

Book Reviews

Sacred fury: Understanding religious violence

Charles Selengut

New York: Rowan & Littlefield, 2008, 237 p., ISBN 978-0742560840, US\$ 33.95.

‘So long as religion is about ultimate truth and commitment to the sacred, to a vision of a utopia described in holy scriptures, men and women will be defenders of the faith and willing soldiers in the battles for God’ (p. 205).

This is the concluding statement and a good summary of the thoughtful treatise on religion and violence by Charles Selengut, professor, author, and expert on religious fundamentalism. His basic thesis is that though all religions provide a foundation for and teach positive social values and even oppose injustice and violence, there are also within all religions the seeds for violence and war. Thus, most wars, especially recent wars have some element of religion associated with them.

By their very nature, religions generate strong convictions that adherents believe come from God and as such are binding upon the whole human race. Therefore, those who reject or oppose such beliefs are often viewed as enemies of God who must be brought to the truth, either through persuasion or force. The promise of an afterlife filled with beauty and bounty, especially for those who suffer for their faith provides a powerful motivation for the foot soldiers in such sacred wars.

The book addresses violence from five perspectives. First, the author provides a theological perspective by illustrating that violence is incorporated in the scriptures of all three major Abrahamic religions. Second, he provides an overview of various psychological models to understand human aggression, particularly René Girard’s mimetic desire theory and Leon Festinger’s cognitive dissonance theory. Without fully embracing them, he skillfully demonstrates how modern religious conflicts illustrate such theories. Third, Selengut addresses “apocalyptic violence” by examining the theology, practices and leaders of several movements like Japan’s Aum Shinrikyo and the Branch Davidians of Waco Texas. These groups teach that violent confrontation is coming at the end of the world but that their leader has received a divine revelation about how to prepare for it. Such beliefs and loyalty to the god-like leader who frequently views himself as being above corrupt secular governments often leads to violence. Fourth, he convincingly illustrates Samuel Huntington’s “clash of civilizations” theory by examining conflicts in the last thirty years that have included orthodox Jews, fundamental Christians and radical Muslims. Finally, Selengut examines personal violence within religions, such as sacred

pain, religious masochism, martyrdom (including religious suicide), and sexual abuse. The concluding chapter outlines several practical suggestions on how to overcome religious violence.

Selengut's book makes several significant contributions, of which I will note only three. First, he provides convincing arguments for and extensive illustrations of his basic thesis – that religion is associated with most of the world's recent conflicts. Second, he makes the weighty point that much of the conflict in our modern world has been encouraged by the religious ignorance of western politicians, academics and business leaders. Though this may not have been a point intended by Selengut, his observation suggests the need for a return to some form of religious education in those secularized societies that have removed it. Third, Selengut's practical suggestions, which include a better informed laity, state intervention that consists of cooperation with religious leaders and institutions and more informed dialogue, are appropriate and a logical outgrowth of his comprehensive research.

The book has at least two issues that require more clarity. First, in his attempt to illustrate that modern violence is found in all religions, Selengut devotes about the same amount of space to violence within Judaism, Islam and Christianity, giving the probably unintended impression that all religious violence is equal. However, the violence perpetuated against abortion doctors and clinics by fundamentalist Christians, which has killed fewer than 20 people in the last 40 years, hardly compares to violence perpetuated by extremist Muslims, which has killed thousands. The theory behind both kinds of violence may be similar and is legitimately pointed out but the consequences have not been the same in these instances.

Second, Selengut largely ignored the conflicts of the last three decades in Africa, including the genocide in Rwanda, the wars in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire and the violent struggle against apartheid in South Africa. Perhaps these were ignored because they do not so easily support his general thesis.

Our world has experienced much religious violence in the last few decades. *Sacred fury: Understanding religious violence* provides a perspective on recent religious violence around the world that is scholarly and well documented but easy to read. It helps one understand the factors and motivations that lead to terrorism. This in turn helps reduce prejudice and stereotyping and increases the desire to respond with love and reason and not violence. Thus, the book is especially useful for academics and students, politicians and expatriates, and those in or near conflict zones. In fact, anyone who wants to better understand the violent conflicts of our contemporary world will benefit from this book.

Prof. Dr. Danny McCain, Professor of Biblical Theology, University of Jos, Nigeria

Martyrdom: A Guide for the Perplexed

Paul Middleton

London: T & T Clark, 2011, 209 p., ISBN 978-0567032188, US\$ 24.54.

Martyrdom, though neglected in theological and religious studies, after the September 11, 2001 incident at the World Trade Center, has become a subject of global significance. Middleton argues martyrdom has a long history and he examines and demonstrates this by comparing martyrdom narratives in the three Abrahamic religious traditions namely, Christianity, Judaism and Islam.

The first chapter examines martyr narratives of individual deaths that are placed within larger conflicts – political, religious, local, and cosmic spheres. His central thesis is that martyrs are created by people who retell and narrate their stories.

Chapters 2 through 4 look at martyrdom in Christianity. The author argues that the early Christians were enthusiastic to embrace for opportunities for martyrdom. Christians demonstrated their readiness to face death as shown by the martyrs' texts. They understood their persecution in spiritual terms and in line with Jewish "holy war" ideology. Middleton argues the concept of holy war is common in all three religions. Through death, Christians conquered death, Satan and the cosmic powers. Two theological themes underlined the early Christians' attitudes to death and martyrdom namely, martyrdom as both an earthly and cosmic spectacle, and following the example and the footsteps of Jesus – participating in Christ's suffering, his death, and his victory.

Middleton discusses martyrdom in Judaism and Islam in Chapters 5 and 6 respectively, pointing out martyrdom in these traditions were struggles against evil and seen as "righting the wrongs in the world." The author concludes the three monotheistic religions share common understandings of martyrdom by seeing it as a cosmic war waged to overthrow evil.

Middleton links "holy war" ideology to western liberal secular ideologies. This ideology finds nothing wrong in killing people if such people are considered enemies in a war context. Middleton observes that the West's desire to spread democracy, freedom for the individual, and war on terror through military force can legitimately be categorized as a Western jihad (p. 184). The book is not a "book of martyrs." It is clearly written, the author's arguments are balanced and sensitive to the three religions he writes about. Although he does not discuss issues of human rights in relation to martyrdom and other related biblical teachings on the subject, the book provides some good material on the subject of martyrology that may be beneficial for our contemporary reflections on the subject.

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The right to religious freedom in international law: Between group rights and individual rights

Anat Scolnicov

Milton Park: Routledge, 2011, 246 p., ISBN 978-0415481144, US\$ 125.00.

This book is based on the author's doctoral thesis at the London School of Economics. It fills an important gap in present academic literature concerning religious freedom in an international context.

Following a brief overview, the author discusses the reasons why freedom of religion is protected at all. Avoiding an in-depth treatment of such central themes as the right to change one's religion and to proselytize, she argues that there is no such thing as a group right when talking about religious freedom. As far as she is concerned all rights are individual, even if they are embedded in a community situation. Even where certain rights are exercised by more than one believer, e.g. when engaging in communal worship or electing leadership, these are still to be regarded as individual rights.

Scolnicov is basically supporting an age-old principle of international human rights law, defending it against other approaches, and pointing out their dangers especially where the protection of minorities is concerned. However, her reasoning does go far beyond the present international norm. This is clearly the case where she argues that state laws must intervene to avoid the discrimination of women or homosexual clergy in state churches (p. 87), justified by the tight intertwinings between state and religion. The question remains why the distinction of doctrinal and administrative questions discussed earlier in the book (p. 83) should not be applicable in these cases too. Her approach also forces a state to define religious and doctrinal questions. Elsewhere however (p. 92 ff) the author warns that this is one of the dangers of understanding freedom of religion as a group right, namely that the state is not equipped to do this and should not attempt it. A further relevant issue which Scolnicov fails to discuss is how her approach could be acceptable in states with a Muslim or Hindu majority.

The book then develops the theme of individual rights by looking at two vulnerable groups: women (p. 126 ff) and children (p. 160 ff). Interestingly, Scolnicov points out that sometimes laws governing women in minority religions are detrimental and more backward than in countries where this religion is a majority. Often governing states find it difficult to intervene in minorities' laws, since this always involves a groups' self-perception (p. 134).

This inspiring book ends with a short discussion of religious freedom as a right of free speech – an ongoing debate. Based on her view of religious freedom as an individual right, the author argues that denying proselytism is understood best as a phenomenon of group protection (p. 198). She is against this and considers that

“hate speech” should be allowed for the sake of freedom when it tackles ideas, but never when it aims at groups or persons.

Not all the ideas covered in this book will be generally accepted, but they do serve to stimulate continued discussion on the contents and limits of human rights and religious freedom.

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Routledge Handbook of Religion and Politics

Jeffrey Haynes (ed.)

London: Routledge, 2010, 448 p., ISBN 978-0415414555, £135.00.

Haynes is Professor of Politics and Director of the Centre for the Study of Religion, Conflict and Cooperation at London Metropolitan University and has written several books on religion and third world politics. In the editor's words, this collection of essays “examines the recent ‘return’ of religion to politics and international relations” (cover). Beside the introduction there are 25 essays from altogether 27 experts. 12 experts come from Great Britain, seven from the rest of the Anglosaxon world (including Australia and Canada), three from Japan, two from Singapore, two from Israel, and one from Sweden. Each essay would be worth its own review.

All essays touch the relationship between specific religions, society and the state, even though the freedom of religion and belief in itself is seldom a topic.

The essays are grouped into four parts. In the first, writers take a general view of eight specific major religions and their relation to politics, both in principle and in the praxis of contemporary states. The religions include Buddhism, Protestantism, Catholicism, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, Shiism and Judaism. In the second part follow seven articles with more detailed investigations into religion and governance: secularisation, fundamentalism, the tensions between religion and the state, democratisation, political parties, civil society and finally “Different patterns of compartmentalisation among Christians and Mohammedans (sic!)”. The third part has four more general articles looking at the relationship between religion and international relations. The fourth part, with another five essays, discusses the relationship of “Religion, security and development”, especially religious terrorism, preventing conflict, religion and women, international development and evangelical responses to global warming and human suffering.

Overall the book is a good handbook and start for people involved in politics wishing to understand the global role of religions, as well as the other way round

for people studying religions who need a starting point for their search for the political role of belief systems in theory and reality.

The essays are uneven. Some are superb and give a solid overview about the political landscape and research, e.g. most of the essays in the first part, such as the article “Religion and political parties” by Payam Mohseni and Clyde Wilcox, “Religion and democratisation” (subtitle) by John Anderson (my favorite essay), or “Religion and the state” by John Madeley, discussing the different types of relationship between state and ‘church’ globally.

A few articles are really weak, such as the one “On the nature of religious terrorism”, which neither gives a historical or global overview of religious terrorism nor discusses the problem in specific religions, but gives a very generalised opinion that religious terrorists are not much different from other terrorists. Further: why does Giorgio Shani in “Transnational religious actors and international relations” only go into detail concerning the Roman Catholic Church and the United Sikhs and leave out the Muslim world, especially the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)?

Very surprising is the last essay “Changing the climate of religious internationalism: Evangelical responses to global warming and human suffering”. The article in itself is good, but it does not fit in any way into the volume. An essay “Evangelicals and politics” would have been okay, but it would have to present all branches of evangelicalism and this on a global scale. But to single out the topic of climate-change (and even not the political agenda going with it) and to deal exclusively with the US context – something not done concerning any other religious group in the volume – is arbitrary. And then to state, that newer evangelicals are good, as they fight climate change, while older ones are bad, because they ignored environmental issues as a cause of human suffering, is historically too simplistic and opinionated. It is also incompatible with the academic standard of the rest of the book.

The term “fundamentalism” (see index p. 423) is used inconsistently throughout the volume. The editor sees fundamentalism only where there exists a holy book (p. 162). Why that? In Catholicism you can have fundamentalism, even though the Pope is above ‘the book’, and in India and Sri Lanka fundamentalism is prevalent without a single religious book, but with just the same characteristics. In his article “religious fundamentalism” the editor only discusses Christianity, Islam and Judaism and does not even discuss why he leaves out all other religions.

I would like to come back to the first part on the eight major religions. As there are no bios of authors provided, it is hard to tell, but from what I can see, in all cases except Confucianism the authors belong to the religion they write about. It is not by chance, that the critical distance to their religion differs a lot. The Christian authors are quite critical about certain developments in Christianity, the Protestant author more than the Catholic one. The least critical is the article on Islam, which sometimes

comes close to a defence of Islam. Islamism is seen as “primarily” a “political phenomenon” which “cannot be said to stem from some ‘essence’ of Islam” (p. 102). I agree that “Islam is not Islamism”. But to represent the complicated relation between the two as just the opposite by claiming “Islamism is not Islam” does not fit the whole book, which discusses the relationship of religious actors to international politics. If the authors were right, non-religious Islamism should not have been discussed in the book at all. One would have expected in such a handbook that the articles on the major religions would have been more consistent and provided an even balance of distance and understanding.

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Religion and human rights

Nazila Ghanea (ed.)

New York: Routledge, 2010, 4 vols., 1600 p., ISBN 978-0415477871, US\$ 1075.00.

The academic publisher Routledge publishes sets, usually of four volumes, with reprints of a wide range of older and recent articles and book chapters, always edited by a well known scholar and expert on a specific subject. In this ‘Major Works Collection’, a dozen of them so far have appeared in the field of religions (‘Critical Concepts in Religious Studies’). Those sets are not meant for the wider public – as the price of the set is usually above \$1000 – but mainly for libraries and specialists, who want material scattered around the globe and in dozens of publications.

Concerning this collection one could criticize, that its title “Religion and human rights” is wrong because it is too broad. The human right discussed in these volumes is only the “Freedom of religion and belief” and all essays circle around this human right. Under the flag of “Religion and human rights” one would expect a larger range of topics. But if one is interested in the human right under discussion here, namely religious freedom, this is the best selection of articles on the market.

Let me briefly summarize the topics given by the publisher, to prove this: Volume I: Why protect freedom of religion or belief? Volume II: Is freedom of religion or belief an individual or collective human right? Group, collective, and corporate rights. Models for protection of religion or belief. Minority rights. Refugee rights. Volume III: Conflict of rights and freedom of religion or belief in general: On conflict of rights with freedom of religion or belief. Freedom of expression. Women’s rights. Child rights. Volume IV: International standards, persecution and ways forward. International standards and mechanisms regarding freedom of religion or belief.

Persecution and discrimination. Equality, differential treatment, special rights, positive duties, and freedom of religion or belief. Ways forward.

The editor for a compilation of essays on religious freedom has been chosen well, as Nazila Ghanea is Editor in Chief of the *Journal of Religion and Human Rights* and Lecturer in International Human Rights Law at Oxford's Kellogg College. She also initiated and now serves on the Executive Board of the international network 'Focus on Freedom of Religion or Belief' (FoFoRB).

How to select 55 essays out of thousands of published essays, articles and book chapters is always debatable. In my opinion the overall selection is superb. Wherever freedom of religion and belief is studied and these volumes are at hand, students do not need to look for other articles to get started. It is an ideal tool for seminars in universities for studies in a wide range of subjects, including law, comparative religions or sociology.

It is impossible to comment on every essay. But nevertheless some very good and some less valuable contributions should be mentioned.

Highlights on religious freedom, which immediately came to my mind, are included, like Brice Dickson's "The United Nations and freedom of religion" (1995), the editor's "Apostasy and freedom to change religion or belief" (2004), David Keane's "Why the Hindu caste system presents a new challenge for human rights" (2007), "Models of religion-state relations" by Rex Adhar and Ian Leigh (2005) and the superb "Draft model law in freedom of religion" by Dinah Shelton and Alexandre Kiss (1996). Those essays all give a good overview over the international discussion and literature and present positions that are accepted by a broad spectrum of actors in the field of human rights.

A review of course has to also offer criticism and ideas for improvement of which I offer three: (1) Why is there only one historical article (by John Locke from 1640), one from 1974, while all others from 1984 or later? And if you choose only one historical article, is the essay by Locke really the most important one before 1974 representing the development of the religious freedom thinking best? And should not an article by a representative of a religious minority vital to the development of religious freedom thought have been included, e.g. from the Jewish or the Baptist side?

(2) Articles that are merely of regional interest or focus on just one religion were excluded in principle. Why, then, is an article included which asks "Should the United States provide refuge to German Scientologists", though it does not feature any outcome or principle of international interest? It concluded in 1999, that Scientologists in Germany "suffer mainly economic disadvantages", but to describe their present situation "as persecutory ... seems exaggerated". This is an outdated description.

(3) Why is the article "Parental rights and the religious upbringing of children" by T. H. McLaughlin (1984) included? It is more philosophical than religious, arguing for "a non-indoctrinary form of religious upbringing which a liberal can in

good conscience claim”, and it is more a private opinion piece on how to raise children than a needed discussion of the application of parental rights (part of UN’s standards of religious freedom), when theses have to be overruled, and what this means for education and schooling. – But these weaknesses do not overshadow the overall positive impression of the collection.

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Paul and the mission of the church: Philippians in ancient Jewish context

James P. Ware

Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011, 400 p., ISBN 978-0801039683, US\$ 36.66.

In this monograph the North American New Testament scholar James P. Ware first surveys early Jewish views regarding the conversion of Gentiles (23-159; with an emphasis on the significance of Isaiah). Against this backdrop, Ware examines in three chapters various aspects of mission in Philippians 1:12-2:18. He first sketches “The progress of the Gospel in Philippians 1:12-18a” (163-199). The chapter “Suffering and Mission in Philippians 1:18b–2:11” (201-236) is of particular interest. Ware rightly notes that it is essential to understand Philippians 1:12-18 within the larger context of Paul’s exhortation in 1:12-2:18 (actually of the whole letter). Ware argues that “Paul’s conviction that believers must suffer with Christ in order to share his glory is rooted in Jewish thought, and its emphasis on the eschatological vindication of those who suffer for their God. . . . Paul’s courageous witness to the gospel despite the threat of suffering . . . serves within the letter as a model for his converts at Philippi” (234). Paul applies Job 13:14-16 (in the LXX version) to his own situation (Job’s assurance of salvation is his fearless speech and reproof before the ruler who seeks to put him to death). Furthermore, there is a close connection between the call to unity and the threat of persecution: “Paul’s fusion in 1:27-30 of the language of friendship with the language of mission and proclamation reveals his concern that the Philippians respond to the threat of suffering with a united and courageous struggle for the spread of the gospel” (234). Paul’s charge not to be afraid of the opponents (1:28) is an exhortation fearlessly to proclaim the word despite persecution and suffering that will result from it. Ware also suggests that the mission of Paul and of his converts had a counter-imperial aspect: Paul’s example of testimony to Christ – intended to be imitated – was a bold confrontation with Roman claims and power (1:19f); the same applies to his direct exhortation to the readers despite personal risks and suffering to fearlessly spread the gospel in Roman Philippi in Philippians 1:27-30. The third chapter addresses “The mission of the church in Philippians 2:12-18”

(237-284) and argues persuasively that Paul had a strong expectation that his converts engage in congregational evangelism.

Ware offers an excellent analysis of a key New Testament passage on the suffering and persecution of Christians and its relation to salvation. He shows to what extent mission and suffering for the gospel are linked in Philippians. That the Philippians should cease their evangelistic very nature and activities is not in Paul's view. However, he instructs them to spread their faith in a sensitive manner (see Ware's helpful analysis Phil 2:12-18, including the charge in 2:16 to hold forth the word of life, rather than hold fast as in some translations).

Mission in Philippians is also the focus of Mark J. Keown's comprehensive study *Congregational evangelism in Philippians: The centrality of an appeal for Gospel proclamation to the fabric of Philippians* (Paternoster Biblical Monographs; Carlisle: Paternoster, 2008).

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Very stones cry out: The persecuted church – pain, passion and praise

Baroness Cox and Benedict Rogers

New York: Continuum, 2011, 168 p., ISBN: 978-0826442727, US\$ 15.56.

This is a piggy-back ride with leading and renowned activists from Christian Solidarity Worldwide on a journey visiting different countries, and hearing about stories of courage, faith and praise from those who are persecuted for their Christian faith.

Whether you are well versed on the subject or have no current knowledge about the persecution of Christians around the world, this book is a must read. Each chapter focusses on one of the seventeen countries from Burma to Vietnam – touching on a blend of demographic and situational information about each country. Each chapter then sets out to drill down even deeper into personal stories and examples of those that have been directly affected by persecution.

However, this book isn't a morbid book full of sadness and death. Its tone is factual and descriptive rather than emotionally convincing. Further, the authors don't make you feel like you're not good enough because you're not facing death for your religious beliefs.

All in all, the authors have done a great job of communicating the persecution – raising awareness and telling untold stories, but also making this relevant to everyone on a journey with God.

My one gripe about this book is that the authors seem detached from the writing – even though they have personal knowledge and experience of those countries. So although it is factual, perhaps a little more personal perspective would give this book an added dimension. Despite this, it will win the reader over due to its motivating and eye opening stories of persecution.

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Witness of the body: The past, present, and future of Christian martyrdom

Michael L. Budde & Karen Scott (eds.)

Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans (The Eerdmans Ekklesia Series), 2011, 238 p., ISBN 978-0802862587, US\$ 22.00.

The purpose of this collection of essays is clearly defined: “returning martyrdom to a more central place in the self-understanding of the church” (VII) and instead of seeing martyrdom “as an object of fascination or dread . . . resituate martyrdom within the everyday practices of the church” (VIII). I can welcome this goal from all my heart.

The book is written for a Western audience, mostly unfamiliar with martyrdom. Contributions of authors living in the Majority World are missing. They could have contributed additional insights. In addition, the confessional breadth of opinions seems to be desired (“across the confessional divides of Christianity”, IX), but not really accomplished, because the great majority of the contributors consist of US-American Catholics.

It is a strength of the collection to cover not only martyrdom in the Early Church but in Part III (“Martyrdom destroys the church”) also to deal with the persecution of Christians by Christians especially in the age of Reformation. Brad S. Gregory (“Persecution or prosecution, martyrs or false martyrs? The reformation era, history, and theological reflection”, 107-124) rightly criticizes that from the standpoint of the 21st Century with its focus on human rights it is too easy to judge the prosecution of supposed heretics in the 16th century without really understanding the presuppositions of that age. Having said this I sometimes sensed too much understanding for the prosecutors in this article.

For me there are two highlights amongst the eleven essays about martyrdom. From the article of Stephen Fowl, Professor of Theology at Loyola College of Maryland, “The primacy of the witness of the body to martyrdom in Paul” (43-60) the title of the whole book is derived. Fowl represents the school of “theological interpretation of Scripture”. He tries (and I think, he succeeds) to put martyrdom in the broader context of Romans 12:1-2 where Christians are encouraged to “present” their “bodies as a living sacrifice”.

Every believer is called to the “witness of the body”. This witness is the commitment of our whole being to God’s will and God’s glory. That might lead to martyrdom or not. “Believers can and should always participate in the witness of the body. Whether or not the authorities will kill them for this is largely out of their hands” (44).

My second highlight is “Is anything worth dying for? Martyrdom, exteriority, and politics after bare life” (171-189) by D. Stephen Long, Professor of Theology at Marquette University and Geoffrey Holdscaw.

The authors analyze that Western secular societies have excluded any goals higher than life from political philosophy. The fear is prevalent that the grounding of “politics in some transcendent goal” might “produce a militaristic society” (171). As a result “...the only rational, dogmatic position from which to begin political thought is that of the preservation of life” (173).

This article is very inspiring in showing how a new commitment to doctrinal truth, i.e. putting God’s will higher than our life, will rightfully challenge the foundations of our current political philosophy and so might be perceived as a threat. The authors should have made it clearer that “What is worth dying for?” not inevitably leads to “What is worth killing for?” (171), and that putting doctrinal truth over life is a common point of radical Muslims and devoted Christians, but that there are decisive differences in what the respective truths are.

Wolfgang Haede, author of “Faithful until death: The story of Necati Aydin, a Turkish martyr for Christ”, Living Sacrifice Books, 2012.

Taken! North Korea’s criminal abduction of citizens of other countries

Yoshi Yamamoto

Washington: The Committee for Human Rights in North Korea, 2011, 140 p., ISBN 978-0977111138, No price given. <http://www.scribd.com/doc/55378738/Taken>.

“Taken” relates the many stories of the individual abductions by North Korea over the past 60 years. The majority of abductions are those counted by the removal of nearly 83,000 Koreans to the North during the initial invasion by North Korea during the Korean War. Another 93,000 Korean immigrated to North Korea, mostly from Japan, deceived into believing they would have a better life in North Korea. And although it documents these as abductions, most of the book’s stories are the individual abductions by North Korea for spy recruiting, spy training, or personal interests of the North Korean government.

Although North Korean abductions were not promulgated for religious (or anti-religious) purposes, a small but critical part of the story told in “Taken” for Christian missions is the deportation of one of the North Korean prisoners, Chantal Sobkowicz. After bringing her to North Korea for translation work, then refusing to allow her to leave, Ms. Sobkowicz was eventually deported for being a Christian missionary in North Korea and continuing to evangelize as a prisoner there. As noted in “Taken”, North Korea released few prisoners, but this report documents that what they wanted to eject from North Korea was Christian missionaries, even if they were brought to North Korea by abduction.

More report than book, “Taken” is a good reference for anyone beginning research into the abduction program of North Korea. It provides a table of all of the documented abductions as well as sources for the many abduction stories, treatment of prisoners, and the evolution of North Korean abductions over the years.

However, I recommend going to the primary sources over this particular report for research or citation of facts regarding abductions because of the characterization of all groups of people that have gone to North Korea (maybe) unwillingly as abductions and the over-emphasis on American based solutions in the report that may not be useful to most of the abductees listed.

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The future of the global church: History, trends and possibilities

Patrick Johnstone

Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity and Milton Keynes, UK: Authentic Media, 2011, 256 p., ISBN 978-0830856596, US\$ 32.00.

Johnstone chronicles the worldwide history of Christian mission, and projects its future from an evangelical perspective in the context of demographics, major religious movements and ideological developments. An impressive array of color-coded maps and charts presents data on the evangelization of people groups drawn from the World Christian Encyclopedia and Operation World databases.

The time frames and geographical locales of significant persecutions of Christians, beginning under Emperor Nero in Rome, and extending through two unprecedented World Wars and the Cold War of the twentieth century, are briefly described and graphically displayed, together with important political, military and people movements and events during each century. Color-coded maps, tables and pie charts depict the areal extent and severity of the persecutions, the world population, Christians as a percentage of the population, the number of martyred Christians, and the proportions of each category of persecutors and martyred Christians during each century.

The author provides hundreds of topical commentaries, insightful observations, and compelling questions that relate pivotal historic events and trends to the present day and to projected future conditions in the countries and regions of the world. The spectacular explosion of evangelical Christianity during the twentieth century in many developing countries, as compared to much slower or even negative rates of growth in economically more advanced countries, has vast implications for the future, not only in terms of the greatly altered distribution of Christian populations around the world, but how global Christianity will continue to change as it influences, and is influenced by, the prevailing cultures and the potential sources of conflict within those cultures.

Islam is deemed by the author to constitute a threat to future peace and security in those countries and regions where Muslims are in the majority or their numbers are growing, and would presumably represent a major challenge and a potential danger for Christians in those settings. In light of Jesus' promise: "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth" (Matthew 5.5), Johnstone raises the question on page 67, "How can biblical Christians who are politically marginalized inherit the earth without resorting to worldly methods or weapons?"

This prompts the question, "What might happen if Christians, who with an attitude of love desire to witness to Muslims as friends, sincerely reach out to them as equals in constructive interfaith dialogue, seek to understand and appreciate their perspectives and concerns, and express the desire to cooperate with them?" Such encounters should in no way constrain either Muslims or Christians to compromise their most deeply held religious convictions, but should rather be opportunities for them to overcome ignorance and hostility, build mutual trust and respect, and search for common ground.

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„Das Wort sie sollen lassen stahn...“: Das Kirchenlied im „Kirchenkampf“ der evangelischen Kirche 1933-1945

Matthias Biermann

Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011, 427 p., ISBN 978-3525624166, € 82.95.

This recent doctoral dissertation, accepted at the University of Jena, deals with the role of church hymns in the German Church Struggle ("Kirchenkampf") during the National Socialist dictatorship 1933-1945. It analyses the practice of liturgical singing, evaluating primary sources from Protestant church archives from all over Germany, which up to now had remained unconsidered or unpublished (i.e. hand

outs, song sheets, song books). He compares the use of hymns among the Confessing Church (“Bekennende Kirche”) and the “German Christians” (“Deutsche Christen”). According to Biermann, both movements are not to be seen as monolithic blocks. The boundaries between the apostate “German Christians” and the persecuted Confessing Church remained rather fluid.

On the one hand, the Confessing Church returned to the reformation roots of the German Protestant Church. Many leading voices (i.e. Barth, Bonhoeffer) were favoring the priority of word (in best pure biblical language) over music. They were critical of the self-centered subjective texts of the pietistic and romantic eras. On the other hand, the German Christians mixed traditional church hymns with popular folk songs and popular classic and romantic pieces (i.e. Wagner’s overtures). Yet they did not leave the traditional church hymns unchanged. According to their ideology, they removed any hint of Jewish words or ideas and even cleansed them from soteriological and christological remarks. Such happened to “Großer Gott wir loben dich” (Holy God, we praise Thy name), where hymnbooks related to the German Christians eliminated some stanzas. The God of the German Christians remained a great, omnipotent, transcendent being, who used Hitler to build up his kingdom on earth. The German Christians also composed some new songs which were explicitly nationalistic. Both movements had in common some favorite hymns, like Luther’s “Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott” (A mighty fortress is our God). Both also supported new songs. And some of the most influential song writers (i.e. Klepper) were not affiliated to either one of those movements. Not everyone actively participated in the Church Struggle.

Regarding the general role that music plays in times of religious persecution, Biermann’s thesis shows two important facts. First, the singing of the Church does not only reflect the experience of persecution but it also shapes the identity of the persecuted church. It unifies those in trouble and gives them one voice. On the side of the apostate Church, it reflects its ideological adaptation to National Socialist propaganda. On both sides, church songs remain a mirror of their time, theology and ideology. Secondly, Biermann can show that strong persecution and imprisonment evoke a change of attitude concerning the value of subjective poetry. This can be shown by looking at the case of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. During his imprisonment, he began to value the songs of Paul Gerhardt which he had formerly rejected for their lack of objectivity. This might indicate the strong effect that solitary confinement has on one’s self-reflection.

All in all, Biermann’s nuanced study offers stimulating insights into the function and functionalization of church song in the Third Reich.

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The privilege of persecution: And other things the global church knows that we don't

Carl A. Moeller and David W. Hegg

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“What we need is not revival but reformation. Revival will put more people in the pews. Reformation will transform the thinking and the behaviour of the church” (p. 10). This introduction by Brother Andrew sets the tone for a book which demands transformational and reformational thinking in dispersing the traditional approach to the persecuted church from the point of view of our strength and their weakness. By using a well balanced recipe of testimonies, first-hand experiences and key Scripture verses, the two authors explore six areas where the persecuted church can teach the church in freedom what reformational thinking should look like: (1) God and his word, (2) worship and the church, (3) prayer and dependence, (4) community, culture and evangelism, (5) leadership, authority and power, (6) generosity and stewardship.

In these six chapters the authors examine authentic and biblical Christianity and redefine the “normal Christian life” of Christians in the west and in particular the USA. Both authors speak from an experiential point of view with a clear understanding of where the American church currently finds herself in terms of life, theology and practice and the mirror image portrayed by the persecuted church in terms of prayer, community, generosity and worship. A telling statement, probably the best summary of the whole book, is found in chapter three, where the authors make the following statement: “Whether we want to admit it or not, how we view prayer is one of the primary indicators of how we view God” (p. 70).

The major contribution this book makes in a time where most popular books focus on self-enrichment and self-esteem is that the church, as a community of global believers, has a mandate to glorify God and that persecution has a glorious way of stripping the believer of anything and everything that will prevent this from happening. This book is highly recommended for those who understand the necessity to deny the self, take up the cross and follow Christ. For those who seek a self-enriched faith and who see the persecuted church as an unfortunate group of people who find themselves at the wrong place at the wrong time, be ready to be transformed by the renewal of your mind and be prepared to be reformed by how you view authentic Christianity.

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