

Godefroid Manunga-Lukakisa. *Catholic Evangelization among the Ndebele of Zimbabwe.* Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 2004. 267 pp. No price listed, cloth, ISBN 978-3-8050-0515-9.

Reviewed by Paul Gundani

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This book is based on a dissertation that the author presented for his doctoral studies in Missiology at the Gregorian University in 2003. The author is a Catholic priest from the Democratic Republic of Congo, and a member of the Divine Word missionaries (SVD). He worked in the diocese of Bulawayo in Zimbabwe from 1992 to 1996, and later visited Zimbabwe, for almost a year in 2003, to carry out fieldwork for his studies.

In the study, Godefroid Manunga tackles the subject of cultural identity and its relationship to evangelization among the Ndebele of the archdiocese of Bulawayo in Zimbabwe. Whilst the study is missiological in its purpose and goal, methodologically it is inter-disciplinary. It infuses insights from cultural anthropology and pastoral theology. Like any other dissertation, the study starts off with a general introduction that covers issues such as the author's interest, justification for study, method of approach, limitations and chapter outline. It then proceeds to tackle the subject at issue in five chapters. Each of the chapters begins with an introduction and ends with a summary of the findings and notes on the sources that the author used. Finally, the author presents a synthesis of his findings by way of a general conclusion. The book's bibliography contains a vast array of sources ranging from documents of the Magisterium, Pontifical documents, church documents, various sources on the Ndebele people of

Zimbabwe and the Church in Southern Africa, as well as journal articles and dictionaries.

Chapter 1 deals with basic issues on biblical and post-conciliar theological positions on the interface between the gospel and the receiving culture. Chapter 2 takes the discussion a step further and grapples with historical and ethnic factors that have shaped, and continue to shape the identity of the Ndebele people in the Archdiocese of Bulawayo. In chapter 3, the author focuses on the process of evangelization by Catholic missionaries among the Ndebele since 1879. However, the major thrust of this chapter is to highlight the changes that occurred in the Archdiocese of Bulawayo since Vatican II (1961-65). In chapter 4, the author traces the emerging trends and tensions arising from the interaction between the Gospel and Ndebele culture. Lastly, in chapter five, the author offers "practical missiological suggestions" on what needs to be done in order to ensure a fruitful encounter between the Gospel and the Ndebele culture amidst the changing times.

Manunga firmly believes that the process of evangelization will remain forever shallow and superficial if it does not engage the conditions of the evangelized peoples (p. 22). The culture of the evangelized is one of the many factors with which the Gospel must deal. For this reason, the author takes the strategic dialog between the Gospel and culture, reflected in the New Testament and characteristic of the Early Church, as ideal models that

should be emulated by the universal Church in its engagement with diverse cultures across the ages. Manunga compares the interaction between the Gospel and culture to a "love encounter" that aims not only at the conversion, but also at the enhancement of culture of the evangelized. Hence, he advocates for the preservation of Ndebele culture by the Church in the Archdiocese of Bulawayo. In his view, the local Church of Bulawayo Archdiocese must critically discern the positive elements of the Ndebele culture before incorporating them into the Christian life that is not only Catholic but also uniquely Ndebele.

There are significant findings that Manunga made following the fieldwork that he carried out among the Ndebele of the Archdiocese of Bulawayo. To get to these findings he interviewed a wide spectrum of people from both urban and rural centers of the archdiocese, including male and female lay people; youth; expatriate and local priests; nuns; brothers; deacons and catechists. On the basis of this empirical research, he concludes that the post-Vatican II (post-conciliar) phase has, to a large extent, been a success on a number of fronts. Among others, these successes include the change of mindset among missionaries with regard to the Ndebele culture as well as creative co-responsibility between lay and clergy, men and women, and indigenous and non-indigenous missionaries. Furthermore, he observes greater appreciation of the women's involvement in Church activities, the growing numbers of missionaries from the southern hemisphere, rather than from the north, and collaboration between secular and religious orders.

In Manunga's view, however, much needs to be done in the Archdiocese of Bulawayo. He identifies a number of areas that are in need of transformation. These include, among others, the need for a more committed ecumenical approach to evangelization; greater recognition of the role of the laity; the need for the church to create space for "contemplation in action"; the creation of ways

to empower the youth for evangelization; and a demonstration of sensitivity towards other religions. Furthermore, he calls upon the Archdiocese of Bulawayo, as a local church, to explore possibilities of developing a liturgy based on a greater variety of cultures at parish and diocesan levels, evolving a more robust theology of inculturation that realistically deals with questions of marriage, healing, and exorcism.

The study has a number of shortcomings. First, it is disappointing for an author, who should be conscious of the damage of western cultural hegemony on the process of evangelization and the general development of Africa as well as the rest of the "Two-Thirds" world, to write in defense of Cecil John Rhodes's "From Cape to Cairo" imperialist vision. The attempt to "canonize" Rhodes to the status of a "missionary" puts the very term to shame and disrepute. Furthermore, to claim that Rhodes was acting as a "reconciler" of the adversaries following the Ndebele uprisings (1895-96) is a serious historical distortion that smacks of academic fraud. Cecil J. Rhodes was the founder and owner of the British South Africa Company (BSAC) that spearheaded the colonization of Mashonaland in 1890, and waged a war of conquest against the Ndebele in 1893. The Ndebele uprisings in 1895 was aimed at freeing the Ndebele from British imperialism, which Cecil Rhodes represented. In what way(s) then did meetings that he held with senior Ndebele indunas in the Matobo Hills make him a "reconciler"? One wonders whether this view reflects the author's understanding of historical events pertaining to the colonization of Zimbabwe or whether he is merely an innocent victim of some naïve interviewees who were either deliberately attempting to sanitize the history of colonialism in Zimbabwe or were simply ignorant of the role that Rhodes played in pacifying Matabeleland following the Ndebele Uprisings as part of the grand plan to serve the interests of British imperialistic interests in Zimbabwe. The sections that purport to affirm European colonialism in the name of "devel-

opment" and "progress" betray a dangerous amnesia that would shock many ideologically conscious readers (cf. pp. 102, 108, and 109, 110, 111, 112, 143, 198).

Second, there are a number of historical inaccuracies that the reader should be warned of. For example, Zimbabwean historiography does not make any reference to the "Rudd-Rhodes concession" of 1888 (pp. 105, 143), although Rudd represented Rhodes. Rather, the agreement between Lobengula and Rudd with his two colleagues was merely called the Rudd Concession. The centenary of the Catholic Church in Zimbabwe was celebrated in 1979, and not in 1987 (p. 96). Bishop Abel Muzorewa was not "the father of the Zimbabwean liberation" (p. 152). Instead, Muzorewa betrayed the cause of liberation when, together with Ian Smith, Ndabaningi Sithole, and Josiah Chirau, he signed the ill-fated Internal Settlement in 1978. Even a casual reading of Zimbabwean historiography will confirm that the "father of Zimbabwean liberation" is Joshua Nkomo, whose popular nickname "Father Zimbabwe" gained national currency from the early 1960s. Third, there are a few other errors and typological mistakes that also need correction. For instance: all references to Phatisa should read Nyathi P. (e.g., p. 44); "Joshwa Nkomo" (pp. 151, 152) should read "Joshua Nkomo"; and, the word "devout" (p. 151) should read "devote." Lastly, the word "loosing" (pp. 159, 171) should read "losing."

In spite of the few lapses indicated above, there is no doubt that Manunga's research findings will go a long way towards filling a missiological and theological gap that existed in Zimbabwean studies. Because of their minority tag, when viewed against the majority Shona compatriots, the Ndebele people have generally been given little space in the history of Zimbabwean evangelization. This study affords the reader broader insights into the complexity of Catholic evangelization and its dynamic engagement of the Ndebele people over generations, within their historical,

cultural, socio-economic, and political contexts. This well-researched study will be handy to a variety of readers including Church leaders and members, missiologists, theologians, pastoral workers, and, not least, seminary students.

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