

particular doctrine of predestination and an unlimited view of atonement, and as such represented 'another Reformed tradition' (p. 81).

Thomas finds this tension in Calvin, arguing that his theology presents an unstable *complexio oppositorum* in that he held to a universal promise of the gospel-offer revealed in God's *voluntas signi* (revealed will), and a belief in God's individual election in his *voluntas secreta* (hidden will). While it is possible to detect a resolution of this tension towards the hidden side, Thomas argues that it was only with Beza's strongly supralapsarian theology that this tension was resolved adequately by Beza's denial of the universal promise of the gospel offer. Thomas argues that in the 17th century, the tension is more explicit in the various deputations of the Synod of Dort, and is most clearly seen in the Amyraldian controversy which Thomas credits as bringing all the latent inconsistencies of the Reformed system to the fore. Thomas concludes, I thought somewhat disappointingly, with a single page on Barth and how his reformulation of election is a positive attempt to resolve these inherent tensions, and how Reformed theologians should give him careful consideration. Indeed it is apparent by the end of the book that because he believes these difficulties to be irreconcilable, Thomas wishes to leave this theological arena he has been surveying in search of a new departure in Reformed theology, Barth being the starting point for such a venture.

Thomas' book is lucid and highly stimulating and in a field which can sometimes seem rather removed and dry, this is a positive feature. Its wide scope is both an advantage and a disadvantage. Because he covers such a wide area, I am not sure whether he can substantiate his claims with the force he does, on this evidence alone, and for those already acquainted with this area of historical theology and with specific individuals in particular, one wonders whether they will be persuaded by a study of this length (for example, Thomas' exposition of Calvin only runs to 24 pages). However it is refreshing to see this whole historical period dealt with as whole, and one can gain a good overview of the characters involved and issues debated in this formative period. With this in mind and noting their close relationship, I found Thomas' book helpful not so much as a piece of historical theology, but as an excellent entry into Reformed systematics. Because he relates the question of the extent of the atonement to other areas

of doctrine, one can discern all the areas of contention in Reformed theology, areas which are just as vigorously debated today as they were three hundred years ago. So often questions like the extent of the atonement are discussed in isolation from other areas. In his thesis Thomas presents a clear theological map of the connections and relationships which need to be made in discussing the extent of the atonement. For me, rather than demonstrating the lack of consensus regarding the extent of the atonement, Thomas' thesis highlights the constant struggle within Reformed theology over firstly, the relationship between limited atonement and the universal free-offer of the Gospel; secondly, the nature of and relationship between the 'two wills of God'; thirdly, the infralapsarian/supralapsarian debate; and fourthly, the relationship between logic/deduction and paradox/mystery in theology. One area which Thomas strangely does not mention and which would aid discussion in the above areas is the distinction between common grace and special grace and their relationship to the work of Christ and the nature of God. Ironically therefore, although Thomas' thesis is primarily centred on a specific question within a specific period of history (1536–1675), I would recommend this book to anyone interested in the complexities and nuances of Reformed theology not only around the time of the Reformation, but in Reformed theology today.

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Christianity and Politics in Doe's Liberia

P. Gifford

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RÉSUMÉ

Cet ouvrage fait partie des « Études de Cambridge sur l'idéologie et la religion ». Elle examine comment la foi chrétienne a été reçue au Libéria, dans la période de 1980 à 1990, sous la dictature de Samuel Doe. L'auteur montre un fondamentalisme qui n'a rien fait pour s'opposer aux ravages d'un régime corrompu : cette sorte de christianisme n'a pas apporté grand-chose pour ce qui concerne le

renouvellement de la société. Il montre l'importance de l'implication américaine, caractérisée à la fois par des desseins impérialistes et une insensibilité de la part des missionnaires à la culture, à l'économie et à la justice. Une étude qui frappe fort et vaut la peine d'être lue.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Die vorliegende Studie, Teil der 'Cambridge Studies in Ideology and Religion', untersucht, welche Rolle der christliche Glaube in Liberia während der Diktatur von Samuel Doe in den Jahren 1980–1990 gespielt hat. Paul Gifford führt uns einen Fundamentalismus vor Augen, der weder dazu beigetragen hat, den Verwüstungen durch ein korruptes Regime entgegenzuwirken, noch die Erneuerung der Gesellschaft zu fördern. Gifford zeigt zudem das Ausmaß des amerikanischen Einflusses auf, der sich sowohl in einer imperialistischen Absicht als auch in einer missionarischen Unsensibilität gegenüber Kultur, Wirtschaft und Fragen der Gerechtigkeit äußerte. Die Studie trifft einen hart, ist aber auf jeden Fall lesenswert.

This book, in just under 350 pages, offers another significant study of how Christian faith is appropriated in the African context. The study also complements the works of South African theologians Charles Villa-Vicencio and John de Gruchy who have contributed to the same series. The work is an analysis and critique of the church's passivity in social politics and of American imperialism in Liberia.

The book consists of an introduction, six main chapters, a conclusion, a select bibliography and an index. Gifford marshals a variety of sources and his footnotes are extensive. Chapter one outlines the historical setting, sketching Liberia's beginnings, the rule of early leaders, especially Presidents Tubman (1944–71) and Tolbert (1971–80), who effectively set the scene for Sgt. Doe's *coup d'état* and his ten year reign of terror. The bulk of the chapter deals with Doe's activities during the period under review and various reactions to his rule. Gifford gives a host of fascinating facts and figures about Liberia and its life under Doe. Further, chapter one helps the reader to conceptualise the extent of American influence in Liberia—a major theme and point of criticism in the book.

The next four chapters (2–5) deal with the churches and their different emphases within Liberian society. Starting with a brief

portrayal of the returned slave situation with a preponderance of Christians, Gifford also sensitises the reader to the various denominational bodies. Of all the mainline churches Gifford indicates that the Roman Catholic community, and particularly certain of its leaders, was the most active in opposing Doe's destructive policies. Gifford draws attention to the educational and social institutions the churches developed—some as joint ventures, others in opposition to one another, thus exacerbating the fragmentation of church communities and emphasising the individualism of western sentiment.

With few exceptions, Gifford portrays the evangelical churches as offshoots or manifestations of American fundamentalism. Due to evangelicalism's so-called antipathy to political involvement, Gifford's material indicates an almost total withdrawal from engaging in the political arena. Gifford, in fact, suggests evangelicalism's tacit support for the status quo, be it for Tubman and Tolbert earlier on, or for Doe during his rule between 1980–90 (see his conclusion on p. 145).

The final chapter, 'The Geopolitical Context' (p. 231–285) gives brief but pithy comments about various ideologies which have fed the religious mindsets discussed earlier in the book. Gifford observes that the 'biblical Christianity' espoused by so many Christians—both national and expatriate—in Liberia, 'was essentially an amalgam of Christian motifs and the values and ethos of Middle America' and that the Bible 'was being used to further economic and political ends' (p. 284–5).

While the title aptly describes the content it does not indicate the wider usefulness of the study and it is possible that the book could thus be overlooked. This would be unfortunate because Gifford's book needs to be read and it needs to be discussed at the widest levels, but especially in missions and evangelism study programmes—whether one ultimately agrees with him or not. It is not a book for the fainthearted or ultrasensitive, however. It is damning in its critique of America's political involvement and its fundamentalism; it does not offer a positive strategy for the church's role in society. I am glad I read the book though, and I recommend it.

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