

**SERVING IN ‘THE BELOVED STRIP’:
A CENTURY OF MISSIONARY ACTIVITY
IN MWINILUNGA DISTRICT, ZAMBIA**

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Dr. Walter Fisher (1865-1935), a Brethren¹ missionary who had come out to Central Africa with the second of Fredrick Stanley Arnot’s pioneering expeditions in 1889, established Kalene Hill mission in 1906.² Since the small and rather modest inception, the mission has grown and expanded its field of activity. During the past century, not only has the mission spread geographically to other parts of what is today Mwinilunga district in Zambia’s North-Western Province and to neighbouring areas of Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo—an area affectionately referred to as ‘The Beloved Strip’—but it has also diversified its enterprises by establishing numerous hospitals, clinics, schools, an orphanage and a farm, most of which still continue to operate.³ By setting up this extensive and varied infrastructure the Brethren have influenced not only religious, but also social, economic and political aspects of daily life of the local population.

Although their primary aim remained evangelisation, many missionaries engaged in such activities as farming, trading, educational or medical work. This could be to establish closer contact with those whom they wished to convert, out of sheer necessity, or for other reasons.⁴ The motives for and influence of these secular

1. The Brethren in Zambia are locally referred to as Plymouth Brethren or Christian Missionaries in Many Lands.

2. See National Archives of Zambia [hereafter NAZ], HM 8/FI2/6/1/1, Walter and Anna Fisher correspondences and diaries, especially folios 1485-1857.

3. See the *Echoes of Service* manuscripts [hereafter EOS] in the Christian Brethren Archive, John Ryland’s University Library of Manchester, for correspondence related to missionary activities in Mwinilunga district.

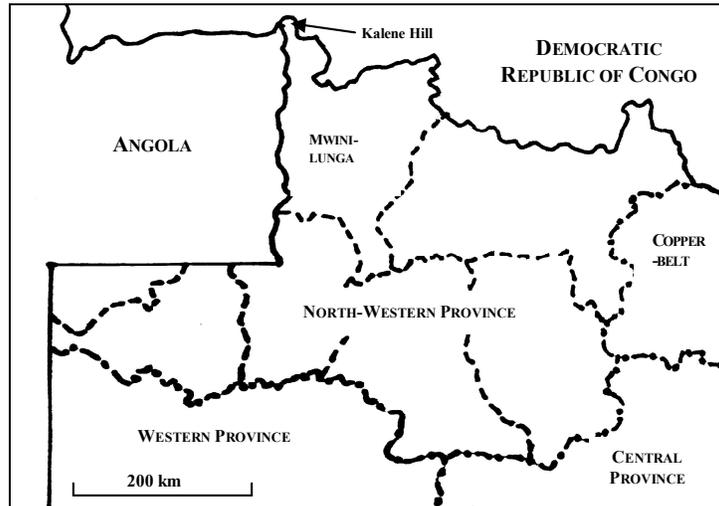
4. For a historical overview of Brethren activity in Zambia, see: Kovina L.K. Mutenda, *A History of the Christian Brethren (Christian missions in many lands – CMLL) in Zambia: One hundred years of God’s faithfulness and partnership in the Gospel (1898-1998)* (Chingola, 2002).

activities in which missionaries engaged will be examined in this paper. It will be argued that rather than executing a preconceived plan, engagement in secular activities was often an ad hoc reaction to the socio-economic and political situation which missionaries encountered locally. In the long run, however, it was exactly these secular activities which served to further the evangelistic endeavours of missionaries, and in this sense the religious and the secular could act as mutually reinforcing.

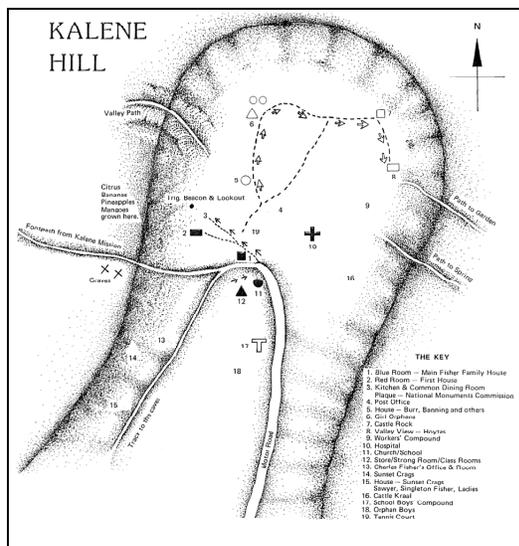
In the light of the colonial encounter in Africa, missionaries have frequently been depicted as agents (or even harbingers) of Western imperialism. Their activities have been negatively connected to issues of cultural imposition, notions of racial superiority or inferiority and questions of the exercise of power.⁵ In recent years, though, this negative view has increasingly been criticised. By contrast, more attention has been paid to issues of mutual dialogue and exchange between missionaries and those whom they wished to convert.⁶ Through highlighting the connections between missionaries, the (colonial) government and the local population, it will be argued here that missionaries were not so much external agents imposing foreign ideas, as locally grounded individuals—balancing and adapting their own ideas to local practices and beliefs. By employing local staff, eating locally produced food and interacting daily with the surrounding population, missionaries even adopted numerous local practices, ideas and beliefs themselves. By looking at the relationship and interdependence between religious and secular activities, the influence of missionary activity on the local setting of Mwinilunga district will be assessed.

5. Raphael Chijioko Njoku and Chima J. Korieh, 'Introduction', in *Missions, States, and European Expansion in Africa* (London, 2007), p.2.

6. See in particular Walima T. Kalusa, 'Language, medical auxiliaries and the re-interpretation of missionary medicine in colonial Mwinilunga, Zambia, 1922-51', *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, vol. 1.1 (2007), pp.57-78.



Map of North-Western Province showing its districts (only Mwinilunga is labelled); the location of Kalene Hill; and the surrounding provinces and countries.



Kalene Hill, showing a map of the original site, founded in 1906. In 1937 the mission moved to a new site, about a mile from the foot of the hill.

Source: *Echoes of Service commemorative leaflet*

Pioneering days at Kalene Hill

At first, Kalene Hill mission started out as no more than a group of grass huts.⁷ Dr. Walter Fisher had selected the site as being suitable for a sanatorium, due to the high altitude and relatively healthy conditions prevailing on the Hill.⁸ He and his wife Anna both had ample experience as missionaries, having served in various locations to the west of the Hill for almost twenty years. Being proponents of medical evangelisation, and having witnessed the debilitating effects of African illness, they decided to found a sanatorium in order to treat both the local population and fellow missionaries. They believed that medical work and the preaching of the gospel could go hand in hand, and could even reinforce each other.⁹

Initially the local population viewed the missionaries with mistrust, both because memories of the slave trade were still fresh in their minds and because previous experiences with whites had not been positive.¹⁰ The missionaries had to look for nightly camp fires from the Hill in order to locate surrounding villages, which otherwise remained hidden in the bush.¹¹ Even though this mistrust prevailed for many years to come, especially amongst the people who lived further away from mission stations, it was gradually overcome as missionaries visited and interacted with the population and

7. For published sources on the history of Brethren activity in Mwinilunga district and some autobiographies by missionaries, see: Elsie Burr, *Kalene Memories: Annals of the old hill* (London, 1956); W. Singleton Fisher and Julyan Hoyte, *Ndotolu: The life and stories of Walter and Anna Fisher of Central Africa*, 2nd edn (Ikelenge, 1992); W.T. Stunt et al., *Turning the World Upside Down: a century of missionary endeavour*, 2nd edn (Bath, 1973), pp.414-23; and Pauline Summerton, *Fishers of Men: The missionary influence of an extended family in Central Africa* (Tiverton, 2003). The hospital website, which explains the current activities of Kalene Hill and contains links to a number of articles discussing its work, is at <http://www.kalenehospital.com/> [accessed September 2010].

8. NAZ, HM 8/F12/1/1, Correspondence, Walter Fisher to Singleton Darling, 6th September 1906.

9. Fisher, *Ndotolu*, pp. 1-147, and Summerton, *Fishers of Men*, p. 60.

10. Fisher, *Ndotolu*, p. 132; not only missionaries, but also colonial administrators were viewed with mistrust initially, see: NAZ, KSE 4/1, Mwinilunga District Notebooks.

11. Fisher, *Ndotolu*, p. 133.

increasingly gained their confidence. In addition, people slowly started coming to the mission out of their own accord, requiring medical treatment, selling their crops and other local produce, looking for employment, or for other reasons.¹² The establishment of close contact with the local population and the overcoming of initial mistrust would prove crucial in the attempts at evangelisation which the missionaries undertook in those early days. The first converts to Christianity were generally individuals who had closely interacted with the missionaries for prolonged periods of time and had established a relationship of trust with them. One example is the case of Nyamavunda, who recovered from paralysis after treatment by Dr. Fisher, remained in close contact with the missionaries afterwards, and became the first recorded Lunda convert at Kalene Hill in 1911.¹³ In 1906, when the mission at Kalene Hill was founded, no permanent government presence had yet been established in the area that was to become Mwinilunga district, and international boundaries remained far from clearly demarcated. Even after a British commissioner was sent to the area in 1907 and a government station was built in 1908, administrative presence remained minimal.¹⁴ Initially it was confined to one district commissioner, his assistant and several local messengers, covering an area of over 20,000 square kilometres.¹⁵ Funds expended on the area were similarly minimal, and little money was available to build roads or offer educational and medical facilities. The area lacked mining and large-scale agricultural potential, and in addition, was separated from the major economic centres of the Zambian Copperbelt Province to its south east by long transport hauls. Therefore, Mwinilunga district throughout the

12. Already in 1908 Anna Fisher noted a change in attitude: NAZ, HM 8/FI2/1/1, Correspondence, Anna Fisher to Singleton Darling, 1st February 1908.

13. NAZ, HM 8/FI4/2/1, Singleton Fisher papers.

14. NAZ, KSE 4/1, Mwinilunga District Notebooks.

15. In the 1950s the number of colonial officials rose to four, although they did have a support staff of messengers, carriers and extension workers.

colonial period and even after Independence remained a rather peripheral area to both colonial and later post-colonial interests.¹⁶

The lack of funds expended on the area resulted in the near absence of such basic facilities as schools and health clinics. Therefore, the missionaries initiated the establishment of such facilities themselves, with great encouragement from the government. This arrangement proved to be beneficial to all parties. Whereas it enabled missionaries to establish closer contact with those whom they wished to convert, for the government it was a way to provide basic social amenities without major costs. In addition, it offered the population access to services which they otherwise would have lacked.¹⁷ Although the Brethren missionaries were hesitant to accept funds from the government for these social services, they occasionally made exceptions, especially as overseas funds and personal donations were limited and sometimes unreliable.¹⁸

Next to establishing basic social facilities, the government also relied on the missionaries as a source of knowledge about the area and the population. Some missionaries remained stationed in the same area for decades, obtaining fluency in the local language and establishing close contacts with the local population. By contrast, colonial administrators frequently changed posts and got transferred to other areas, which gave them little time to gain a full understanding of the local situation.¹⁹ Singleton Fisher, Walter's son, in a memoir described how: 'Government officials were more or less dependent on the Doctor [Walter Fisher] in some way or another.'²⁰ For example, when taxation was first introduced in the area in 1913,

16. See: James Anthony Pritchett, *The Lunda-Ndembu: Style, change and social transformation in South Central Africa* (Madison, 2001), particularly chapters one and six.

17. See for comparative purposes: Robert I. Rotberg, 'The emergence of Northern Rhodesia: The missionary contribution, 1885-1924', *African Affairs*, No. 2 (1963), pp. 101-129.

18. EOS, Wilfrid W. Revington Fisher, correspondence 16th February 1960 and 9th July 1931.

19. NAZ, HM 17/MI5/1, Frederick Vernon Bruce-Miller papers.

20. Fisher, *Ndotolu*, p. 151.

many people fled across the international boundaries to neighbouring areas of Angola and Congo in an attempt to avoid payment of taxes. The District Commissioner, who was highly distressed by this situation, called on the missionaries of Kalene Hill to persuade the population to return, which they did with reasonable success.²¹ Thus, although it was missionary policy to remain independent of the colonial government as much as possible, there were numerous cases of co-operation between the two.

Missionary activity in the area expanded gradually, but steadily. First, this expansion took place around Kalene Hill, where a hospital, various local schools, an international boarding school for missionary children, an orphanage, a witch village (for women driven out of their villages as suspected witches), a farm and various trading stores were founded. Thereafter, numerous out-stations were established throughout the district, where medical dispensaries, schools and churches were built—either run by missionaries themselves or by local staff.²² By the late 1940s the Brethren had set up posts in all the major villages throughout Mwinilunga district, and although not all posts were equally well-endowed with staff, funds and facilities, they became important centres towards which the surrounding population gravitated. Villages were built close to mission stations, as scarce socio-economic, medical and other services were offered there.²³ By attracting people towards the mission stations, secular activities also formed the stepping stone for religious conversion, thereby advancing the long-term goals of the missionaries.

To a large extent the expansion of missionary activity in the district was spontaneous, without following a pre-conceived plan. The orphanage, for instance, was established when Anna Fisher took responsibility for one baby orphan, after which many more followed.

21. NAZ, HM 8/FI2/1/1, Correspondence Walter Fisher to Singleton Darling, 10th June 1913.

22. See Mutenda, *A History of the Christian Brethren*, pp.54-73.

23. Mission posts were established in each chief's area (i.e. Ntambu, Sailunga, Kanongesha-Kamapanda, Chibwika, Kanyama, Kakoma, Ikelenge, Nyakaseya and Mwinimilamba; in addition a stronghold was established at the Boma, i.e. the district administrative centre).

This was also the case with the old witches who gathered in increasing numbers around Kalene Hill, where they received refuge and protection from the mission.²⁴ The spread of missionary influence throughout the district will now be further explored by looking at the fields of medicine, education, agriculture and crafts.

Healing the ill—missions and medicine

The fact that the founder of Kalene Hill mission, Dr. Walter Fisher, was a medical missionary ensured that medical extension work has had a prominent place within missionary activity in Mwinilunga district ever since the pioneering days.²⁵ In the eyes of Dr. Fisher, offering medical facilities could not only attract people towards the mission, but also detach them from heathen ideas of sickness and healing, thus making them more receptive to the word of God.²⁶ Initially medical work was concentrated around Kalene Hill, where a hospital was built which came to serve an area of almost 200 kilometres radius, attending to thousands of patients annually.²⁷ In addition, medical dispensaries were built at out-stations throughout the district from the 1930s onwards. Medical facilities offered at these dispensaries were often confined to dressing common sores and wounds, whereas the more complex cases would be referred to the hospital at Kalene Hill, where facilities existed for dental work, X-rays, surgeries, and more.²⁸

At first the population was hesitant to come to the various mission stations for medical treatment. Because mission medicine did not always succeed in curing the various tropical ailments, many

24. Fisher, *Ndotolu*, pp.176-185; Potipher Tembo, 'Suspected witches find refuge in Kaleni hills', 7 July 2005, *Times of Zambia*, <http://www.times.co.zm/news/viewnews.cgi?category=8&id=1120676291> [accessed September 2010].

25. Summerton, *Fishers of Men*, p.49.

26. See Kalusa, 'Language, medical auxiliaries and the re-interpretation of missionary medicine', and Megan Vaughan, *Curing their Ills: Colonial power and African illness* (Cambridge, 1991), for a contextualisation of missionary medical work in Central and Eastern Africa.

27. EOS, David W.S. Kaye, Mission hospital report 1950, Kalene Hill.

28. EOS, A. Charles Fisher, 4th January 1962, Kalene Hill.

continued to consult traditional healers and witch doctors. However, successful cases of treatment of disease did attract increasing numbers of patients to the mission stations. Particularly when the missionaries succeeded in curing a person with authority, such as a chief, this achievement could induce numerous others to come in for treatment at the hospital as well. Dr. Kaye of Kalene Hill hospital explained the increasing numbers of patients by the 1950s as follows:

The reasons for this increase [in the number of patients] are probably, first of all, improvement in road transport in recent years, making it much easier for patients from a distance to reach the hospital. Next, an increase in the grant from the N.R. [i.e. Northern Rhodesian] Government has made it possible to provide better feeding for the patients. A third reason is probably that there is a steady though very slow growth of faith in European medicines as against the arts of the witchdoctor and his like. But let no one imagine that the days of the witchdoctor are nearly finished. He will continue to play a large part in African life and thought for many days to come. A fourth reason for the increase of our numbers [...] may well be the increasing power of our medicines.²⁹

Medicine and religion frequently went hand in hand, as the hospital patients attended gospel services and the local orderlies were predominantly converts to Christianity. Numerous individuals who came in for treatment were introduced to the gospel in this manner, some for the first time in their lives.³⁰

Learning about God—missions and education

In addition to medical services the missionaries provided educational facilities, as illiteracy was prevalent and there was a near absence of schools in the area.³¹ The first missionary schools were opened around Kalene Hill, but soon many more followed throughout the district. The education offered at these schools was initially rather basic, as most schools did not go further than Standard II in the

29. EOS, David W.S. Kaye, Mission hospital report 1950, Kalene Hill.

30. EOS, H. & J. Cunningham, 25th October 1932, Kamapanda.

31. See for comparative purposes: Mutenda, *A History of the Christian Brethren*, and Rotberg, 'The emergence of Northern Rhodesia'.

colonial primary education system, although some of the larger schools offered education up to Standard IV or VI.³² Teaching mostly focused on the traditional ‘three r’s’, i.e. reading, (w)riting and (a)rithmetic. However, in addition to academic skills, the missionaries instructed their pupils in agriculture and crafts (the making of clay pots, baskets, grass mats, sewing, knitting, etc.), so that they might ‘get an all round training and should be useful men and women.’³³

Notwithstanding the fact that most of this education was fairly basic, missionaries were the sole providers of education in many areas. Owing to a lack of funds, the colonial government only established a few schools throughout the area. Therefore, missionary education was much sought after by the local population, who hoped to obtain employment more easily after having completed their educational trajectories.³⁴

Although the missionaries engaged in offering educational facilities, their primary goal remained evangelisation: As Miss Grace Adlington, one of those responsible for the orphanage at Kalene Hill from 1928 until 1966, noted, ‘first and foremost we long for their conversion and for their lives to be consecrated to the Lord.’³⁵ Education served to further the goal of evangelisation by exposing pupils to the scriptures and the gospel on a daily basis, and so spreading the word of God. It was thought that ‘no church can be strong in spiritual life unless most of its members can read God’s word for themselves in their own tongue.’³⁶ Religious exposure through schooling resulted in numerous converts amongst the pupils. Thus, by establishing close contacts with the local population, winning their trust and getting to know their needs, offering educational facilities could also serve to further the religious aims of missionaries.

32. NAZ, KSE 4/1, Mwinilunga District Notebooks. The colonial primary education system started with Sub A and Sub B, and continued with Standard I to VI.

33. EOS, Grace O. Adlington, 12th August 1941, Kalene Hill.

34. NAZ, SEC 2/156, Western Province annual report 1949.

35. EOS, Grace O. Adlington, 12th August 1941, Kalene Hill.

36. Fisher, *Ndotolu*, p.185.

Agriculture, trade & occupation

The establishment of large mission stations throughout the district had a profound economic impact on the surrounding population, and missions came to function as major markets. Not only missionaries themselves, but also hospital patients, boarding school children, orphans, numerous visitors and all others falling under the care of the mission, had to be fed.³⁷ Even though the missionaries did grow some of their own food, and imported certain items, they relied on the surrounding population for the bulk of their daily food provisions. The practice of Anna Fisher, Walter Fisher's wife and the matron of the hospital, was described in her son's memoir:

She held a market every day with the village women and bought from them all the food she wanted for the in-patients [of the hospital]. Crowds of women could be seen coming on to the place carrying baskets balanced on their heads containing manioc [cassava] meal, maize, mushrooms, bunches of sweet potato leaves, sweet potatoes, yams, pumpkins, smoked fish, eggs, fowls, and other commodities according to the time of year. These had to be bartered for with much bargaining and haggling [...] A couple of hours each day would be spent in the midst of a seething mass of these women, all eagerly presenting their goods for sale.³⁸

Though preferring certain types of food, such as rice, vegetables and fish, the missionaries accepted most of the produce that was offered for sale, even the produce that was initially unknown to them, such as cassava meal, an important source of carbohydrates, and pumpkin leaves.³⁹ The consumption and purchase of local food enabled the missionaries to establish close daily relationships with those who came to sell their produce. The missionaries used this opportunity to preach the gospel to them, whereas the producers in turn got to know

37. Burr, *Kalene Memories*, pp. 22.

38. Fisher, *Ndotolu*, pp. 148-9.

39. Summerton, *Fishers of Men*, pp.61-62; cf., Iva Peša, 'Cinderella's cassava: a historical study of agricultural adaptation in Mwinilunga district from precolonial times to independence', MPhil thesis, Leiden University and African Studies Centre, 2009.

the missionaries personally and established a bond of trust with them, which could eventually facilitate conversion.⁴⁰

In addition to buying local produce, missionaries employed local staff for such tasks as house construction and carpentry. Due to the expansion and multiplication of mission stations, there was always construction or maintenance work to be done, and local employees were hired to assist the missionaries in this. Although missionaries largely followed the building style which was common throughout the district, they made more use of permanent materials, such as sundried brick, cement and glass, than the surrounding population did for the construction of their houses. Thus, the missionaries educated their employees in basic crafts of construction work, carpentry, brick laying and other skills. Whereas construction work was mostly confined to men, women were instructed in such tasks as sewing, weaving and the making of baskets. These skills were in high demand, as they enabled women to earn an income independent of their husbands.⁴¹

Due to the repeated daily interaction which the buying of food and the instruction in various crafts necessitated, the missionaries gained an understanding of local needs and problems. Learning about the customs and mores of the area facilitated daily interaction between the missionaries and the surrounding population, thereby also facilitating religious conversion. On the other hand, the individuals who came to sell their produce, or were instructed in the various crafts at the mission, could enhance their income-earning opportunities by this means, and so a relationship was created that proved to be beneficial to both parties.

‘Zambianisation’ after independence

In the years leading up to Zambian independence in 1964, a change in attitude towards missionaries and missionary activity could be discerned. This shift was mainly prompted by individuals who

40. NAZ, HM 8/FI2/1/1, Correspondence, Anna Fisher to Singleton Darling, 1st February 1908.

41. EOS, A.R. Chapman, 2nd February 1982, Reminiscence of service.

agitated against the colonial government and in favour of the nationalist cause. Political activists, such as Rhodes Mangangu, strongly criticised missionaries and even resorted to giving anti-missionary speeches in public, requesting that European missionaries be substituted by African members of staff.⁴² Suspicion towards white missionaries mounted, and especially the local educated elite was 'inclined to assume they know everything and don't need the white any longer', or so the missionaries themselves argued.⁴³ This situation temporarily led to a dwindling interest in religious matters, as people were becoming too 'politically minded' and attendances at missionary meetings dropped.⁴⁴

Following Independence, the government promoted a policy of 'Zambianisation' and exerted pressure to employ more African employees and managers, instead of expatriate missionaries.⁴⁵ The missionaries complied with this aim, and, as Miss Hilda Kelly, a teacher from Liverpool at Sakeji School, the international school for the children of missionaries, noted, 'as Africanisation is implemented politically, so it is our aim to withdraw from what may appear to be leadership and to work behind the scenes'.⁴⁶ This had long been part of missionary policy in Mwinilunga district, though. Ever since the founding of the various mission stations, local staff had been employed and trained in order that missions and churches could become self-sufficient and independent in the long run. The training of staff to 'undertake regular responsibilities and to shoulder the burdens of leadership [of the church]' had always received ample attention amongst Brethren missionaries in Mwinilunga district.⁴⁷ Already in the 1950s it was being argued by Tom Rea, a missionary from Belfast, that 'self-supporting African assemblies should be the aim and object of all our services [...] The time has surely come when

42. EOS, S.W. and J. Arnot, 5th January 1964, Ntambu.

43. EOS, Hilda Kelly, 8th November 1947, Kalene Hill.

44. EOS, Adelaide Hobbs, 6th August 1961, Mwinilunga.

45. EOS, Hilda Kelly, 7th October 1967, Sakeji.

46. EOS, Hilda Kelly, 16th September 1964, Mwinilunga.

47. EOS, Hilda Kelly, 5th August 1962, Mwinilunga.

Africans can assume more responsibility for their own people.’⁴⁸ In this sense, then, the policies of the post-Independence government did not clash fundamentally with the basic aims of missionaries themselves.

Even though missionaries were encouraged to hand over certain tasks to the government, their work did not seem to be hindered seriously. Hilda Kelly, looking back in the 1970s on her time as a missionary at Kalene Hill, argued that:

It really is fantastic to have lived through a primitive country’s development from paternal, colonial rule to its emergence as a self-governing, independent, industrialised and fully-integrated nation [...] There are wide-open doors of opportunity for Christian workers, and vocational missionaries would find wide fields of service “white unto harvest”.⁴⁹

Her colleague, Miss Agnes Riddell equally noted how: ‘Until it is possible to Zambianise all the medical work in the country there will still be openings for medical missionaries, and, of course, the same applies to teachers in Secondary Schools, colleges and the University.’⁵⁰

Nevertheless, missionary activity was affected by the fact that government increasingly took over such tasks as education, medicine, the care for orphans, and other vocational tasks. Missionary activity in these fields was often not completely banned, though. Missionaries still continue to play an important role in the running of Kalene Hill hospital and Hillwood orphanage, for instance. In addition, in the field of education missionaries are still able to give religious instruction at primary and secondary schools, although the actual running of schools is now done by the government. Even though the activities of missionaries were narrowed down in some respects, this also gave them the opportunity to focus more specifically on religious affairs. Building on the relationship of trust with the local population, established through the schools, dispensaries and trading activities, missionaries could now focus on spiritual issues—devoting

48. EOS, Thomas and E. Rea, 17th October 1957, Mwinilunga.

49. EOS, Hilda Kelly, 14th June 1974, Sakeji.

50. EOS, Agnes Lind Riddell, 20th July 1967, Kalene Hill.

themselves to such tasks as the running of churches, the opening of Christian bookshops, organising Sunday schools, and other explicitly religious activities.⁵¹ At present there are Brethren churches in all the major villages throughout the district, with large numbers of people attending meetings and being actively engaged in church affairs.

Embedding Western knowledge

Although a large part of missionary knowledge and practices concerning medicine, education, religion and occupation had originated in the West, it would be an over-simplification to call missionary enterprises foreign-imposed. Certainly, the missionaries had gained most of their medical knowledge about the curing of illness, the use of surgery and the improvement of hygienic circumstances in Western hospitals.⁵² Moreover, the missionaries had propagated various crops, such as Brussels sprouts, cauliflower and strawberries, and introduced various technological items, such as cars, film projectors and gramophones, which had hitherto not (or only poorly) been known in the area.⁵³ However, in many ways missionary enterprises became firmly grounded in the local context, as well as interacting with and even taking over many aspects of local beliefs, practices and knowledge. In fact, it was exactly this local foundation which enabled the success of missionary enterprises in the long run.

By employing large numbers of local staff, by eating locally-produced food, but above all by close daily interaction, the missionaries were able to establish a relationship of trust with the surrounding population, which greatly aided conversion. In order to establish this relationship of trust, the missionaries had to adapt their ideas and practices to the existing local situation, and it was through this process that the ideas and activities of missionaries themselves sometimes changed. Once the missionaries realised, for instance, that

51. Mutenda, *A History of the Christian Brethren*, especially chpts five, nine and twelve.

52. Vaughan, *Curing their Ills*.

53. NAZ, HM8/FI/2/6/1/1, Walter and Anna Fisher correspondences, Eileen to Walter Fisher, 19th March 1909; and NAZ, SEC2/133, N.S. Price, Mwinilunga district annual report, 1935.

witchcraft could not simply be dismissed as superstition, but held an important place in local beliefs, they embraced its close study. Singleton Fisher, especially took great interest in witchcraft beliefs, and the study of these enabled him to propagate Christianity more effectively, according to local needs and wants.⁵⁴ In addition, the issue of translation proved to be important. Many religious, medical and other terms in English could not simply be translated to the local language, ChiLunda. The missionaries relied on local assistants to aid them in translation work, and in the process the meaning of the words were embedded in the existing vocabulary and understanding of the population.⁵⁵

It was through this local grounding of Western knowledge and through the answering of local needs in education, medicine and vocational training that the missionaries overcame the initial mistrust of the local population, and succeeded in converting numerous individuals to Christianity.

Conclusion

By offering medical, educational and vocational facilities the missionaries spread their influence from the religious to the secular field. If the missionaries had not previously focused on building close relationships with the local population and getting to know their needs and desires, in addition to familiarising them with missionary aims and goals, the spread of religious activities after Independence would most likely not have been as successful. The interaction between the religious and the secular, and the local grounding of missionary practices played a most important role in winning the trust of the local population. Today, people in Mwinilunga refer to missionaries as 'pure Lundas', as they have been in the area for a long time and speak the local language fluently. The secular activities in which missionaries engaged, as well as facilitating religious conversion, however, also had a profound impact on the surrounding population.

54. W. Singleton Fisher, 'Black magic feuds', *African Studies*, vol. 8.1 (March 1949), pp.20-22.

55. Kalusa, 'Language, medical auxiliaries and the re-interpretation of missionary medicine'.

The missionaries provided scarce socio-economic facilities and educated numerous individuals. In this sense the secular activities in which missionaries engaged proved to be beneficial to both the missionaries themselves and the local population.