
When first published in 1982, David Kessler's *The Falashas* offered an ambitious but flawed reconstruction of the history of this enigmatic people. Unpublished dissertations using oral histories and liturgical materials had already been completed which raised major problems with both his methodology and conclusions. Recent publications have only widened the gap between Kessler's work and most scholarship about the Falashas. It is unfortunate that rather than confronting this challenge by integrating new findings into his narrative and entering into serious dialogue with his critics, he has chosen to reprint a work whose value has only diminished over the past fifteen years.

*Hebrew University of Jerusalem*  
Steven Kaplan

**BANANA, Canaan Sodindo, Politics of Repression and Resistance, Face to Face with Combat Theology**, Gweru, Mambo, 1996, xiii, 335 pp., 086922 650 9

A book by Canaan Banana, discussing the history of Zimbabwe as this one does, is an important event and deserves to be read with much interest but also great discernment. The author is offering 'an insider's perspective' as he deals with events in most of which he has been personally involved both as a christian minister and as a prominent statesman. But here he intends to speak as an academic with whom colleagues should feel free to engage critically in dialogue. The overarching topic is the role of the churches, especially the Methodist one to which the author belongs, in Zimbabwe's political developments in the two periods: from UDI in 1965 to Independence in 1980, and from 1980 to 1995. Throughout the 10 chapters there is evidence that the author has drawn on rich sources of information: published works as well as unpublished ones including both state and church archives, and also a few interviews with a number of people in Harare and Bulawayo in 1996. For those who are acquainted with Zimbabwe's history, there will probably be very little that is really new. But interest will centre on the author's interpretations and reflections, not least on those controversial events, e.g. the Internal Settlement (ch. 7) and the Security Problems of 1982-1988 (and other issues, cf. ch. 8) during which the author was among the leading protagonists. A virtual outsider like the present reviewer
can only admire the degree of integrity with which the author reviews the divergent, often conflictual, positions and motivations, and does not hesitate to take the blame where necessary.

By its title the book seems to promise to address two main issues: the politics of repression and resistance, and what it calls ‘combat theology.’ The first one deals really with the struggle of the (Methodist) church in coming to terms with its ‘dual mandate’: the duty of ministering effectively for the benefit of both the black and the white constituencies in the context of the national struggle against racism and colonial domination. The final verdict seems to be that the ‘church’ continually failed its black constituency because it could not get itself to condemn unequivocally the unjust colonial system, of which its white constituency was beneficiary. The reason seems to be that, on the one hand, ‘the church’ was itself dominated by white leaders, most of whom had difficulty seeing matters differently from the colonial government and the white settler community, while on the other, black church leaders, with few exceptions, were not in a position to champion too openly the black nationalist cause. The case is argued reasonably well. But one wishes there was a more rigorous analysis of the ‘dual mandate’ and that clear answers were given to some intriguing questions. It was not only the Methodist church that was saddled with this problem of a dual mandate: the Anglican, Lutheran, United Congregational, and even the Roman Catholic churches had it too. What accounts for the Roman Catholic church consistently acting in a different way? Was it perhaps because the leadership there was mostly a celibate, mobile, and preponderantly non-British group? There is a problem too with the analysis being concentrated on what the church leadership thought or did; might there not have been new insights if more account had been taken of the ordinary members? The book seems to assume that the problems involved in the dual mandate could begin to be addressed by fighting racism in the church through such tactics as ‘integration,’ ‘united worship,’ and overcoming ethnic barriers. This is a tall order; but more pertinently, it begs the questions: what exactly is integration, and how can it solve the problem of racism? Do these recommendations really address the root problems inherent in the dual mandate?

The mention of ‘combat theology,’ coming from the author of Theology of Promise (1983) and Come and Share (1991), sounds like a promise to offer new theological insights going beyond those in the earlier essays. It comes as a bit of a let-down when this interesting theme is given only an 8-page treatment coming as an appendix at the end of the book. There is an effort to equate combat theology with the ‘prophetic