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Book Reviews

That joyful and humble prophetic activist: Moss Ntlha.

Ntlhola TA (ed.) 2024.

Amafu Self Publishing Home. xiv+230 pages. ISBN 978-0-639-79394-8. No price quoted.

I suppose our present generation can be forgiven for not knowing who Moss Ntlha is when many of our present youth do not even know the key dates in the apartheid struggle; such is the poor impact of our teaching of history on Generation Z, which succeeded Millennials and precedes Generation Alpha. This lamentable situation necessitates projects such as Trevor Ntlhola has completed and for which he must be commended. Ntlha is part of pour living history. He has undoubtedly touched many lives and made significant inroads in changing the course of history in the socio-political and spiritual discourse of South Africa as well as in the continent of Africa. His contribution as a cleric-activist continues to shape Ecumenical/Evangelical values across the globe earning him the name of 'the Evangelumenical' (: ii). His ministry and commitment have made him an icon of reconciliation at the interface of mission and evangelism and unity; he is a man who has deeply impacted South African church and society with a firm Christian commitment powerfully expressed in his ongoing ministry.

This testimony is comprised of forty-four contributions under a number of headings: family, friends, relationships; impacting history; special memento; wide ecumenism; spiritually birthed leadership and a postscript. Both historically and contemporaneously Ntlha represents the challenges of being faithful amid persecution and of standing up to the oppression of the Apartheid Empire as he sought to promote the flourishing of all people (: iii).

His natural relational intelligence is an example of how leadership in the Kingdom of Christ Jesus worked throughout the history of the prophetic witness of the Church during that oppressive era.

Following the coming of democracy, Ntlha became involved with The Evangelical Alliance of South Africa (TEASA). His faith, commitment, persistence, and peace-making efforts played a significant role in this development. In the following decades, he promoted a radical Evangelicalism that combines a commitment to Christ, truth, justice, and love. This meant that he could collaborate with Evangelicals and ecumenical Christians alike. In addition to TEASA, he was active in the South African Council of Churches (SACC), and befriended and worked with Evangelicals in many African countries internationally.

Trevor Ntlhola has provided us with a primary source of a man whose leadership guided the activities of the community giving witness to the way of the Holy Spirit and seeking peace and justice. It is commended for its inclusivity and makes a significant contribution to our apartheid and post-apartheid society.

Reviewer: Emeritus professor G.A. Duncan Dept. of Systematic and Historical Theology, Faculty of Theology and Religion, University of Pretoria Graham. duncan@up.ac.za

Redemptive service: Loving our neighbours well.

Stephenson LP & Wienk R 2024.

Grand Rapids: Baker Academic. vii +216 pages. ISBN 978-1-49343694-1. No price quoted.

In some ways there is nothing new about this book, but it stimulates fresh thinking about a *praxis* approach to Christian service and mission. But I wondered about the title and thought that sacrificial service might be more appropriate, but then redemptive and sacrificial service both resonate with outdated modes of expression. Then I thought that 'redemptive service' was a good title because it indicates change and transformation on the part of the giver as well as the recipient of service. It is mutual service (agape) rendered in God's name.

The authors are clear about their initial assumption – that service is an integral and essential part of our mission. It is Christian lifestyle, and it is biblical, therefore it is *praxis*. Faith based in action on reflection and reflection as an ongoing task of mission 'reflective engaging' (:2). Faith is integrated transformative mission.

Structured in two parts, the first considers biblical and theological teaching. Chapter 1 focuses on the unique 'redemptive' nature of service in relation to worldviews. Chapters 2 and 3 consider the Old Testament context with the election of Israel as the people of God under God's law and the prophetic response to their disobedience. Chapters 4 and 5 look at the context of the New Covenant related to the life and work of Jesus of Nazareth in kingdom perspective and the Spirit initiated beginnings of Christianity as a global faith.

Part Two explores the missional aspect of the theological/biblical material. Chapter 6 considers the issue in the context of poverty adopting a broader than purely economic approach. Short term approaches are the subject of chapter 7 and short and long development is the theme of chapter 8. Advocacy to support people to achieve their potential is the topic of chapter 9 and chapter 10 realises the centrality of the Christian community in this process.

Central to all of this is the necessity of calling or vocation which defines our mission and vision as it is defined as general, missional, and direct. This expands our traditional understandings of the nature of the call and is related to the aims of development and advocacy. The call is clarified as for mall despite our acknowledgment of forms of calling.

In some ways there is nothing new in this book. However, it offers a fresh and stimulating re-evaluation of our missionary calling to live a more Christlike life and, in spite of the overwhelming odds against progress, we can 'lean into' (:8) the struggle against injustice and poverty in support of those who daily have to endure these indignities as we all journey towards the realisation of the kingdom of God in redemptive service.

Reviewer: Emeritus professor G.A. Duncan Dept. of Systematic and Historical Theology, Faculty of Theology and Religion, University of Pretoria Graham. duncan@up.ac.za

Theology and Catholic Higher Education: Beyond Our Identity Crisis.

Faggioli M 2024.

Maryknoll, NY: Orbis. x + 181 pages. ISBN 9798888660393. No price quoted.

This book comes from the *doyen* of Roman Catholic Church History and Ecclesiology who has international experience in modern RC history and whose work is critical for the ongoing mission of the church. Here he analyses the state of theological education since the Second Vatican Council and suggests future trajectories. The context is a particular moment in the history of higher education where the author produces the fruit of many reflections based on his experience over a period of fifteen years. This is a complex study based on a global church with many issues which complicate progress. These are represented by – the mutual alienation of theology and the church; the sex abuse scandal; the context of responses to Vatican in terms of resistance and reform; the influential role of emergent technology where neo-traditionalist Catholics seem to have gained the upper hand and where academia has been rendered irrelevant as more academics withdraw from institutional church plus the de-theologization of clerical leadership; new right wing institutions funded by private donors; the sidelining of academics along with the Catholic intellectual tradition; young learners who seem to have lost their radical vigour by bypassing Catholic institutions for education, the Francis *praxis* factor and the context of the centrality of the "Synodal Process".

The first chapter considers the frame of the identity crisis of Catholic higher education in the context of the massive changes in the ecclesial and theological conversations since the time of Vatican II. The second chapter analyses the interruption and major source of disconnect between the university and the church in the theological reception of Vatican II. The third chapter focuses on the shifting position and marginalisation of theology within Catholic higher education. The fourth chapter looks at some consequences of these developments in the formation of Catholics (not only of those in ministry) for a synodal church. The fifth chapter looks at the role and responsibility of Catholic theology in the wider society, the academy, and the church. In the concluding section Faggiolo advances some proposals for addressing the current identity crisis.

This focuses on three factors: the relationship between academic theology and the church; a new coherent vision around Vatican II; and a new engagement with the tradition. (:147ff). Faggioli seeks to address the question: How can theology be academically rigorous, critical, scientific, and at the same time committedly ecclesial?

Written primarily from within the US context, this reflection has a much broader relevance for the entire RC Church. The author raises the issue of women's ordination at two points but strangely avoids the equally pressing issue of clerical celibacy. However, here we have a study of the future of theological education in its entirety (for Protestant theological education also faces many pressing issues). This study is a welcome contribution to an extremely important debate among academic theologians, faculty members, or administrators who now feel they are being brought to reckoning at this moment in the history of higher education.

Reviewer: Emeritus professor G.A. Duncan Dept. of Systematic and Historical Theology, Faculty of Theology and Religion, University of Pretoria Graham. duncan@up.ac.za

Mission, race and colonialism in Malawi: Alexander Hetherwick of Blantyre.

Ross KR 2025.

Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. ix+202 pages. ISBN 978-1-3995-1742-3. No price quoted.

It is interesting to note that Alexander Hetherwick's ministry in Malawi coincided with both the 'high imperial' and the 'high missionary' eras (1880-1920). From the beginning, we note not only the conflict between ideas of mission, race and colonialism but also their interpenetration. This was a period of unrestricted global growth emanating from Europe and manifested most clearly in the Berlin

Congress of 1884-5 where European powers vied to advance their claims on African territory during the "Scramble for Africa" without the involvement or assent of Africans themselves. This conference, aimed not only to regulate European colonisation and trade in Africa but also to provide a basis for other forms of domination. It is into this controversial and paradoxical period that Ross has ventured by writing a new biography of the missionary Alexander Hetherwick who served at Blantyre Mission, Malawi from 1883-1928.

The Introduction notes that Hetherwick came from the second generation of missionaries who were more conscious of the differences between ethnic groups and less assured of their equality than their predecessors. Ross (p.3), rather sees Hetherwick as liminal character spanning two missionary eras. But more than that, he was an influential person in the development of the Blantyre Synod of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) though he has hitherto been viewed in the shadow of his predecessor and colleague, David Clement Scott.

Chapter 2 examines Hetherwick's early days in mission at Domasi where he began his 'education' in missionary outreach. He became aware of the two great challenges to mission from Islam and the slave trade. He encountered vast differences in cultural outlook and expression and never overcame them entirely as he tried to engage in meaningful *praxis* in a context where he was not the determining factor and where indigenous peoples were participants in mission.

Chapter 3 considers Hetherwick's relationship with the inspirational Clement Scott whose 'imaginative sympathy' (p.26) he lacked; by comparison he was paternalistic, though both men challenged the British administration. Yet, he collaborated with civic society on certain occasions. Issues in the conduct of liturgy led both men into conflict with the Church of Scotland regarding what constituted Presbyterian worship.

Chapter 4 deals with Hetherwick's leadership of the mission and the challenges he faced with an emergent African leadership and his tendency to favour European leadership despite African desire for mentorship. Contrary to the policy of diversification of resources he favoured centralisation including the concept of the 'total institution' approach to mission with evangelical, educational, medical, agricultural, community and industrial projects. With regard to church growth, he aimed at the national context despite the growth of Roman Catholicism.

Chapter 5 focuses on Hetherwick as a public figure and campaigner. He was involved in the formation of the Protectorate and expressed himself on many issues, especially in writing, when its shortcomings were evident. He even accepted an invitation to join the government at a time when what became the Chilembwe uprising was in the air. He perceived his role in making a contribution on behalf of black people as an insider.

The visionary missionary in Hetherwick is the subject of chapter 6. The longer he served in Malawi, the greater was the accumulation of his knowledge and experience of the African people of Nyasaland, a very different context from that

of South Africa. For example, he challenged migrant labour on the basis of the damage that would be done to the people and communities if labourers were sought to man South African mines. He was a churchman and missionary who sought the social economic, political and spiritual development of the people.

Chapter 7 considers Hetherwick as a linguist and translator. His approach was dynamic equivalence rather than literal translation despite his paternalism and collaboration with the colonial administration.

Hetherwick's pioneering holistic mission policy emerges in chapter 8 from his conservative theology and spirituality. He was challenged by the results of higher criticism and yearned for a return to the personal faith of his Scottish childhood. Yet, he adopted a progressive dynamic approach to mission and followed the three-self principle in beginning to integrate Christianity and culture through inculturation (p.133).

As a church leader (chapter 9) Hetherwick tried to be realistic in a deteriorating racial situation. He had a positive view of the role of women and was in the forefront of the development of the CCAP. His involvement in the General Missionary Conferences led him to consider ecumenical possibilities through mission. His thinking was progressive on the relationship of missionaries as ministers in their churches of service and African developments in worship

The concluding section of the final chapter, 'A Person of his Time' (p.180) raised an issue which many have wrestled with in the sense of the justification of missionary outreach according to the historical context of the person. This appellation can be seen as a get out clause to justify negative aspects of the missionary's life, work and witness. In this regard it would have been helpful to see an analysis of Hetherwick's biblical and theological understanding of mission in order to understand what motivated him. For instance, how did he understand scripture and the *praxis* of mission in terms of the values of justice, freedom and solidarity (peace, *shalom*) as standards of the kingdom of God in which all are reconciled to Godself? This could provide an agenda for further research.

Despite this critique, Ross adds substantially to our knowledge and understanding of the interface between mission, race and colonialism and the ecumenical and transnational influences in the ministry of Alexander Hetherwick in Malawi, and is to be congratulated for doing so. This book, as Ross himself suggested will add substantially to the historiography of Malawi (p.4) and other African nations.

Reviewer: Emeritus professor G.A. Duncan Dept. of Systematic and Historical Theology, Faculty of Theology and Religion, University of Pretoria Graham. duncan@up.ac.za

The golden band: African American spiritualities and the hermeneutics of world.

Todd AU 2025.

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. xviii+205 pages. ISBN 978-0-8028-8514-2. Price $39.99.

Asante Todd's *The golden band* takes us into a new world of understanding African American spiritual music. This is a topic which we often assume is simply historic choruses arising out of the Atlantic slave trade and the *antebellum* period which are now meant for entertainment purposes. But far beyond this simplistic understanding is a deep and dark world of 'man's inhumanity to man'(sic) which remains contemporaneously relevant. Here Todd investigates the Spirituals from the viewpoint of American public theology, the cultural logic of sovereignty and how they are related to culture and politics using metaphors of freedom, family and ancestors. The approach he adopts is hermeneutical, historical and theomusical revealing a clear interdisciplinary relationship. Music served an integrating purpose producing a holistic prophetic solidarity among the oppressed through song and dance.

The main focus of the study is to develop a constructive African American public theology grounded in a cultural logic of sovereignty and the logic of our spiritual yearnings in a context of alienation and non identity in a USA context which has never had to submit to a human sovereign.

Part 1 has three chapters. Chapter 1 explains the methodology of the study and chapter 2 explains the problem, while chapter 3 and defines naturalism which challenges the possibility a public theology. Chapters 4 and 5 constitute Part 2 which discusses analyses historical figures in the state of nature doctrine and in African American theology. Part three is devoted to Todd's contribution where, in chapters 6-9, he analyses the Spirituals. Chapter 6 considers Spirituals as a source for a hermeneutics of world. Chapter 7 focuses on the compositional features such as 'call and response'. Chapter 8 discusses the role of the Trinity in Spirituals. Analyses geographical features related to the religious thought that underpins the Spirituals. The outcome in chapter 9 is the conviction that God is Pilot, Rock and Provider in w world where what we call sacred and secular are integrated.

Beyond the deep philosophical, theological and musicological research that has gone into this book, there remains the reality of the inspiration that enabled nineteenth slaves to sing, dance and make music as faith acts despite their horrendous circumstances. They were visionary and continue to inspire oppressed communities today. This *Golden Band* testifies to a dynamic living God and to their membership in the communion of saints and to a future which is in God's hands. They are a remembrance of the slaves who crafted the Spirituals;

they signify a social and moral community that still today offers a sterling example for a *praxis* approach to faith; and they offer a guide in matters of justice, even beyond the Christian faith. This book could inspire a revival of the use of Spirituals in the context of increasing global injustice.

Reviewer: Emeritus professor G.A. Duncan Dept. of Systematic and Historical Theology, Faculty of Theology and Religion, University of Pretoria Graham. duncan@up.ac.za

Black Britain and Nelson Mandela: 'Pulling the Branch of a Tree'.

Williams EM (ed.) 2025.

London: Bloomsbury Academic. xxviii+ 252 pages. ISBN 978-1-3505-4077-0. No price quoted.

Here we have a fascinating contribution to studies on Nelson Mandela written from a British perspective. It generally follows a positive approach to Mandela's leadership but does not fail to adopt a critical perspective at times.

The book begins with an analysis of the question is there still more to be said about Mandela? The response is in the affirmative. It then proceeds to engage with issues relating to Mandela such as culture and spirituality, leadership, ambiguous relationship to British law, legacy and contribution to contemporary life. What emerges is a person who while respectful of certain aspects of colonial legacy, such as the British legal system, he remained grounded in his own traditional culture espousing values such as peace, harmony, solidarity through consensus. He truly inculturated Christianity and this alone has given rise to suspicion regarding his faith position, yet he remained open to and respectful of other faith positions. It is even interesting to note his contribution to reggae music and philosophy.

An analysis of the legal context of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is offered including the complex and controversial matter of reparations. The process, while flawed is certain respects, facilitated the peaceful post-1994 transition towards national unity and justice. This was the result of his moral authority derived from his tendency towards achieving consensus. However, he was not absolved from criticism being accused of favouring the desires of the white population at the expense of blacks as the cost. This is especially true with regard to the issue of securing economic justice and reconciliation for all. This lay at the heart of Mandela's mission and vision.

With regard to his legacy, Mandela is often compared with Mugabe in Zimbabwe in a hero-tyrant contrast. The truth is not so simplistic as is demonstrated. Differences in their approaches to political dynamics, economics and colonial justice, Cold War geo-politics and the nature of negotiation processes are analysed. Within the South African context it is no easy matter to rationalise Mandela's involvement with the Rhodes Trust relative to the Rhodes Must Fall movement, other than to justify it by his absolute commitment to the inherent right of education for all and his ability to forgive.

This book adds to our knowledge and understanding of Mandela as a person, leader, lawyer and statesman. He was an African through and through and never departed from his cultural heritage even though he became an international figure of dignity and respect. He did not only contribute to the ending of legislated apartheid in South African but willingly engaged in conflicts in other African nations as a committed peacemaker.

With all this said, the absence of comment on and from the British churches is notable. For instance, the impact of Mandela and others, like Tutu and Boesak, on the Scottish churches, the Church of Scotland, the Roman Catholic Church and the Scottish Episcopal Church in particular is significant. This could provide a basis for further research.

This is a book worthy of wide dissemination and provides a foundation of ongoing discussion of Mandela's legacy.

Reviewer: Emeritus professor G.A. Duncan Dept. of Systematic and Historical Theology, Faculty of Theology and Religion, University of Pretoria Graham.duncan@up.ac.za

Faces and phases of resilience: Memoir of a special kind.

Maluleke TS 2025.

Bryanston: Tracey Macdonald. xxxi+339 pages. ISBN 978-1-0672288-7-3. ZAR 390.00

In his Foreword, Ruel Khoza rightly describes this book as 'an ode to resilience' (p xiii). It is one of the most significant qualities possessed by southern Africans: that ability to keep on going despite and in the face of tremendous obstacles. I call it stickability - fortitude. It is not that only black people have it, because the Afrikaners demonstrated it during their Great Trek, but that they have it in abundance. But it arises out of certain contexts where survival itself is a challenge. This is the essence of Maluleke's work Although Maluleke is a missiologist by

training, here he introduces insights from history, ethnography, cultural studies, linguistics, musicology, spirituality, poetry, genealogy and psychology combined with life and academic experience honed through perceptive observation and inquiry.

All of those profiled here are distinguished by their activism; they are not bystanders who allowed life to happen to them, they took responsibility and used their minds for developing their futures and, consequently, those of others. They are liberated people who have followed Biko's teaching that progress is impossible in those whose minds are constricted and dominated by self-hatred and denial of their own humanity: 'Our greatest challenge lies in the extent to which our minds remain as unfree as our bodies' (p163). These resilient community icons 'stand in continuity with ancient African traditions of thought leadership – traditions that go back to the pharaohs of Egypt, to Queen Nzinga of Angola-Congo and Kimpa Vita' (p.204). Maluleke's attention to detail, family and historical events is remarkable. He is a creative critic of government politics, lack of policies and their implementation which have not progressed the nation much beyond the apartheid state.

Integral to this is Maluleke's critique of the domination of English, the language of Empire. He emphasises the essence of leadership as defined by Michelle Obama which: 'often happens with the smallest acts, in the most unexpected places, by the most unlikely individuals' (p.93).

Maluleke penetrates beyond the biographical facts to the essence or spirit or soul of those selected here. Indirectly, this work contains an incisive critique of mediocrity and lack of commitment and asks us to answer to answer as to are we were when Gender Based Violence (GBV) is occurring. It would have been interesting to have some reflection on the LGBTQ+ issue. He makes a direct challenge to South Africans:

South Africans will one day have to learn to answer as to where they were when corruption and gender-based violence became embedded into every level of society. We may soon have to answer why we stood aside and watched the lack of infrastructure maintenance, vandalism, loadshedding and sabotage became national sports. We will have to explain why our children cannot read for understanding, how our hospitals are becoming hospices, why our roads are rotting away and our train stations are overgrown ruins. But maybe we won't have to answer to any of these questions as these conditions will have become normalised, and we will duly have adapted and acclimatised to our abnormal situation. God forbid! (p177).

Maluleke's own life, though not the direct subject of this work, is an excellent example of resilience; beyond Valdezia and Meadowlands to his life changing time at the anti-apartheid Federal Theological Seminary of Southern Africa, through further studies, ordination, church struggles, overseas study, various university appointments and leadership roles.

Despite its eminent readability, this is a collection of rigorous seriously researched, analytical and perceptive studies which contribute a great deal to our understanding of societal development through the value of positive attitudes. While it is prophetic it does not end on a high note; yet, it does emphasise that our only hope is in the endurance of the human spirit sourced in resilience.

Reviewer: Emeritus professor G.A. Duncan Dept. of Systematic and Historical Theology, Faculty of Theology and Religion, University of Pretoria Graham. duncan@up.ac.za

Everyday Christian teaching: A guide to practicing faith in the classroom.

Smith DI 2025.

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. vi+221 pages. ISBN 978-8028-8300-1. No price quoted.

This book seeks to place the entire educational process under the care of Christianity where faith and character formation, a well beloved concern of mission education, are predominant. This is its mission (p.5). So it about a renewed way of thinking about teaching and learning as a holistic process for both learners and the learned. In this practical (and theoretical) manual the key is reflective practice in a context of a relationship between faith and teaching of 'being in the world' (Manganyi 1973). The book consists of a series of narratives of teaching 'moments' with reflective exercises to encourage making connections between faith and the learning process as integral to a social process.

The book is designed around what the author calls 'pilgrim practices'. Following an invitation these include beginning, connecting, framing, assigning, pausing, repeating and ending. Despite being written from a Christian faith perspective, the development of ethical values is emphasised. Hence, Christianity is an adopted life position relating to the manner in which both learners and teachers engage in an appropriate community, for example, with justice, charity and humility – and sometimes with silence. Stuck in well tested repetitive routines while instinctive ideas are flooding into minds. It provides opportunities for teachers to get to know their learners and discover their gifts of knowledge and experience and put them to constructive use. In this way education can become transformative as can Christianity. Together they have the potential to become truly life giving, life sustaining and life transforming.

This is a to book, not a philosophy of education manual. It is to be studied in historical and contemporary context, reflected upon, acted upon leading to further reflection and action. The approach adopted in this book is very similar to Groome's (1980, 1991) shared Christian praxis, though Groome limited himself

to Christian religious education. The intention here is to develop and nurture a spirituality of and for life that integrates all learning which is hospitable within our own communities and relevant to South Africa. It is written out of years of study and experience and is, therefore, highly recommended for those in any branch of the teaching profession.

Reviewer: Emeritus professor G.A. Duncan Dept. of Systematic and Historical Theology, Faculty of Theology and Religion, University of Pretoria Graham. duncan@up.ac.za

The Missionary Movement from the West: A Biography from Birth to Old Age, Andrew Walls.

Walls AF (Stanley B ed.) 2023.

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. xx+266 pages. 978-0-8028-4897-0. Price $32.99.

Here we have long-awaited culmination of scholarship by a pioneer of missiology and the history of global Christianity which is complex and fraught with tensions. Though modern missions began with European colonialism, the outcome was a largely non-Western global Christianity. Highly esteemed scholar Andrew Walls explores every facet of the movement, including its history, theory, and future in terms of the life cycle and aging process.

Part 1 on the Birth and Early Years examines the origins of Christian missions and the birth of the Western Missionary Movement in terms of radical Christianity incorporating the concept of monasticism, Christendom and the Great European mission, Puritan and Pietist origins, Jonathan Edwards and native America and Early Protestant foreign missions under the theme of the History and Geography of Christian obedience. It culminates in a consideration of humanitarian approaches to missions.

Part 2 focuses on the middle age of missions under the themes of 'Made of one blood' on race, culture and society in Western mission thinking, Reading the Bible in considering theology and interpretation of prophecy in C19 Protestant missions, How Protestant missionaries arrived in China and how each influenced the other.

Part 3 considers the impact of midlife crises in Western missions, particularly the Protestants, the World Missionary Conference in 1910 and the First World War with a section on the International Missionary Conference at Tambaram (1938) headed 'Before the volcano erupted'. In all this process, colonialism and missionary work wereessentially incompatible. Missionaries must live on another

culture's terms, and their goal—the establishment of churches of every nation—depends on accepting new, indigenous Christians as equals.

Part 4 on Old age takes account of the Second World War and the subsequent Western missionary movement, the Hebrew Bible legacy of Daniel 7 as a challenge to global powers, missions and the ongoing China experiment. It concludes with a consideration of the theological challenge of global Christianity.

This is for me the most significant part of the book for its focus on the indigenous Christian scholarly community. Walls made it clear that with the exponential growth of global mission, western theology and practice have become too small for Africa and Asia. He reminds how the ecumenical creeds, formulated during the Early Church period, were creations of 'indigenous' Christians and that heresy was an integral part of the process towards truth. The discussion of the relationship between gospel and cultural dynamics has made considerable advance in the idea of the non-partial activity of God. But important from a historical contemporaneous perspective that Christianity is a non Western faith, is that it also had earlier genesis as western mission was predated by African missions, Celtic and Roman missions, Near Eastern missions, all of which were the result of migration and 'All of a sudden the future was here' indication that with regard to missions, we have to look backwards as well as forward in order to achieve authentic understanding. Walls did not fear to tread where angels would rather avoid, into a matter which is dismissed in the West but which is vital for Africa and Asia – the theology of principalities and powers, especially in relation to the Hebrew Bible where we find ancestors and witchcraft playing a significant role. Herte there is an opportunity to develop links with African theologies to help achieve renewed understanding through the liberation of theology.

Since 2021, with the death of Prof Andrew Walls, and earlier in 2008 with the death of Prof Ogbu Kalu, the field of the history of mission Christianity has been left with no other global leader than Prof Brian Stanley, the editor of this work. He is to be commended for his ongoing contribution to the field which is hopefully in the process of producing more international global scholars.

Reviewer: Emeritus professor G.A. Duncan Dept. of Systematic and Historical Theology, Faculty of Theology and Religion, University of Pretoria Graham. duncan@up.ac.za