today, the concept is challenged by urbanisation, which has resulted in human beings becoming part of numerous communities, e.g., families, communities, workplaces, churches, societies, and associations. Even Mandela understood this. However, the concept retains its usefulness.

An example is the situation under South African apartheid, where human dignity was denied in many aspects of life, but the concept of hlonipha (respect) was promoted in communities such as the church. Today, lived ubuntu can enhance both our individual and communal lives as a testimony to the vitality of human life. The African Union Commission provides a valuable definition of dignity as the “soul of the African human rights system shared with other civilized human societies” (p.53). This definition emphasises respect for the dignity of humans and animals, and the integrity of all creation, underscoring the importance of environmental stewardship and care.

Thus, Africa was a fitting location for these discussions. Without becoming sentimental, it is probably true that respect and human dignity are more deeply ingrained in lived experiences in Africa compared to many Western societies, though instances of human rights abuses and dignity violations certainly exist. In a world characterised by transitions and conflicts, the concept of dignity serves as a crucial universal moral guideline. This book explores examples of dignity violations from countries such as Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Sudan, and Kenya, and offers perspectives on feminism, African Traditional Religion (ATR), and environmental issues.

One glaring omission in the discussion relates to the human rights and dignity of homosexual persons, who are barely mentioned, yet are amongst the most discriminated against in society and deprived of dignity.

ACLARS has opened a valuable avenue for study and reflection on a topic that, while closely related to human rights, has not been as prominently discussed. They deserve commendation for seizing this opportunity and addressing it in a context often dominated by cultural issues.

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