

## ***Between Worlds: German Missionaries and the Transition from Mission to Bantu Education in South Africa*, by L Chisolm**

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### **Reviewed by Graham A Duncan**

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

University of Pretoria, Faculty of Theology, South Africa  
[graham.duncan@up.ac.za](mailto:graham.duncan@up.ac.za)

This book adds to the growing literature on Bantu education and its effects, compared with the mission education which preceded it. It highlights the injustice of the process and its effects, despite the need for reform of education in South Africa at the time the Nationalist Party came to power in 1948. The German Hermannsburg Mission was one of a number of missions that had to come to terms with the imposition of Bantu education. This work focuses on the reasons for and the manner in which change occurred.

Following an introductory chapter, the author introduces the terms of transnational cooperation involving the Hermannsburg missionaries in education. The following chapter describes the challenges in education in 1953, focusing on the Bethel Mission. Chapter three discusses the theme of chiefs, missionaries and communities as they engaged with the Department of Bantu Education. The scene moves in chapter four to the Natal Mission. The subsequent chapters then deal with curriculum, language, textbooks and teachers; the transition of Umpumulo Teacher Training College to a theological seminary; trans-nationalism and Black Consciousness; the educational engagement in Bophutatswana; Inkatha and the Hermannsburgers; and finally, transitions through the mission.

What is particularly interesting—in the context of compliance with the Bantu education system—was the ability of teachers to defy the system by introducing progressive child-centred methods of teaching while concurrently working with the authorities. Christel Bodenstein is a good example of someone inspired by the best in progressive methods



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of Pestalozzi and Froebel in Europe, and she is regarded as a pioneer of constructivism in South African education.

The transition from mission education to Bantu education was not a smooth process. It was, in the closing words of the author, “irreducibly unpredictable and contingent” (p. 187). Hence it was open both to adherence to the law and to challenges of the system—directly and indirectly. This book is worthy of careful study, for it demonstrates the innovative ways in which an essentially conservative mission overcame the strictures of an evil system that was designed to prevent the majority of South African school children from achieving their full potential; it inadvertently prepared the way for significant changes that began in 1990.