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BOOK REVIEWS


A thorough reading of the previously almost untouched 'E' (European Education) series of correspondence files in the National Archives enables Challiss not only to construct a convincing narrative but also to explore the political, economic and social aspects of early European education.

Challiss shows how education was crucial to the maintenance of settler economic and political power. While substantial revenues from the Rhodesian Government, private funds and the support of the Imperial Government were all appropriated for White education (pp. 5–17, 28–42, 84–95), African education received paltry state support and 'the course of African education was diverted in the period 1914–23 from progression towards secondary schooling and sophisticated technical training into a simplified kind of instruction that was considered to be most suitable for African aptitudes, abilities and needs' (p. 37). Furthermore, construction and maintenance of a comprehensive European education system depended very much on the exploitation of African labour (pp. 67–83).

In the course of seeking to maintain White supremacy and Empire loyalty Rhodesian schools developed a particularly racist, militaristic and jingoistic ethos (pp. 21–3, 26–8, 49–57, 57–66). A significant feature of the development of European education in Zimbabwe, manifestations of which can still be seen in government 'A' and exclusive private schools today, was the early injection of British ruling class 'Public School' values and institutions into schools (pp. 53–6).

Challiss's analysis of the curriculum of European schools (pp. 96–9) is sketchy, establishing only that academic subjects vastly outweighed technical subjects. His examination of some aspects of the relationship between education and White racism (pp. 57–66) is more satisfactory, providing useful insights into the fears that underlie racism and into the complete failure of early European education to counter those fears.

Although Challiss's monograph is far superior to the superficial and ideological work he so acerbically and effectively criticizes in his footnotes, I find one major flaw in it, and that is its lack of a sufficiently developed theoretical framework. This inadequacy pervades the monograph and a proper critique of it would involve a more extended analysis than is possible here. A single example will have to serve as illustration.

In describing the establishment of European education Challiss refers to the speed with which European schools were taken over by the state and to the role played in this by the first two Directors of Education (pp. 10–12). His analysis would have been more profound, and of greater use to contemporary educators, if he had used the concepts of state and ideology. Challiss would then have been able to show that it was the nature of the settler state that determined the role played by government in relation to both European and African education throughout the colonial period, and that the ideology of educators—the way educators explained and justified their actions—played a very important part in the creation of educational policy. Today, of course, the nature of the independent state and the ideology of educators, both of which reflect the class structure, continue to shape
the direction of education. Given Zimbabwe’s professed goal of building a democratic socialism, the most disturbing aspect of current debate on education in Zimbabwe is the almost complete absence of class analysis and the consequent failure to develop a coherent socialist education strategy. Histories such as the one reviewed here have an important contribution to make to the development of such an analysis and strategy, but only if they use sharper, more committed, concepts.

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G. Foley


Dr Ngara’s book is a welcome addition to the Zambeziana Series as it is the first work in the series which examines issues of language in Zimbabwe.

The phrase ‘issues of language’ bespeaks an enormously wide range of topics and problems. Dr Ngara begins with a discussion of bilingualism, that is, the relationship between languages in contact within a particular boundary (here, Zimbabwe) and the problems of acquiring two or more languages for the individual member of a community. This is followed by a survey of the language situation in the country itself with some interesting observations from the writer’s 1975 study on the attitudes to language of Black teenage students. Clearly the war for national independence created a growing awareness of a linguistic and cultural identity with Shona, although, as a counterbalance to this, the study records a positive attitude to a neutral world language like English.

The central chapters of the book discuss the specific linguistic and learning problems for the Shona student in learning English. The contrastive studies of Shona/English phonology and grammar are the first easily accessible accounts of these subjects and should provide language teachers and laymen with a valuable reference source. To the linguist, these chapters are a spur to deeper study.

Languages in contact inevitably influence each other’s development in every aspect of the linguistic systems from phonetics to semantics. Ngara introduces and analyses the important principles of ‘penetration’, ‘interlarding’ (for example, when a Shona speaker is so accustomed to using particular phrases of English that he cannot avoid using them in his first language) and the idea of ‘alternation’ which is ‘an advanced form of interlarding where the bilingual introduces so much English that it may be difficult to tell whether he is speaking Shona or English’ (p. 97). There are some interesting examples:

- *Hwahwa hunopinda* right through
- *Vanhu vacho vari* devoid of sense *ambuya*
- *Iye ndiye* trouble causer

It should be emphasized that from the linguistic point of view these are natural processes of language interchange. They look forward to a future variety of spoken Zimbabwean English in which there may well be so much ‘alternation’ in a speaker’s language that the new variety could in fact assume a separate language identity. Such speculation is of the future but decisions concerning the relationships between our three most widely spoken languages in contemporary Zimbabwe may well affect the kind of language which future generations of Zimbabweans use.
In many respects, Ngara’s book addresses itself to the future. The subtitle ‘Proposals for language use and language teaching in Zimbabwe’ is the culmination of much preceding debate, on the influence and inter-change language resources between Shona, Ndebele and English. As Minister Mutumbuka notes in the foreword they are ‘a good basis for discussion’. Ngara proposes, *inter alia*, as one alternative, that Shona and Ndebele should be regarded as our national languages and accorded official status while English would remain the language of international communication and the prime medium of higher education, while a second alternative would be to regard the majority language, Shona, as the one national language. As far as classroom communication is concerned he proposes that English should be introduced in gradual stages so that it would only be a medium of communication at secondary level. Clearly the medium of teaching at primary level would be in the child’s mother tongue.

Many problems would obviously require careful analysis before such proposals could be successfully implemented: the wishes of parents, for example, would, in my own experience of contact with schools, favour the retention of English as the medium of instruction from the earliest stages of education and there is no doubt that Zimbabwe has inherited a sound infrastructure of English teaching in terms of syllabus design, the quality and linguistic ability of teachers, the design, testing and production of suitable teaching materials and a much closer involvement with English over the years than countries such as Zambia, Botswana and Lesotho. It would be unfortunate to dilute the progress we have made in these respects.

On the other hand it is vital to develop the cultural linguistic consciousness of Shona and Ndebele speakers and clearly such impressions are best developed with learners of school-going age. To this end Ngara discusses an outline content of new Shona studies (‘Rurimi noUnhu HwavaShona’); he proposes the establishment of a Ministry ‘charged with the task of promoting and developing the national languages’ (p. 137), and a National Languages Development Bureau. Ngara also offers proposals on the restructuring of the University departments to fulfil new development needs, including guide-lines for the preparation of language teachers.

Ngara has produced a most useful book in that it sets out virtually all the relevant issues pertaining to language development in Zimbabwe and the policy options which planners and politicians may choose from. There will no doubt be much change in the years to come but whereas, to make a comparison, for a nation’s economy, the market-place is a dynamic force, for a nation’s educational system, the classroom and the forces within that system are conservative and slow to change. Innovation in education is a slow process, particularly when so many people are involved; discussing proposals for innovation is an even slower process because so many people are involved. But, in a sense, this is right and proper because appropriate decisions will shape the character of our new nation for many years to come. Ngara has stimulated us to think about new processes and there will be no shortage of discussion about them.

*University of Zimbabwe*

D. Dawson

This detailed study of Shona symbols of life is an analysis of the consciousness of the Karanga, a Shona-speaking group who inhabit a sizeable portion of Zimbabwe. Many aspects of Karanga life are examined, such as childhood and education, puberty, marriage, division of labour between the sexes, sexual intercourse, pregnancy and birth. The author was a medical doctor in charge of a rural hospital in Zimbabwe from 1965 to 1971. Almost all the information presented in the book was obtained from people who came to the hospital. His Karanga nurses helped him to collect the information.

One interesting point about the study is that the various symbols and rituals are described and analysed from the point of view of Karanga informants themselves without any 'outside' interpretation. The author points out: 'It was realised from the start of the project that the interpretation of those symbols and rituals which had been collected could only be satisfactorily explained if it was based on the most intimate knowledge of the Karanga's world. And, of course, only the Karanga themselves have this kind of knowledge. This has been our guiding principle throughout.' He believes that we can learn far more in this way than we can from any scientific theory about symbols, myths and rituals: 'Theories that have become dear to us tend to cloud our judgement and lead us to ignore wilfully the fact that “primitive” tribes possess a consciousness of their own, relating to their own world and ideas, a consciousness we never looked for because we did not suppose it existed.' This approach means, as the author rightly points out, that the reader will have to form his or her own opinion at every stage on the question of whether indigenous interpretations given make sense or not. In other words, what has been presented in this book is oral tradition only. Readers must bear this in mind.

The author chose to write in the present tense ‘for the sake of simplicity’. This approach led to two main problems. Firstly, social change has largely been ignored. Many of the symbols, myths and rituals are no longer found today or have changed in form. Thus, to have a fuller picture of Karanga life the reader must read other books or articles. Secondly, the author has made a large number of generalizations throughout the book that are often misleading, generalizations such as ‘The Karanga knows nothing about the human ovaries’; ‘One of the biggest mysteries for the Karanga is the development of the embryo which starts after fertilization’; ‘The Karanga woman has no need of emancipation’. There are many statements such as this in the book.

Despite these weaknesses the book has much to offer to historians, anthropologists and others interested in oral tradition, and can be a useful reference book.

University of Zimbabwe

G.L. CHAVUNDUKA

This book by the Revd Canaan Banana challenges the Church, in the words of the Foreword which has been written by the Prime Minister, Robert Mugabe, ‘to identify itself with the cause of social justice, equality and the development of the poor... through joint purposeful action with the state’. Its central theme, expressed in one way and another throughout the book, is that ‘Christianity is Socialism’. It is argued with vigour, conviction and a wide range of example. It is clearly of considerable importance that the author is, in fact, the President of Zimbabwe. Neither he, nor his readers, can possibly be forgetful of that fact. He is at once a recognized minister of the Church and the formal head of the State. So any call for ‘joint purposeful action’ of Church and State in a book written by him clearly carries a special weight. Nevertheless he does not write as president. It is his personal approach which he is putting forward here and it is to be reviewed as such.

The sources of Banana’s thought are explicitly Marxist socialist upon the one hand, Christian upon the other. The Marxism, however, is much modified by Zimbabwean experience. Equally, the Christian tradition here represented is a special one, that of liberation theology and Black theology—the theological thinking of Assmann, Fierro, Cone and Segundo. Despite a good deal of criticism of academic theology, it is still in large part two essentially academic, indeed literary, traditions which are coming together here; yet both traditions are profoundly concerned with praxis. Both Christianity and Socialism are concerned to change the world rather than to understand it; but practitioners of both know that it is not possible to change very much unless one understands a good deal.

There has been little liberation theology written in Africa hitherto, at least north of the Limpopo, and Banana’s contribution to it both now and in his earlier book The Gospel according to the Ghetto will be widely welcomed. It remains, it can be argued, a selective approach to Christianity, to the gospels, indeed to Christ himself. All theologies are, however, necessarily selective. It is no condemnation to say that this quite short book is selective too. It is focused on an exceedingly important aspect of the Christian message; it is relevant and practical in purpose; it is forceful in its appeal. That is surely sufficient. For Banana the most basic Christian commitment is to justice, the revolutionary struggle for a better world, the building up of an equitable society. Christ challenged the powerful and the oppressive, but too often the Church has become instead a part of a system of oppression and privilege. Banana’s theology is explicitly a theology of revolution. The Church he wants is a ‘Proletarian Church’. He believes that the true Christian should be committed to a ceaseless struggle for socialism and against neo-colonialism.

For many people Banana’s message must be an irrelevant one because they do not believe in Christianity—or any religion. Such people would, of course, include, Marx, Engels, Lenin and all old-fashioned Marxists. For them it is a pointless attempt to salvage religion in a secular age and within a Marxist context where it can have no abiding home. For many Christians, on the other hand, the traditional Christian concern for the spiritual rather than the material, for another world rather than this one, the belief that original sin is pervasive in every human society and must make every vision of Banana’s type essentially utopian, all this remains Christianity’s true message. For them liberation theology is too one-sided
in its use of scripture. The traditional church was wrong in some things but its basic message was not as misleading as Banana would have it.

Personally I write as one who belongs to neither of these two groups but who shares the author’s basic stance and does believe that Christianity is, or should be, far more ‘materialist’ and this-worldly than has often seemed to be the case. If I still want to offer some criticism it is from a position of considerable underlying agreement. The great danger with liberation theology is over-simplification: the past is blackened, the Marxist analysis accepted uncritically, the post-revolutionary situation idealized.

‘Since the great revolutions man has come to realize that politics and daily life go together’ (p. 41). Is this not a progressive realization which goes back at least as far as ancient Greece? The generalizations that one reads here about something called ‘western culture’ or ‘western capitalist society’ do not commend the author’s sense of cultural understanding. We read, for instance, that ‘in western capitalist society... personal critical insight and alertness is never encouraged’ (p. 48), or ‘western culture... perceives man as naturally deformed, basically sinful’ (p. 47) or again that ‘in most western societies’ political awareness ‘is completely neglected. The system is designed in such a way that the public remain completely unconscious of and alienated from the political and decision-making processes’ (p. 42). Such assertions are so far from the reality that they can throw doubt upon the reliability of the author in his wider assessment of the contemporary world.

‘To be married to patterns of the past is all that foreign ideologies intend to do by imposing their own solutions on us’ (p. 84). I am not sure that an ‘ideology’ can intend anything, but if this warning is true, why does it not apply to Marxism, which is certainly a ‘foreign ideology’ devised by a gentleman living in London over one hundred years ago and later developed by various other Europeans? Why is this one expression of European intellectual history to be treated so entirely differently from all the rest?

The principal weakness of Christianity in the recent past was, as I see it, that ‘the kingdom of God’ came far too close to being identified with a certain temporary pattern of Western power and civilization. The danger that I sense in this book is a strangely comparable one: to identify God’s kingdom with a certain post-revolutionary state based upon a particular historic ideology. Liberation theology needs to stand free of every state and, ultimately, every ideology in a stance of prophetic independence. Banana’s message seems near to being that in post-revolutionary Zimbabwe, and a few other comparable countries, salvation has as good as arrived. He takes the text of Luke 7: 10–23 and adapts it to here and now in a way that is genuinely moving: ‘Go back and tell your masters in Europe and the United States what you have seen and heard: land is given to peasants... the sick are looked after and the ignorant are educated; co-operatives are formed... the hungry are filled with good things and the rich sent away empty’ (p. 119).

Personally, I can recognize that picture in post-independence Zimbabwe without difficulty. So many good things have happened. It is indeed exciting. But the task of the prophet is less to underline the failings of the past than to point a finger at the present, to cry out that the hungry are very much still with us, that the rich are doing pretty well, that many a squatter would not recognize Banana’s picture at all. There are, of course, plenty of complex reasons why the new Jerusalem has not yet arrived, but then there always were, and one of the reasons is that old-fashioned Christian one labelled ‘original sin’: it continues to thrive even in
post-revolutionary society. Denying it will not help matters. A book published in 1982, only three years after the coming of Independence, may legitimately be concerned more with the castigation of the past than with the moral ambiguity of the on-going struggle. Nevertheless it is the latter that now matters and, in a way, the author seems too confidently sure that in an avowedly socialist society all manner of things will be well to be, for this reviewer at least, a wholly safe guide for tomorrow's Christian.

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A. Hastings