

- 10 See 'St. Paul and the Judaizers: A Dialogue', repr. in *The Ministry of The Spirit*.
- 11 *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church* (World Dominion Press, 1960), p. 82.
- 12 *Missionary Principles* (World Dominion Press, 1964), p. 21.
- 13 *Ibid.*, p. 90.
- 14 *The Ministry of the Spirit*, p. 50.
- 15 *Ibid.*, p. 57.
- 16 *Ibid.*, p. 137.
- 17 *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?*, p. 120.

### Bibliographical Note

Roland Allen's major works have been reprinted in recent years by World Dominion Press in the U.K. and Eerdmans Publishing Company in the U.S.A. and are listed in the Select Bibliography of Christian Missions contained in this issue of the *Journal*. For a complete bibliography see Charles Chaney, 'Roland Allen: The Basis of his Missionary Principles and his Influence Today', *Occasional Bulletin* of the Missionary Research Library (3041 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10027, U.S.A.), May 1963.

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## Review

**CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES AND THE CREATION OF NORTHERN RHODESIA, 1880-1924.** By R. I. ROTBERG. (Princeton University Press; Oxford University Press, 1965). Pp. xi, 240. \$6.50, 52/-

**Reviewed by J. K. Howard**

The influence of the Christian Church upon the various countries in which its Gospel has been proclaimed has proved, over the centuries, incalculable. In this new book Mr. Rotberg attempts to assess this influence with relation to Northern Rhodesia (or, as it is today, the Republic of Zambia) from the period of earliest European contact with the Bantu peoples of the area until the British South Africa Company relinquished its rule and the territory became a British Protectorate under direct rule from Whitehall in 1924. The field of such a survey is immense, and as a professional historian the author should have been well aware of the impossibility of doing justice to such a task in less than 150 pages of text. The overall impression of the book is 'bitty'; it tends to make one feel that it is little more than a hasty compilation of facts; quotation is piled upon quotation, and his judgments—and especially the religious insights—are consistently superficial. Nonetheless, there is much of value in the book, especially his chapters on 'Christian Authority and Secular Power' and 'The Growth of Secular Initiative'.

A well-known and respected missionary once remarked to me that more money and man-power had been spent by the Church on Northern

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Rhodesia per head of population than in any other mission field, and with fewer spiritual returns. This may be an over-statement, but Mr. Rotberg's book makes clear some of the reasons why such a judgment could ever have been made. It is, as the book makes clear, one of the tragedies of Christian work in Northern Rhodesia that Christianity was all too often, by the missionaries themselves, equated with Western ideals and outlooks, and later with Western imperialism. This was true right up to the end of the colonial era; most mission stations, including those of the Christian Brethren, had the Union Jack fluttering above them. I have seen on Brethren stations photos of the Queen on the walls, but not one Scripture poster. Mr. Rotberg, with a certain amount of that 'holier than thou' attitude which is so often a feature of American writing on colonial matters, highlights the basic issue. Those who imagine that the Brethren missionaries were above secular politics and the miserable intrigues of white colonialists against the Bantu chiefs would do well to read the tragic story of the founding of Johnstone Falls mission on p. 69. It is small wonder that the Christian worker has today to deal with increasing suspicion and distrust. This is the legacy we have left behind.

The other important matter which is dealt with in the book is the vacuum produced by the deliberate eradication of tribal custom. With their Victorian presuppositions they considered evil virtually everything associated with the tribe, and, therefore, it had to be rooted out, lock, stock and barrel. Quite apart from whether they were right in their basic ideas about the necessary evilness of native customs (and I for one believe they were utterly wrong), in disallowing—in particular among those professing Christianity—certain practices which were basic to the well-being of the social unit, they put nothing in their place. The Bantu were incapable at their stage of social development of understanding and adopting a Western mode of life (I say 'Western' and not 'Christian' deliberately), and with their roots cut they drifted and became lost. The missionaries failed to grasp the concept of 'corporate personality', which is basic in Bantu society as it is in all primitive peoples; and they failed to understand the New Testament concept of the Church as a community. If they had but grasped this latter point, much of the tragedy unfolded in this book might have been avoided. The Christian Church must accept at least some of the blame for the moral decay and delinquency which increasingly marks Bantu life in Central Africa today.

From the technical point of view Mr. Rotberg's orthography is at times odd. It is not correct to write CiBemba in English; it should be written ChiBemba, and the same applies to a number of other languages (p. 48). On p. 20 he speaks of Ndebeleland, but this is on any reckoning an error, since Ndebele is singular. If he wishes to be pedantic he might call it Amandabeleland, but it has been called Matabeleland with general acceptance for at least seventy years. He is right with Barotseland on p. 20, but why Bulozzi on p. 23? Again, on p. 27 the accepted orthography is Xhosa, not Xosa. One could mention several more instances; it is a pity he did not take the trouble to be consistent and correct with his spellings on Bantu names.

On p. 53 Rotberg is just not correct. The White Fathers were just as concerned with adequate living standards as the rest. Further, he misses the basic point that they were a thorn in the flesh of the administration all the time. Most of them were Belgians, Dutch or French and owed no allegiance to the British rule, and often went out of their way to undermine its authority. To have this sort of running sore in the middle of a community, especially in the state of development of Northern Rhodesia then (and for that matter Zambia today), naturally produces grave possibilities. For all its faults the British system never produced a Congo.

The author's concept of the 'creed' of the distinctively evangelical mission groups is something of a parody (p. 77), and it is in this field that his judgments are most at fault. Again, it is not true that originally the U.M.C.A. was a High Church group, although it is today. His delineation of the missionaries (Appendix II) is somewhat hard, although it must be conceded that a good many were poorly qualified, which may have been one factor in producing the 'beggar on horseback' type of situation. The biographical notes on various missionaries are too short to be very useful and are at times inaccurate, not so much by errors of commission but omission.

There are a great deal of other points which one could take up: the problem of tribal dancing, discipline on the mission station, and so forth. There clearly had to be some sort of discipline on the mission stations; and although it was, as Rotberg points out, at times excessive, it has to be understood against the viewpoint of the time and the savage and often arbitrary discipline of the tribe. This the author has completely misunderstood, and one feels deliberately so, since his ultimate purpose of the denigration of the missionary effort in Northern Rhodesia is clear from the beginning. The real problem was the development of mission stations at all, not the discipline on them.

In spite of these criticisms, however, this is a book which all who are interested in the task of the Christian Church overseas should read. His conclusions in his Epilogue, although perhaps overstated, are nonetheless broadly valid; and it is only against the background of this early situation in such countries that the present troubles in Africa can be seen in their true perspective. In view of the attitude of the Christian Church and its general tendency to be identified with the forces of social reaction, it is small wonder that militant African Nationalism is increasingly anti-Christian in its bias. Let us also remember that the Christian Brethren do not have clean hands in this regard.

It is unfortunate that such a valuable book as this should be priced out of the range of the average pocket; \$6.50 or 52 shillings for less than 150 pages of text is extortionate.

(Some of the members of the Fellowship may be interested in Mr. Rotberg's article, 'The Plymouth Brethren and the Occupation of Katanga, 1886-1907', *The Journal of African History*, 4 (1964): 285-297. W.G.)