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## BOOK REVIEWS

**Come and Share: An Introduction to Christian Theology** By C. S. Banana. Gweru, Mambo, 1991, xxvii, 119 pp., ISBN 086922-495-6, Z\$27,00.

In *Come and Share* Banana grapples with pertinent themes that could guide the Zimbabwean Church towards a truly African outlook. His theological reflections are undergirded and informed by the quest for contextual theology that has manifested itself for decades in local independent churches. The same quest has also lately become familiar in ongoing theological discourse in both Protestant and Roman Catholic churches.

Banana is of the opinion that colonial and neo-colonial structures are as entrenched in the Church as they are in government and other public institutions. He argues that, owing to this colonial outlook, the Church, like other public institutions, is not able to serve its predominantly African constituency, particularly the masses (the 'povo'). With that in mind, the author argues that it is imperative to transform the Church in order to enable it to meet the needs of the African people. The starting point towards such transformation is in the evolution of a theology that is authentically African.

In *Come and Share* Banana discusses three areas that he regards as fundamental in the evolution of African theology. These are: African tradition and culture; Marxist socialism; and the Scriptures — all of which, he argues, are to be given equal value in an authentic and liberating African theology.

In this theological model Banana takes serious cognizance of the political, social, economic and cultural dynamics of the Shona and Ndebele peoples. He specifically highlights the Shona and Ndebele concepts of community, spirituality and unity of worldview, especially the modes of communal sharing and commerce that goes on between the living and the 'living timeless' (a new coinage for ancestors). He also highlights the Shona and Ndebele concepts of life and death as expressed through ritual and myths.

Banana picks out the *kurova guva/umbuyiso* ritual as an example that could inform Christians' understanding of Christian concepts like communion (*Koinonia*), forgiveness, reconciliation, ecumenical worship and celebration. According to the author, if the Church learns lessons from such African ritual practices as *kurova guva/umbuyiso* and from their ways of thinking then it would have no difficulties in knowing the concerns and anxieties of the African people.

For Banana the Church has to be a symbol of the kingdom of God, a form of classless society that should show 'the way' to the world by breaking down the barriers impeding communication and the development of good relationships. This is the state of affairs that he wishes to see in the Zimbabwean Church.

However, although Banana's concern is justified and the theological enterprise he engages in is noble, there are many areas that make his model questionable if not uninspiring. His first concern has to do with the

equality of sources that he calls for when he says that 'Scripture should be regarded as a source of theology equal to others' (p. 41). Another is his ambiguous assertion that the Bible contains 'but a small part of the divine acts of God in human history' (p. 42). The author is also not convincing when he argues that 'Church creeds and doctrines are almost irrelevant and meaningless to our context' (p. 42). Furthermore, he discounts the notion of an eschatological kingdom of God as 'garbage' to the Shona and Ndebele people. He regards the mediatorship of Christ at the Parousia as 'meaningless and nonsensical', again, within the context of the understanding of the Shona and Ndebele people.

Undoubtedly, there is a lot at fault about a theology that emphasizes the local context at the expense of the essential faith and beliefs held by the Universal Church. Banana's model distorts the Christian context and foundation that it purports to build upon. Instead an authentic African Christian theology should 'be ready to discover traces of God's natural revelation outside the Christian religion', in this case, from the African context, without, however, calling into doubt the uniqueness and 'centrality of the Christ event' (*Crossroads*, Oct./Nov. 1991, 26).

Any Christian theology, be it African, Asian, Latin American or Western European, has to engage faithfully with the Scriptures and Church tradition. Christianity not only enjoys the status of having 'sacred writings', it is also a historical religion. As such, Scripture and Church tradition in the form of great conciliar teachings and creeds form part of the Christian heritage that cannot be dispensed with as easily as Banana implies. To undervalue or distort this heritage is to renege on the faith into which Christians are initiated.

While *Come and Share* is meant to challenge the Zimbabwean Church from its characteristic complacent slumber, the overly extreme stance that the author takes is counter-productive. It stands in the way of, rather than facilitates or encourages, further experiments in evolving local theologies. A more conciliatory attitude in subsequent editions of the book will be necessary in order for it to be given a warm reception by the Church.

University of Zimbabwe

P. H. GUNDANI

**Chakwesha** By H. Chimhundu. Harare, College Press, 1991, 198 pp., ISBN 0-86925-906-7, Z\$12,95.

Chimhundu's first novel *Chakwesha* is a most welcome and overdue contribution to the slowly developing genre of Shona prose fiction. The author's experimentation in terms of plot and characterization makes this work unique in more than one way.

The title of the novel (*Chakwesha* can be loosely translated as meaning 'confidence trickster') is derived from the anti-social character and behaviour of Moses Marufu, a University student in the colonial education system who chooses to betray the goals of the Chimurenga War for his personal benefit and who is paid as an informer by the Rhodesian Central Intelligence Organization. At Independence he returns from self-exile the

same hypocritical man to scramble for the independence 'cake' and rises to join the emergent 'whisky' class. But after a short-lived enjoyment of petty-bourgeois life, he dies in mental and physical torment.

Interwoven with the story of the protagonist are the stories of several other characters, each of whom has a different background but all of whom experience difficulties under colonialism and, later, neo-colonialism which contribute significantly to their different destinies. Characters are realistically and sympathetically depicted. Through the multiplicity of plots the author competently captures the spirit of nationalist political activities in the rural areas and at the University of Rhodesia in the 1970s. He also manages to relate different events to mainstream history, alternating between the narration of individual stories and historical events. It is no mean task to research history and then to fictionalize it, but, unfortunately, some chapters tend to be overloaded with historical data which is not fully exploited in the fictional sense. Sometimes the setting is propounded too discursively, forcing the reader who is immersed in the story to emerge in order to grasp the historical context before returning to the plot.

Chimhundu is, however, a sensitive observer and analyst of social history. He relates the various traumas in different characters to politically-induced social ills. His focus ranges from economic problems, the betrayal of socio-political ideals, the crisis of the AIDS epidemic to tendencies towards millenarian spiritualism in the economically depressed.

The individual story lines are given verisimilitude by the author's inclusion of every minute but significant detail of life in the country and the city before and after Independence. This makes the novel quite outstanding as prior to this work there were no real Shona historical novels. *Chakwesha* traverses the past and the present and ends facing the future. This historicity, especially the focus on contemporary life, gives this novel social relevance and will help to develop society by stimulating passionate discussion. It depicts the inalienable relation between the individual and the history of his people.

A noticeable achievement in the narrative style of the novel is the absence of the overtly intrusive moralistic voice which hitherto has pervaded Shona novels, often reducing them to moralistic fables. Restraint is maintained even in the condemnation of Moses to purgatory.

The length of the novel as well as the breath of its setting (Hartzel High School, Goromonzi, Harare, Botswana and London) offer a wide canvas in which to portray historical action in detail. This wealth of detail creates the illusion of reality which is the hallmark of good fiction. Other Shona authors such as Giles Kuimba, Charles Mungoshi and Raymond Choto approximate such breath of vision but are not quite as successful as Chimhundu has proved to be in this work.

The author is very enterprising in his diction, freely drawing from the rich vocabulary of traditional and modern Shona. The novel abounds in proverbs, idiomatic expressions and loan words. This gives the novel an affinity with the complex reality with which it grapples. Language purists would have lots of surprises when reading this novel but the author's successful attempt to weave adoptives not only into dialogue, as would be

normal, but also into the third person narrative itself is an achievement which is as yet unsurpassed. His resourcefulness shows the dynamic and transitional nature of the Shona language, as well as the possibilities of future literary development. A long poem forms a satirical epilogue to the novel, summing up the vision of the artist in a brief but vivid way.

Notwithstanding the national problem of a shortage of good quality paper at the time, College Press could have improved the quality of the cover by using a little more imagination.

University of Zimbabwe

E. M. CHIWOME

**The Sound of Snapping Wires** Compiled by T.O. McLoughlin. Harare, College Press, 1990, xxii, 225 pp., ISBN 0-86925-910-5, Z\$17,55.

Professor T. O. McLoughlin's selection of Zimbabwean short stories, published under the intriguing title, *The Sound of Snapping Wires*, is indicative of his long-standing interest in promoting the works of (young) Zimbabwean writers. One is reminded of his earlier anthology, *New Writing in Rhodesia*, published by Mambo Press, which was a selection of poetry, short stories and drama.<sup>1</sup>

The latest collection focuses on the 'poor relation of Zimbabwean literature': short stories. The perceptive introduction neatly posits the major critical issues raised by the short story as a genre. It also provides an interesting historical overview of the chequered history of the short story in Zimbabwe. His essay highlights the pervasive influence of censorship, which effectively meant that there were very few outlets for short stories with an overtly socio-political theme. A contrast is drawn with the creative ferment that occurred in South African literary circles, where the short story was a powerful medium of exploring the lot of the urbanized Black South Africans.

The selection spans the period 1910-89 and introduces the reader to a number of Zimbabwean writers, from established literary figures like Arthur Shearly Cripps, Doris Lessing, Charles Mungoshi, Shimmer Chinodya, Dambudzo Marechera, Tsitsi Dangarembga and Pius Wakatama, to other less well-known writers such as P. N. Katsande, Noel Masvosvere and Dennis Matangara. Some of the stories are carefully crafted, while others show less skill in the writers' handling of language and theme.

This is, nevertheless, a welcome selection, as many of the short stories published in Zimbabwe appear in magazines and newspapers rather than in book form. It covers a variety of themes and the introduction is pitched at a level which will encourage both the informed reader and the secondary-school pupil, to read around the subject. The editor pays due tribute to periodicals such as *Moto*, *Parade*, *Prize* and *Mahogany* which have done much to encourage the Zimbabwean short-story writer.

University of Zimbabwe

M. Z. MALABA

<sup>1</sup> T. O. McLoughlin (comp.), *New Writing in Rhodesia* (Gwelo, Mambo Press, 1976).

**The Making of Zimbabwe: Decolonization in Regional and International Politics** By M. Tamarkin. London, Cass, 1990, ix, 326 pp., ISBN 0-7146-3355-0, £30.00.

This is a study of the various attempts to solve the Rhodesian problem by negotiation from the time of the Lisbon coup in 1974 down to the Lancaster House conference in 1979. The main focus is on the activities of outside interested parties — South Africa, the Front-line States, Britain and the United States. The contestants themselves — the Rhodesian Front Government and the Zimbabwean nationalists — thus appear to be reacting to events rather than making them, although the author does give the basic information on the progress of the war and its effects on the White economy and society. This is a useful corrective to the one-sided triumphalism of Martin and Johnson's *Struggle for Zimbabwe*,<sup>1</sup> the more so as Tamarkin's approach is factual and fair.

The drawback of this factual, descriptive account (and descriptive it is in spite of some short-lived theoretical considerations in the Introduction) is that there is no overall analysis of why the contestants, their patrons and the global players did what they did, nor is there any engagement with the interpretations of other writers on the subject. Nothing published since 1985 appears to have been consulted, with the result that Flower's *Serving Secretly*<sup>2</sup> and Ellert's *Rhodesian Front War*<sup>3</sup> have not been taken into account — nor, surprisingly, has the best single survey of the war, Moorcraft and McLaughlin's *Chimurenga*.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, the sources used for the study are mainly newspapers and radio broadcasts — the 1 500 references to which, incidentally, are savagely abbreviated without any key or listing so that the first task of any serious reader is to painstakingly compile an alphabetical list of the abbreviations employed so that the sources can be identified, a task one would have thought that the editors at Frank Cass should have performed for a book that costs £30.00 (approx. Z\$400.00).

The study ends (in December 1979) as abruptly as it began (in April 1974) with as little assessment of why Lancaster House succeeded, as there was explanation of who was fighting whom for what at the beginning.

In short, this book seems to have been written for the specialist for whom it will be a useful reference source to check what happened when. The 'whys and wherefores' remain to be written.

University of Zimbabwe

R. S. ROBERTS

<sup>1</sup> D. Martin and P. Johnson, *The Struggle for Zimbabwe: The Chimurenga War* (Harare, Zimbabwe Publishing House; London, Faber, 1981), 23.

<sup>2</sup> K. Flower, *Serving Secretly: An Intelligence Chief on Record* (Harare, Quest; London, Murray, 1987).

<sup>3</sup> H. Ellert, *Rhodesian Front War: Counter-Insurgency and Guerrilla War in Rhodesia, 1962-1980* (Gweru, Mambo, 1989).

<sup>4</sup> P. Moorcraft and P. McLaughlin, *Chimurenga: The War in Rhodesia, 1965-1980* (Marshalltown, Sygma, 1982).

**Benjamin Burombo: African Politics in Zimbabwe, 1947-1958** By *N. Bhebe*. Harare, College Press, 1989, 160 pp., ISBN 0-86925-831-1, Z\$14,95.

One of the problems of writing historical biographies of modern nationalist leaders of Zimbabwe is that of 'heroism'. If a person is acclaimed as a heroine or hero this almost automatically involves stressing the more positive aspects of a person's character and career. However, professional historical research also almost automatically uncovers the less creditable angles as well. It is a test of the honesty of the historian to present an accurate picture of the subject, and of the maturity of the society in its response to that picture. Moreover, there is an inevitable delay between the hero's life and the clearance by the archives of the essential documents that must be read to correct or confirm impressions left by contemporaries. Burombo died in 1958 at 50 years of age so his biography would have been easier to research than that of one of the nationalist leaders of the generation born in the 1920s, a generation which is still very much with us. However, this consideration should not be allowed to detract from the value of Bhebe's work.

The book starts with two chapters setting the scene of Burombo's ten years of political life; one chapter dealing with the towns and the other with the countryside. These chapters are not intended to provide a definitive study of colonial rule in the 1940s, but they give the non-specialist reader a clear idea of the conditions that led to the urban strikes and rural protests in the 1940s and early 1950s.

The next chapter provides a brief survey of Burombo's life up to 1947, when he suddenly emerged on the trade-union scene, a scene that was inevitable political by the standards of the time, given the practical exclusion of Africans from the formal politics of the colony. The sources for the life of such a man cannot be easy to discover. The broad outline is obvious, but it is not always clear just when Burombo moved from one place to another in Matabeleland and the Transvaal seeking education and employment. Nevertheless, this account presents a most interesting image of the man. Burombo came from a family which was relatively well-off but which does not seem to have been very stable. When Burombo's father died (before Burombo was born) his mother was inherited by her husband's brother but was neglected by him. Both Burombo's father and mother were *moyo* Rozvi (that is, both belonged to the Rozvi clan and both had the same *moyo* (heart) totem), and it would be interesting to know whether the marriage was thought to be close to incest and whether this affected matters. As Bhebe shows, Burombo himself did not have a happy marriage.

Unable to obtain more than primary education, Burombo tried his hand at many activities. In this he was not unusual, given the limited opportunities for Africans in Huggins's Rhodesia, but his career as cook, café owner, storekeeper, farmer, cattle-trader, security guard and insurance salesman was exceptionally varied. As Bhebe explains, Burombo was rarely successful for long in most of his undertakings and could not always afford to be scrupulous; for example, he bought cattle from peasants who were being forced to de-stock and he paid his labour force in kind instead of in cash. Although he seems to have learned labour politics and amateur

law in South Africa, his sudden emergence into the field of labour unions in 1947 seems at first to be a break in the pattern, but trade-union work was also a career option.

In the two chapters on the 1948 strike Bhebe shows how Burombo tried to make his African Workers Voice Association a movement for the (even) poorer African workers. Historians dealing with this period are still uncovering fresh information on the strike and such questions as to whether the leaders were behind or apart from the surge of anger that lead to the strike. I cannot comment on this specialized topic, but two points emerge from Bhebe's work which arouse my curiosity: Firstly, although some evidence from 1948 shows Burombo's direct involvement in the strike (such as in the posting of placards) other evidence comes from the eulogy at his burial, when he was beyond the reach of the state. Although Bhebe refers to Burombo's trial and appeal he does not tell us exactly what happened and how he escaped punishment. Secondly, Whites such as Bailey and Davies were evidently involved to a greater or lesser extent but Bhebe does not explain their role or their motivation.

Two chapters deal with Burombo's activities in the countryside in the late 1940s and early 1950s when he was combating the great post-war eviction programme and a wide range of repressive legislation. Bhebe suggests convincingly that these activities were not a failure, for in a way Burombo was preparing the ground for the nationalism of the mid- and late 1950s, even though he was not able to stop the evictions and the legislation. Finally, after an unexplained gap from 1953 to 1956, the book deals with Burombo's sudden re-emergence on to the political stage and chronicles his tour of the Federation, his illness, his death as a result of a bungled operation, and his triumphant funeral. At the time his enemies hinted that business troubles lay behind his sudden activity, which is possible but not proven.

After all this, with evidence from Bhebe's own judgement and from the account itself, it seems clear that Burombo's reputation as a nationalist hero and worker for the common people is justified, even if his career had a strong element of self-interest at times. Bhebe has given us a clear and realistic account, but I would very much like to see a second edition with a little more detail in places. Burombo deserves it.

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D. N. BEACH