

social – order. It earned Ramsey considerable opprobrium from a wide variety of persons both within and outside the Church, even as it proclaimed a fundamentally catholic vision of the Church as the Body of Christ. From the *Honest to God* controversy and structural reform of the Church of England to Anglican-Methodist unity and ecumenical relationships with the Roman Catholic Church, and from homosexuality and abortion to Northern Ireland and Zimbabwe, Webster opens a window on an eventful primacy, reinforced by thirty-five excerpts from the Ramsey papers and Hansard debates. In a comparatively short volume, more than one-third of which is devoted to Ramsey's own words, it seems churlish to complain of omissions, but the relative lack of space accorded to Ramsey's relationships with his fellow bishops is disappointing. While Ramsey's interactions – particularly with such colourful individuals as Mervyn Stockwood of Southwark – are mentioned, this is mostly *en passant* (that Archbishop Donald Coggan of York, Ramsey's eventual successor, is mentioned only twice in the text is striking) but perhaps it merely reflects the splendid isolation in which Ramsey actually functioned. This is, however, a minor point and does not detract from the value of Webster's work for scholars of late twentieth-century Anglicanism and of the ecumenical movement more generally.

DURHAM UNIVERSITY

JEREMY BONNER

Text and authority in the South African Nazaretha Church. By Joel Cabrita (International African Library, 46.) Pp. xx + 402 incl. 3 frontispieces and 10 figs. London: International African Institute/Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014. £65. 978 1 107 05443 1
JEH (67) 2016; doi:10.1017/S0022046916000099

Over the years the Nazaretha, or the Nazareth Baptist Church, one of the largest independent Churches in Southern Africa, has held fascination for scholars, starting with the Swedish Lutheran bishop Bengt Sundkler in the 1940s. This fascination stems particularly from its perceived 'syncretism' with Zulu pre-Christian religion and its promotion of African traditional values within the context of an Evangelical background. Scholars, particularly Western theologians, have branded the Nazaretha 'post-Christian' and a bridge back to African traditional religious practices. This view was seen especially in the earlier works of Sundkler and those of the South African Dutch Reformed theologian G. C. Oosthuisen, but, as Joel Cabrita points out in this fine study, has permeated the literature on African independency ever since. The Nazaretha Church is arguably the most researched religious movement in Africa, certainly in South Africa, where there are thousands of African Independent Churches. One of the reasons that this has been a ready subject for research is the Church's willingness to be accessible to outside researchers. Indeed, Cabrita herself has taken advantage of the movement's readiness to be examined, especially through its archives and copious sacred writings. In this study she presents a new perspective, examining the Church from the angle of its connections with Protestant Christianity and revivalist movements in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and stressing the importance of the written texts associated with the development of this movement.

The Church began in the early twentieth century with the remarkable ministry of its founder Isaiah Shembe in the region now known as KwaZulu Natal. Shembe was undoubtedly affected by the Evangelical revivalism of the time, particularly found in the movements of Zionism and that of the Pentecostals and Apostolics. But it is one thing to trace this part of the history of Isaiah Shembe as Cabrita does so carefully in chapter iii; it is quite another task to show the development of the movement far beyond its Evangelical, and some might argue biblical, beginnings. This book does that superbly. Towards the end of his life Shembe began to employ young and educated scribes to write down his sermons and accounts of his activities, texts that soon were accorded the status of sacredness, especially after Isaiah's death in 1935, when he was also accorded divinity and the Church began to rely more on African tradition. Since Isaiah's death and that of his successor and son Johannes Galilee Shembe in 1976, the movement has been torn by schism and turmoil, sometimes violently so. Recourse has been made to the courts for redress of disputes. Many of the Nazaretha texts were later published by western scholars in academic presses. These texts and their amanuenses continue to play a significant role. Authoritative texts are used to validate both a particular leader's authority and his legitimacy against challenges, beginning with Johannes Shembe, who lacked some of his father's charismatic gifting. Johannes's death resulted in an immediate schism between his brother Amos and his son Londa, and after the death of both these in 1995 and 1989 respectively, the movement continues to be racked with dissention.

This is a combination of cultural history and ethnography with a detailed textual study of Nazaretha sacred texts. It represents what is perhaps the most comprehensive history of the movement to date, interspersed with fascinating insights into the role of texts, including both that of the Bible and, increasingly, those attributed to its leaders with similar authority. One of the most interesting parts from my perspective is the links that it demonstrates between the early Nazaretha Church under Isaiah Shembe and Evangelical missionary Christianity. This is not strictly a chronological history, however, and the chapters are arranged thematically. Historians may wish for a more ordered history than is scattered throughout this book, but the broad sweep of the study is certainly impressive and it will be an authoritative text on the Nazaretha for many years to come. Politically, the Church aligned itself with the Zulu royal family (albeit in some tension with rivalling claims to loyalty) and with the emerging Zulu cultural and political movement Inkatha. In more recent years, with Inkatha's loss of support, the Church has moved into the orbit of the African National Congress, and the three South African presidents since 1994 (Mandela, Mbeki and Zuma) have all visited Nazaretha church functions, thus acknowledging the Church's political significance. From a theological perspective, the claims of divinity for the leaders of the Church and the practices of their followers may not have been sufficiently critiqued, and the suggestion that the Church is to be understood as 'Evangelical' or even that it is 'deeply shaped by the influence of global Evangelical networks' (p.109) leaves more questions than answers. So too, Cabrita's suggestion that Isaiah Shembe was unique and different in his healing practices (pp.158–9, 170) needs modification, for the healing practices of contemporaneous African Christian prophets with at least as large followings, Engenas Lekganyane in the

north of South Africa and Simon Kimbangu in the Belgian Congo, displayed similar characteristics, using the biblical text and the healing ministry of Jesus as their point of reference. The same could be argued for many African healers who have emerged since. Nevertheless, this is compelling reading with a wealth of information. The religious historiography of South Africa owes an enormous debt to Cabrita and will be forever changed after this publication, which I unreservedly commend.

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

ALLAN H. ANDERSON