

Book reviews

Todd M Johnson & R Kenneth Ross (ed.): Atlas of Global Christianity. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009, 361 p. (large format), ISBN 9780 748632671. £150.00, US\$200.00, €184.99.

The *Atlas of Global Christianity* maps changes in the geographic spread of world religions, Christianity and Christian mission over the past one hundred years. In the section on religious freedom (p. 36-43) reviewed here, Brian J Grim provides a more differentiated set of indicators than in his Pew study, “*Global restrictions on religion*” (reviewed above). Moreover, a set of maps helps to visualize, even on the sub-national level of regions, the degree of infringement of religious liberty worldwide.

In an introductory article on “religious freedom” (p. 36-37), Grim defines the challenge of religious liberty in a holistic perspective and traces its development in the past decades. He argues that social and government restrictions on religious freedom drive a vicious circle, the so-called “religious violence circle”. Furthermore, he suggests a close correlation between religious freedom in a country and its level of human and economic development.

Based on the GRI and SHI indices of the Pew study, Grim has developed a somewhat simplified Government Restriction Index (GRI; 8 instead of 20 underlying questions) and a Social Restriction Index (SRI; 5 instead of 13 questions) which provide the basis for a composed Religious Freedom Index (RFI). All countries, subdivided into states or other regional administrative regions, are displayed on a large world map of religious freedom. The author suggests categorizing all countries by using a set of six levels of religious freedom, ranging from “deregulated countries” to “social-political monopoly.” The strength of Grim’s contribution lies not only in the clear visualization of restrictions on religious freedom in thematic maps, but also in the provision of further socio-governmental and religious violence indicators that capture the challenge in a more differentiated way. However, the “War on Terror”, instigated by the

9/11 attacks (p. 43), which Grim mentions as an example for a “religion-related armed conflict”, shows how difficult it is to draw a clear line between types of conflicts that may be interpreted variously, let alone to exactly quantify and categorize these complex issues.

The table on “indices of religious violence, 2010” (p. 43) pulls together all developed indices regarding the restriction on religious freedom for different regions and subregions. Reading the values of the five indices side by side in one line, one assumes that the values are comparable. However, the individual scales are not standardized and maximum values vary between 3, 5, and 10.

The *Atlas of Global Christianity* provides important information and visualization material both for research, education and for the raising of public awareness on religious freedom issues. An interactive CD is included and avails itself for presentations. All graphics can be exported. This book is therefore a must for any reference library.

*Dr Rainer Rothfuss, Professor of Human Geography,
University of Tübingen, Germany*

Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life (ed.): Global Restrictions on Religion. 72 p., published in Dec. 2009 on the internet with complementary country details and annual up-dates: <http://pewforum.org/docs/?DocID=491>.

This study by the Pew Research Center’s Forum on Religion & Public Life that covers 198 countries, representing more than 99.5% of the world’s population. Based on the incidents of religious violence or intolerance from mid-2006 to mid-2008, it finds that about one-third of the countries in the world have high or very high restrictions on religion, representing nearly 70% of the world’s 6.8 billion people. It is intended to revise on an annual basis to be able to chart changes and trends for single countries and regions over time.

The study provides important added value for awareness raising and research on religious liberty which is generally the most neglected field of human rights. Its main strength has to be seen in the development of quantifiable, objective measures for the infringement on religious liberty rights that are combined into two comprehensive indices, the “Government Restrictions Index” (GRI) and the “Social

Hostilities Index” (SHI). The study measures obstacles to the practice of religion in each country by answering a comprehensive set of questions (20 for GRI and 13 for SHI) on the basis of publicly reported incidents of religious violence, intolerance, intimidation and discrimination by governments and private actors (16 renowned human and religious rights reports are taken into consideration). The differentiation between countries where restrictions stem mainly from government actions, policies and laws (e.g. China) and those where threats from society prevail (e.g. Iraq) allows a closer understanding of the underlying causes. There is only one country in the world, Saudia Arabia, where both GRI and SHI have been rated “very high” at the same time. Among all regions, the region of the Middle East and North Africa has the highest government and social restrictions on religion.

Obviously, the strength of the Pew study lies in its provision of a simple and fairly precise picture of the religious liberty situation in all countries worldwide. For the first time, government and social restrictions have been visualized in maps and combined in one chart covering all countries. Nevertheless, the study does not replace a qualitative in-depth analysis of the situation, the specific underlying causes and potential future threats in an individual country or sub-national region. These may well remain hidden behind the quantitative indices that represent countries as homogeneous blocks. Seeking to be neutral, the *Pew* study does not attempt to determine whether particular restrictions are “justified” or not. The study does not judge how peaceful and tolerant are the religions or sectarian groups on which restrictions have been imposed in a given country. Therefore, individual countries may be perceived as rated too rigidly and others too leniently: e.g. Germany has a GRI of 3.2 on the scale from 0 to 10, mainly for favoring the two traditional churches and banning Scientology members from government positions whereas Nigeria scores 3.6 even though the national government tolerates the severe oppression of Christian minorities by Sharia law in one-third of its states contrary to its own constitution.

*Dr. Rainer Rothfuss, Professor of Human Geography,
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Gerlinde Groitl: Evangelical Internationalism. The American Christian Right and Global Human Rights. (Regensburger Studien zur Internationalen Politik, 4). Hamburg: Dr. Kovac, 2007, 200 p., € 68.00, ISBN 978-3-8300-2823-9.

“While evangelical Christians are usually identified with policies of unilateralism, militancy, and controversy only, the [American] Christian Right recently presented itself as a genuine force that fights against injustice and human rights abuses abroad” (p.19). In her thesis the author attempts to clarify the reasons “why evangelical Christians turned to and engage in global human rights advocacy” (p.20). Among the American Christian Right and its key organizations (p.20), Groitl identifies the National Association of Evangelicals as “of particular importance for the new foreign affairs activism” (p.27). The human rights concern within American evangelicalism are the fight against religious persecution, human trafficking, HIV/AIDS, and poverty (p.34-41).

Groitl sees one of the reasons for this growing involvement in recent years on a structural level: evangelicals found favorable political allies and opportunities, inside and outside the US Congress which led to “direct legislative outcomes” (p.113), something they did not see happening on key moral domestic issues before. What “the Christian Right desperately needed at the time were political successes in order to prove its own political power and to reconcile the grassroots” (p.84). These they found in a new focus on global human rights issues. Beyond this, a cultural dimension also has to be taken into account: a strong evangelical collective identity based on a strong emphasis on mission and evangelism with religious freedom as a prerequisite, draws evangelicals together for global human rights, and much more even demands an engagement with these issues. The author concludes that “Evangelical internationalism initially gave the Christian Right new vitality and sophistication. Meanwhile [in 2006], it has developed its own dynamic and creates great tensions in the evangelical community” (p.159). This book offers a well-informed, balanced and fair overview on the history, development and motifs of American evangelical involvement for global human rights for which it deserves wide recognition.

*Drs Frank Hinkelmann, Petzenkirchen, Austria, Central European Director
OM International, Chairman Austrian Evangelical Alliance*

Stephen B Bevans and Jeffrey Gros: *Evangelization and Religious Freedom: Ad Gentes, Dignitatis Humanae*. Mahwah, New Jersey, USA: Paulist Press 2009, 259 p., ISBN 978-0-8091-4202-6; US\$ 21.95.

The watershed in the Roman-Catholic church's stance on religious liberty occurred at the Second Vatican Council and it was the greatest seismic shift in its thinking and theology. Religious freedom was dismissed as modernism by Pope Pius IX in 1864 and was thus regarded by official Catholic theology for nearly two centuries as an undesirable permission to promote errors that could not be endorsed. There were only two options in the policy pursued by the Vatican, called "thesis and hypothesis": 'Thesis' signified the 'Catholic state' where the Roman-Catholic church was privileged as the only true religion while 'error' had no rights. In all other societies, in which Catholics were in a minority position and a 'Catholic state' was therefore out of reach, the agenda of the church was religious tolerance ('hypothesis').

With *Dignitatis Humanae (DH)*, the 'Declaration of Religious Freedom' of Vatican II, this changed profoundly. From then on Catholic theology no longer focussed on the 'rights' of the 'truth' but on the rights of the individual, embracing the modern understanding of human rights. As part of a wider series, 'Rediscovering Vatican II', Gros sheds light – primarily from an American perspective – on the historical background and the history of the actual text of this remarkable document, including a short commentary on major points. The closing 50 pages on its implementation and open questions are probably of greatest interest at the beginning of the 21st century. These cover the changed policy in the concordats with different countries, the promotion of religious freedom especially by Pope John Paul II, ecumenical dialogues, the legacy of John Courtney Murray, who drafted the new doctrine and died shortly after the council, and the Catholic stance on pluralism and education. Even though Gros's essay is rather descriptive than critical, the book is highly recommendable, providing quick and comprehensive information, suggesting a wide range of areas to work on and literature for additional reference.

Dr Thomas Weissmuller, Marburg, Germany
Author of "Religionsfreiheit: Christliche Wahrheit
und menschliche Würde im Konflikt?", Francke 2003

Timothy M Monsma: Hope for the Southern World: Impacting Societal Problems in the Non-Western World. Loveland, CO: CCW Books, 2006, 135 p., US-ISBN 1-4243-11624, US\$ 12.95.

This is mainly a book of lists, trying to confront the well-known and enormous problems of the Two-Thirds-World. In such a short book, the treatment of each problem inevitably borders on the superficial. And in respect to persecution, the author is not so sure-footed. He recycles Barrett's dubious figure of martyrs per year without a qualm, and – tellingly – does not include any missions with a persecution focus in his appendix of potential partner agencies. That said, the book is a fair introduction to the main issues, particularly for younger Christians taking their first steps to understanding how to fit in to the church's work in the world. Monsma divides persecution into two types – sporadic and deadly, and provides lists of ways to deal with each. The problem with this list approach is that it runs the risk of merely stating the obvious. If written for southern Christians, would it really not occur to them during persecution to “seek government protection” or “stay united?” Or when dealing with deadly persecution, it is not helpful to simply suggest, “flee to another place.” The issue surely is, *when* is it appropriate and God's will to stay, and when to go? The essential nuancing that would turn Monsma's lists from the merely helpful to absolutely vital is missing. The book accordingly has limited value for the persecution specialist, but retains its value as a wide-ranging, fast-paced introduction to the general challenges of the church in the southern world.

*Ron Boyd-MacMillan, Chief Strategy Officer, Open Doors International,
Edinburgh, Scotland*

Tibebe Eshete: The Evangelical Movement in Ethiopia: Resistance and Resilience. Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press 2009, 480 p., ISBN 978-1-60258-002-2, US\$ 54.95.

This ground-breaking study (PhD in history, University of Michigan) presents various responses of three diverse streams of Ethiopian Christianity to the 1974-1991 Ethiopian Marxist Revolution. Eshete, a former Orthodox adherent and subsequently a convert to Ethiopian Pentecostalism, describes this movement as rising from many tributaries, internal as well as external, and considers it as part of the broader evangelical movement. It eventually developed into a vibrant youth phenomenon with strong indigenous leadership in urban areas,

mainly drawing young people of Orthodox Church background. The fact that thousands of youth were changing their religious allegiance eventually resulted in bringing this neophyte religious movement into serious conflict with the Orthodox Church and eventually the State.

The closure of the majority of evangelical churches and persecution forced the evangelical movement to go underground. Clandestine house churches, led by ordinary men and women, became vibrant Bible teaching locations where spiritual gifts were nurtured. The Ethiopian Marxist Revolution, antagonistic to Christianity, inadvertently made several significant contributions to the maturation of the evangelical movement: development of a distinctly national identity, gifted and tried leaders, a tested and internalised faith, an authentic ecumenical church movement, and an indigenous Ethiopian hymnody grounded in the Amharic scriptures. Presently, nearly a third of all Christians in Ethiopia call themselves *Pente*, formerly a pejorative designation intended as an insult towards the Pentecostals. Eshete persuasively presents evidence that the present Evangelical Movement in Ethiopia is not an imported model but an authentic spiritual response of resistance to modern Marxism and a tradition-bound Church. This book is highly recommended for libraries of theological training centres located in countries dominated by repressive regimes.

Dr E Paul Balisky, Grande Prairie, AB, Canada, served with SIM Ethiopia with his wife Lila from 1967-2005 and is author of "Wolaitta Evangelists: A Study of Religious Innovation in Southern Ethiopia, 1937-1975" (Wipf & Stock 2009).

Anto Akkara: Kandhamal - a blot on Indian secularism. New Delhi: Media House, 2009, 121 p., ISBN 8179453515, Rs.150, US\$ 15.

This book is one of the important, significant and critical documents on the anti-Christian violence that erupted within the state of Orissa in 2008. The author has worked as a journalist for 21 years in Indian and international media. He is also a specialist in human rights, social and religious affairs. In the course of 14 chapters he argues the violence in Orissa indicates that Indian secularism has been weakened as an institution.

The anti-Christian violence was triggered by the killing of a prominent Hindu leader on August 23, 2008. The author made half a

dozen arduous investigative visits to the Kandhamal jungles and thus, this book is unique in terms of presentation of evidence to the facts. He gives the reader several shocking and rare facts which had not been picked up by the mainstream media. The sum total of the death and devastation in Kandhamal amounts to more than 75 Christians killed, 5000 Christian houses looted and destroyed along with 250 churches and Christian institutions desecrated and reduced to ashes. An attempt has been made to compare the list provided by the author with the record issued by the Government of Orissa. The facts and figures presented by the author raise serious questions on the secularism of India.

The account of shocking facts such as rape, murder of clergy, pastors and ordinary Christians are a mockery of the constitutional guarantees of secularism, equality and freedom of faith. The government of Orissa has done little to protect the lives of Christians through interim compensation and rehabilitation programs as the author has pointed out in chapter 6, "How the Christians are protected." The role of Hindutva forces in the killing of Christians in the Kandhamal district of Orissa is apparent. The author's contention is that the government has failed to maintain law and order in the areas. Finally, the Christians have ended up living in refugee camps. Such immunity, Akkra pointed out, "raises serious questions about the secular credentials of the nation that prides itself in the fundamental freedom of faith and equality under Indian constitution."

Only a few major issues could be addressed in this book. The issue of conversion continues to play a major role behind attacks on Christians in Orissa. Christians are accused of being "rice Christians." Hindu fundamentalists have accused Christians of being involved in conversion activities. The author attempts to claim that in spite of democracy in the country, constitution, and law, the lives of Christians are in danger. The author's treatment of the topic is open and balanced. Each chapter provides very adequate information that is complex, important and controversial in relation to the atrocities in Orissa. The work is clear, concise, challenging, and stimulating. This book is suitable for individuals of all religions because it talks about human issues. The author's arrangement of the map, figures will help the readers to delve deep into the issues connected with the lives of the people in Orissa.

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Craig Hovey: To Share in the Body - A Theology of Martyrdom for Today's Church. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Press, 2008, 157 p., ISBN-10: 158743217X, US\$ 22.00.

Craig Hovey's book is a profound yet accessible meditation on the gospel of Mark refracted through the lens of martyrdom. Hovey is convinced that an awareness of the gospel enactment that martyrdom represents, is necessary for the church to live faithfully in the modern world. 'The true church', Hovey contends, 'is still a martyr-church despite its relative shortage of martyrs' (p. 40). Martyrdom is not essentially different from Christian discipleship: 'The virtues necessary to be a martyr are no different from the virtues necessary to be a faithful Christian' (p. 60).

Hovey's reading of Mark's gospel uncovers its martyrological core. From the baptism of Jesus to the mystery of the empty tomb, he traces the life of Jesus in Mark's rendition as a pattern for discipleship in the contemporary world. Naturally enough, it is the body of the crucified Christ that is the focal image. The word 'body' is allowed its full ecclesiological reference – hence, to 'share in the body' (as in the title of the book) points not only to the disciple's union with Christ but also to his or her membership in his persecuted Church.

Hovey is effective in explaining what martyrdom is *not*. It is not heroism; nor is it a deliberate making of a statement. It is not an opportunity for a kind of perverse triumphalism. In his final and most stimulating chapter, 'Martyrdom and Promise', Hovey argues astutely that the church must remember its martyrs 'non-instrumentally'. That is to say, martyrdom does not accomplish anything. It is not a strategy to be pursued, but a form that obedience takes in certain circumstances. 'Martyrs do not die in order to make a point' (p. 143).

There is a certain vagueness in Hovey's conception, as there often is in contemporary Protestant theology, regarding the term 'the Church'. It is terminology that allows him to borrow freely from Roman Catholic writers like W.T. Cavanaugh; but one would assume that the two authors mean very different things when they refer to 'the Church'. This imprecision is significant, given the prominence of ecclesiology in the book.

Nonetheless, *To Share in the Body* would make a terrific study book for a small group, prompting prayer and reflection.

*Rev Dr Michael P Jensen, Lecturer in Theology,
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Joshua J Whitfield: Pilgrim Holiness - Martyrdom as Descriptive Witness. Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2009, 134 p., ISBN 13: 978-1-60608-175-4, US\$ 17.00.

For a relatively short book, this publication covers an enormous amount of ground. Whitfield surveys Islamic and secular views of martyrdom, spars with Hegel and Wittgenstein and finds support from Augustine, Kierkegaard, Barth, Yoder, Milbank and a couple of Popes. In addition, he is abreast of most of the recent literature on martyrdom.

Yet this is also a book that draws from a profoundly spiritual conviction about the value of the self-descriptions of the martyrs for the life of discipleship in the postmodern world. Whitfield begins with a pointed, even polemical account of the ways in which Christian martyrdom is ‘policed’ in contemporary liberal secular politics; and enters a plea for voices of the martyrs themselves to be heard ‘within the martyrs’ own horizon of meaning (p. 44):

... in order to discover something approximating a genuine understanding of martyrdom, one should attend to the coherent stories of the martyrs themselves – by definition a subversive act. Simply, this is to listen *to the martyrs*, to believe them for a moment and to test the coherence of their claims with the horizon of the stories that have spoken these martyrs (p. 43).

Whitfield draws attention, therefore, to the early Martyr Acts and the remarkable events that they narrate. Martyrdom, which either makes little sense or appears as an outrage from a secular point of view, when considered christologically turns out to be a witness to eternal peace and radical hope. The martyrs are not heroes, to be considered individualistically, but rather they narrate the story of Israel, Jesus and the Church. Whitfield argues that the christological analysis of martyrdom must also result in a renewal of the ecumenical impetus. He is able to do this, one feels, because he doesn’t consider some of the most famous martyrdoms of the church’s history which were inflicted by one church on another.

So much is packed into this brief book that, at times, important steps in the argument are accomplished with a quick sentence or two. It would be interesting for Whitfield to expand on some of the ideas that he introduces here. The omission of an index is an irritation.

However, *Pilgrim Holiness* is an enormously stimulating, judiciously argued and very timely work.

*Rev Dr Michael P Jensen, Lecturer in Theology,
Moore College, Sydney Australia*

Ajith Fernando: The call to joy and pain. Embracing suffering in your ministry. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books 2007, 191 p., ISBN 9781581348880, US\$ 14.99.

Fernando's book is not a classical work on persecution of Christians. The national director of Youth for Christ in Sri Lanka provides the broader picture: Suffering in all its aspects is an integral part of the Christian calling.

Fernando tries to "follow the biblical practice of not talking about pain without also talking about the blessings of it" (p. 10). Joy is one of the blessings of Christian suffering; but without a proper "theology of suffering" (p. 11), the believer will not be able to experience this joy.

Fernando tries to give a "practical Christian theology of suffering" (p. 11), which he splits up in 30 chapters, designed as readings for one month's personal devotional time. After explaining the fundamental meaning of suffering and its relationship to joy (Part One "Suffering and joy are basic to Christianity") he deals with the personal gain (Part Two: "Suffering brings us nearer to Christ"). Fernando's main focus however is the church: Part Three ("Our Suffering helps the church") proves how suffering Christians add credibility to the church and its message. Part Four ("Servants of the church") is talking about the special burden of sufferings in Christian ministry. It is helpful to embrace the difficult sides of serving other people, like being misunderstood, being disappointed by other Christians or just getting very tired in ministry (p. 161) as genuine Christian suffering with the promise of joy.

Throughout this biblically well grounded study it is obvious that Fernando writes with the very practical background of having led and discipled other Christians for many years. As a non-Western theologian who knows Western Christianity well, he is able to point to one of the blind spots in Western thinking that is more concentrated on "escape from and therapy of suffering" (p. 51) than on proper biblical

teaching on suffering. “I trust that this book will help people look at suffering biblically and by so doing help them to be happy and obedient Christians” (p. 11).

I hope that many Christians in the Western world will read and meditate on their “call to joy and pain”.

Wolfgang Häde, author of “My brother-in-law, a martyr” (German)

Christian devotional books

Emir Fethi Caner & H Edward Pruitt: The costly call. Modern-day stories of Muslims who found Jesus. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2005, 158 p., ISBN 0825435552, US\$ 8.79.

This book presents real testimonies of 16 men and 4 women from 17 countries of 3 continents. It demonstrates various religious perspectives of people in traditional Muslim lands. They are the first-generation believers in Christ, who converted from Islam and kept their Christian faith in the midst of persecution triggered by their defection from Islam. Their stories consistently convey the power of the gospel in experiential way. It enabled each of them to make great sacrifices for their faith and to love all people unconditionally, even their enemies. It emboldened them to risks to share the gospel with their loved ones.

David Witt & Mujahid El Masih: Fearless love. Rediscovering Jesus’ spirit of martyrdom - With meditations of Christ and his love. Greenville, TX: Casscom Media, 2009, 242 p., ISBN 978-0615240336, US\$ 15.00.

A former Pakistani Mujahid, who became a Christian, and now considers himself a “Mujahid for the Messiah”, teamed up with an American pastor who serves the persecuted to teach about martyrdom from a Christian perspective. This 29-chapter-book with questions for group discussions is the material used for their courses. They consider themselves ‘living martyrs’ (witnesses) who rediscovered Jesus’ spirit of martyrdom. This book presents their zeal and heart for the persecuted church. They are contrasting biblical martyrdom (a call to purposeful living and a bold witness of faith) with Islamic martyrdom. From a Christian perspective, the greatest action is ‘love’ which is

willing to sacrifice oneself. This book teaches that fearless love is the tool which God gives to overcome the fear of suffering and death, and that a relationship with Jesus brings us to a growing fearless love.

The Voice of the Martyrs: Heroic faith. How to live a life of extreme devotion. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2008. 176 p., ISBN 978-0785296775, US\$ 11.04.

This book seeks to strengthen Christians to “extreme devotion” and courage in the face of harsh persecution. It demonstrates eight qualities of “heroic faith” and developing devotional life in the face of persecution, such as self-sacrifice, endurance and radical joy in Christ. Each quality is illustrated in a chapter by looking at living examples of heroic faith, serving Christ in persecution. This book challenges Christians to lay down their lives for God and points out steps on how to incorporate these qualities into their own Christ-centered lives.

John Foxe & The Voice of the Martyrs: Foxe. Voices of the martyrs - 33 A.D. to today. Alachua, FL: Bridge-Logos, 2007. 475 p., ISBN 978-0882703305, US\$ 29.95.

In 1559 John Foxe wrote his first collection of martyr accounts from a protestant reformation perspective. But the book of Christian martyrdom was not closed then and religious persecutions and martyrdom are continuing for Christians in many parts of the world until today. This publication is a good update of this classic history of Christian martyrs. In addition to an edited selection of Foxe’s reports and from “The martyr’s mirror”, it presents 200 pages on Christian martyrs up to and including the twenty-first century. A survey of persecution 2000-2006 covers 53 countries in South Asia, Near East and North Africa, Central Asia, Europe, East Asia, Southeast Asia, Africa, and the Americas. Christians in every generation have given witness to their faith in Jesus Christ with the sacrifice of their lives as the Christian martyrs followed the loving example of Christ.

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