

Introduction

An Analysis of the Context and Development of Roland Allen's Missiology

An Overview of Roland Allen: A Missionary Life

The focus of these two volumes is the examination of the missionary ecclesiology within the ministry of Rev. Roland Allen (1868-1947). These works present an *intellectual biography* of Allen's missiology of indigenization. The theses explore the influences that shaped the development of his missionary ecclesiology (Church-centred mission) and the reasons why his writings tenaciously challenged the methodology of colonial missionary societies – established and independent – thus, disclosing the hegemonic causes that he believed hindered indigenous-led Church expansion. Allen believed that the Apostle Paul's precedent of 'Spirit and order' – which integrated perspectives both *pneumatological* (the doctrine of the Holy Spirit) and *ecclesiological* (the doctrine of the Church) – provided the basis for addressing the missionary situation with what he considered to be universal *apostolic principles*. These, he believed, would empower the indigenous Church to work independently of the prevailing colonial authorities. Both these volumes especially depict an overview of Allen's apostolic missiology, which contributed to a more comprehensive advancement of lay ministry and voluntary clergy practice associated with the mission of the Church.

In order to understand Roland Allen's missiology, it is essential to explore how these *apostolic principles* served as the central planks of his Church-centred approach to mission, along with an understanding of Allen's *apologia* for an improved missiology in his day. To explain why he thought Paul's missionary methods, as he understood them, trumped all other methodologies, the historical context of his early missionary experiences in China (1895-1903) and the end of his ministry in Africa (1947) requires examination. After careful analysis of the archival primary sources available,¹ this work discloses how Allen's missiology

1. Deposited papers: Roland Allen; Boxes 1-8, Special Collections & Western MSS, Bodleian Library of Commonwealth and African Studies, Oxford, Bodleian Library, Roland Allen archives, USPG X622.

of indigenization provided farsighted clarity for the contemporary (and later) changing situation of mission within world Christianity. Thus, this work undertakes three important tasks, which have, until now, received little scholarly attention: (1) to provide an ‘intellectual biography’ to elucidate *why* Roland Allen thought the way he did; (2) to explore which people and ideas primarily influenced his thinking; and (3) to analyze in detail how his missionary ecclesiology developed throughout his life. These volumes required the first close analysis of his unpublished writings and neglected sermons. This, in turn, revealed, along with much else, the ‘warm’ pastoral nature of a parish priest and a ‘perceptive’ missionary theologian who served the Church for over five decades.

Methodology and Structure

To a large extent, this task is an exercise in *historical missiology*. As such, the methodology used for this study has consisted primarily of archival research. Together with Allen’s published works, and that of select contemporary missiologists, special attention has been given to extensive analysis of primary archival sources – letters, articles, sermons, speeches, diaries, unpublished papers and books – preserved by the United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (USPG; formerly called the SPG) and deposited at The Bodleian Library (Oxford). Interviews have also been conducted with those who still remembered Allen, particularly Hubert J.B. Allen, Roland Allen’s grandson and biographer. Specific detailed information has been acquired from these interviews, especially critical information which has not previously been disclosed within missiological studies. Of course, special attention is given to Hubert Allen’s biography which unveils firsthand knowledge of his grandfather’s life and ministry. Finally, my research has included engagement with missiologists who were familiar with Allen’s works. Much contemporary missiological discussion has focused on certain aspects of Allen’s analysis of Western missionary organizations, thus making his work valuable again. However, most of this analysis examines only a *small portion* of his writings and missiologists have tended to ignore how his thinking developed over the five decades of his ministry, especially the last twenty years of his life.¹ To address this enormous gap

1. Missiologists *generally* cite Roland Allen’s *Missionary Methods: St Paul’s or Ours? A Study of the Church in the Four Provinces* (London: Robert Scott, February 1912; in the Library of Historic Theology. Repr., October 1913. Revised edition published by World Dominion Press, second edn, August 1927. Repr. 1930, 1949, 1956. Reset – with memoir by Alexander McLeish – Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962. Repr. 1993. Repr. Cambridge: The

within scholarship, Allen's missionary ecclesiology is here articulated as an extension of my engagement with not only his most popular books, but through an extensive analysis of his archival deposited papers and other works usually unobserved. As indicated above, the present thesis consists of two principal parts: (1) a historical understanding of Allen's missionary ecclesiology; and (2) an analysis of the apostolic principles that formed his missionary theology.

Overview of Chapters in *Roland Allen: A Missionary Life*

Part I: Historical Milieu (1868-1947) analyzes the ecclesiastical background that pervaded Roland Allen's earlier theological development within Anglicanism. An assessment of the contributing scholars who assisted his formation of a *principled* approach rather than a *systems* approach to missiology is scrutinized in the context of nineteenth-century thought. As a former missionary to China with the Church of England Mission in North China, during his first year of mission (1895) and then with the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG until 1903), his preliminary surveillance of contemporary missionary practices motivated the formulation for his theology of the indigenous Church and has been articulated through what he believed was a proper hermeneutic (interpretation) for Pauline theology and practice.

The context of *Roland Allen: A Missionary Life* consists of eight chapters which analyze the development of Allen's ecclesiology and missiology. Chapter 1 presents the 'Formation of an Anglican Missionary (1868-1907)' by disclosing his heritage within the Church of England and provides the framework for his churchmanship, theology and missiology. A historical overview of how Allen's apostolic faith permeated his life, ministry, friendships and publications is taken into account within this chapter. Chapter 2 is introduced as 'Missionary Experiences in China' in which Allen's missionary experience in China is outlined, which is followed by an exploration of how this prompted his critique of the 'mission station system' and various paternalistic missionary practices. Initial evidence is proposed within this chapter (and unpacked in subsequent chapters) for a better understanding of his emerging missiology of indigenization. Chapter 3 'From Systems to Principles: How Allen's Missionary Experiences in China Shaped

Lutterworth Press, 2006); Roland Allen, *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church: and the causes which hinder it* (London: World Dominion Press, 1927. Repr. Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1997); and David M. Paton, (ed.) *The Ministry of the Spirit: Selected Writings of Roland Allen* (London: World Dominion Press, 1965).

his Missiology (1895-1947)' examines how his missionary experience in China motivated him to evaluate missionary methods in its historical setting and how these events occasioned his propensity for becoming a missionary methods analyst.

Chapter 4 introduces 'Allen's Analysis of St Paul's Missionary Principles' by examining how his missionary experience in China inspired him to evaluate the missiological situation of his day and documents how this contribution to the study of indigenous church-planting provides a continuing relevance for theories of Church growth, as we see today in the Majority World (Africa, Asia and Latin America). My analysis of his *Missionary Methods: St Paul's or Ours?* (1912) attempts to reveal and articulate an *indigenous* missionary ecclesiology. The chapter discloses his philosophy of ministry that extended from deep theological and missiological reflection. That said, the chapter further explains how Allen's missiology within a colonial context caused him to articulate an *indigenous* 'missiology from below' which sought to empower Chinese Christians to manage their own churches.

Chapter 5 is entitled 'The World Dominion Movement and Its Evangelical Mission' because it describes Allen's association with the World Dominion Press (London) as their representative theologian for its publications on foreign missions, especially for their cutting-edge missionary journal entitled *World Dominion*. The primary leaders of what has been called the World Dominion Movement were S.J.W. Clark, 1862-1930 (Congregationalist), Thomas Cochrane, 1856-1953 (Presbyterian), and Roland Allen (Anglican). This chapter discloses that from the onset of their missionary publication's existence, the editors made sure that all of their publications maintained a 'belief in the Deity and Atoning Death of the Lord Jesus Christ, the World's Only Saviour, and in the Final Authority of Holy Scripture'.¹ This evangelical emphasis provides the backdrop for Allen's (and the others') missiological writings and the missionary survey analysis which they conducted. Chapter 6 is described as 'Field Work in Various Countries' because it outlines Allen's missionary journeys to India, Canada, South Africa and Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe). This field work began in 1910, when both Roland and his wife, Beatrice, visited Delhi, Calcutta and Madras, India. The chapter discusses the emergent friendship that began with Vedanayagam Samuel Azariah (later consecrated bishop in 1912) and Bishop Henry Whitehead (Madras). Details on Azariah and Whitehead are described in the next chapter, as well as in *Roland Allen: A Theology of Mission*, which

1. 'Mission Statement, 'Table of Contents', *World Dominion*, XVII, no.4 (London: World Dominion Press, October 1939).

specifically unpacks Allen's visit to India, years later when he conducted leadership training with the clergy of Azariah's diocese (Dornakal). Also, the chapter describes his mission trips to South Africa and Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) in 1926.

Chapter 7 is entitled 'Friends, Family and African Ministry' as it highlights significant relationships with friends of the Allen family, especially the Christian friends who had missional influence in Africa. This chapter also sets the framework for understanding the various ways in which his family began to settle down within African culture. Attention is given to Roland's willingness to learn Swahili during his *mid-60s* and the inclination to improve his linguistic skills through the help of his son John (a Swahili scholar) is evidenced through the translation work of Muslim epics that he translated from Swahili into English. Chapter 8 is defined as 'Select Sermons and Teachings on the Old Testament' and advances an introductory disclosure of the archival collection of Allen's sermons. After extensive archival research, a wealth of *unexamined* information concerning these sermons and teachings has been uncovered. The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the reader to this collection and to reveal his thinking on the relevance of the Old Testament, particularly, the Ten Commandments and the relevance of the Commandments for Christians. For those familiar with Allen's most famous books – *Missionary Methods: St Paul's or Ours?* and *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church* – one might assume that his theology was shaped *only* by the New Testament.² That would be a misunderstanding of what shaped his theology. With that in view, this chapter sheds light on his engagement with the law of God as the prophetic proclamation that speaks directly to Church and society.

This research essentially analyzes the context and development of Roland Allen's missiology. In particular, the first volume introduces what he believed was an ideal example of apostolic ministry as disclosed through the missionary work of the Apostle Paul. Based on this analysis of St Paul's missionary methods, Allen proposed various apostolic principles, which, he believed, provided the central planks for a missionary ecclesiology; that is, a church-centred approach to mission for the expansion of the indigenous Church. Special attention is given to his interpretive approach of Pauline practice through the plethora of writings located within the archives of Allen's journal contributions, articles, letters, unpublished works, as well as his books, sermons and speeches. While these items are discussed more extensively in the second volume, the focus now turns to the background of the early life and missionary calling of Roland Allen.

2. The Scripture Index at the end of both of these books disclose biblical passages only from the New Testament.