Idara Otu. *Communion Ecclesiology and Social Transformation in African Catholicism: Between Vatican II and African Synod II*. African Christian Studies Series 17.

Eugene, OR, Pickwick Publications, 2020. Pp. xviii + 281. \$36.

This thought-provoking work from Nigerian theologian Idara Otu, MSP, is helpfully written in clear, accessible language and includes a foreword by the late Irish theologian Gerard Mannion. Arguing from the perspective that the mission of the Catholic Church in Africa cannot be separated from lived experience, the author employs the ecclesiological notion of communion to discuss the reception of the doctrinal and social teachings of Vatican II, their interpretation and applications in the first two African synods, and relevant paths of transformation for the Catholic Church in Africa. Otu remains faithful to his goal and provides sufficient analysis to show that communion ecclesiology may have socially transformative implications in the African context.

The book includes four extended chapters preceded by an introduction. Herein Otu interestingly argues that “the concept of *communio* in Latin, *koinōnia* in Greek, or communion in English [which] can be understood as ‘participation,’ ‘fellowship,’ or ‘sharing in common’” may likewise “find expression in the *Nguni* African language idea of *Ubuntu*, which can be described as the vital principle of life revealed through the human community and participation” (8–9). The second chapter explores the biblical basis and meaning of ‘communion ecclesiology,’ including its multi-dimensional features as presented in the conciliar and post-conciliar documents of Vatican II, towards a renewed and transformed understanding of the Church. To examine the reception of the social teachings of Vatican II in Africa, the author analyses the theme *Church as Family*, proposed by the first African Synod; and in chapter three explores *Social Justice as Mission* in the second African synod. Both chapters discuss how the Catholic Church in Africa has attempted to contextualise the social doctrines of Vatican II. The concluding chapter highlights the central thesis and findings of the book: namely, that the social teaching of Vatican II should be ‘contextualised’ and transform church life in any given context. In Otu’s words, “... the church in Africa as a communion of God’s people at the service of African social transformation requires a consistent renewal of missional praxis for continuity in its credible, prophetic, dialogical and effective witness” (241).

Otu’s work is an insightful theological contribution to current African discourse on inculturation hermeneutics. Reading the documents of Vatican II with African eyes requires engagement with the ‘African context’ as an essential subject in the interpretive process. Otu’s work utilizes this approach and provides an in-depth analysis of the reception process of the social teachings

of Vatican II that involves a critical study of the African situation. However, lacking from the study is an analysis of how the outlined principles of the ecclesiological communion are translated into practice in local churches at a grassroots level. Despite this, it is an excellent work on African ecclesiology and a must-read for Roman Catholic church leaders, African theologians, missiologists, seminary formators, lay leaders, and any wishing to deepen their understanding of the contributions of African Catholicism to social transformation on the continent.

George Ossom-Batsa

Associate Professor, Biblical Studies and Mission Studies School of Arts,
Department for the Study of Religions, University of Ghana, Accra, Ghana
gobatsa@ug.edu.gh

Brenda Salter McNeil. *Roadmap to Reconciliation 2.0: Moving Communities Into Unity, Wholeness and Justice*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2020. Pp. 152. \$19.99.

Brenda Salter McNeil's book with a forward by Eugene Cho and contribution by J. Derek McNeil, offers an update to her earlier *Roadmap to Reconciliation* (2015), including a preface and a new chapter on restoration, exploring the unique challenges faced by people of color engaged in reconciliation efforts. While her proposed roadmap can be used for diverse forms of reconciliation, the book focuses specifically on racial and ethnic reconciliation. Over the course of nine chapters and a conclusion, McNeil uniquely redefines reconciliation and genuinely promotes dismantling racial oppression and the colonial legacy. Her work concerns the spiritual formation of diverse communities to heal fractured relationships and restore broken social systems.

McNeil defines reconciliation as a perpetual spiritual process and she powerfully advocates an approach to repairing broken relationships and social systems that is undergirded by a theological vision of diversity. Her process seeks to diminish group animosity and replace deformed societal structures with restorative social patterns. As McNeil observes, this vital work, championed by diverse counter-communities committed to the mission of reconciliation, typically commences through crises which shatter cultural enclaves. Those who retreat to their enclaves forfeit further participation, while those who admit responsibility in the brokenness take action and join the process. McNeil rescues the idea of reconciliation from a white evangelical view, which often demands peace between hostile communities while ignoring the imbalance