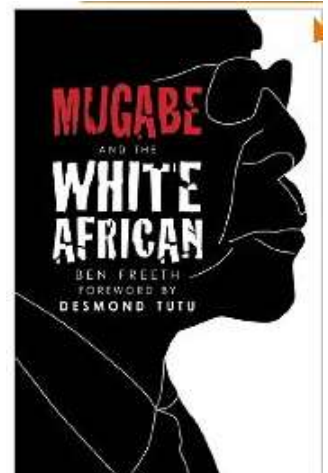


Ben Freeth: Mugabe and the White African – Lion 2011

Alison Morgan July 2011

The first thing to say about this book is this: read it immediately. The second thing to say is this: think about what it means to be a Christian, and ask yourself how well we remember to model ourselves upon Christ and to depend upon God. Ben Freeth is a white Zimbabwean farmer, and this is his story of what it means to stand firm against the oppressive and life-threatening tyranny from which so many have fled in fear of their lives. He has done this partly through the innate instinct which ties a human being to the land on which he was born, but also through the sheer conviction that Jesus was walking beside him each step of the way. It's a painful but inspiring story – and it's not yet over.



Ben believes that the battle in Zimbabwe, as in so many African countries, is being fought in the spiritual realm. He contrasts Botswana, a landlocked, desert country led by a man whose family has been Christian for generations to the point where it is now a free and peaceful society and the fastest growing economy in the world, with Zimbabwe, where leaders with allegiance to violent ancestral spiritual traditions have taken a country with the highest literacy levels and most prosperous agricultural economy on the continent into decades of poverty, violence and hunger. Zimbabwe now has the lowest life expectancy and the fastest declining economy in the world.

'The reason that Africa is hungry is not because of physical factors,' he points out; 'Africa is hungry because of the covenant with death and the web of lies in which it has encased itself.' I am reminded of the startling comment by atheist journalist Matthew Parris: "Removing Christian evangelism from the African equation may leave the continent at the mercy of a malign fusion of Nike, the witch doctor, the mobile phone and the machete." I would go further, and say that without Christian discipleship Africa – and perhaps not only Africa – has no future.

EXTRACTS – in italics

Why are there so many hungry people in a continent where there is the potential, over much of it, to get double the annual grain yields per hectare of the best farms in Europe? A continent that has more agricultural land, more mineral wealth and other natural resources than any other? A continent where, only half a century ago, before 'liberation', there were food surpluses and almost every country was self-sufficient in grain? I came to the conclusion that the answer is simple. Every country, every institution, every enterprise is made up of individuals. And it's the individuals within each business, or organization, or government, or country that make them tick – or stop ticking. The problem in Africa lies with the individuals and, more specifically, the spiritual forces within or behind those individuals. The Bible teaches that, "Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Ephesians 6:12). Throughout history there has been a continual tussle between the spiritual forces of good and evil, whether or not we choose to recognize it. In Africa today, these spiritual forces are working very powerfully. Witch doctors, spirit mediums, spells, even human sacrifices, are not uncommon in Zimbabwe, which is (or has been) a relatively civilized country, with a well-educated population and a literacy rate that once topped 90 per cent, the highest in Africa. But often in Zimbabwe, an individual who is doing well will suddenly fall sick for no apparent reason, and actually die. In my limited understanding, this is because of the spirit of jealousy, coupled with the spirit of fear, that rules African society. The spirit of jealousy comes in first and then, with the aid of spirit mediums and n'yangas, the spirit of fear finishes the job. p88

These spirits – particularly the spirits associated with water – have a huge hold over people's lives. The emblem of the crocodile is widespread in Zimbabwe, including on all the old bank notes. The first gang to begin killing white farmers was the 'Crocodile Gang.' The crocodile is the clan totem of Mugabe's Shona tribe. His Zezuru clan adopted the old Munhumatapa kingdom name of 'master pillager' – it was the praise name for the dictator of Great

Zimbabwe, the heart of the old kingdom colonised by the Zezuru. The spirit of the master pillager lives on in Mugabe.

I believe that, to a greater extent than most people understand, it's the malevolent spirits of the dark underworld, represented by the bird and the crocodile, that have allowed the leaders of Zimbabwe to cause much of the people's suffering. People's minds have been deceived and clouded by their fear of these spirits. Meanwhile, the world outside has little or no knowledge of the spiritual forces that are at play in the hearts and minds of the people of Africa, or of the evil influence that the spirit world has on the interplay between the corrupt authorities and ordinary men and women.

The reason that Africa is hungry is not because of physical factors; there is absolutely no physical reason why Africa should be hungry. Africa is hungry because of the covenant with death and the web of lies in which it has encased itself. Where there are lies, there is no reason, no logic, no justice, no God, and no goodness. Without faith, it's easy to get ensnared in the tangle of lies. It's also very easy to compromise one's principles out of fear.

Botswana and Zimbabwe

When there was no food in Zimbabwe and we had to drive six hours to do our grocery shopping over the border in Botswana, I had seen how proper leadership had created development and wealth in that desert state. It all stemmed from servant leadership, based on Christian principles and not on the fear of the spirits..

At independence in 1966 Botswana, a land-locked country with 70 per cent of its surface covered by the Kalahari Desert, was one of the poorest countries in Africa, with a GDP per capita of about US \$70. Led by founding president Sir Seretse Khama KBE, Botswana broke the pattern of most other post-independence African states and forged ahead into the ranks of middle-income status to become the fastest growing economy in the world... For the past fifteen years, Transparency International has ranked Botswana as the least corrupt country in Africa... From being third poorest in mainland Africa, Botswana is now the second richest in terms of per capita income.

While I was in Botswana, I was taken to parliament to meet MPs, ministers, and permanent secretaries. Those few days are etched in my mind as days of great hope. Here was a non-racial African society with a government that was forging forward. Its foundation dates back to the Scottish missionary Robert Moffat's mission in the nineteenth century, when a young man – later to become Khama the Third – became a committed Christian and revolutionized the way things were done in his society. The Khama family continued that Christian tradition and are leading the way forward for the rest of Africa.

p 236-7

For information on how to support the development of Christian discipleship in Africa please visit www.rootedinjesus.net and find out about ReSource's *Rooted in Jesus* discipleship course now in use in 13 African countries – but not, as yet, in Zimbabwe.

