

ABSTRACT

This work examines two theories on the role of missionaries in the provision of education to Africans in Zimbabwe in the context of the philosophy of *hunhu/ubuntu*. The two theories are the theory of collaboration and the theory of benevolence. Beginning with the latter, proponents of the theory of benevolence argue that missionaries aimed at benefiting Africans when they came to Africa and provided education to Africans. On the other hand, proponents of the theory of collaboration maintain that missionary activities, including the provision of education to Africans, were part and parcel of a larger movement, the colonisation of Africa. So, largely, missionaries were collaborating with the colonial movement and supported it both overtly and covertly. It is then argued that missionary provision of education to Africans must be understood in the context of the missionaries' role in supporting the colonial venture.

Using the historical inductive as well as the comparative approaches, this study examines the activities of missionaries in Zimbabwe in the context of these two contending theories. It is argued, using the inductive argument, that if missionaries were concerned with the welfare of the African people, their activities should have been aimed at building onto what the Africans already had, their culture, traditions, civilization, values, and education, and that relations with Africans would have been characterised by respect for Africans, especially their philosophy of life, the philosophy of *hunhu/ubuntu*. After a discussion of the African philosophy of *hunhu/ubuntu*, the two theories, Christian missionaries' view of Africans as well as the goals and activities of the missionaries amongst Africans, and Africans' perceptions and reactions to missionary education, the conclusion is drawn that missionaries, if considered from an African perspective grounded in the philosophy of *hunhu/ubuntu*, can be characterised at best as collaborators with the colonial regime. The missionaries ignored the philosophy of *hunhu/ubuntu* which permeated every aspect of African life in Zimbabwe. That Africans benefited from missionary activities is undeniable, but it is the intentions that missionaries had in coming to Africa and the means of ensuring that their intentions were realised that lead to the above conclusion.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to my family, my wife, Loveness Hapanyengwi, my daughter Nyashadzaishe Chemhuru, my sons Oswell Kudakwaishe Chemhuru and Ben Bernard Simbaraishe Chemhuru. This work is further dedicated to members of my families who are late, my mother Eneth Hapanyengwi Makotore, Jeremiah Makotore, Synesius M. Zindere, as well as my late sister Queen Makotore Bhila. May their souls rest in eternal peace!

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