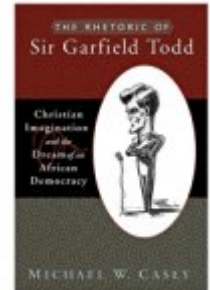


Michael W. Casey. *The Rhetoric of Sir Garfield Todd: Christian Imagination and the Dream of an African Democracy.* Waco: Baylor University Press, 2007. xiii + 389 pp. \$34.95, cloth, ISBN 978-1-932792-86-7.



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The author of this book, Michael W. Casey, contends that the politics of Sir Garfield Todd "flow directly from his religious heritage, and not from his political liberalism" (book jacket). Taking issue with those who think otherwise, Casey claims that Todd, while considered liberal, drew from his Christian perspective, especially from his lifelong denominational tradition--the New Zealand Churches of Christ, which Casey defines as "historically connected to the Stone-Campbell tradition (Disciples of Christ, conservative Christian Churches and a cappella Churches of Christ)" (p. 2). Todd's "outstanding skill at oratory" forms another central theme of this study. Casey shows that as a result of this skill, Todd allegedly "transformed the role of Rhodesian prime minister into a rhetorical presidency," (p. 29) which would indeed be a unique achievement in a country devoid of such talents. Thereafter, Todd devoted the remainder of his public life (about thirty years) to speaking out against injustice, mostly against the police state repression of the Ian Smith regime but also, toward the very end, the violations of human rights by Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF)

government. Thus, the author is primarily concerned with Todd's rhetoric and religion, which is hardly surprising in view of his previous publications, all of which focus on these two subjects. It is also obvious from the sources he quotes at great length in the first one-third of the book, which include the works of Alexander Campbell, "a key founder of Todd's religious heritage," Cornel West and his "deep democratic tradition," prominent rhetoricians (Kenneth Burke, James Darsey, and others), and even an authority on "homiletics" (p. 29).

In fact, this book is not intended as a biography of Todd. Instead, the author quite clearly endows Ruth Weiss (*Sir Garfield Todd and the Making of Zimbabwe* [1999]) with the title "Todd's biographer" and cites her book approximately twenty-six times in the notes. However, Casey regards the other biographer of Todd, Dickson Mungazi (*The Last Liberals in Africa: Michael Blundell and Garfield Todd* [1999]), in quite another light altogether. He criticizes Mungazi for attributing Todd's support for human rights to "British political liberalism" and for mistakenly

claiming that Todd embraced the "Asquith-Lloyd George [liberal] philosophy" (p. 2). But Casey's rebuttal that "Todd, a native of New Zealand, came from a politically conservative family and never lived in Britain" (p. 2) is scarcely a convincing one, since political affiliation is not hereditary (sons often rebel against fathers) and New Zealanders are generally regarded as "more British than the British." If anything, Todd probably would have been proud to be identified with the British liberal tradition, unlike most of the "Rhodies" who despised it.

Most of the book, the other two-thirds, consists of Todd's speeches delivered over four decades, from 1950 to 1989, with brief introductions to each by Casey. These documents, in turn, are divided into three somewhat arbitrary categories, defined as "Sermon Texts," "Political Speeches," and "Prophetic Speeches," the latter two obviously overlapping and distinguishable only by their respective chronologies--1946-57 and 1959-89--but excluding 1958, the crucial year of Todd's fall from power. In any case, the 214 pages of speeches are more likely to serve as reference material than reading matter. It is interesting to note that in the last of the "political" speeches Casey included (from November 1957), Todd still believed that "the European people of this country have shown themselves liberal in their outlook and ready to accept into the voting and governing circle all citizens without regard to race, who show goodwill and who meet the requirements laid down in law" (p. 242). Within months, those Europeans had rejected him for that very reason, even though the electoral law (allegedly "reformed") still excluded most Africans on the basis of education, property, and employment.

Similar concerns arise in the introductory section, with chapter headings defining Todd as "The Democratic Missionary" (pre-1953), "The Limited Democratic Politician" (1953-58), and "The Radical Democrat" (1960-89). So, was it a case of

Todd "seeing the light" in 1958, no longer deluded about his capacity to convert the European minority to the inevitability and, above all, the justice of African majority rule? But even as the "democratic missionary" at the Dadaya mission where he spent most of his life, he engaged in some quite authoritarian practices, such as the sacking of teachers and the expulsion of students for striking against his widespread use of corporal punishment. On one occasion (which Weiss relates in her biography [pp. 58-59], but Casey does not), Todd caned the entire school of five hundred students for striking against the quality of food, an act for which he was prosecuted but not convicted. One of the teachers expelled for leading the strike, the famous or infamous Ndabaningi Sithole, later became leader of ZANU, but not (as Casey says) "until a split occurred in the group mostly along tribal lines," (p. 36) but as a result of that. Sithole later defected to the Smith regime's internal settlement, not "the transition government," and in 1978, not "1979" (p. 37).

Also missing (but included in Weiss's book [pp. 74-75]) is any mention of Todd calling out the federal army to put down the strike by nine thousand Wankie coal miners, which was widely condemned as an overreaction to quite legitimate grievances. But as Casey explains, Todd's "limited liberalism" at that time denied "full rights" (including the right to strike) to Africans just as it denied them universal suffrage (p. 59).

Nevertheless, as the author correctly points out, Todd's liberal views on race and politics were "out of step with those of most white Rhodesians" and the contrast between those views and what happened under the Smith regime "could not be greater" (pp. 60-61). Consequently, Todd spent the next two decades (i.e., the sixties and the seventies) as the "prophet in the wilderness." Having joined up with Joshua Nkomo's Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), supported the liberation struggle, and spoken out against the Smith regime at the United Nations and other international fo-

rums, he became a pariah in his adopted land. For this, he paid a heavy price; he was continually harassed by the security forces, detained in prison, and subjected to years of house arrest. But "finally," as Casey triumphantly proclaims, "Todd, like Christ, was fully vindicated in the narrative: Both Zimbabwean independence and international recognition of his support for democracy against oppression were signs of this vindication" (p. 108). But this, too, came at a high price, for Todd, true to his principles, broke with the Mugabe government that had made him a life senator over the human rights abuses against his ZAPU allies, who were among the twenty thousand Ndebele who lost their lives.

But to find out how and why all of this occurred, the reader will still need to consult a history of Zimbabwe to supplement the 214 pages of speeches.

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