

across racial barriers are to be achieved in the Church, there is a need, therefore, to look beyond race. The book is simplistic when it quickly rejects cultural considerations, which go a long way to explain further the tendency towards racial segregation in the Church and wider society (p. 22).

Zimbabweans of today live in a society marked by a plurality of modes of being-in-the-world and unfortunately they lack a theology that provides guidelines for facing up to modernity. To make racism the main framework for interpreting the segregation of Blacks from Whites is thus useful, but only in a limited way. I am not suggesting that colonialism and racism have become redundant areas of scholarship. Instead, I am drawing attention to wider questions about modern African societies, which continue to have divisions and appalling injustice prevail despite the fact that White rule has been eliminated.

Finally, more attention could have been paid to editing. For instance, on page 8 reference is made to 'Paul's sterling and spirited attempt to identify the operative dynamics . . .' This is not a reference to Paul's spirited writings of the New Testament, but the Church historian, Paul Gundani. On page 26, one has to guess that 'the Commission' refers to the Theological Commission of the Catholic Church. Dodge wrote to Ian Smith during the times of Rhodesia in 1966 and not, as stated on page 105, in 1996.

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**Gospel Ferment in Malawi: Theological Essays, Book 2** By Kenneth Ross. Gweru, Mambo Press, 1995, 151 pp., ISBN 086922-615-0.

**Christianity in Malawi, A Source Book, Book 3** Edited by Kenneth Ross. Gweru, Mambo Press, 1996, 253 pp., ISBN 086922-641-x.

These two books, when read together, bring out a composite picture of the Christian history and theology in Malawi, spanning a period of more than a century (1889–1996).

In *Gospel Ferment in Malawi*, Ross begins his theological reflection by analysing the Christian social witness in Malawi since the issuing of the Pastoral Letter of 8 March 1992 up to the holding of the National Referendum in June 1993. For one to understand the thrust of Ross's arguments in this essay, it is necessary to refer to documents 18, 19 and 20 in *Christianity in Malawi*. It is Ross's opinion that the publication of these documents by the largest Christian Churches in Malawi, i.e. the Roman Catholic Church and the Presbyterian Church (CCAP), provides 'grounds for suggesting that the Church, for all its divisions and failures, acted as a liberating force at a key turning point in Malawian history'.

Essays 2 and 3 basically affirm the Church's right to participate in the civic affairs of the country. Ross's reflections on Presbyterian theology and the idea of the kingdom of God lead him to the conclusion that 'the risks and the costs of engaging prophetically in social and political conflict are necessary to the integrity of the Church's witness' and discipleship.

In the remaining essays Ross refreshingly grapples with the theological implications of vernacular translation, church architecture, preaching and the African sense of recreation. These topics also get better amplification when one reads source documents from *Christianity in Malawi*. These include hymns, memoirs, diaries of Christian converts and missionaries, as well as documents that have bearing on matters of the cultural identity of Christians, gender and ministry, as well as independency.

The categories that Ross provided for the documents, and the introduction made before each section and each individual document are of tremendous help to the reader. The introductions help the reader to place the documents in their appropriate historical, socio-cultural, political and missiological contexts. The documents were well chosen to reflect the whole period of Christian presence in Malawi. *Christianity in Malawi* presents an invaluable source that affords the reader an opportunity 'to listen directly and critically to the voices of the past'.

While both books are well conceived and well written I would like to pick out one essay for deeper scrutiny. This is the one entitled 'The theology of hope: A missing link in African Christianity'. I pick out this essay because it purports to represent African Christianity in a generic sense. This is an essay that affirms John S. Mbiti's thesis in his *New Testament Eschatology in An African Background* (1971). For Ross to subscribe uncritically to Mbiti's claims, made over 25 years ago, reflects the kind of cynicism that Ross has of African scholarship. This essay vulgarises the reality of conversion not only in Malawi, but also in the rest of Africa.

Apart from citing Mbiti, Ross does not present reasons for supposing that African Christians, in spite of the long history of the Church's presence, have failed to make a transition from the 'traditional world view' (whatever that means) to the 'Christian world view' (whatever that means) that accommodates a truly Christian eschatology of hope. To imply that African Christianity has to undergo a process of regeneration in the norms that the European Christianity represents is tantamount to claiming absoluteness of Western Christianity and its virtues over other forms of Christianity. One only hopes that Ross has not lost sight of the fact that while the struggle for orthodoxy can surely be defined in terms of historical and cultural specificity, African Christianity does not have to aspire to European orthodoxy.

Another oversight was to leave out a bibliography at the end of *Gospel Ferment in Malawi*. The two books, however, are an important addition to

students and scholars of Christian history and theology in Africa, in particular Malawi.

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**Street Sellers of Zimbabwe Stone Sculpture — Artists and Entrepreneurs**  
*By C. & M. C. Kileff.* Gweru, Mambo Press, 1996, 68 pp., Illustr., ISBN 0-86922-637-1, Z\$96.

This short work is unusual among the growing literature on Shona stone sculpture in two ways. It is written by an anthropologist rather than an art critic; and it deals with artists selling on the streets and generally unknown, even despised, by the professional critics.

The first half of the book comprises an introduction to ways in which the works of unknown artists may be sold, principally to tourists, around Zimbabwe. Many of the themes are covered through vignettes of particular artists. The substance of the book is the brief autobiographical profiles given by 14 artists in and around Harare, together with those of three sellers and one White South African artist, who also sells Shona sculpture, in Cape Town. There is a final chapter that questions the distinction between the high art to be found in galleries and the sculptures found on city streets.

In a book of this size the narratives and the analysis are necessarily brief. References are limited, and do not always tally with the bibliography. Nevertheless, the book is welcome for the points it raises. The Kileffs show the importance of the entrepreneurial skills of the artists, and the economic significance of their work in their lives. On the other hand, the narratives of several of the sculptors also show an artistic dedication to their craft. Although stone sculpture is relatively new in Shona history, it can provide an authentic expression of the perceptions of Shona artists. Art is essentially creative. Although carvers presented in this work do borrow ideas and designs from others, they are also innovative at times.

A key issue, which the book opens up rather than resolves, is the relationship between the art of the galleries, and the items sold by street vendors and curio shops. About five percent of sculptors achieve the elite circles of galleries: others are left on the periphery, not necessarily due to lack of talent. The Kileffs present Tago, a sculptor and street seller who commented on the exclusiveness of the elitist galleries. He only managed to get his works into a gallery when they were given to a promoter by a renowned artist.

The book is easy to read and well illustrated, and I recommend it as a refreshing balance to works that emphasize the elite in Shona sculpture.