



Book Reviews

Book Review: *John Wesley and the Origins of Methodist Missions* by Philip Wingeier-Rayo (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 2025)

This book offers a revealing overview of the history of Methodist missions. Part one begins with an introduction to John Wesley's formation in a Lincolnshire backwater. While this terrain has been well travelled the author provides surprising background information about Wesley's exposure to the wider world through a variety of fascinating sources. These include the impact of testimonies from missionaries serving in Tamil Nadu on Susanna's personal sense of vocation to her children, Samuel's vision to serve in Ethiopia and India, and the general cultivation by the Wesley family of a global intellectual culture in the Epworth wilderness. This account of Wesley's formation is then situated in relation to the wider eighteenth-century missionary context. All this serves to demonstrate that John Wesley's early horizons were much broader than we might first imagine.

From here the book moves to an account of John Wesley's attitude toward mission. However, though he famously declared "The world" to be his 'parish', the author highlights Wesley's hesitancy to engage in overseas mission – given the limited human and financial resources of the movement and, moreover, his reluctance to secede from the Church of England by ordaining priests to serve abroad. Wesley's perception of non-Christian civilisations is also explored. However, the author's suggestion that Wesley's early naivety and prejudice concerning non-European peoples gradually dissipates over time underestimates some of Wesley's more deep-seated prejudices. Nevertheless, this section closes with a robust account of Wesley's theology of mission which is immensely helpful.

The final part of the book examines the life and ministry of a variety of "unheralded" Methodist missionaries. At this juncture the author highlights the role of a mixed bag of sea captains, slave owners and slaves. This powerfully illustrates the character of Methodist expansion in this period. It was not the result of a deliberate centralised strategy but the ad hoc work of people who, as they moved around the world, carried their faith with them. Thus, while Wesley actually visited the slave owner Nathaniel Gilbert in London and baptised his slaves, Mary Alley and Sophia Campbell, this did not lead him to support their work in bringing Methodism to Antigua. However, while this shines a light on the true nature of Methodist witness around the world, Wesley's collusion with slavery is overlooked and Gilbert's involvement in the slave trade is framed contextually: "Gilbert lived in an era before the abolitionist efforts of William Wilberforce" (p. 134).

Similar criticisms might be made of the analysis given to the life and ministry of Thomas Coke. The author rightly contrasts Coke's zeal for overseas mission with Wesley's profound lack of enthusiasm. Moreover, he demonstrates the way in which Coke's unswerving devotion (and personal financial commitment) eventually led the conference to establish formal structures for this important work. Nevertheless, while Coke's concern for the evangelisation of non-European peoples remained steadfast, his collusion with slavery frequently led him to preach in plantations on the duty of slaves to obey their masters. Thus, while it is true that Coke was "a product of the eighteenth century" who "lived within the realities of the institution of slavery," (p. 163) his actual conduct is not so easy to explain.

On the whole, however, this work offers an excellent overview of the history of Methodist missions. By platforming the fundamental role played by slaves, migrants, and an array of extra-ordinary women and men this beautiful work has much to teach us today about how those on the margins are the key agents of God's ongoing work, a mission from everywhere to anywhere.

Daniel Pratt Morris-Chapman, Wesley House Cambridge

Book Review: An Ambazonian Liberation Theology? A Theological-Political Response to the Anglophone Crisis in Cameroun by Daniel Pratt Morris-Chapman (Stellenbosch, SUN Press, 2022)

Daniel J. Pratt Morris-Chapman's *An Ambazonian Liberation Theology* offers a timely and courageous intervention in African political theology. Written against the backdrop of Cameroon's Anglophone crisis, the book insists that theology cannot remain neutral in the face of systemic injustice. Pratt Morris-Chapman argues that Scripture must be understood from the context of the ordinary people and, therefore, is inseparable from justice. It should begin with a method that does not ignore the structural oppression of the poor (p. 83).

The study begins with a careful reconstruction of Cameroon's colonial and postcolonial trajectory, tracing the marginalisation of Anglophone Cameroonians from the era of British and French partition through the contested unification process. By situating the 2016 protests of lawyers and teachers within this longer history of disparity in law, education, and governance, Pratt Morris-Chapman demonstrates that the crisis is not episodic but the culmination of entrenched injustice (p. 7).

The book then engages African theological currents. While acknowledging the contributions of inculturation and reconstruction theology, Pratt Morris-Chapman contends that neither adequately addresses contexts of ongoing violence and suppression. Liberation theology, by contrast, provides a framework in which salvation encompasses spiritual redemption, cultural dignity, and political justice (pp. 7–8).

The heart of the work is the articulation of an Ambazonian liberation theology. Drawing on biblical paradigms of exodus and prophetic witness, Pratt Morris-Chapman argues the Anglophone population's plight should be read through the eyes of God's redemptive activity, which encompasses historical liberation from oppressive systems (pp. 87–103). Christians, therefore, cannot retreat into spiritual refuge but must confront both political captivity and spiritual alienation. Particularly striking is his treatment of resistance: while affirming the moral gravity of violence, he refuses to dismiss outright the legitimacy of armed struggle under severe repression, instead calling for communal discernment and theological accountability (pp. 108–112). Pratt Morris-Chapman believes that the solution to the problem should be from a political, economic and psychosocial perspectives (p. 139).

Although not framed as a systematic ecclesiology, the book assumes a prophetic role for the church. Pratt Morris-Chapman warns that Christians will have to help in the reconstruction of society (p. 142). His emphasis on solidarity resonates with John Wesley's vision of social holiness, though readers may note the need for fuller exploration of reconciliation alongside justice.

The book's strengths lie in its grounding of theology in lived suffering, its serious engagement with political ethics, and its expansion of African liberation theology into a relatively underexplored context. At the same time, greater attention to grassroots ecclesial voices would enrich its pastoral dimension. More explicit dialogue with classical Holiness theologians could deepen its account of sanctification and social transformation. Finally, while the case for self-determination is compelling, consideration of alternative political futures such as federalism or mediation would broaden its constructive horizon.

In theology, Pratt Morris-Chapman's most significant contribution is amabazonian identity as a tool for liberation. It offers a means of unifying diverse people (p. 112). In this framework, it resists the forces of domination (p. 112). The book thus challenges Christians to articulate how perfect love is expressed in contexts of political crisis.

An Ambazonian liberation theology is a bold and necessary work. It situates theology within the lived realities of oppression, presses Holiness traditions toward justice, and contributes to global conversations in political theology. Its insistence that sanctification cannot be divorced from solidarity marks it as both a gift and a challenge to the contemporary church.

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