

Book reviews

Boesak AA 2013. Dare we speak of hope?: Searching for a language of life in faith and politics. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. xiv +202 pages. ISBN 978-0-8028-7081-0. Price \$18.00.

Here is another of Boesak's significant contributions to the development of a much needed political spirituality in South Africa (see his *The Tenderness of Conscience* [2005]). It is unashamedly political in the best sense of the word as it seeks to impact on the polis or community. It does not hesitate to use God's name or character in the same sentence as those of political leaders. Boesak even takes courage and names the devils in South African and other societies as part of his quest for greater meaning in life and in his search for a closer relationship with God through God's people. Although this book is concerned with justice, Boesak hardly uses the word. His prime focus is on hope linked to faith, though it is about fulfilling righteousness by righting wrongs with a particular focus on contemporary South Africa and Obama's USA.

Following on an introduction in which hope is expressed as a condition of history, grounded in suffering and the source of vision, chapter one related hope and suffering. Augustine's metaphor of hope's two daughters, anger and courage, is discussed in chapter two. This is linked to chapter three where hope arises in situations of despair with reference to the South African situation. Chapter four takes a broader perspective in its examination of issues of war and peace, violence and nonviolence, just war and the approach of Jesus of Nazareth. There is a return to the matter of hope in chapter five where hope is integrated with faith and questions arise regarding the growth of tension in the realm of faith, prophetic truthfulness and political realities and the value of such tensions both creatively and negatively. Chapter six transports us to the realm of creativity, imagination and dreaming grounded in the Old Testament story of Joseph's dreams in a political context. The book concludes with a meditation on hope.

Throughout, Boesak is anxious to investigate how we express and articulate our spiritual life in faith and politics in a context where many are frustrated and disappointed after twenty years of democracy which began with such high hopes which have been progressively eroded. In such a situation it is easy for individuals and groups to lose hope as a result of a feeling of powerlessness. Boesak helps us to realise that it is for the sake of the common good, both now and in the future that we need to regain and maintain a spirit of hope. Our lives here and now do not serve the pious hope of pie in the sky when you die, but are meant for fulfilment in the here and now (John 10:10). We cannot experience life in its fullness when people and

societies are marginalised and diminished. In the South African context this is why it is vital to exercise the hard fought for and sacrificed for right to vote, however we exercises that right. This book is a timely reminder that human beings are not simply at the mercy of massive institutional forces but can continue in the way of the Old Testament prophets to speak truth to power in a time honoured tradition. Here we have an inspirational source of praxis.

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

Adogame A, McLean J, & Jeremiah A (ed.) 2014. *Engaging the World: Christian communities in contemporary global societies.* vi+235 pages. ISBN 978-1-908355-21-8. No price quoted.

Commission VII of the Edinburgh 2010 study process had as its theme Christian Communities in Contemporary Contexts. This was obviously a multidimensional perspective based on studies of poverty, suffering and marginalised communities; globalisation and the reproduction of hierarchies; Christianity and socio political action; identity, gender and power; the interface between migration, diaspora and ethnicity; and HIV/AIDS, church and mission.

Part one consists of papers on Church and society. One of the things that becomes clear is that there is no such thing as an insular community; we all exist in complex and diverse societies and this is reflected in the papers collected and presented here. The failure of the church to alleviate and eradicate poverty is highlighted. This failure is, at least in part, due to her inability/unwillingness to engage with the very issues that contribute to the maintenance of global poverty, that is success, wealth, empowerment, disempowerment and exploitation. Here is a situation where the church as agent of the kingdom can promote healing and reconciliation through eliminating religious boundaries.

Christianity and socio-political action is the theme of part two investigates how far local churches operate with a reconciliatory paradigm. The third part on Christianity and culture challenges the church to express its identity clearly in terms of power dynamics related to resources in all its manifestations. Yet, identity is also a differentiating factor. Mission, migration, diaspora and ethnicity constitute the body of part four and focuses on reverse mission dynamics. This section reveals both the dynamism and variety of mission strategies employed. Here there is centrifugal, centripetal, innovative, labour feminism, justice and advocacy , omni directional dimensions of mission.

The final part offers church responses. Among these are the reminders that memory is important and that alienation is a common factor, alienation from land, cultures, worldviews and from themselves. Therefore, an understanding of mission contexts is vital in contemporary outreach. From the birth of Jesus and the inception of the church it has been a migrating faith and

diverse theologies have emerged from these contexts. In the original contexts the poor were marginalised as at the earliest celebrations of the Lord's Supper, despite being on the majority of the faithful. Then we have to contend with issues of race, class and poverty and how this is dealt with in diaspora communities. Certainly, the common theme needs to be collaboration arising out of our conversion and conviction. It is no less true today and so a theology of empowerment is necessary and this must also be a holistic theology to engage with the crises of the twenty first century. Given the diverse contexts there is a great need for an integrated though not uniform approach to mission. It has been noted that, strangely, the issue of growing unemployment was missing from consideration. This is a serious omission given the context of global poverty. Dunmow in her report on the Urban Mission Development Project in the UK, that in this process it is important not to simply replicate the structures of secular society, particularly with regard to leadership. Much mission thinking has been focussed on adopting business and commercial strategies to Christian leadership. While they may have much to offer that is helpful, it is vital that we do not become captive to such models.

This book provides substantial material that will become an agenda for twenty first century mission. It clarifies the current situation and will, as history progresses, become a useful resource on the status of our missionary outreach globally at this time.

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

Jesudason P, Rajkumar R, Dayam JP & Asheervadham IP (ed.) 2014. *Mission at and from the margins: Patterns, protagonists and perspectives.* Oxford: Regnum. xviii+277 pages. ISBN 978-908355-13-3. No price quoted.

This book touches on one of the most sensitive and delicate issues faced by Christians in India and further afield – a problem which has deep and historically penetrating negative impact on Christian mission – the case of the Dalits (formerly and erroneously known as ‘untouchables’). Here Christianity is at the mercy of cultural history in the sense that it normally operates from a position of power within a receptive culture and objectifies the indigenous people whose identity is considered defective. Study of the mission to the Dalit communities offers new perspectives on the forces that cause marginalisation for here is a community whose right to exist and to be treated as human beings is challenged. The collection of papers gathered here is the expression of experiences of otherness or nothingness where mission has as its purpose the solidarity which establishes dignity and basic

human rights. This raises questions regarding the nature of mission as God's purpose for creation through the building of just systems.

This can, of course, be linked to the mission of the Old Testament as well as that eminently represented by Jesus' ministry to the marginalised of his own time in the process of achieving life in its fullness or the transformation of all things through the pursuit of justice and love. This can only be done by challenging the powers that impose evil on human beings. This is Christ's mission, uncomfortable though it may be. The relationship between mission and power was a strong force in the Edinburgh 2010 missionary conference and constituted one of the nine themes that underpinned the study process, particularly in the context of the Dalit churches in the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh where experience has provided a valid basis for mission by creating the conditions necessary for empowerment of peoples through an understanding of mission as hospitality. But it goes beyond this as mission must also involve itself in helping to remove impediments to realising this noble aspiration and this brings us within the realm of the political. This approach also came under the conference transversal theme of 'subaltern voices'.

Worthy of note is that the growth and empowerment of the Dalit movement has in large part been facilitated by Christian missions and missionaries have also been empowered through their reflection on their practice of mission. Together, this has led to a reclamation of identity self-worth and rights. This has enabled Dalits to extend their self value into their wider communities.

The papers gathered here reflect a predominantly ethnographical study. The first part of the book focuses on developing an understanding of mission from the perspective of marginalisation. The second part The patterns of Mission present historical perspectives while part three The protagonists of Mission tries to understand the Dalits as agents of mission in their own right. Biblical Perspectives on Mission in part four looks at feminist aspects along with wisdom and Lukan narratives. The final part adopts a multi-focal perspective on imagining mission through the eyes of ecology, sociology, globalisation and communalism; in all of these Dalit perspectives have a great deal to offer.

In sum, if Dalit mission is to be carried out in the light of Jesus' mission, then it will also have to be a mission of the cross for it was through the subsequent resurrection that the eventual transformation of humanity was enabled. It is a journey from repentance, through discipleship to hope. This book has made a great contribution not only to our understanding of the predicament of the Dalit but also to our understanding of the mission Dei.

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

Ma W, Kärkäinen V-M, Asamoah-Gyadu K (eds.) *Pentecostal mission and global Christianity*. Oxford: Regnum. xi+ 397 pages. ISBN 978-1-908355-43-0. No price quoted.

It is only right that the subject of Pentecostal mission should be the focus of a separate volume in the Edinburgh Centenary Series as with other major traditions in global Christianity due to its widespread rapid growth and impact. The editors have included a range of theological, historical, practical and strategic spirituality studies on what they consider to be the most important themes in historical and contemporary perspective. The focus of the papers include provide a combination of analytical studies and taking note of specific developments within this dynamic movement. This makes drawing neat and tidy conclusions high impossible. Nonetheless, here is an innovative faith expression which is becoming in all its diversity somewhat determinative of the future of Christianity. Due to the recent emergence of a Pentecostal theology, its identity has been largely interpreted in terms of its spirituality.

The early chapters of the book concentrate on pneumatological issues including healing, reconciliation, principalities and powers. While many of The source of dynamic growth through church planting is ascribed to the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit by J Ma in chapter 6 and this is evidenced in the Yoido Full gospel Church in chapter 7. W Ma convincingly describes the blessings which emerge from the poured out blessings of the Spirit in chapter eight.

‘Pentecost in world Christianity’ is predominantly a third world expression which emerged concurrently with the world mission legacy of Edinburgh 1910. Although there had been earlier Pentecostal revivals in the nineteenth century, this is most definitely a twentieth century phenomenon which has challenged the emergent ‘left wing’ mission agenda of the WCC. It has also begun to engage with social justice issues and has become more open to ecumenical discourse.

One of the positive contributions we note is the emphasis on the power of the Holy Spirit as a source of Christian mission. This has become possible as the result of the mainstreaming of the emerging ‘tradition’ (which is itself dynamic) of Pentecostalism. Here I disagree with the editors. While Pentecostalism may be a syncretistic phenomenon, it is no different from other more ‘historical’ traditions. The editors do well by not romanticising Pentecostalism in the themes chosen. They deal honestly and responsibility with matters such as its negative attitude towards other faiths, the misuse of resources and the materialism of the prosperity gospel. It has to be acknowledged that Pentecostal theology is still in its early days. It comes from a direct reflection on grassroots experience and is therefore praxis based activism. The negative side of this is to be seen in the perversion of the

prosperity gospel . There are still deficits in some of pentecostalism's teachings, missionary methods and the materialistic lifestyles of some of their leaders which detract from its ultimate value.

Perhaps one of the greatest indirect contributions Pentecostalism makes to contemporary world Christianity, is that it offers potentially a way of re-energising western Christianity. It certainly has done a great deal to enhance the global missionary outreach of the church universal.

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

Ouedraogo P 2014. Female education and mission. Oxford: Regnum. xiv+263. ISBN978-1-908355-11-9. No price quoted.

This book represents the fruit of new and innovative qualitative community-based action research on female education as life-long learning in Africa, with special reference to the context of Burkina Faso. Using a narrative and case study methodology in the absence of substantial primary and secondary evidence, the author rigorously pursued his research in such a way that one of the positive results is the government's adoption of accelerated learning Speed Schools in 2006 as a way of expediting the growth of female education. This model has a universal application. Ouedraogo's basic premise is that the development of female education is a vital component of the socio-economic growth of nations. He believes and has proven that a conglomeration of factors, historical, social, cultural/religious, economic and political have inhibited the development of female education (:121). In this process he examines critically the correlations between education and faith, religion and gender, culture and socio-economic aspects which affect women and girls in a holistic approach to education. This education takes place within a tripartite religious context of Christianity , Islam and African Traditional religion (the author betrays his personal ideological commitment here by referring to it as 'ancestral worship':5). Despite this broad approach the government is concerned to develop girls both cognitively and spiritually

Due to open relations with the government, the Christian church has entered a partnership to enhance education of females in a society which has a predisposition to favour males. The central subject of this book is the Assemblies of God church as an exemplar of progressive approaches to female education.

Following an introductory chapter, chapter two offers an overview of the Burkina Faso context , while chapter three relates this to the existing state of education in the country. Chapter four examines the work of the Ministry of Basic Education along with its policies and laws as well as the limited opportunity for private sector investment. Chapter five looks at the obstacles to female education and the strategies employed, particularly by evangelical

churches to obviate them. Government data is gathered in chapter six and is subjected to scrutiny in chapter seven. This part include narrative methodology and includes the spiritual impact of poor, or lack of, education. The penultimate chapter outlines the positive nature of partnerships at local, regional and national level. The final chapter analyses and works out the implications of the research for amelioration of the current situation.

The recommendations made by the author are not ground breaking but they are intensely practical. Churches need to make a greater investment in the development of female education particularly in the non formal sector. In this they need to be assisted by government financially. Conditionality should be rejected related to accepting foreign donations. The local people know best what their needs are and how to meet them. The health and wholeness of family life needs to be stressed. The author stressed tow further research needs. First, there needs to be greater ecumenically based research on education. Second, useful research can be done on the outcomes of female education in terms of careers, etc. Third, there are similar needs for development within the male context of education.

This book provides evidence of a great need in Africa and some means of fulfilling it. The author has performed a great service to education through his commitment, faith and energy. Hopefully, this book will gain a broad readership particularly within and throughout the African continent.

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

Yung H 2014. Mangoes or bananas: The quest for an authentic Asian Christian theology. Oxford: Regnum. xv+232. ISBN978-1-908355-47-8. No price Quoted.

From its outset, this book offers a stimulating and fresh approach to the topic of an authentic Asian theology that needs to be more clearly articulated among the emerging theologies of the twenty first century. The author writes out of the conviction that previous work has been only superficially contextual. For him, western theology has not addressed the real concerns within a context of the relevance of Christ to revolutionary social change, pervasive poverty, ethnic and economic minorities, culture as a positive and negative force, the multi-faith situation and church conflict. The aim is clearly stated: 'what sensitive Asian Christians are asking for today is a genuinely indigenous or contextual Christianity and theology that is firmly rooted in the Asian soil, and not one premised on the Western worldview, even if it has been given an Asian dress' (:3). His methodology is to analyse representative Asian models of theology of the past and present, assess their appropriateness as mission theologies and thereby define the parameters of a more adequate model. He rejects the nominal Christianity which has been the norm in many mission contexts and seeks to promote a consciousness and self defined Asian

Christianity. He believes that this can best be achieved by addressing the spiritual needs of the continent and the missiological and pastoral concerns of the church in an engaged manner.

The book begins with an introductory chapter on the issues raised above followed by an examination of the theological criteria for mission of the church in chapter two. Criteria for such a theology are discussed in chapters three and four. These are the extent to which theology engages with physical and socio-political matters, ie. the needs of human beings; how they practice their theology through evangelism and pastoral care; inculturation through an engagement with worldviews, ways of thinking, family and group solidarity, understanding of history and Asian cultures of modernity; and faithfulness to Christian tradition taking account of religious pluralism. Chapter five focuses mainly on the Protestant context in the Far East pre World War Two. Chapters six and seven are concerned with the post World War Two period mainly using primary sources relating to individual theologians and representative ecclesiastical groups which arise out of the Asian context. He compares each theological position with his defined criteria and with one another. The final chapter reflects a personal statement of the author's journey to an evangelical faith. It summarises the work and begins the process of drawing the parameters of an authentic Asian theology. Here Yung explains his imagery regarding mangoes (indigenous fruit) and bananas (origin unknown and skin colour darker than the contents). In the South African context this would be more appropriately communicated through the analogy with coconuts!

Throughout this book it is emphasised that any Asian theology must take account of the spirit world however it is viewed. This is one of the means whereby, the perdurance of the Enlightenment paradigm can be evaluated. While it is possible to differ from the author's particular stance and conclusions, there is no doubt that he has produced a sterling service in providing us with the fruits of his research. They will be of great assistance to any who are pursuing similar studies and want a model to follow, adapt and develop. Hence, it is to be strongly recommended to all who would challenge the deeply ingrained enlightenment model which has disfigured much indigenous theology.

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