

## Foreword

I AM DELIGHTED TO write this foreword to Robert Faris's fine book for several reasons. Not the most important, but certainly personally satisfying is the fact that I was privileged to supervise his PhD thesis upon which the book is based. Bob was not only a mature and highly capable graduate student and researcher, but he brought to his task all the ingredients necessary to ensure that his work would be well done and that the outcome would make a significant contribution to his field of enquiry. As a former theological educator in Mozambique he had the hands on experience of his subject, an insider's knowledge with an outsider's critical distance, and an ability to work in the several languages needed to achieve his goals. But equally, he had the necessary passion and commitment to both undertake the task and to pursue it to its conclusion. To say that I supervised his work is to give me far more credit than I deserve. The truth is, I learnt an enormous amount from Bob's careful research and the many informative and lively conversations that we had together over the years during which he wrote his thesis.

But to simply commend the book for these personal reasons, which I do so warmly, would be totally inadequate. What Bob has produced makes a significant contribution to the narrative of Christianity in southern Africa within the framework of the struggle for liberation from colonial rule. And Bob does so by focusing on the story of a Protestant political and ecumenical leader, Eduardo Mondlane, of note within a dominantly Roman Catholic country. Mondlane's story is Faris' entrée into exploring the role of the churches and missions, especially the Swiss Mission, in the struggle for African Independence.

Mondlane's name needs to be as well known as that of Nelson Mandela, both of whom were products of Christian mission education, but also spoken of alongside the likes of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. A layman, Mondlane was theologically well-informed, ecumenically engaged, and, in the end was assassinated in the struggle for justice. Reared in evan-

gical piety, he became more radical in his Christianity, anticipating the emergence of liberation theology in Latin America and in the end finding himself on the boundaries of both Christianity and the church. It is noteworthy that Mondlane was invited, together with Martin Luther King Jr., to address the Fourth Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Uppsala, though in the end neither could attend.

Mondlane's name and story are well-known within some circles, but certainly not as much as they should be beyond them. The reasons are obvious. The story of the liberation struggle in Mozambique, which is so well told by Faris, was in many ways over shadowed by what was occurring in the former Rhodesia and in South Africa at the time. This was so largely because Mozambique was a Portuguese colony which, for language reasons did not get the media coverage it deserved within the Anglo-Saxon world. Those outside the Lusophone sphere could not easily access the story except through ecumenical and mission board reports which, in any case, were not widely circulated. But Mondlane was also a Protestant in a predominantly Catholic country where the official Church worked hand in glove with the colonial authorities. It was not in their interests to give him publicity except as a terrorist.

Of course, Mondlane was well-known to the liberation movements in southern Africa, especially South Africa, as he was also to the Portuguese authorities and the security forces in Rhodesia and South Africa who helped bring about his death. The latter rightly feared his charismatic leadership for, in the end, Mondlane and his movement FRELIMO changed the face not only of Mozambique, but also of southern Africa as a whole. It was only after the liberation of Mozambique that the struggle against Ian Smith's regime could achieve success, and only after both countries were free that pressure could be exerted on the apartheid government in the way that it was. The withdrawal of the Portuguese from Mozambique and Angola created a domino effect which suddenly meant that South Africa was isolated, surrounded by post-colonial countries hostile to its policies and incapable of indefinitely protecting its borders. No wonder blacks in South Africa celebrated the liberation of Mozambique in anticipation of their own.

Faris' discussion goes well beyond simply telling the story of Mondlane—it is not, after all, a biography—or providing a history and analysis of what happened in the political struggle in Mozambique. He digs deeper in relating this to the role of the Protestant churches and to

Mondlane's own theological journey away from mission based piety and growing skepticism about the ability of the church to take a stronger political stand. And yet Mondlane was a product of both. The fact that he grew beyond them should not obfuscate the fact that missionary education made his journey possible in the first place or the fact that much of his thinking and action was influenced by ecumenical thinkers and activists well beyond Mozambique. This indicates again the important role which the World Council of Churches and other ecumenical agencies played in bringing about political liberation in southern Africa.

These few words cannot possibly do justice to the well-honed book that Faris has produced. My hope is that it will be widely read and discussed. It certainly deserves to become required reading amongst those who are interested in the twentieth-century history of Christianity in Africa, the ecumenical movement, and the political struggles of southern Africa. But it also invites a much wider readership both within the worldwide church and in those concerned about justice and peace. I was not surprised that one of Bob's distinguished examiners commented that his thesis was "a fine piece of work, beautifully written and well structured," and that it constituted "a real contribution to knowledge." This says it all. I, too, commend it highly.

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