

Sixteenth-century Mission: Explorations in Protestant and Roman Catholic Theology and Practice, R. L. Gallagher and E. L. Smither

Bellingham WA: Lexham Press. 2021. xix + pp. 370
ISBN 978-168-35946-6

Reviewed by Graham Duncan

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2583-1914>

University of Pretoria

profgrahamduncan@gmail.com

For a long time, I contributed to the belief that the Reformation produced no impetus to missionary activity. I reinforced this view with the misconception that the Reformers were too busy securing and reinforcing their local Reformations to be concerned with what was happening beyond their European interests, and what mission had to contribute to global history, even though global exploration had only begun in the preceding century.

This is a long-awaited and necessary contribution to Reformation and post-Reformation history, which successfully challenges this long-held false assumption. This volume reveals that mission was not only the prerogative of the Reformers but has a distinguished history in the Roman Catholic Church, which predates the Reformations. Seven out of the 16 essays focus on the Catholic contribution, all of which make significant additions to our understanding. For instance, Sigg's essay on *Trinity in a Woman's Soul* uses Jan Hus's work, *Dcerka* (The Daughter) as "an early, foundational text for a gender inclusive holistic mission spirituality" (p.57). As far as breadth of interest is concerned, it covers the Lutheran, Reformed and Anabaptist reformations.

The book also reveals recent developments. The development of World Christianity provides a fresh perspective in the study of the early modern period. It adopts a broad perspective to discuss the re-evangelisation of already Christianised populations as distinct from mission to non-Christians. It also broadens the field of study in an interdisciplinary and inter-ecclesial manner to include social historical research. This obviates the assumption that global mission only began in the late eighteenth century and that prior to that, each nation of Africa and Asia and southern America was a *tabula rasa*.



Studia Historiae Ecclesasticae
<https://unisapressjournals.co.za/index.php/SHE/index>
Volume 48 | Number 2 | 2022 | #11633 | 2 pages

<https://doi.org/10.25159/2412-4265/11633>
ISSN 2412-4265 (Online), ISSN 1017-0499 (Print)
© The Author(s) 2022



Published by the Church History Society of Southern Africa and Unisa Press. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>)

Three main themes underly the book. First, the meaning of mission is located in the Reformation period rather than in the modern period; second, mission in forgotten places; third, strategy in mission. These are as relevant today as they have always been.

This book offers a surprisingly global vision of the church from before the Reformations. It reveals something of the value of communities of faith, early diaspora movements, successes and failures in mission—something which is not normally alluded to as it does not provide good promotional material. In some ways, it is surprising that it has taken so long for a volume such as this to appear. Yet, it is welcomed as a creative addition to our understanding of both the Reformations and mission, and should be widely promoted.