

important role in African education. Dr Zvobgo considers this matter in all its aspects: government subsidies, organisation, reforms, etc.

The ministry of healing was also a means of carrying into Africa the total salvation of body and soul, as Christ had done. It was a very convincing way to evangelise. So missionaries opened hospitals, dispensaries and clinics. Initially Africans had no confidence in White doctors. Later on the missionaries gained the confidence of Africans by gentleness supported by spectacular cures, and missionaries took advantage of this confidence by ministering to their spiritual needs at the same time.

In the last chapter, the author presents some statistics, which show the growth and expansion of Christianity in Zimbabwe. Of interest is that ordained ministries among the Africans, in spite of the stringent rules, began to appear in almost all the denominations from 1924 on: in the Catholic church, however, the first two priests were ordained only in 1947.

Dr Zvobgo offers us a very useful book on how to know and understand the Christian history of Zimbabwe, which will be an essential basis for further investigation. It is a precious contribution to the history of Africa, and in particular to that of Zimbabwe, which cannot ignore the role played by the churches and their missionaries. Churches have always brought to Africa the equilibrium for harmonious development. The author shows skill and balance in his presentation. Sometimes we would like to see more interpretation, and criticism of the events.

Istituto Storica della Compagnia di Ges
Via dei Penitenzieri, Roma, Italy

FRANCISCO A. CORREIA, S. J.

Politics of Repression and Resistance: Face to Face with Combat Theology
By Canaan Sodindo Banana. Gweru, Mambo Press, 1996, 335pp., ISBN 0-86922-650-9.

Racism among Whites is used to justify what Banana calls a 'combat theology'. He writes,

... missionary motives were often at variance with the economic interests of their Governments, but this in no way detracts from the fact that European Churches often shared the same attitude of superiority towards the beliefs, values, customs and traditions of the peoples of lands being colonised.

Banana provides a detailed account of the responses of the Church to the challenge to remove White supremacist policies. He articulates well the complex relationship between Church and State in politics, against the background of a war of liberation in which Banana himself took part as both Church leader and politician.

Following Linden's example of a study of the Catholic Church,¹ Banana pays much attention to those Christians in the history of the Methodist and other Churches who opposed racism. Banana refers to the 'double mandate' of the Church in Rhodesia. By this he means first, the way in which the Church acquiesced to the demands of the State to educate Africans to become good subjects in a colonial state. Second, he refers to the way in which the Church had the responsibility to challenge the State that oppressed Blacks.

It is important to note the historical orientation of Banana's book, in particular, the attention paid to the fight between Whites and Blacks in the second *Chimurenga*. Banana provides a useful historical account of how individuals and groups of Christians resisted White oppression. We might question Banana's depiction of the historical survey of Church reactions to racism as a 'combat theology'.

There is a whole spectrum of liberation theologies in the third world that are movements of protest against oppression, espoused along the lines of class in Latin America, race in North America and with women in mind in both the third and first world. These theologies might help the reader understand the meaning of a combat theology. Given that there was a war of liberation in Rhodesia, Banana identified a terminology which highlights the need to counter White racism. The book gives the impression that the religious sector masterminded a clearly organised religious 'war' of liberation from White supremacist policies and simultaneously developed a clearly discernible theology. This in fact is more than what the Church did by sporadically raising voices of resistance to the oppression of Blacks. Moreover, the wider society was already caught up in a war against oppression, whether Christians agreed or not.

Since the aim of the Church in opposing government policies in Banana's book is to promote 'a lasting spirit of racial tolerance' (p. 27), the term 'combat theology' sounds awkward. The word 'combat' connotes a confrontation in which there must be a winner. In contrast, Banana draws attention to a necessary dialogue within a community whose aim is to encourage harmonious relations among the different adherents of the same Christian religion. Key to Christianity is the figure of Jesus who has already died for the sins of all and risen in victory.

To this day, there are differences in behaviour between Christians from a European background and African Christians. Banana speaks of 'the illusion of perceived notions of self-importance' among people of the colour White. Besides this, there are cultural and linguistic issues which are key to our understanding of the differences between White and Black since the dawn of British imperial rule. If lasting harmonious relations

¹ Ian Linden (1980) *The Catholic Church and the Struggle for Zimbabwe* (London, Longman).

across racial barriers are to be achieved in the Church, there is a need, therefore, to look beyond race. The book is simplistic when it quickly rejects cultural considerations, which go a long way to explain further the tendency towards racial segregation in the Church and wider society (p. 22).

Zimbabweans of today live in a society marked by a plurality of modes of being-in-the-world and unfortunately they lack a theology that provides guidelines for facing up to modernity. To make racism the main framework for interpreting the segregation of Blacks from Whites is thus useful, but only in a limited way. I am not suggesting that colonialism and racism have become redundant areas of scholarship. Instead, I am drawing attention to wider questions about modern African societies, which continue to have divisions and appalling injustice prevail despite the fact that White rule has been eliminated.

Finally, more attention could have been paid to editing. For instance, on page 8 reference is made to 'Paul's sterling and spirited attempt to identify the operative dynamics . . . ' This is not a reference to Paul's spirited writings of the New Testament, but the Church historian, Paul Gundani. On page 26, one has to guess that 'the Commission' refers to the Theological Commission of the Catholic Church. Dodge wrote to Ian Smith during the times of Rhodesia in 1966 and not, as stated on page 105, in 1996.

University of Zimbabwe

ISABEL MUKONYORA

Gospel Ferment in Malawi: Theological Essays, Book 2 By Kenneth Ross. Gweru, Mambo Press, 1995, 151 pp., ISBN 086922-615-0.

Christianity in Malawi, A Source Book, Book 3 Edited by Kenneth Ross. Gweru, Mambo Press, 1996, 253 pp., ISBN 086922-641-x.

These two books, when read together, bring out a composite picture of the Christian history and theology in Malawi, spanning a period of more than a century (1889-1996).

In *Gospel Ferment in Malawi*, Ross begins his theological reflection by analysing the Christian social witness in Malawi since the issuing of the Pastoral Letter of 8 March 1992 up to the holding of the National Referendum in June 1993. For one to understand the thrust of Ross's arguments in this essay, it is necessary to refer to documents 18, 19 and 20 in *Christianity in Malawi*. It is Ross's opinion that the publication of these documents by the largest Christian Churches in Malawi, i.e. the Roman Catholic Church and the Presbyterian Church (CCAP), provides 'grounds for suggesting that the Church, for all its divisions and failures, acted as a liberating force at a key turning point in Malawian history'.