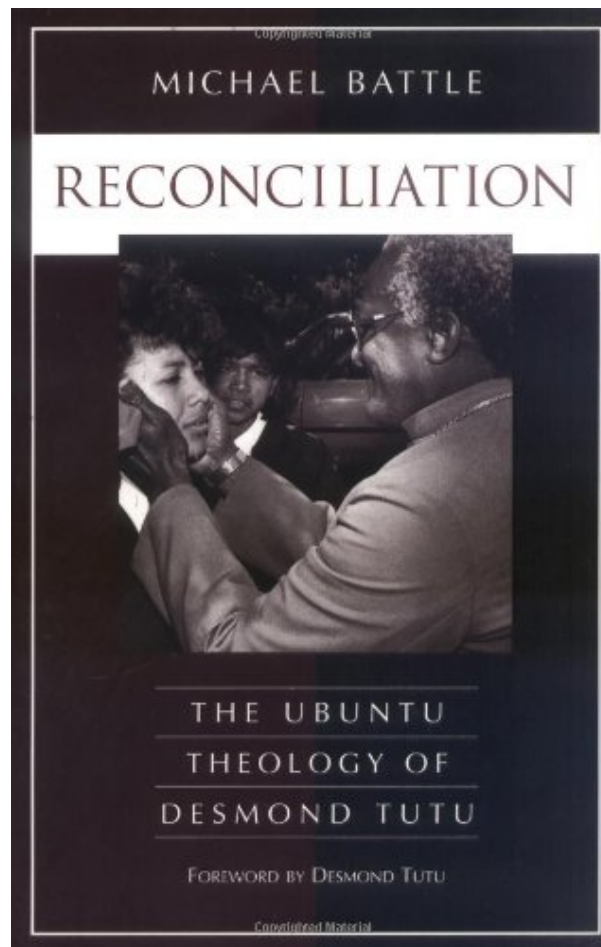
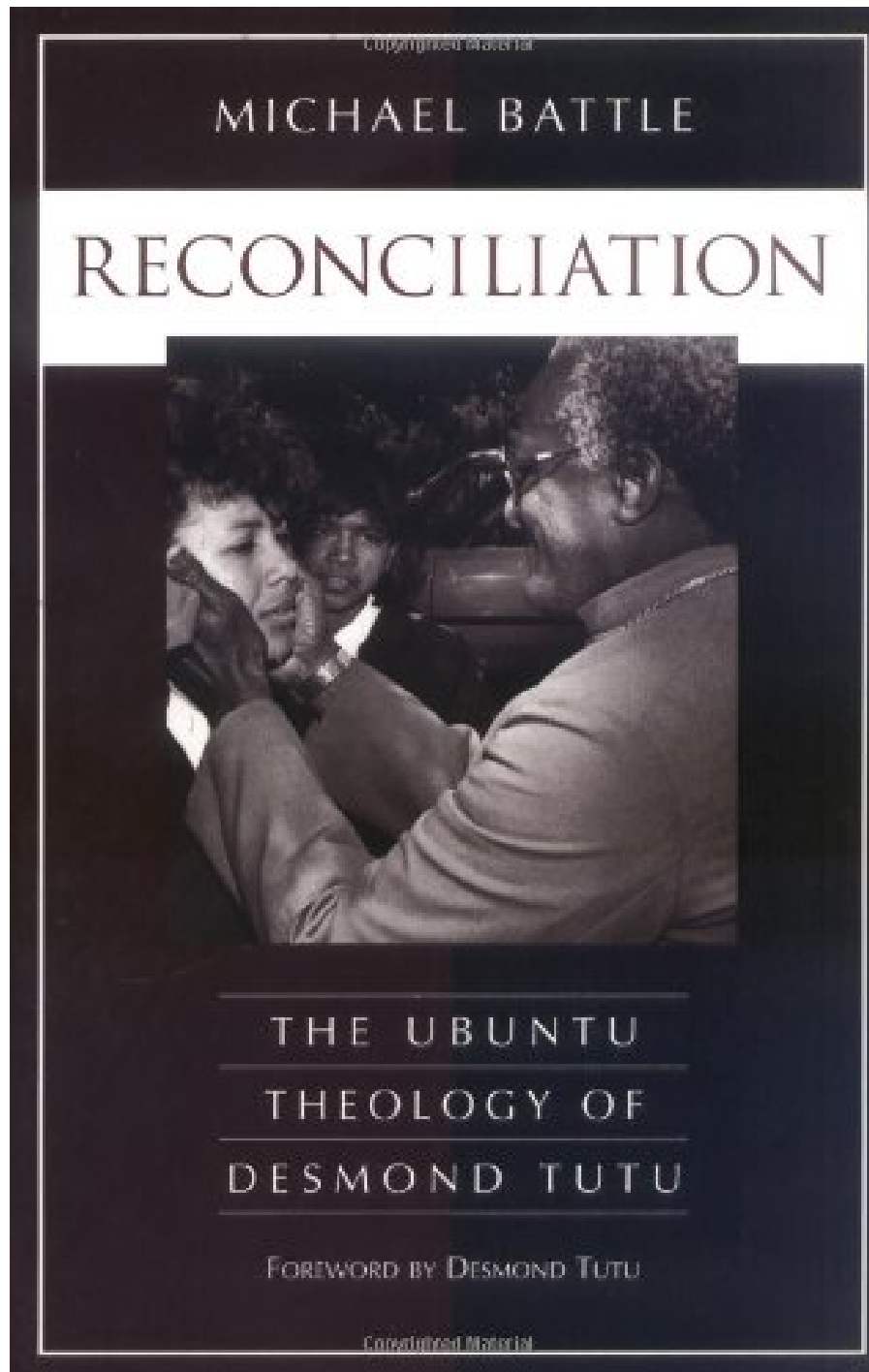


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A highly original analysis of Bishop Tutu's theology of ubuntu, an African concept that identity is formed by community, Battle draws on Tutu's many unpublished addresses and sermons to portray a man for whom the conventions of Anglicanism serve as roots and resources in the ongoing struggle against apartheid. Foreword by Desmond Tutu.

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A much needed corrective to rampant individualism

By Kerry Walters

Christianity in North America and Europe tends to buy into the Enlightenment ethos of "enlightened self-interest" and "rational individualism." The individual as free agent is the starting point for thinking about society, and this of course reduces community to little more than a collection of individuals who come together out of self-interest. A Christianity saturated with this way of thinking about the relation between persons and society tends to focus too much on individual salvation and individual sin and too little on the Kingdom of God as communitarian ideal, collective salvation, and corporate sin.

The underlying principle of Archbishop Tutu's Christian ethics is the African notion of "ubuntu." Ubuntu is a difficult word to translate, but it connotes community, with the understanding that it's impossible to isolate persons from community, that there's an organic relationship between all people such that when we see another, we should recognize (an important word for Tutu) ourselves and the God in whose image all people are made. Interdependence and reciprocity, not independence and self-sufficiency, are the keys here. As Tutu magnificently says, "A self-sufficient human being is subhuman. I have gifts that you do not have, so consequently, I am unique--you have gifts that I do not have, so you are unique. God has made us so that we will need each other. We are made for a delicate network of interdependence." (p. 35)

Michael Battle, an African-American theologian who lived and worked for a while in South Africa, has written a comprehensive and lucid account of Tutu's understanding of ubuntu. He carefully explores its ethical, theological, and spiritual implications for Tutu and, by association, for contemporary Christianity. Battle is generous in his quotes from Tutu, but he also provides insightful commentary on Tutu's words. Strongly advised for anyone wishing to explore Christian social ethics. I recommend it be read along with Bishop Tutu's *No Future Without Forgiveness.*

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

The philosophy of life

By K. E.

I'd recently heard of the concept of "Ubuntu" and being a healer and mom it resonated with me so much that I thought I'd like to read about it. The idea that what you do for yourself is not as fulfilling as the sharing of the collective hits home for me. In our house we dedicate ourselves to loving, sharing, overcoming the natural tendencies of selfishness to find true joy.

In my life I share myself with my children, husband, family, friends. When they do well I am happy for them. It was shocking to me the way my husband's sister (ostensibly a progressive) took her brother's inheritance as her own (and now is grossly obese, and probably won't live as long as she could-but that's Cnorher story). Following the philosophy of Ubuntu, she would have shared generously to her brother and his children-been equitable and even over generous to the one she loved. Perhaps then she would be fit, healthy and most importantly, have more live of her brother, his wife, and their children. Because family and blood are a deep connection-almost karmic and until that is healed and made right, there is no peace nor health.

I love Ubuntu! I will strive to incorporate this idea and philosophy into my life every day.

9 of 13 people found the following review helpful.

Tutu's Reconciliation Theology

By FRANK AMBUHL

The author, a prominent Episcopalian African-American theologian, was in residence with and understudied Desmond Tutu during the years that ended apartheid in South Africa and brought in Nelson Mandela as President. He was, therefore, in a unique position to learn the underlying philosophy and theology that led to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa, a major reason for the peaceful transition to full democracy and the avoidance of the blood bath that many had expected.

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