

The *Spirit* of Change
Defining The Agency Of Missionaries In The Decolonisation Of Rhodesia

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Abstract

This thesis presents a search for defining the agency of missionaries, their respective churches and religion's role in the decolonisation of Rhodesia until 1979 with the ending of the Bush War and the emergence of the newly created Republic of Zimbabwe. As such, it seeks to understand missionaries as more than just a happenstance of history but rather as active and integral to developments within the Rhodesian region and its vastly different processes of decolonisation. Furthermore, this thesis presents the history of decolonisation from the bottom up, attributing agency and importance to the ordinary people whose lives were affected by the global dynamics of the Cold War. What follows therefore details the discovery of missionaries as actors within Rhodesia and their far-reaching impact on the decolonisation processes at play.

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Map of the Rhodesian Region, Encyclopædia Britannica Vol. 23 (1911), p. 276.

Introduction

“The spirit of the Lord is on me,
 Because he has anointed me
 To preach good news to the poor
 He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
 And recovering of sight to the blind,
 To set at liberty those who are oppressed”
 - Luke, 4:18-19

Missionaries have been a constant undertone in imperial studies. As agents of empire they traversed the globe in their seemingly never-ending mission to convert the *savages* various colonial empires inevitably encountered. The rise of empires as a radical expansion on the colonial policies of the previous eighteenth and nineteenth centuries witnessed too rapid an increase in institutional and state sponsored missionary activities working in tandem with the ever-expanding imperial boundaries around the globe. At the same time, however, the history of missionary activity is all too often subsumed within historical studies of Empires, rather than being accorded a legitimate focus in their own right.

It was only with the decline of Empires from the mid-20th century onwards that missionaries and their involvement in the formation of imperial systems became a focus of academic attention.¹ Yet what of the decline of empire? Whereas scholars have focused their attention on the relationship between missionaries and the rise of

¹ To name a few: Porter, Andrew, *Religion versus Empire? British Protestant Missionaries and Overseas Expansion, 1700-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004); Copeland, Ian, “Christianity as an Arm of Empire: The Ambiguous Case of India under the Company, C. 1813-1858”, In: *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 49 (2006); Dachs, Anthony, “Imperialism: The Case of Bechuanaland”, in: *The Journal of African History*, Volume 13 (1972); Porter, Andrew, “Religion, Missionary Enthusiasm and Empire”, in Porter, Andrew (ed.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, Vol. 3 (1999); Porter, Andrew, “‘Cultural Imperialism’ and protestant missionary enterprise, 1780-1914”, in: *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (1997); Stanley, Brian *The Bible and the Flag: Protestant Mission and British Imperialism in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (Leicester: Apollos, 1990); Etherington, Norman (ed.), *Missions and Empires* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

empire, little attention has been paid to the same relationship in the final years of the imperial age. The intention of this thesis is to add a distinct voice to an emerging canon of texts that seek to analyse the history of decolonisation in Africa. The paradox of missionary studies is that it tends to end in 1914, with little to no attention being placed on missionaries, Africa and the twentieth century. Norman Ethrington's magisterial contribution *Missions and Empire* awards a mere conclusive chapter to missionaries in a post-1945 world.

The value of missionaries in a decolonized world has been overshadowed by the sheer magnitude of shifting and ever changing complexities of the Cold War, political decolonization and more "popular" histories taking precedent over what may appear, at first glance, to be no more than an antiquated, non-entity in the processes of decolonization of Africa. This thesis presents an alternative perspective. It argues that by investigating missionaries in the process of decolonization we can uncover a fascinating and largely unexplored aspect of African nationalism, independence and Christianity that emerged out of the direct presence of missionaries, their influences and actions. Missionaries warrant an inter-disciplinary approach due to their ability, as conduits for national, regional and pan-African processes, to enable a lasting contribution to the knowledge concerning African decolonisation not solely from the European perspective but also from that of the decolonised. The narrative of missionaries in the decolonisation processes of the Cold War may contribute to the deconstruction of a dominant Eurocentric perspective and thereby allow for the reconstruction of a postcolonial framework in the context of Africa. The importance of missionaries has been underestimated or for worse, taken as a mere happenstance of a by-gone era of imperialism when a differently structured argument reveals missionaries to have been centrally involved in the formation of the present Global order shaping Africa today.

This thesis rests upon this very task, to present the processes of decolonisation in Africa through the lens of missionaries, their denominations and congregations in the central Africa region of Rhodesia roughly between the years 1953 and 1979.² To shift attention onto the regional dynamics of Christianity in Africa at a tumultuous moment in global history, involves, as Adrian Hastings argues: "the Importance of the religious dimensions within modern history should be clear enough to anyone

² "Roughly" due to the necessity to draw from context beyond the year 1953.

concerned theoretically or practically with the life of contemporary Africa”.³ And so too does this thesis argue that missionaries and their contribution to the accumulative knowledge of African history, the history of decolonisation and the transformation of the world must be vigorously perused from the “bottom up”.⁴

This thesis is structured as follows: Initially, it presents a comprehensive thematic overview of the relevant literature as attains to missionaries, Rhodesia and African Christianity in its varied contexts within the twentieth century. There follows a discussion of the themes evident in the literature to highlight not only the availability of sources that concern themselves with the agency of missionaries but also the underrepresentation of their importance in the greater processes of decolonisation of the Rhodesian region. Furthermore, the discussion will serve to draw the missionary agency into the thematic conversation concerning the Cold War, Africa and the discipline of International Relations in an attempt to argue for a bottom-up approach to addressing a de-constructed worldview of IR that is not only inter-disciplinary but also non-western.

The literature on imperial history is vast and unending, the fascination with empire has created swaths of secondary literature that is a challenge to even the most ardent of scholar. The same can be argued has been the case with the academic interest in decolonisation, which has produced not only substantial literature, but a generally accepted sub-section in imperial studies that has transcended its own disciplinary boundaries and forms a solid bridge between the world of empire and the postcolonial. Yet, as previously stated, the literature on Christian missionaries role in this process, in particular in Africa, has been left largely unattended. This literature review demonstrates that despite considerable interest in decolonisation, Rhodesia and the Cold War, missionary activities remain an underused tool for greater understanding of the decolonisation process in the Rhodesian region.

This thesis poses the question: what is the agency of missionaries in the process of decolonisation in Rhodesia? Can missionaries be viewed as agents (if perhaps unwilling) of decolonisation, as the cultural arm of liberation in Rhodesia? What role do they play and how can an analysis of their involvement aid a greater understanding of these processes, of regional, continental and global history and the

³ Hastings, Adrian, *A History of African Christianity 1950-1975* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 1.

⁴ This will be explained further in the methodology.

formulation of new and modern International Relations? The literature required to tackle these questions can be divided in two separate but interconnected fields: (1) Missionaries in Rhodesia, the church - state relations within the country, native education to local politics, Kith, Kin and Tribal Genesis. Viewing Rhodesia as a regional dimension within African decolonisation attention must also be placed on Zambia (Northern Rhodesia) as a comparative within the Rhodesian region, the formulation of a separate church-state relationship, education and the drive for African leadership. (2) Decolonisation in Africa, the African theology of decolonisation and the international aspects of Rhodesian decolonisation, missionaries and their relation to decolonisation processes and the continental postcolony. Both these bodies of knowledge need furthermore to be placed within the dynamics of the Cold War to prevent the ensuing decolonisation processes to be falsely conceptualised as inherently western in orientation or consequences.

Methodology

Drawing inspiration from Paul Johnson's invitation to write "history from the bottom up", the methodology of this thesis aims to build a foundational narrative of the Cold War that draws its argumentations, discourse and empirical drive from ordinary people.⁵ In doing so, the thesis presents a revisionist history of decolonisation in Africa and in particular of Rhodesia through the lens of missionaries as reflection of greater processes at play, namely the Cold War. Uncovering missionaries as active conduits of this process allows for laying a foundation upon which the Cold War thematic is represented in a different way to the one traditionally attempted: not in the form of an a priori existing North-South divide borne of global politics, history and discourse, in which the Southern and Third World is ultimately regarded as a side-show or as an afterthought rather than it itself being a possible starting point of causality and effect. Missionaries, as will be demonstrated in the thesis, can provide insights into the fruitfulness of a "bottom up" revision of Cold War history and its appraisal in the Southern hemisphere. Crucial is this endeavour is an emerging definition of agency in this "bottom up" approach to decolonisation's history in Africa. Martin Hewson notes that agency, as it attains to individuals, may not solely

⁵ Johnson, Paul, "Reflections: Looking Back at Social History", in: *Reviews in American History*, Vol. 39, No. 2 (2011).

be characterised as the ability of the individual to act in any given situation. It may also be viewed as agency by proxy or as agency of the collective. Such a shift in the underlying methodological armoury allows for agency to provide a different and considerably broader perspective as it allows for agency to attach to individuals, groups, their actions and the effects of said actions.⁶ Deployed in this manner, agency will denote a set of abilities that are not stationary or fixed to one individual but, rather, can be viewed as flexible and attributable to general actions within a situation and their reinforcing effects on the situation.

In addition, this thesis is written as an attempt to contribute to greater efforts to end the marginalisation of Africa and the history of decolonisation in International Relations. As Zeynep Gulsah Capan argues: “the most pervasive binary that is reproduced in International Relations is the West/non-West differentiation”; a binary that continues to reproduce both the power of the West over both empirical and academic matter.⁷ The emphasis placed upon the “bottom up” approach in this thesis is entirely congruent with such a revision of key aspects of decolonization processes in International Relations given that “bottom up” (or ‘real life’) scenarios are less easy to represent in binary terms. The African continent holds immense value to International Relations scholars, both for contemporary and historical observations. It has experienced colonialism and having undergone decolonization processes provides an optimal case to study often-radical political change, in which new powers emerge and old forms manifest themselves differently.⁸ Hence this thesis seeks to rectify the “sin of omission” that has plagued African history in International Relations by addressing the impact not that the Cold War had on its development, but rather the effect localized “bottoms” have had on the creation of a postcolonial order.⁹ It is, as Bogue demonstrates, the necessity of viewing International Relations from a colonial perspective that is vital in introducing a redefined sense of seriousness into IR.¹⁰ In an attempt to invite such seriousness to emerge and furthermore working in the shadow of Sanjay Seth this thesis will try to shake the shackles of Europe in its

⁶ Hewson, Martin, “Agency”, in: Durepos, G. Mills, A. and Wiebe, E. (eds.), *Encyclopaedia of Case Study Research* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2010), pp. 13-17.

⁷ Capan, Zeynep Gulsah, “Decolonising International Relations?”, in: *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 38, No. 1 (2017), p. 8.

⁸ Harman, Sophie and Brown, William, “In from the margins? The Changing Place of Africa in International Relations”, in: *International Affairs*, Vol. 89, No. 1 (2013), p. 69.

⁹ *Ibid*; Jones, Gruffydd, “Africa and the Poverty of International Relations”, in: *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 26, No. 6 (2005), pp. 987-1003.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 211.

perspective and methodology.¹¹ The necessity of recognising missionaries in decolonisation (and decolonising) IR is embedded within the wider necessity of placing historical experiences and memories in the foreground of any analysis.¹²

Source material that can help to uncover the agency of missionaries include letters written by missionaries, church pamphlets and official declarations, personal memoirs, newspaper articles and related information-rich evidence that has been produced, digested and disseminated “at the bottom”. Some such material has found its way into this thesis, often by passing through secondary literatures. However, any such attempt must contend with limitations. Having access neither to non-western scholarly works nor to source material that is not ready-to-hand due to financial and logistical constraints, a Master’s thesis must be modest in its claims.¹³ That said, and especially in the Rhodesian case, there is considerable value attaching to the idea of “true lawfulness” that can be found in the missionary’s agency as a novel aspect of the foundation of African historicity and the “moments” in the African *being*.¹⁴

In the interests of clarity and following Karl Hack, ‘decolonisation’ is defined in the context of the present thesis as a political process. Simultaneously, the thesis also makes reference to processes of decolonising involving those intellectual ideas that had established themselves in superiority to the colonised.¹⁵ Geographically, this thesis treats Rhodesia as a region and its entities separable between Southern and Northern Rhodesia, this includes future Zambia, Zimbabwe and Malawi; all references made to a particular nation will be referred to using the contextually and historically accurate name.¹⁶ The purpose of this is to highlight the divergent and starkly different decolonisation processes as comparatives within a region that at one stage was a unified entity within the British Empire.

¹¹ Seth, Sanjay, “Postcolonial theory and the critiques of International Relations”, in: Seth, Sanjay (ed.), *Postcolonial Theory and International Relations*, (2013), pp. 16-18; Hobson, Leira, de Carvalho, “The Big Bangs of IR: The Myths That Your Teachers Still Tell You about 1648 and 1919”, in *Millennium Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 39, (2011), pp. 735-758.

¹² Epstein, Charlotte, “The Postcolonial Perspective: An Introduction”, in: *International Theory*, Vol. 6, No. 2, (2014), p. 294.

¹³ *Ibid.* p. 298.

¹⁴ Mbembé, Achille, *On the postcolony*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, (2001), pp. 5-7.

¹⁵ For decolonisation as a political process: Hack, Karl, *International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences* (Detroit: Macmillan, 2008), pp. 255-257; For decolonisation of ideas: Prasad, Pushkala, *Crafting Qualitative Research: Working n the Post positivist Traditions* (New York: Sharpe, 2005); Capan, Zeynep Gulsah, “Decolonising International Relations?”, in: *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 38, No. 1 (2017).

¹⁶ The region defined as per the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. 23 (1911), p. 276.

Missionaries and Rhodesia

When researching missionaries in Rhodesia in the mid-twentieth century any interested scholar encounters a complex world of inter-disciplinary miscommunication and missed opportunities that get in the way of any comprehensive understanding. Furthermore, the speed at which academia leaped on the on-going crisis, that developed in 1965 out Ian Smith's Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) is remarkable. Just as it is remarkable how it has continued to grasp the fascination of a small group of scholars who are still unravelling the complexities of Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), Zambia and Malawi. The importance of uncovering the "missionary" and missionary activities in Rhodesia as more than passive players arises with a necessary review of how the scholarly world has thus far concerned itself with the concept and idea of missionaries in prelude to the UDI and its aftermath. Additionally, it is important that we ask ourselves in what way are we presenting and pursuing the greater scope of missionary activities in the decolonisation of Africa. As David Maxwell has noted astutely: "The necessity of serious study of the twentieth century missionaries does not for one moment mean that we ignore all the important gains we have made in understanding processes involved in the African reception and localisation of Christianity ... there is a danger in simply pushing the pendulum back in the opposite direction" or that we might be "pitting missionaries against Africans as if they were polar opposites. It is important to weigh up missionary hegemony against African agency but ... it is equally important to study how missionaries and African interacted to create new cultural forms and new types of knowledge".¹⁷ For the purposes of uncovering a trail of missionary agency, the later part of Maxwell's argument will be prime modus operandi as it is the cross-section of missionaries and Africans that generates the important roles the former played in the creation and maintenance of a decolonisation process in Rhodesia.

¹⁷ Maxwell, David, "Writing The History Of African Christianity: Reflections Of An Editor", in: *Journal of religion in Africa*, Vol. 36, Fasc. ¾, (2006), pp. 387-388.

Southern Rhodesian Politics, Christianity and the Church(es)

To understand the value of inserting a missionary perspective into our thinking of decolonisation processes in general and in the particular case of Rhodesia, one must begin with an observation of domestic and regional Rhodesian politics, and their global aspirations. This section of the thesis seeks to place Rhodesia, both as a country and as a region within its own context in order to be able to locate and the missionary activities within such a context. The objective is to gain a better understanding of the missionary activity within the Rhodesian decolonisation process. David Maxwell proclaimed that missionaries and the Christian churches did not play a significant role in the decolonisation of Africa; at least in part the present thesis was written to counterbalance this claim.¹⁸ Specifically in the Rhodesian region, missionaries have played an integral role in generating the foundation, the agency and the inspiration from which liberation movements eventually ended one of the world's most oppressive apartheid regimes. Especially in the northern areas of Rhodesia missionaries have had a considerable differentiating impact on and enduring processes of decolonisation. An obvious point of reference here can be established by charting the reaction of the church leadership to the escalation of the Bush war and apartheid politics within Southern Rhodesia. Indeed, the conception of "Rhodesia", the nation, – arguably the instance that brought Rhodesia into the global sphere – UDI in 1965 inexplicably drew the church into the midst of the controversial decision. When Ian Smith's government and party (The Rhodesian Front, RF) declared in November of 1965: "We have struck a blow for the preservation of justice, civilisation and Christianity, and in the spirit of this belief, we have this day assumed out independence", as Chengetai Zvobgo noted that the church in Southern Rhodesia had a very public reaction to this.¹⁹ UDI was in essence a counter-revolution for the white minority government of Southern Rhodesia, having observed the instances of successful liberation movements in Zambia and Malawi. When these latter secured majority rule Smith's government was determined to maintain the

¹⁸ Maxwell, David, "Decolonization", in: Etherington, Norman (ed.), *Missions and Empires*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 285

¹⁹ Zvobgo, Chengetai, "Church and State in Rhodesia: From the Unilateral Declaration of Independence to the Peace Commission", in: *Journal of South African Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (2005); See also: Wood, Richard, *So Far and No Further! Rhodesia's Bid for Independence During the Retreat rom Empire, 1959-1965* (Victoria: Trafford, 2005), pp. 472-475.

status quo in the southern half of the region.²⁰ The UDI placed (intentionally or not) the leadership of the various represented denominations of Rhodesia on a collision course with the government through their claim to Christian legitimacy. A few days following the declaration the Anglican Archbishop of Salisbury, Cecil Anderson, denounced the UDI as illegal and was quickly thereafter followed by the Christian Council of Rhodesia (Southern Rhodesia's umbrella organisation for protestant denominations).²¹ Not just within the Protestant churches did UDI have an impact as a "pastoral instruction" was publically distributed from the Catholic Bishops entitled *A Plea for Peace*:

"Vast numbers of people of Rhodesia are bitterly opposed to the unilateral declaration of Independence. They are particularly angered that it should be sated publicly that this action was taken in the name of preserving Christian civilisation in this country. It is simply ... untrue to say that the masses are content with this recent decision or that they have consented by their silence. Their silence is that of fear, of disappointment, of hopelessness. It is a dangerous silence; dangerous for the Church, for us all."²²

The church leadership was in opposition to the Land tenure Act and the proposal for a new constitution yet failed in their attempts to actively effect political change in Southern Rhodesia. Though this might challenge the viewpoint that agency was in effect in the churches in Rhodesia, Chengetai fails to highlight the laity and congregation as the primary push of agency from the churches. Indeed, throughout the 1960s the church leadership cannot be viewed as representative of the majority population; instead they are thoroughly European in origin and orientation. Though their actions are often commendable, their effectiveness is at best rather limited. However, it is not only in the actions of the European church leaders that agency can be found but in the emerging class of African Christian leaders such as Canaan Banana, a Methodist minister and co-founder of the ANC.²³ Others include the founder of the Zimbabwean African National Union (ZANU) Ndabaningi Sithole

²⁰ Zvobgo, Chengetai, "Church and State in Rhodesia: From the Unilateral Declaration of Independence to the Peace Commission", in: *Journal of South African Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (2005), pp. 381-382.

²¹ *Ibid*, p. 382

²² *Ibid*, p. 383.

²³ Banana, Canaan, *A Century of Methodism in Zimbabwe*, (Harare: The Methodist Church, 1991).

who had been educated in the United States as a Methodist minister by the American Board of Missionaries (ABM).²⁴ These acts of education by the ABM were early instances of attempting to introduce self-governance of the African churches in Rhodesia; and even though the effectiveness varied between from one region to the next the measures of such invite contemplating the notion of agency transferal from missionary to educated African minister.²⁵

This concept of self-governance of African churches was not solely a top-down “allowance” by the missionaries who had enabled the Africans to engage in such tasks themselves. At the very least, it can be said that the agency of the missionaries and the churches was not uniquely European. Throughout the process of decolonisation in Rhodesia (and Africa) new African led homogenous, interpretations of Christianity “challenged” the missions. The concept of Christianity through missionaries is inherently malleable and thus inevitably subject to acceptance rather than total adoption.²⁶ Arguably, it is the story of Jesus that inspired the schism from the “domineering” leadership of many European missionaries and their condemnations of African cultural practices”.²⁷ A particular example of this evolution occurred in Northern Rhodesia when in 1953, an illiterate woman named Alice Lenshina emerged from a coma claiming she had been resurrected by Christ and had been given personally a bible written specifically for Africans. She subsequently founded a church that drew its gathering from both Presbyterian and Catholic congregations with her new moral code from the African bible, which included, for instance, rules banning alcohol, and smoking, but also prohibiting sorcery and traditional dances.²⁸ It is therefore perhaps not surprising that Northern Rhodesia’s Chief Justice MacDonnell believed that the independence of the African churches had exposed “our fragile . . . hold over these people, and, at times, one saw the abyss opening”.²⁹

²⁴ Abbott, Jeri, *God at Work in Gazaland: A History of the United Church of Christ in Zimbabwe*, (Salisbury: Graham, 1981), p. 70

²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 70

²⁶ Edgar, Robert, “New Religious Movements” in: Etherington, Norman (ed.), *Missions and Empires*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 216.

²⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 216.

²⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 235.

²⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 232.

Northern Rhodesia/Zambia, Christianity and the Church(es)

Northern Rhodesia retained a different relationship between its church and state than its Southern counterpart. Here too the agency of the missionary permeated the higher echelons of liberation movements as Kenneth Kunda, the President of the United Nationalist Independence Party was the son of a missionary. Kunda was a product of the binding force Christianity and the churches represented in the Rhodesian region.³⁰ The development of the Christian churches in Northern Rhodesia, though similar in origin to the South had emerged out of the Second World War as an advocate of the black cause. As a result, their representative missionaries and clergy strongly opposed to the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland and had frequently spoken out in favor of African labor unions.³¹ Yet the lack of actions taken by the white missionaries in the wake of the Nyasaland emergency of 1953 restricted their agency in favor of the emerging missionaries, who taught and raised indigenous Christians.³² As Kaunda noted: “We believed sincerely that we were fighting in a righteous cause but the very churches which had taught us the meaning of the fatherhood of God and the dignity of man seemed to be against us in our struggle”.³³ The understanding of missionary activities as inherently European cannot be maintained as the African counterparts began to emerge in their representative functions of the Christian faith, the European church effectively “introduced forces into Zambia which have worked to keep it [now African] bound politically”.³⁴ Piper makes a valuable contribution to the role of the missionary as regards the rise of Nationalist leaders such as Kaunda: “It is argued first that the Church inspired them to political life and second that it helped train them for it”.³⁵ It could even be argued that the missionaries in Zambia of European origin had forgotten for whom they had intended to work for upon arrival.³⁶

³⁰ Piper, John, “Christianity and Politics in Northern Rhodesia”, in: *Journal of Church and State*, Vol. 10, No. 1, (1968), pp. 88-89.

³¹ *Ibid.* pp. 91.

³² McCracken, John, “Missionaries and Nationalists”, in: Adogame, Afe and Lawrence, Andrew (eds.), *Africa in Scotland, Scotland in Africa: Historical Legacies and Contemporary Hybridities* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), p. 49.

³³ Piper, “Christianity and Politics in Northern Rhodesia” (1968), pp. 91.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 93; See also: Northcott, Cecil, *Christianity in Africa* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1963), pp. 36-37.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 95.

³⁶ St. John Wood, Anthony, *Northern Rhodesia: The Human Background* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1961), p. 74.

More must be added on the Zambian transference of power from European to African missionary agency, particular in the aspect of leadership of the church, mission stations and congregations. Here Lazarus Phiri utilises the case study of the Tonga Church wherein a deliberate transformation of the Rhodesian Brethren of Christ mission was undertaken from European, through establishment, training and equipping, to African church leaders. A chronicle transformation that runs parallel to the African liberation movements in Rhodesia.³⁷ Southern Rhodesia too attempted inclusion but its development was retained within the colonial framework and rarely expanded to introduce African laity into its leadership. The missionaries in Southern Rhodesia proved far more possessive than their northern counterparts, their efforts circled around “protecting their hard won converts”.³⁸

Educated Agency

Missionaries in Rhodesia maintained a firm grasp on one aspect in particular: education. Their agency translated into the unquenchable desire for imposing western education and *civilization* upon the African population. This was by no means a recent phenomenon, however, only a small group of scholars have extensively explored the effect this has had on the liberation movements in Rhodesia. The effect of this education by missionaries cannot be understated; in fact it can be argued that missionary schools facilitated the genesis of African nationalists leaders.³⁹ The issue is highlighted by Maxwell, who addressed a central connection between missionaries and decolonization in the form of education. He asserts that in a post Versailles age the projects of education and healthcare became driving factors in legitimizing missionary activity, development and maintenance of the colonial state.⁴⁰ As a result a multitude of African nationalists had received their education and cultural indoctrination from missionary stations and knew the full extent and power of

³⁷ Phiri, Lazarus, *The Brethren in Christ Mission in Zambia, 1906-1978: A Historical Study of Western Missionary Leadership Patterns and the Emergence of Tonga Church Leadership [Doctoral Thesis] (2003)*. [Accessed on 13 May at 18:22: <https://www.era.lib.ed.ac.uk/handle/1842/22557>], p. 245.

³⁸ Ruzivo, Munetsi, “Ecumenical Initiatives in Southern Rhodesia: A History of the Southern Rhodesia Missionary Conference 1903-1945”, in: *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* (2017), p. 15.

³⁹ Zvobgo, Rungano Jonas, *Government and Missionary Policies on African Secondary Education in Southern Rhodesia with special reference to the Anglican and Wesleyan Methodist Churches, 1934-1971 [Doctoral Thesis] (1980)*. [Accessed on 13 May at 19:45: <https://www.era.lib.ed.ac.uk/handle/1842/7185>] p. 216.

⁴⁰ Maxwell, David, “Decolonization”, in: Etherington, Norman (ed.), *Missions and Empires*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 289

Christian symbols and ideas.⁴¹ Indeed, as the growth of Christians in Africa rose from approximately 75 million in 1965 to 351 million in 2000 it is necessary to view the impact of missionaries on the rise of black/African nationalist leaders and their Christian/missionary roots.

It was not, however, solely in the political sense that the mission school acted, though unwillingly, upon the influential youths under their charge. As Carol Summers has demonstrated, the effect of these schools on the increase in social hierarchical perceptions and marriages had a sizeable effect on the missionary educated and their relationship to the state.⁴² Emerging out of the Second World War the missionaries had to reconcile their practices with the emergent reality of African independence; as a result the missions increasingly sought to produce not “permanent dependency, but the possibility of mature, successful, civilized adulthood”.⁴³ In turn, this individual independence resulted throughout the Rhodesian region in mission educated Africans having opportunities in the schools administration and the instruction of classes.⁴⁴ Though there is debate about whether the agency accumulated by the emerging African middle class was collective or individual the delegation of responsibility laid a foundation of action not only as a result of their involvement in the missions but as a slowly growing, broader elite within different African communities.⁴⁵ As David Chainaiwa has argued:

“The historical primacy of the Western-educated elites, including Christian Ministers like Sithole and Muzorewa, was guaranteed by the African masses who saw in the non-racial, constitutionalism and courage of both the

⁴¹ Maxwell, “Decolonization” (2005) p. 285; See also for a contemporary overview of the sociology of religious symbols Durkheim, Emile (translated by Joseph Swain), *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, (London: Allen & Unwin, 1912).

⁴² Summers, Carol, “Mission Boys, Civilized Men and Marriage: Educated African men in the Missions of Southern Rhodesia, 1920-1945”, in: *Journal of religious History*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (1999), p. 78; See also: Summers, Carol, “Educational Controversies: African Activism and Educational Strategies in Southern Rhodesia, 1920-1934”, in: *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 20 (1994), pp. 3-25.

⁴³ Summers, “Mission Boys, Civilized Men and Marriage: Educated African men in the Missions of Southern Rhodesia, 1920-1945” (1999), p. 77

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p. 78.

⁴⁵ Ranger, Terence, “*Are We Not Also Men*”: *The Samkange Family and African Politics in Zimbabwe, 1920-1964* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1995).

politicians ... the embodiment and promotion of their own ideals and desires for independence, freedom, identity and unity”.⁴⁶

Education of the African population was at times a means to an end for the white minority rule. Contemporary scholarship had rationalised the education of Africans as “education is survival and in essence Western directed African education perpetuates white rule”.⁴⁷

To shift attention to an alternative form of education that empowered African indigenous church formation in Zambia, the Nielsen-Goodhall report, which empowered Black Nationalism through theological education.⁴⁸ The intention of this report was to discover the feasibility of an indigenous theological college in southern Africa. What remains a fascinating pre nub is that the initiative for this was taken at the World Missionary Conference in 1947 held in Canada wherein it was decided to gain a better understanding of regional “recruitment, training and maintenance of indigenous ministry in the younger churches”.⁴⁹ The findings of the report enabled a Northern Rhodesian and eventual Zambian Christian society to emerge *as native and African* as it argued that “Theological teaching needs to be made the responsibility of the African” and that theology should be taught in “community context” using local languages, cultural and forms of thought.⁵⁰ Despite the regional dynamics of Rhodesia as a colonial possession, Northern Rhodesia was selected as the site for this college due to its growing “Copperbelt” towns surrounding the namesakes industry. The church believed it could (and eventually would) attach itself to the growing trend of urbanisation in the region and thereby forgo the previously dispersed nature of the missions stations. It was hoped that this would enable students to receive training against a “local and indigenous background”.⁵¹ The eventual effect of this college was in its role as a “think tank” for what would become the United Church of

⁴⁶ Chainaiwa, David, “Zimbabwe: The Internal Settlement in Historical Perspective”, in: *The Decolonisation of Africa: Southern Africa and the Horn of Africa* (Paris: UNESCO Press, 1981), p. 87.

⁴⁷ Parker, Franklin, “Education in the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland”, in: *The Journal of Negro Education, Vol. 30, No. 3* (1961), p. 293.

⁴⁸ Kangwa, Jonathan, “The Goodhall-Nielsen Report and the Formation of the United Church of Zambia Theological College”, in: *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, (2017); See also for a contemporary overview of Northern Rhodesian education prior to the Second World War: “Education in Northern Rhodesia. Annual Report on European Education, 1932. Annual Report on Native Education, 1932”, in: *Journal of the Royal African Society, Vol. 33, No. 132* (1934).

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p. 5.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, p. 6.

⁵¹ Kangwa, “The Goodhall-Nielsen Report and the Formation of the United Church of Zambia Theological College” (2017), pp. 6-10

Zambia.⁵² It is therefore fitting to see both the creation and the eventual role of African churches as a direct product of colonial decisions made prior to independence and thus as a paternalistic allowance made by the colonizers to appease the colonized. It was, as with the churches and with every other aspect of Africa society, the desire for freedom that generated just as much of an impulse for the creation of African churches as it was the Christian impulse within the post-Second World War western churches.

The difference between Zambia and Southern Rhodesia was not restricted to education in mission. As Walima Kalusa has expertly reigned in on the cultural evolution that occurred in the case of Kalene Hospital in Zambia between missionary doctors and their patients arguing that any investigation into the role of missionaries in decolonisation should at least partly question the missionary-African relationship in “dominance-resistance paradigms”.⁵³ Additionally, Giacomo Macola has argued for the creation of African identities through the effective use of missionary infrastructure and support as a key aspect of this being “the reconstruction and hardening of ethnic identities through the production and publication of vernacular histories and ethnographies”.⁵⁴ In the 1950s and the 1960s, for instances, Northern Rhodesia saw an increase in Missionary publications (in particular the Paris Missionary Society, White Fathers and the Dutch Reformed Church Mission) giving voice to the local and oral traditions of African culture.⁵⁵ This not only generated a strong Christian affiliation for pre-colonial institutions, but also enabled the African authors to supplant “their erstwhile missionary mentors as the principal producers of published vernacular histories”.⁵⁶ Additionally, this instance of self-creation generated an early notion of independence strongly centred on the pre-colonial cultures. Of course, as Macola rightfully argues “by producing tribal histories, or by training increasing numbers of Africans to do so, missionaries provided the cultural rationale for the social and administrative engineering that colonial officials were

⁵² Kangwa, “The Goodhall-Nielsen Report and the Formation of the United Church of Zambia Theological College” (2017), p. 10.

⁵³ Kalusa, Walima, “Missionaries, African Patients, and Negotiating Missionary Medicine at Kalene Hospital, Zambia, 1906-1935”, in: *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 2 (2014), p. 294.

⁵⁴ Macola, Giacomo, “The Historical and Ethnographical Publications in the Vernaculars of Colonial Zambia: Missionary Contributions to the ‘Creation of Tribalism’”, in: *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Vol. 33, Fasc. 4 (2003), p. 335.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p. 345.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p. 350.

then striving to put into practices”.⁵⁷ It should serve as a reminder that although the agency of missionaries is directed in the mid-twentieth century to a large degree in favour of the majority population the utilisation of this agency as legitimisation to bolster the policies of minority rule should not be overlooked. In contrast to Northern Rhodesia, the missionaries in Southern Rhodesia did not attempt to create such identities.⁵⁸ Their efforts “at inscribing languages and ascribing social identities based upon perceived differences in language emerged from a particular ideological field, namely that of the Age of Modernism and its attendant forms”.⁵⁹ However, tribalism in Southern Rhodesia proved to be a “powerful catalyst for local peoples’ mobilization against colonial oppression” due to its repressed nature.⁶⁰

It was when the missionary gap between “ideology and good practice of ‘good argument’ became ever greater, colonialism’s practitioners ‘found them unable to live up to their pretensions’”.⁶¹ Though this may have been the case, it is, as Afe Adogame and Andrew Lawrence have argued, in partly due to younger generations of missionaries, which were increasingly “Africanized”, that such an allowance for tribalism and indigenous cultural renaissance was allowed and even encouraged.⁶² In particular the Scottish missionaries rebelled against the hegemonic hierarchy of the white settler in Rhodesia, a symbol of the conservative and traditional colonial mentality.⁶³ This however is not an anomaly as the World Council of Churches attempted to draw attention to the apartheid regime of oppression in Rhodesia throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Through letters to their membership and the United Nations, the World Council of Churches represents the greater attitude of Protestant

⁵⁷ Macola, “The Historical and Ethnographical Publications in the Vernaculars of Colonial Zambia: Missionary Contributions to the ‘Creation of Tribalism’ (2003), p. 353.

⁵⁸ There were however great attempts at forging the legitimacy of white minority rule in Rhodesia as being an organic development that originated with the missionary activities in the nineteenth century. The Southern Rhodesian government created the Oppenheimer series as a *raison d’être*: Haig, Joan and Dritas, Lawrence, “An Archive of Identity: The Central African Archives and Southern Rhodesian History”, in: *Archival Science, Vol. 14* (2014).

⁵⁹ Simmons, David, “Signs of the Times: Missionaries and Tribal Genesis in Southern Rhodesia”, in: *Transforming Anthropology, Vol. 9, No. 2* (2000), p. 13.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*; Rankin, Elizabeth, “Africanising Christian Imagery in Southern African Missions”, in: *English in Africa, Vol. 30, No. 2* (2003), p. 85.

⁶¹ Cocks, P.T., “Musemunuzhi: Edwin Smith and the Restoration and Fulfillment of Africa Society and Religion”, in: *Patterns of Prejudice, Vol. 35, No. 2* (2001), p. 31; See Also: Smith, Edwin and Dale, Andrew, *The Ila Speaking Peoples of Northern Rhodesia* (London: Macmillan, 1920).

⁶² Adogame, Afe and Lawrence, Andrew, “Africa-Scotland”, in: Adogame, Afe and Lawrence, Andrew (eds.), *Africa in Scotland, Scotland in Africa: Historical Legacies and Contemporary Hybridities* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), p. 9.

⁶³ *Ibid*.

clergy towards Rhodesia post-UDI.⁶⁴ The effect of this was twofold, firstly it further entrenched the minority regime in Rhodesia, adding to their sense of abandonment by the world that had but decades prior hailed them as standard bearers of a civilizing mission. Secondly, it can legitimacy and credence to the missionaries and clergy who opposed the minority regime as well as the Christian nationalist leaders who had been given the opposition mandate indirectly through the global community.

Created Elites and the Missionary-African Relationship

So how then do scholars engage with the gap between missionary activity and liberation movements in Rhodesia as the driving forces of decolonisation? The issue is not one of addressing the relations between the church and the state but the one between the church and the liberation movements. Surely, as demonstrated above, the church had its relations with the individuals within and the collective formation of an identity but how so with the movements as whole? Again, Hastings draws attention to the missionary created elite within the liberation movements:

“The missionary movement was by no means uniformly liberal and sympathetic to African political advance – and still less were the clergy and laity of settler churches – but in many African countries it had been sufficiently so both to engender a fairly elitist, politically minded African lay leadership and to retain the confidence of that leadership to some considerable extent.”⁶⁵

This African, homogenous elites formed the bridge between the missionaries and the movements, names such as previously mentioned Kaunda, Sithole or Muzorewa or the by now infamous Robert Mugabe who was noted as a “distinguished student” at the mission school of Fort Hare.⁶⁶ Even Ndabaningi Sithole was a graduate from the “Leadership Programme” of the Mission Board in Southern Rhodesia, having been in

⁶⁴ “Statement by Officers of the World Council of Churches” [Letter], Archive Number: S-0871-0004-04-00001 New York, UN Secretariat (9 Jan. 1970), pp. 1-2

⁶⁵ Hastings, Adrian, “The Christian Churches and Liberation Movements in Southern Africa”, in: *African Affairs*, Vol. 80, No. 320 (1981), p. 345.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

the United States as a result and eventually writing his *African Nationalism* in 1955.⁶⁷ Elitism also brought with it a particular form radical interpretation and usage of Christianity that was, by the 1970s entirely populist. By using both the story of Christ as a parable for decolonisation and using the power that Christianity has in mobilising the masses this very elite that had brought it with them through their education transformed it into an African entity.⁶⁸

Yet from the missionary perspective, the relationship towards the liberation movements was not entirely linear but rather dichotomous, marred by fear on the one hand of the anti-Christian rhetoric of the communist dynamics at work in the liberation movements and the Christian morality to aid and seek redemption in their actions on the other. It was, as an English missionary in southern Africa wrote in the 1950s: “The question, as a missionary with experience of the Communist victory in China points out, is not ‘will there be a revolution?’ but ‘who will *lead* the revolution.’ It is my opinion that the Church will prove strong enough to lead the revolution”.⁶⁹ The government in Southern Rhodesia, especially in the context of the escalating Bush War of the 1970s, continued to condemn the missionaries, in particular at the borders with Zambia and Mozambique of “harbouring terrorists but condemned by the guerrillas as establishment figures, enemies of the people”.⁷⁰ So the relationship must also be viewed as twofold, from missionary to liberation movement and from liberation movement to missionary. For the liberation movements the missionary, even those acting in a “radical” manner such as the interracial cooperative mission at St. Faith’s Farm in Southern Rhodesia were “essentially liberal, operating within rather than against the accepted establishment”.⁷¹ Additionally, the congregation naturally deepened political ties, as white congregations would be inexplicably tied to the status quo and as a result drag their church with them.⁷² Prior to the escalation of the Bush War, in the 1950s and 1960s, deep ties between the missionary and the African population had emerged. This resulted in, as Robert Matikiti argues a path into the future wherein:

⁶⁷ Hastings, “The Christian Churches and Liberation Movements in Southern Africa” (1981), p. 347; Sithole, Ndabaningi, *African Nationalism* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968).

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, p. 354.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p. 346.

⁷⁰ “RR7701A Rhodesia Post Geneva Report” [AP Television Broadcast], in: *Roving Report Rhodesia* (1 July 1977).

⁷¹ Hastings, “The Christian churches and Liberation Movements in Southern Africa” (1981), p. 346.

⁷² *Ibid*, p. 347.

“Africans owed everything in their new life to the missionary and to the reasonable settler. However, Africans wanted to become partners with the missionaries and settlers. This explains why mission stations became hotbeds of the anti-colonial nationalist excitement that swelled the country with political parties, organizations, meetings, and strikes in the 1950s and 1960s”.⁷³

The agency of missionaries was to choose sides, either the local African population who had been their historical *raison d'être* in Africa or with the white, minority rule that gave them security and legitimacy? The history of Rhodesian missionaries shows a varied response. From as early as the Nyasaland Crisis in 1959, churches and their members swung either towards political conservatism and away from “enlightened paternalism” or, as only very few did openly, towards the nationalist movements.⁷⁴ Yet, Adrian Hastings argues that by the 1970s there had been an almost complete divorce between the churches and the liberation movements, that the liberation movements no longer needed the church halls for meetings or recruitment but rather guns and differently shaped over-arching ideologies.⁷⁵ While such an argument may appear justifiable as it attain to the leadership of both the churches and the liberation movements the individuals in Rhodesia display a different a relationship, one that extends well beyond 1970. Key to the argument here would appear to be that the relationship must be worked out at the level of the individual and without vast generalisation, as western scholars have tended to do. An example of this occurred in 1979 when Father Kennedy of St Peters Mission in Southern Rhodesia gave an interview without official permission by the regime. When asked about his and other missionaries relationship with the guerrillas:

⁷³ Matikiti, Robert, *Christian Theological Perspectives On Political Violence In Zimbabwe: The Case Of The United Church Of Christ In Zimbabwe [Doctoral Thesis] (2012)*. [Accessed on 12 May at 16:48: <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.839.6850&rep=rep1&type=pdf>], p. 148.

⁷⁴ McCracken, John, “Missionaries and Nationalists”, in: Adogame, Afe and Lawrence, Andrew (eds.), *Africa in Scotland, Scotland in Africa: Historical Legacies and Contemporary Hybridities* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), pp. 43-45.

⁷⁵ Hastings, “The Christian churches and Liberation Movements in Southern Africa” (1981), p. 348.

“I think it’s a good relationship, they understand naturally that if they were to come onto the mission site that would jeopardise all the work we are doing here and I think that they appreciate that and so far they have not actually been on the site but we have contact with them. We are here to help poor, sick and so on. They get sick and we give them drugs and so on but they are very discreet in their manner of approach”. [Question: You provide them with medical supplies?]. “Yes I supply anyone with medicine who requires medicine”. [Question: How do you regard the guerrillas?] “Many of them are school boys that we have taught from time to time ... I respect them from time to time as a group of people who have a cause ... I am a Rhodesian actually, I think that’s quite important, people perhaps overseas think that all Rhodesians subscribe to a particular policy that isn’t quite true ... so in as much as the guerrilla are a force that has alone manage to get these things (the policies) withdrawn I respect their dedication.”⁷⁶

The missionary societies themselves should therefore not be seen to be monolithic; within the Catholic missions there was vast disparity in attitude towards the guerrillas ranging from the Jesuits openly opposing the liberation movements to the Burgos Fathers actively supporting them.⁷⁷

Missionaries throughout Rhodesia, whether European or African staff members, lay ministers and preachers played an integral role in mediating the relationship between the guerrillas, their respective liberation movements and the local population. It is a tragic happenstance that this has not garnered as much attention as it should, the agency of missionaries in acting as conduits for grassroots interactions not between leaderships but individuals provides a fascinating insights in the agency of missionaries in the decolonisation of Africa.⁷⁸ Terrance Ranger argues that the guerrillas and the masses had reached a broad consensus with the guerrillas, though, this should not induce the reader to believe that the masses were ideologically devote, rather they were inherently pragmatic towards the guerrillas.⁷⁹ The missions

⁷⁶ “Goodbye Rhodesia” [Thames TV Broadcast], in: *This Week*, (11 Jan. 1979).

⁷⁷ Hastings, “The Christian churches and Liberation Movements in Southern Africa” (1981), p. 352.

⁷⁸ Maxwell, David, “Local Politics and the War of Liberation in North-Eastern Zimbabwe”, in: *Journal of South African Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 3, (1993), p. 363; Lan, David, *Guns and Rain: guerrillas and Spirit Mediums in Zimbabwe*, (London: Curry, 1985).

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* See Also: Ranger, Terence, *Peasant Consciousness and Guerilla War in Zimbabwe* (London: Curry, 1985).

acted not only as conduits but as observers, they do offer the documentation necessary for any sort of account of interaction between the masses and the liberation movements on the local level as an international delegation at the Elim Mission noted in 1976: “The whole of the African population in the area is in sympathy with ZANU and there is evidence that the school children are in contact with them”.⁸⁰

Additionally, the missionaries aided in creating a social hierarchy amongst local populations, that local tribes chose to “ally themselves” with the missionaries and in exchange did receive a higher societal rank. However, with the changing dynamics of Rhodesian politics, Maxwell charts how in the case of the Manyika tribe (one such ally of the missionaries) saw a dramatic change in their political alliance during the 1970s. It was in the most part due to the communication of ideology as one combatant noted, it was easier to communicate with the Manyika rather than “start from the base and teach them everything”.⁸¹ The Manyika represented the leadership cadre of the ZANU forces with their President, Herbert Chitepo until his assassination in 1975.⁸² In an interesting flip of agency, it was through the contact with the African staff at missions that the ZANU forces would act almost as “ZANU-missionaries” themselves directing their mobilisation messages at the local elites and getting them to communicate the cause to the non-missionary educated African population.⁸³ That is not to say that the guerrilla forces did not have their own “literate-elite”, on the contrary as the missionaries themselves in Rhodesia realised the value in courting these elites for the message of the gospel. Maxwell highlights, how in turn too the guerrilla elites “recognised the importance of capturing church based constituencies and used Christian songs and symbols as means of mobilisation”.⁸⁴ Lastly, and despite his assertion that missionaries and the church lack impact in the decolonisation of Rhodesia, Maxwell makes a compelling counterargument based on the attempts to observe decolonisation from the “bottom-up” with missionaries being accorded the agency of legitimisation:

“The comrades were acutely aware of the existence of zones of popular religion – ‘traditional’ and Christian – and of the varied ability of the holy

⁸⁰ Maxwell, David, “Local Politics and the War of Liberation in North-Eastern Zimbabwe”, in: *Journal of South African Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 3, (1993), p. 365.

⁸¹ *Ibid*, p. 368.

⁸² *Ibid*, p. 367.

⁸³ *Ibid*, p. 376.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, p. 378.

men who controlled them to act both as peasant leaders and as agents capable of bestowing political legitimacy upon them”.⁸⁵

It should be argued that in part Black Nationalism (and Pan-Africanism) is manifested in Black Christianity, a rebellion against the inequality experienced in their relationship with the white missionaries and white Christians.⁸⁶ Furthermore that opposition to colonial rule manifested itself, as previously demonstrated, in the independent African church organisations, labour movements and cultural associations.⁸⁷ As Martin Hewson notes, agency is not solely the ability of the individual to act in any given situation but may also be perceived as agency by proxy or by the collective.⁸⁸ Christianity, as practiced by the missionaries had in turn become a medium for proxy agency by the liberation movements, by the liberation and nationalist leaders while in reverse allowing for greater realms of agency of the minority government giving a constant legitimisation for their continued actions within the Bush War.

Missionaries as Agent of Legitimation

This legitimisation by the minority regime was undertaken through the constant utilisation of missionary deaths and attacks on mission schools, stations and hospitals as a legitimising force for their continued defence of the white-minority regime. As an example, the then widely covered Elim Mission incident was pivotal in creating a narrative of legitimisation in Southern Rhodesia. Michael Kaufman described the incident at the Elim Mission in 1978 where 12 white teachers and children were killed as a “Brutal terrorist attack” and opened a discussion in the American press on the vulnerability of missions in Rhodesia.⁸⁹ Kaufman interviewed a Rhodesian government official who noted:

⁸⁵ Maxwell, “Local Politics and the War of Liberation in North-Eastern Zimbabwe” (1993), p. 386.

⁸⁶ Mashingaidze, Elleck, “The Role of Liberation Movements in the Struggle for Southern Africa, 1955-1977”, in: *The Decolonisation of Africa: Southern Africa and the Horn of Africa* (Paris: UNESCO Press, 1981), p. 25.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, p. 25.

⁸⁸ Hewson, Martin, “Agency”, in: Durepos, G. Mills, A. and Wiebe, E. (eds.), *Encyclopaedia of Case Study Research* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2010), pp. 13-17.

⁸⁹ Kaufman, Michael, “12 White Teachers and Children Killed by Guerrillas in Rhodesia”, in: *The New York Times* (25 June 1978).

“It had been assumed that attacks in missions, which provide the bulk of education and medical services in the remote countryside, were mostly random and uncoordinated. Now, with the number of such attacks increasing and in light of the horror felt after the latest slayings, there is at least the suggestion that missionaries are being targeted for tactical reasons”.

And indeed, throughout the 1970s attacks and raids on missionary stations had been steadily increasing, in 1978 there had been at least one attack per month.⁹⁰ The Elim Mission incident generated a series of investigations into the event and Kaufman writing in the *New York Times*, continued the discussion in an international realm questioning the precarious nature of missionary activity in Rhodesia in the 1970s when they often found themselves under threat from both the guerrillas and the government.⁹¹ Mugabe was quoted to have disclaimed personal responsibility for this incident, stating that the local commanders held all the autonomy in the decision making process for operations. Despite the attempts by Rhodesian newspapers and Ministry of Information to portray this incident as an almost daily occurrence and another nail in the coffin for Rhodesia, a pamphlet was distributed in 1978 detailing the most grotesque images and stories of missionary “massacres” in Rhodesia all caused, the regime noted, by the “terrorists” (Guerrillas).⁹² Whereas Kaufman’s investigation into missionary vulnerability concluded that:

“It is understood that some of the guerrilla visitors have come with messages of reassurance for the missionaries, saying that they have regards for their work and that they will be needed after a black government is installed. On the other occasions they have come with threats, urging staff to leave”.⁹³

⁹⁰ This assessment is based on a overview of the *Rhodesian Herald*, the main newspaper in Southern Rhodesia during the 1970s and an overview document produced by District Commissioner John White who kept note of the article headlines each day during the Bush War: White, John, *A Newspaper Chronology of the Rhodesian Bush War* [Unpublished Manuscript], van Tonder, Gerry (ed.) (Derby: 2014). Unpublished but can be made available.

⁹¹ Kaufman, Michael, “Missionaries in Rhodesia Increasingly Imperilled by Guerrilla Violence”, in: *The New York Times* (30 June 1978).

⁹² *The Murder of Missionaries in Rhodesia* [Pamphlet] (Salisbury: Ministry of Information, 1978).

⁹³ Kaufman, Michael, “Missionaries in Rhodesia Increasingly Imperilled by Guerrilla Violence”, in: *The New York Times* (30 June 1978).

So while not entirely peaceful it was by no means that every engagement or point of contact between missionaries and guerrillas ended in violence and death. Some academics, in particular modern Zimbabwean such as Jephias Dzimbanhete, have begun questioning the Elim Mission incident and the accepted evidence as regards the standard narrative.⁹⁴ This has created interesting post-decolonisation debates that highlight the legacy of missionaries in their “victimhood” during decolonisation and, a debate that has begun to question the scholarly attention the Elim incident received during the immediate academic post-mortem.⁹⁵ The recent scholarship has questioned the notion that only Mugabe and ZANLA forces *could* commit such a crime.⁹⁶ Dzimbanhete poses the proposition that (a) missionaries decided their own fate by either siding with the government or the guerrillas, neutrality was not an option and (b) the possibility of being “sold out” by radicalised African staff working in the mission who would “betray” the missionaries. This may add to the idea that not only did missionaries mediate relationship between the guerrillas and the masses but that in reverse too the African population “handled missionary relations” to the guerrillas.⁹⁷ Lastly, Dzimbanhete questions the role of the Zimbabwean African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) guerrillas claiming that it may have been the Rhodesian Security Forces who committed the act, though discovering the truth of the Elim Incident may remain a difficult endeavour, with archival resources being rare, politicised and restricted both for ZANLA and Rhodesian government sources.⁹⁸

Though history records the role of missions and churches, as being almost solely involved in the education of nationalist leaders of the liberation movements that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s it is paramount to review this assertion that their actions were limited to education. The redress of this singular agency must take into account the sheer scope of involvement missionaries and their respective institutional extensions played in the continued decolonisation of Rhodesia. Furthermore it is

⁹⁴ Dzimbanhete, Jephias, “The Case of Elim Mission ‘Massacre’ During Zimbabwe’s Liberation War: Will the Truth Ever be Known?” in: *Africology: The Journal of Pan African Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 9, (2017)

⁹⁵ Caute, David, *Under the Skin: The Death of White Rhodesia*, (London: Allen Lane, 1983).

⁹⁶ Dzimbanhete, Jephias, “The Case of Elim Mission ‘Massacre’ During Zimbabwe’s Liberation War: Will the Truth Ever be Known?” in: *Africology: The Journal of Pan African Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 9, (2017), p. 288

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* p. 290; Maxwell, David, “Christianity and the War in Eastern Zimbabwe: The Case of Elim Mission”, in: Bhebe, Nagawbe and Ranger, Terrance (eds.), *Society in Zimbabwe’s Liberation War*, (Harare: Boydell and Brewer, 1996), p. 67.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.* See Also for tactic of the Rhodesian Army in dressing as guerrillas: Daly-Reid, Ronald and Stiff, Peter, *Selous Scouts: Top Secret War* (Alberton: Galago, 1982).

necessary to provide a foundation upon which the greater study of decolonisation, Christianity and African post-colony. Though the limited access to sources within Zimbabwe as attains to the guerrilla's and their interactions with missionaries are a constant hurdle to the scholarship.

Theology, Nationalism and Christianity

To build upon the agency of missionaries in Rhodesia and place that within the larger context of Christianity in Africa, hereby offering a step up in the evaluation of missionary agency. This thesis will not be addressing with the multitude of differences in Christianity in Africa and its various effect that differentiate depending on the colonial context but rather draw a comparative to the greater African instance of Christianity and missionaries as active in the process of decolonisation thus highlighting not only the impetus but also the necessity for greater research. Here too lies a two-way street as it was not only the missionaries that had an affect but also, as Canaan Banana wrote, African Nationalism of the 1950s became a “major force ... African demands to control their own political and economic and social destine affected all churches”.⁹⁹ Regarding missionaries and their conceptual tool as the “handmaiden to empire” has been a popular assertion and one that needs little defending, however, with growing interest scholars have regarded the role of missionaries, religion and Christianity as an interesting conceptual perspective in decolonisation processes.¹⁰⁰ Though this thesis focuses on the Rhodesian sub-region, it should be placed into a regional/continental context with an emphasis not only on the scholarship that draws from instance in Rhodesia but also in a larger and wider scope.

The thematic usage of religion as a tool is a vital step in generating a complete understanding of the missionary during decolonisation. Additionally, language forms an import aspect of the entre missionary narrative in the decolonisation of Rhodesia. It has been largely left out of the narrative that Rhodesia witnessed a transformation in language in the mid twentieth century; John MacCraken for instance, points to the interesting shift in appropriation of Christian church language as another form of

⁹⁹ Banana, Canaan, *A Century of Methodism in Zimbabwe*, (Harare: The Methodist Church, 1991), p. 131.

¹⁰⁰ Adogame, Afe and Lawrence, Andrew, “Africa-Scotland”, in: Adogame, Afe and Lawrence, Andrew (eds.), *Africa in Scotland, Scotland in Africa: Historical Legacies and Contemporary Hybridities* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), p. 9.

missionary agency of the missions and their stations, especially those administered by Africans became churches.¹⁰¹ In this shift resides the adoption and assimilation of the Christian institution, which in turn provides an avenue for exploring the nationalism and Christianity relations in Rhodesia (and Africa thematically). The connection between missionaries and African nationalism may be explored on a theological and symbolic level. For instance, throughout the decolonisation process, the African Chieftaincy retained and built upon its pre-Christian traditions as a means to “revitalize the link with the past and rediscover a traditional ‘identity’ and so to forge a new nationalism”.¹⁰² In this case it is a refusal of Christianity and the oppressive doctrine it propagated yet in a dichotomous fashion the African nationalist leaders knew the full extent and power of Christian symbols and ideas.¹⁰³ Indeed, as David Kimble asserts: “The nationalist movement could hardly have got under way had it not been for the remarkable work of the Missions in the field of education”.¹⁰⁴ This is not to say it is solely responsible for the rise and development of the nationalist movement, but it is important to give credence to the value found in Christian education, doctrine and utility by Nationalist leaders. This conversion to Christianity was not spontaneous but the result of lasting missionary activities in tandem with the retention of pre-colonial beliefs.¹⁰⁵

As an offshoot from African/Black Christianity it is imperative that Liberation Theology be taken into account, albeit not in the Latin American sense most commonly associated with Liberation Theology but in a particular African fashion. The work of Mokgethi Motlhabi, for instance, whose research on the history of Black theology and the ensuing liberation theology provides a foundational insight into the nuances of liberation theology in Africa and the direct correlation of African projects

¹⁰¹ McCracken, John, “Missionaries and Nationalists”, in: Adogame, Afe and Lawrence, Andrew (eds.), *Africa in Scotland, Scotland in Africa: Historical Legacies and Contemporary Hybridities* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), p. 49

¹⁰² Gilbert, Michelle, “The Christian Executioner: Christianity and Chieftaincy as Rivals”, in: *Journal of Religion in Africa, Vol. 25, Fasc. 4*, (1995), pp. 374-375.

¹⁰³ Maxwell, “Decolonization”, (2005) P. 285.

¹⁰⁴ Kimble, David, *A Political History of Ghana: The Rise of Gold Coast Nationalism, 1850-1928*, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1963), p. 166.

¹⁰⁵ Gilbert, Michelle, “The Christian Executioner: Christianity and Chieftaincy as Rivals”, in: *Journal of Religion in Africa, Vol. 25, Fasc. 4*, (1995), pp. 374-375. See Also: Simensen, Jarle, “Christian Missions and African Society: the Social Context of religious Change”, in: Baier, Helmut (ed.), *Kirche in Staat und gesellschaft im 19 Jahrhundert* (Neustadt: Degener, 1992), p. 85.

on theology evolving into a uniquely African entity.¹⁰⁶ Motlhabi's research focuses primarily on South Africa, yet it provides a foundation (if not a motivation) for greater primary research into the evolution of African theology in a philosophical sense as having inspired other instances of Liberation Theology in Africa and Rhodesia. Such a broadening of the scope of analysis could open up avenues for new insights into the decolonisation processes and their ties to religion as the diversity of religions in Africa can offer new avenues as of yet unexplored to be brought to the fore of modern, ethnographical accounts of "Africanised" religion.¹⁰⁷ In the Rhodesian case this holds value, as Bella Mukontora argued, in that the task of democratisation in Rhodesia, then Zimbabwe, required the task to be precluded by a personal transformation and that this transformation was mostly in hands of Evangelical theologians.¹⁰⁸ That this particular theology, and its implications for the liberation movements, was paramount to the African shift towards independence is evident in Dibinga Wa Said's 1971 *An African Theology of Decolonization*. Drawing from Douglas and Du Bois's Colour Line, Said parallels not only the categorisation of Africans as different and oppressed by the "white" racial group but also in what way the decolonization processes are in tandem and parallel with the, as Said argues: "decolonization mission" of Jesus.¹⁰⁹ Said invites an appraisal of Christian, white theology as incompatible with the freedom of the African, that there is always conflict between the missionary and the African Christian.¹¹⁰ Yet, it is through these missionaries that the bible now becomes a tool or instrument with which Africans can now "recapture our lost lands" and that, at its very core, the decolonisation theology in Africa calls for the "radical and unconditional recognition of Humanity".¹¹¹ In an earlier, unpublished article, Said had argued that this would only be achieved if "all its institutions were administered by bona-fide sons and daughters".¹¹² African decolonisation theology is at its core uncompromising, both in its objectives and in its

¹⁰⁶ Motlhabi, Mokgethi, "The History of Black Theology in South Africa", in: Hopkins, Dwight and Antonio, Edwards (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Black Theology*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 221-233.

¹⁰⁷ Ranger, Terence, "Conference Report - Evangelical Christianity and Democracy in Africa: A Continental Comparison", in: *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Vol. 33, Fasc. 1 (2003), p. 113

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*; Quoting Bella Mukontora at the aforementioned/cited conference in 2003.

¹⁰⁹ Said, Dibinga Wa, "An African Theology of Decolonization", in: *The Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 64, No. 4, (1971), p. 503.; T.J Mafico invites a further comparison between Jesus and Marx who were both concerned with creating a lasting world peace in their ideology's image. Mafico, T.J, "Church Adaptation to the new Social Order in Zimbabwe", in: *Zambezia*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (1981), p. 175.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 505.

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 523; p. 523

¹¹² Said, Dibinga Wa, "The Christian Marijuana of Pope Paul VI in Africa" [Unpublished] (1970).

interpretation of the Christian theology from which it came. It sought to exploit the hypocrisy of the Christian western leadership while retaining its Christian theological roots.¹¹³ It is still important in all of this to retain the memory of the oppressive nature of Christian theology in Africa and its lasting effect even in a post-1945 Africa. Said made a brutally honest contribution in 1971, it is the full embodiment of Black Nationalism, its understandable frustrations and the aim to place the Continent's situation neatly within a Christian context.¹¹⁴ Though this may not speak volumes for the agency of missionaries in Rhodesia, in particular given Said's generalisation, yet it highlights the importance of Africanised Christianity at the heart of decolonisation in Africa.

Rhodesia, Decolonisation and the Cold War

In the ensuing thematic step up from the bottom, Rhodesia will be placed within a greater scope of decolonisation processes, the Cold War and international history. It is imperative that the Rhodesian regional dynamic not be lost in the annals of the Cold War, which have so often ignored to thematise Africa. The ground-up approach to Rhodesian decolonisation seeks to continue its appraisal of missionary agency in an ever growing, regional and global fashion that highlights the instances of individual, local ethnographic agency in a greater collective and international sphere. P. B. Harris offers a starting point in his article published in the then newly created Humanities journal of the University of Rhodesia (now the University of Zimbabwe), *Zambezia*, with his account of the changing political culture in Rhodesia. Questioning whether Rhodesia is democratic may seem a foregone conclusion but as Harris demonstrates it was a debate that attempted to rationalise Rhodesia's complex political and diplomatic situation:

“Is Rhodesia a democracy? Clearly it could not be described as a Madisonian-type democracy; for Dahl speaking of the Madisonian concept of majority rule, argues that preoccupation with the rights and wrongs of majority rule has

¹¹³ Said, Dibinga Wa, “An African Theology of Decolonization”, in: *The Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 64, No. 4, (1971), pp. 508-512.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 501-524.

‘run like a red thread through American political thought since 1789’. As far as Rhodesia is concerned, majority rule is a *red* thread.’¹¹⁵

It is the question about this *red* thread and its accurate viability that provides a starting point for further investigation. Were the Rhodesian conflict, decolonisation and missionary activities an issue of communist forces at play? To what degree did the missionary become involved in the greater Cold War bi-polarity? And if so, how did these global factors influence the Rhodesian missionary?

Communism and the Rhodesian Missionary

David Caute recalls a young Rhodesian Special Branch officer directing his anger towards Father Prosser at St. Augustine High School at Mutare, denouncing all missionaries as Marxists asking the priest what had he done for Rhodesia?¹¹⁶ It should be asked why did this interaction take place? Though not an indication of the entire perspective of the Special Branch in Rhodesia it does beg the question why such an opinion of the missionary might formulate in the first place. As demonstrated, the church in Rhodesia was caught between both the guerrillas and the government, generalized and reduced to personal experiences and individual prejudice just as much as policy based involvement in the local progress of the respective operational zone of a mission’s station.¹¹⁷ It is, as Robert’s states, that the “conflict between Church and State would survive the end of Empire”.¹¹⁸ To address the Special Branch officers comment we would have to ask a number of questions: where do the greater implications of ideological conflict fit into the Rhodesian missionary’s narrative? What agency does the missionary have? An interesting insight into this agency is the documentary “Rhodesia Unafraid” created in 1978 by the Friends of the Rhodesian Army Corps of Chaplains. Apart from the modern usage of technology in transporting a message to both the indigenous population and the international community, what is noteworthy about the film is the blatant attempt to

¹¹⁵ Harris, P. B, “The Changing Rhodesian Political Culture: 1969”, in: *Zambezia, Vol. 1, No. 2* (1970), p. 7.

¹¹⁶ Caute, David, *Under the Skin: The Death of White Rhodesia* (London: Allen Lane, 1983), p. 313.

¹¹⁷ Education of natives a constant cause of strife between the missionaries and the Southern Rhodesian government: Summers, “Educational Controversies: African Activism and Educational Strategies in Southern Rhodesia, 1920-1934” (1994), pp. 3-25.

¹¹⁸ Edgar, Robert, “New Religious Movements” in: Etherington, Norman (ed.), *Missions and Empires*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 236.

mask the on-going Bush Conflict (which by 1978 had more than escalated) as a conflict between Communism and Liberty, rather than as a racial and colonial conflict.¹¹⁹ As Lt. Col. The Rev. Norman Wood states:

“We have realised that we fight against a common enemy. We have realised that we are fighting against international communism, Marxism at its worst. And as a result of this, here in Rhodesia we do not have a black white confrontation. But rather a confrontation of black, white, coloured and Asian against Marxist terrorism who seek to destroy all that is Christian.”¹²⁰

Supporting these assertions is Col. The Rev. Robert Slimp (US Army, Ret.): “A Lot of people think this is a racial war, nothing could be further from the truth. This isn’t a case of black against white. This is a case of black and white together against communism”.¹²¹ What is even more fascinating in this documentation of missionaries in the Rhodesian armed forces attempting to portray the motivation in a bias, scripted and political fashion, is the interviewed captured guerrilla commander whose testimony on his political education is as follows:

“When you get into these classes where they teach you ... communism as a whole they can really brainwash you. So that when you get in [to the country] you hate Europeans and when you see a missionary talking or preaching you feel he is filling your people with imperialist ideas and suddenly you would like to kill him”.¹²²

Despite representing only an instance of Rhodesian propaganda, the inclusive nature of the military missionary speaks volumes for their collective agency to act as unabashed agents of apartheid and minority rule. The fear of communism was utilised to its fullest extent to create a narrative that covered the racial inequalities with a justifiable existence of self-defence. The 1970s, with increased missionary deaths and attacks on stations, it should be argued, was the result of missionary agency to aid in

¹¹⁹ “Rhodesia Unafraid” [Friends of the Rhodesian Corps of Chaplains Documentary], in: British Empire and Commonwealth Museum, (ID 2000/190/048, 1978).

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² *Ibid.*

the creation of the very liberation leaders that spurred a movement that would inevitably seek to target the missions as establishments of imperial rule. For some in the international Christian community, this spurred the sentiment of a rebirth of “global Christian values” in the 1980s as the death of missionaries had contributed greatly not only to the necessity for their defence but also the re-direction of attention towards their activities in Rhodesia.¹²³

Continental Comparison

Despite the constant regional comparisons of missionaries in Rhodesia with other postcolonial independence states, the instance of missionary activity in the decolonisation processes of African colonies and their postcolonial realities is an under researched yet evident phenomenon. To place Rhodesian missionaries within a continental comparison is to showcase the effective and far reaching scholarly endeavours as well as the vital necessity for further such research as attains to nations, regions, sub-regions and various other former colonial entities. The informed post-imperial narrative must be inclusive and far-reaching, if it is to succeed in informing a future-orientated dynamic that recognises the entirety of decolonisation history that is at least partially rooted in missionaries, the church and Christianity. Indeed, only when such research has been conducted can a comparative research begin to unravel the further depth of interconnectivity in Africa during the mid twentieth century and in so doing produce a greater breadth of knowledge from which policy, trade and (anti) globalisation can begin to emerge.¹²⁴ In the case of Zimbabwe, the legacies have been focused on a post-colonial narrative and not in a comparative perspective paying heed to other nations, such as South Africa, which have been producing scholarly examples of their respective nations’ interactions with Zimbabwe (but not with Rhodesia).¹²⁵

It should be clear by now that the investigation of Rhodesian missionaries gives credence to the possibility of agency of missionaries in other parts of Africa. Though incomplete, this is an introductory insight into the foundational scholarly

¹²³ Marty, Martin, “Ethical Issues for the Eighties: A Framework for Inquiry”, in: *Items-in-Southern Baptist Convention Christian Life Commission* [Manuscript], Archive Number: S-0972-0011-07-00001 New York, UN Secretariat (15 Oct. 1979), p. 6.

¹²⁴ Ranger, Terence, “Afterword: War, Violence and Healing in Zimbabwe”, in: *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (1992), p. 699.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

attempts at uncovering missionary agency. The sub (sub) section of missionary studies (which in itself is a sub section of imperial studies) represent niche interests at best and therefore have failed to garner the far-reaching interest within scholarly communities; inadvertently, the scholars who have produced evident works of passionate labour find that the results of their passions interest few but the writers themselves. This is regrettable for a deeper reading shows the interconnectivity of missionaries and processes of decolonization that have yet to be investigated and analysed on a more contextualised and global stage. An example of such work can be found in Darcie Fontaine's 2012 article "Treason or Charity? Christian Missions on trial and the decolonization of Algeria".¹²⁶ It concerns itself chiefly (but not exclusively) with Algeria, by focussing on a singular trial in 1957 of 12 European Christian missionaries and their actions and how these impacted in/on the war of independence. Although Fontaine does not undergo an analysis of the overarching thematic of missionaries and decolonization, the article nonetheless highlights the possibility of case studies into regions/countries such as Algeria and the impact missionaries may have in shaping a nation's history and eventual independence. As Fontaine's conclusive remarks showcase in which she highlights that a trial ensured the continued presence of Christianity in Algeria and marked a vital passage into independence for the nation.

Fontaine's article should be read in tandem with Frans Verstraelen who in 2002 offered a comparative case study of Ghana and Angola and the contrasting aspects of decolonisation processes and missions.¹²⁷ Although his paper could potentially serve as an insightful comparative, Verstraelen fails to deliver on this score, dedicating only 4 pages to a comparison. Yet his monumental work on uncovering the regional dynamics of missionary agency is paramount to understanding the differencing de-colonial experiences as they unfolded in Zambia and Zimbabwe.¹²⁸ Verstraelen's initiative to view decolonization through a partial missionary perspective is nuanced and begs for further research in a more coherent international fashion. Lastly, David Maxwell's chapter in Ethrington's aforementioned book *Missions and Empires*, though only an overview, brilliantly

¹²⁶ Fontaine, Darcie, "Treason or Charity? Christian Missions on trial and the decolonization of Algeria", in: *International Journal Of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 4, (2012), pp. 733-753.

¹²⁷ Verstraelen, Frans, "Contrasting Aspects of African Decolonisation Processes and Missions in West and Southern Africa: Ghana and Angola as Case Studies", in: *Zambezia*, Vol. 29, No. 1, (2002), pp. 38-59.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

captures the essence of the missionary perspective through the process of decolonization.¹²⁹ His chapter offers an appreciated thematic gesture of validity to the concept of missionaries as having played a role in the process of decolonization. Maxwell acquiesces that “missions do not feature in explanatory models of African decolonization”, due to a combination of academic routines, missionary retreat from politics and a voluntary silence on their colonial ties in the face of rising tensions across the Africa continent.¹³⁰

Kith and Kin

It is hard to discuss missionaries in Rhodesia without drawing attention to, or at least acknowledging, the dynamics of the Rhodesian relationship with its colonial homestead. To what extent did the British churches and missionaries actively participate in the decolonisation of their former colony? Notwithstanding the position of Wilson’s government at the time, was the church involved? And how can we characterise the diplomatic relationship surrounding and at least partially shaping the process? The fact that Britain was and felt responsible for bringing Southern Rhodesia into independence was a foregone conclusion, given that it had previously been active in seeking majority ruled self-governance in both Zambia and Malawi following the dissolution of the ill-fated federation, yet the large population of “kith and kin” was to make it a difficult achieving a similar outcome in Southern Rhodesia.¹³¹ The dilemma of “kith and kin” – the close relationship (which was both imagined and real) that was espoused between the white minority rule and the British mainland population – had been a focal point of British-Rhodesian relations since the UDI and the early 1960s. The phrase itself had featured in the UDI, stressing the importance of Rhodesian continued loyalties to crown, kith and kin and that the result of this loyalty was now lying “shattered on the rocks of expediency”.¹³² The sense of betrayal stemming from a perceived British lack of support had permeated the relationship of the churches in England and the Rhodesian congregation. In 1965, the entrenchment of Rhodesian Anglicans had reached its near zenith when they

¹²⁹ Maxwell, “Decolonization” (2005), pp. 285-306.

¹³⁰ *Ibid*, p. 290.

¹³¹ Watts, Carl, “Britain, The Old Commonwealth and the Problem of Rhodesian Independence”, in: *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (2008), p. 76.

¹³² Wood, Richard, *So Far and No Further! Rhodesia’s Bid for Independence During the Retreat from Empire, 1959-1965* (Victoria: Trafford, 2005), p. 472.

recommended that the then Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Michael Ramsey, introduce a new hymn “Onward Christian Soldiers, shoot your kith and kin”.¹³³ The threat of now independent Rhodesians sending the Archbishop the ashes of their burnt bibles indicates the heightened and volatile politicisation of the church in Southern Rhodesia and might be another indicator of the increased support the Anglican Church in Rhodesia gave to the settler community and the status quo of racism despite the increase in anti-racism in Great Britain.¹³⁴ Emerging out of the Second World War, the Protestant churches in Great Britain sought to seek redirection in their imperial attitude and in particular their leadership often became vocal proponents of the devolution of colonial rule, both in governance and church structures, through mediation and public campaign.¹³⁵ Not to be outdone by their English counterparts, the valuable contribution in the decolonisation of the Rhodesian region was by the Church of Scotland’s general assembly, in particular for Malawi where the Scottish missionaries had retained a strong post-war presence.¹³⁶

Despite the belief in Southern Rhodesia amongst the white minority in Southern Rhodesia that their kith and kin would support their future, the three-way-split between neutrality, majority rule and minority rule in the British public made this an eventual political dead-end for Rhodesians who believed that their cause was one fuelled by international support.¹³⁷ Nicholas Owens argues that the lack of support felt for the Rhodesian cause was due to the colonial incidents in the region prior to UDI. The Sharpeville Massacre and the Nyasaland Emergency (1960 and 1959 respectively), both events that resulted in high number of African deaths, was crucial for the anti-colonial groups and movements in Britain as it gave them “an opportunity to tap the sympathies of hitherto undecided audiences such as church groups” that would play more so vital roles in encouraging the end of colonialism

¹³³ Brendon, Piers, *The Decline and Fall of the British Empire* (London: Vintage, 2008), p. 21.

¹³⁴ *Ibid*, p. 21.

¹³⁵ Stockwell, Sarah, “‘Splendidly Leading the Way’? Archbishop Fisher and Decolonization in British Colonial Africa”, in: *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. 36, No. 3 (2008); Maxwell, “Decolonization” (2005).

¹³⁶ Ross, Kenneth, “‘A Very Definite Radicalism’ The Early Development of the Scotland-Malawi Partnership”, in: in: Adogame, Afe and Lawrence, Andrew (eds.), *Africa in Scotland, Scotland in Africa: Historical Legacies and Contemporary Hybridities* (Leiden: Brill, 2014); See also: Ross, Andrew, *and Colonialism to Cabinet Crisis: A Political History of Malawi* (Zomba: Kachere, 2009).

¹³⁷ Watts, Carl, “Killing Kith and Kin: The Viability of British Military Intervention in Rhodesia, 1964-1965”, in: *Twentieth Century British History*, Vol. 16, No. 4 (2005), p. 409.

from a far.¹³⁸ Yet the agency here afforded to Britain in the decolonisation of Rhodesia must be placed in tandem with the blame for the inception of the Bush War, the continued white minority rule and the deaths of thousands in the region. Though Watts stresses that Britain “lacked all the essential attributes that were necessary for any chance of success”, more explanatory credence must be given to Crawford who argues that Britain allowed Rhodesian minority rule to develop throughout its history, that “though Southern Rhodesia never achieved dominion status, white minority rule was in practice unencumbered by residual imperial sovereignty”.¹³⁹ Additionally and lastly, the instances of British agency in the decolonization of Rhodesia, though a reality, should never outweigh the reality of Rhodesia being decolonized by its rightful people. The mention of Britain here then is mainly to highlight the international connection of missionaries, church laity and leadership, serves only as such and not to take anything away from the agency of the Africans in Rhodesia: to be the masters of their own fate/faith.

Rhodesia in the International Context

Rhodesia remains an afterthought, a mere happenstance in the histories and narratives of the Cold War. It is not the Congo, nor is it Ethiopia or Algeria examples that have understandably been the focus of much scholarly attention. So wherein do we place Rhodesian decolonisation within the history and debate that surrounds the Cold War? Both the absences and the presence of Rhodesia during the mid twentieth century within the Cold War dilemma require a necessary analysis. By contrast, Vietnam represents a focal point in the Cold War even though Rhodesia could easily have suffered a similar fate. As Westad argues, Vietnam and its escalating scale prevented the Johnson administration from engaging in other emerging crises despite its growing concerns for Soviet influence and support for the liberation movements that were emerging throughout Africa in the 1960s.¹⁴⁰ Westad brings about a rationale for why Rhodesia did not acquire a central point in the Cold War: for the United States,

¹³⁸ Owen, Nicholas, “Critics of Empire in Britain”, in: Brown, Judith and Louis, Roger T. (eds.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire, Volume IV* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 206.

¹³⁹ Watts, Carl, “Britain, The Old Commonwealth and the Problem of Rhodesian Independence”, in: *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History, Vol. 36, No. 1* (2008), p. 77; Young, Crawford, *The Postcolonial State in Africa: Fifty Years of Independence, 1960-2010* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2012), p. 97.

¹⁴⁰ Westad, Arne Odd, *The Cold War: A World History* (New York: Basic Books, 2017), pp. 432-433.

Rhodesia represented a similar government as in South Africa and despite being the “greatest civil rights president in US history”; Johnson needed the apartheid regime in South Africa “on-board in Cold War terms”.¹⁴¹ Similarly, the close association Rhodesia had with Britain presented both another obstacle should they want to involve themselves in the expanding Bush War while through Britain, the US already had an ally operational in the region.¹⁴² As for the Soviets, Gaddis argues that the support given to conflicts by the mid 1970s in Ethiopia and Angola had resulted in serious miscalculations as the stern reaction by the western allies demonstrated and as Anatoly Dobrynin later acknowledged, “strongly affected détente”.¹⁴³ Yet it was exactly the liberation movements in Rhodesia and Mozambique that gave the Soviets the motivation to participate in the greater decolonisation of Africa.¹⁴⁴

Such wider debates notwithstanding, it must be acknowledged that greater insights into Rhodesia’s place in the Cold War remain forever in the shadow of Vietnam and other such proxy wars. Although, as Watts as demonstrated there is one link to Vietnam that Rhodesia offers, “[a]s American cooperation on the former partly explains why the British government felt compelled to support American involvement in the latter”.¹⁴⁵ Yet as is commonly the case in western interactions with Africa, the economy and the global order (which it perpetuates) maintain a governing grip on the macro-interactions between the west and “the rest”. Zambia post independence maintained its role in this global order as a supplier of copper to the US thus legitimising itself to the west as an agreeable participant in the region.¹⁴⁶

The lack of consensus on the importance of African Cold War conflicts within the larger sphere of analysis for this period should offer an impetus for seeking another, alternative point of reference. Herein the missionary, “bottom-up” foundation can play in cases such as Rhodesia proof to settle the African narrative of nations and regions previously excluded within the greater Cold War discourse. As argued previously, missionaries in Rhodesia found themselves in the centre of Cold War dynamics, either being accused of supporting the communist guerrillas or as

¹⁴¹ Westad, *The Cold War: A World History* (2017), pp. 433.

¹⁴² *Ibid*, pp. 433.

¹⁴³ Gaddis, John Lewis, *The Cold War: A New History* (New York: Penguin, 2005), p. 254.

¹⁴⁴ Keylor, William, *The Twentieth-Century World: An International History, Fourth Edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 421.

¹⁴⁵ Watts, Carl, “The United States, Britain and the Problem of Rhodesian Independence”, in: *Diplomatic History, Vol. 30, No. 3*, (2006), p. 439.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p. 450.

manifestations of the oppressive regime. They contributed to the conflict and attempted to avoid it both simultaneously successfully and unsuccessfully, creating leaders for opposition in Rhodesia and supporting the settler community. The Cold War might not have been affected greatly by the missionaries but does that mean then that the missionaries who were greatly affected by the Cold War do not find place within the greater narrative of the Cold War?¹⁴⁷ As this thesis has argued, that is not the case, rather, missionaries and a bottom up approach to the Cold War are both imperative in creating a fully encompassed, international, regional and national depiction.

Following the “Internal Agreement” and the wide array of international condemnation is brought with it, and coupled with the disastrous Cold War debacle in Angola that resulted in one of Southern Rhodesia’s staunches allies, South Africa, retreated evermore inwards and thereby effectively sealed the fate of white-Rhodesia and thus signalled the rise of Zimbabwe.¹⁴⁸ South Africa’s inward turn – *vesting Suid-Afrika* – pushed the minority government into accepting the Lancaster House agreement in 1979. Though not the confounding factor for the dissolution of Rhodesia, the international dynamics do present the last stage in a process that emerged at least partly in the missionary stations in Rhodesia. With the Patriotic Front being headed by missionary educated African Christians, missionaries had inadvertently (and perhaps (un) willingly) become agents of decolonisation in Rhodesia. There is a drive emerging in the “new” international history’s emphasis on “decentralizing” the Cold War and it is vital that all aspects are taken into account when doing so.¹⁴⁹ Indeed, such a broadly post-colonial repositioning of decolonisation narratives does challenge the assumption that Africa was not able to affect the evolution of the Global contest and conflict during the Cold War. Though the international dynamics of African Cold War influence are still being discovered on a continental basis, as Jeffrey Byrnes notes, Algerian instructors teaching trainee nationalists from Angola, Mozambique and Rhodesia brought together against a common enemy: imperialism there still remains the question of intercontinental

¹⁴⁷ This thesis is supported by Westad who acknowledges the effects the Cold War had on Rhodesia: Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (2005), p. 246.

¹⁴⁸ Westad, Arne Odd, *The Cold War: A World History* (New York: Basic Books, 2017), pp. 702.

¹⁴⁹ Byrne, Jeffrey James, “Africa’s Cold War”, in: McMahon, Robert (ed.), *The Cold War in the Third World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 101.

effects and influences.¹⁵⁰ Africa remains a “collaterally damaged continent” in the history of decolonisation. An alternative view, which this thesis would like to contribute towards, would regard the victories achieved in this process not exclusively through lenses crafted by a perpetuating stigma of negativity, but would dare to ask instead: if one views the American Revolution with idealism then why not too the liberation movements in Rhodesia? Decentralizing decolonisation requires international de-westernisation of that very process.¹⁵¹

Conclusion

By the onset of the 1980s, the project of white-minority rule in Rhodesia was abandoned. With a rapidly declining white population and the return of power to the majority black population, even feeble last minute attempts to retain the unjust balance of power were quickly evaporating. This thesis is not the narrative of reconstruction in Zimbabwe but ends in 1979 with Bishop Muzorewa becoming the nation’s first black Prime Minister. That a bishop should become the first leader of the short-lived, indigenously ruled Zimbabwe-Rhodesia’s government seems only fitting. It is the final expression of agency enacted by the missionary, church and religious communities that had played at least their part in transforming the region through the past two and a half decades. From missionary to layman, from the clergy to church leaders, each had in their own way expressed and performed a form of agency that proved to be necessary in the transformations detailed in this thesis by its ability to influence ordinary citizens to become active. This thesis can only conclude, not with the grandiose narratives of the Cold War that one has become accustomed to, but instead with the encapsulated importance of regarding missionaries as more than just a relic of a by-gone era of Empire.

Taking from Luke 4:18-19 “The spirit of the Lord is on me ... to set at liberty those who are oppressed”, missionaries were agents of decolonisation in an absolute and inadvertent manner. That the church and its missionaries needed to adapt in the wake of the Second World War was inevitable, but few could have predicted that it was through this adaptation and transformation from civilizing to borderline inclusivity in the fields of education and political influence, that the very downfall of

¹⁵⁰ Byrne, “Africa’s Cold War” (2013), pp. 101-103

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

the colony was facilitated.¹⁵² It was, as Father Kennedy replied when asked of how he regarded the guerrillas in the area of his mission in Rhodesia, “many of them are school boys that we have taught from time to time”.¹⁵³ The nationalist movements were splintered and fractioned yet had for the most part interacted with the missionary. That is not to say that the missionary created the movements that sought to destroy the apartheid regime in Rhodesia but instead that the first instances of agency that had been transferred onto the majority population took place and therefore originated in the mission stations scattered across Rhodesia. In truth, despite the activities of missionaries throughout the decolonisation of Rhodesia, with the support of Father Kennedy and the radical opposition to apartheid by Bishop Lamont, the degree of anger that fuelled the liberation movements was ultimately underestimated by all, including the missionaries and the church.¹⁵⁴ The liberation movements were by Africans and for Africans. This thesis is therefore as much a presentation of missionary agency as it is about the product of this agency, the agency by proxy of bishop Muzorewa, Methodist ministers Ndabaningi Sithole and Canaan Banana, the future President of Zimbabwe. Their education, sponsored by the missionaries, provided the conduit to power for the majority of nationalist leaders in Rhodesia.

Looking beyond the confines of the empirical story detailed in this thesis, two larger narratives loom on the horizon of possible future research. One concerns the agents of decolonisation processes, the other attaches to the context in which these latter took place. As concerns the former, a key lesson emerging from the present thesis suggests that a more nuanced understanding of structures and agents at work and in play during decolonisation processes can yield fruitful insights into those very processes. With regard to the second narrative, it is perhaps time to regard the Cold War – as arguably the defining context in which decolonisation took place -- not solely as the history and interaction of superpowers but also as the history of interactions between ordinary people within the contexts that have rarely been of their own choosing. It was for this reason that the present thesis opted to place the history and international relations at play in Rhodesia in the hands of those who experienced

¹⁵² Mafico, T.J, “Church Adaptation to the new Social Order in Zimbabwe”, in: *Zambezia*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (1981), p. 176.

¹⁵³ “Goodbye Rhodesia” [Thames TV Broadcast], in: *This Week*, (11 Jan. 1979).

¹⁵⁴ Peaden, W.R, “Aspects of the Church and its Political Involvement in Southern Rhodesia, 1959-1972”, in: *Zambezia*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (1979), p. 194

its decolonisation and acted accordingly, to support, uphold, dismantle or survive in the collapse of the colonial regime and its apartheid successor. If the history of missionaries is that of agents of Empire in the *rise* of the imperial systems throughout the nineteenth century, then it is time that we start our appraisal of missionaries and the church within the *decline* of that imperial system that they had helped to create. This thesis is but a stepping-stone in that very objective, to uncover the vast array of agencies within the decline of Empire, and to seek to uncover the work of those agencies from the bottom up. Academia, history or international relations, can only benefit from attributing agency (direct, collectively or by proxy) to the people it seeks to quantify, measure and analyse. As should be clear by now, such agency existed in many forms and worked on many scales, all of which contributed directly or indirectly to the rise of a decolonised Rhodesia.

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