

South Africa General Mission (SAGM) Missionaries and the Ndau People of Chimanimani, Zimbabwe

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Abstract

South Africa General Mission (SAGM) missionaries evangelized the Chimanimani District of Zimbabwe from 1897 onwards. SAGM missionaries focused exclusively on this Ndau territory in the light of the pact between missionaries that did not allow them to encroach into territories where other missionaries were already involved. This was to avoid what the missionaries called ‘competing for souls’. This article presents an emic study of this work that the SAGM missionaries initiated in Zimbabwe. The article follows a desk analysis approach (Chitando and Biri, 2016). It uses primary sources in the form of the *South African Pioneer*, articles that were written by several SAGM missionaries that were involved in this evangelization work. The article finds that SAGM missionaries, like missionaries elsewhere, had a paternalistic attitude towards the Ndau people and as a result the Ndau were not very welcoming to these “guests” at least in the first few decades of their work in Chimanimani District.

Key terms: South Africa General Mission (SAGM), United Baptist Church (UBC), Africa Evangelical Fellowship (AEF), Serving in Mission (SIM), Ndau people, Imperialism

1. Introduction

The work of SAGM missionaries in Zimbabwe is sparsely covered in academic discourses as opposed to the work by other missionary organizations to Zimbabwe. This is in spite of the fact that the SAGM missionaries left some extensive written accounts in the form of the *South African Pioneer*, which is a form a journal spanning several decades presenting first-hand accounts from the SAGM missionaries who interacted with the Ndau people on the ground. The SAGM missionaries evangelised Chimanimani district of Zimbabwe, a Ndau people’s territory. Chimanimani district was then part of British Gazaland. The church that was born out of this Mission bears the name: The Association of the United Baptist Churches of Zimbabwe (UBC). Following a desk analysis approach (Chitando & Biri, 2016), the current article focuses on the interactions between the SAGM missionaries and the

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Ndau people of Chimanimani. It demonstrates the complex relationship that existed between the two sides.

2. Background

Missionaries were driven to go to faraway lands based on a quest to want to see the gospel of Christ preached far and wide. Although they would be confused with the colonial white settlers in many contexts, the missionaries were mostly concerned about the “salvation of people in other parts of the world” (Hildebrandt, 1996: 80; Dachs, 1973: 53).

In contemporary missionary discourses, missionaries and colonialism are almost always bundled together. Paas (2006: 126) notes that, “in general, missionary presence preceded colonialist presence’ and that ‘colonialist rule and Christian mission originated from different agencies in different times”. This does not mean that they did not intersect at all but the two were driven by different preoccupations.

It would be inappropriate, therefore, to perpetuate a perception that the missionaries served just as a ‘front’ for colonialists. Missionaries are almost always thought to have been part of a grant scheme by the white colonialists to, in some way, sedate or blindfold Africans with religion while the colonialists were busy colonising African territories. The SAGM missionaries clearly show that they were on a different mission, divorced from that of the settler colonialists. It is unfortunate though that the lines separating the two were blurred in the eyes of onlookers (Dube, 2017).

This article is written from an etic perspective by a pastor within UBC. The author was born into a family where both parents belonged to UBC. He grew up in that church and later trained and became a pastor within the same church. Whatever he presents in this article is from an insider’s perspective. A desk analysis approach (Chitando & Biri, 2016) was utilised in the current article to present data obtained from the South African Pioneer to demonstrate the complex relationship that existed between the SAGM missionaries and the Ndau people of Chimanimani.

While it is true that the early missionaries perceived themselves as the models that the Africans had to emulate in everything, it is an interesting fact of history that this attitude altered in the nineteenth century. Mugambi (1989: 42) points out that:

Towards the end of the nineteenth century there developed in Europe a great interest in the study of the African religions and cultures. The previous view that African peoples did not have any religion or culture was modified in that development so that early in the twentieth century the popular view was that African peoples had

their own religions and knew something about God. However, these religions were considered to be in the primitive stages of evolution, and the objective of Christian missionary activity would be to erase the religious understanding of those peoples and replace it with the highest religion which was thought to have been attained in Christianity.

In practice, therefore, the attitude of the missionaries towards African traditional practices and cultures remained negative (Dube, 2017).

It is a pity that even in this later position, African religion(s) and African cultures were not studied for what they were but for what the Westerners wanted them to be. There is, I suppose, much that the missionaries and the Westerners at large missed because of their denigration of the African religions and cultures (Dube, 2017).

3. Reasons for the SAGM Missionaries' Evangelization of the Chimanimani District of Zimbabwe

Missionaries to Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) had an arrangement in which different missionary groups, belonging to different societies, would not go to the same areas to evangelize. The *modus operandi* of the missionaries in Zimbabwe was based on the principle that the different missionary groups were not supposed to compete for 'souls' in one area. As such, the different missionary groups went to different places or regions of Zimbabwe (Smith, 1928; Chitando, 1998: 107; Dube, 2017). It was not an accident therefore that the SAGM missionaries chose to go to Chimanimani to evangelize among the Ndau people.

The same kind of arrangements were not in place in urban areas. When members from different denominations would move from rural areas to the urban areas they would set up congregations of their own denominations in these urban areas, causing different denominations to be in close proximity with one another (Murphree, 1969: 12; Dube, 2017).

Weinrich (1982: xii) and Murphree (1969: 11-12) give a different reason for the different missionary groups having to go to different regions in the country. For them, it was because of land allocation. From this, one can argue that the different missionary groups travelled to different regions in the country because they were given tracts of land in those respective regions by the colonial government. Irrespective of what reason one may prefer, it remains indisputable that the different missionary groups avoided encroaching on each other's territories (Dube, 2017).

The aforementioned explains why different missionaries established schools, hospitals and churches in some regions and places and not in others. For example, the SAGM established two mission schools in Chimanimani at Rusitu and Biriiri but nowhere else. It also established a hospital and Bible school at Rusitu Mission

Station. This missionary organisation was later to be called Africa Evangelical Fellowship (AEF), a name which also was later dropped for the current United Baptist Church (UBC) (Dube, 2017). It remains firmly established in the Chimanimani district of Zimbabwe although it has now spread to many other regions of Zimbabwe, including urban areas as alluded to earlier.

4. British Gazaland (now Chimanimani)

Gazaland was a very broad term encompassing Ndaue territory in Zimbabwe and Ndaue territory in Mozambique (Portuguese East Africa). Melsetter District included what are called Chimanimani and Chipinge Districts today. The whole area was known as Gazaland or British Gazaland, to differentiate it from Portuguese (Mozambique) Gazaland. The name Gazaland had a lot to do with the Gaza Nguni of the 19th century (Dube, 1997: 4; Dube, 2017).

This was the focal point of the SAGM missionaries. The trek into Zimbabwe from Johannesburg (South Africa) was not an easy one. The circumstances surrounding this trek were also not favourable (Dube, 2017). Against all odds, Kidd and Raney forged ahead with their plan to evangelise Gazaland. Beckett (1994: 32) mentions that, "... the trek into Gazaland was formulated, a region partially controlled by the British South Africa (BSA) Company, the remaining area having been annexed by the Portuguese... The sense of urgency felt by Kidd and Raney concerning the need to commence evangelistic work in Gazaland, was not, however, shared by the British Council of the SAGM, and it would seem that the trek into Gazaland may have been undertaken against their will... The Council were of the opinion that, if Gazaland were evangelised, it should be done by African evangelists. They believed that the missionaries should not expose themselves to the vicissitudes of an unhealthy climate, which, due to the prevalence of malaria, imposed a serious threat to most Europeans..."

5. The founders

What was to be commonly known as the SAGM (3 January 1894, later Africa Evangelical Fellowship (AEF) (16 June, 1965), and today Serving in Mission (SIM), began as Cape General Mission (CGM) in South Africa on 12 March 1889. It was a result of the acts of three prominent figures: Martha Osborn (sometimes spelt Osborne or Osborn-Howe), Dr Andrew Murray, and William Spencer Walton (sometimes called just W. Spencer Walton or simply Spencer Walton (Kopp, 2001: 17, 28; *Serving in Mission* Website; Fuller, 2007; Dube, 2017).

Three names stand out whenever the pioneers for this trek are mentioned – Harry Raney, John Coupland (Jack), and Dudley Kidd. According to Beckett (1994: 58), "In December, 1897, three pioneer missionaries, Raney, Coupland, and Kidd,

embarked upon a mission into a potentially volatile human landscape, rumblings of the 1896/97 Shona/Ndebele rebellions against Imperial domination and subordination still shaking the unsettled 'white' community of Gazaland." This suggests that the pioneers into Gazaland entered Zimbabwe at a very volatile period in Zimbabwe's history but it is remarkable that even such documented facts of history could not deter or hamper the pioneers' mission (Dube, 2017).

When we talk about missionaries today, we do not seem to do justice to the hardships they had to endure. It almost always seems as if they enjoyed very smooth transitions from their places of origin and as if they likewise ministered without any form of hardship. On the contrary, they suffered, and Fuller (2007) asserts that, "All the pioneers faced physical rigors, oppressive spiritual darkness, and violent opposition". There was a great deal of walking involved and difficulties in moving luggage from one place to another, among other challenges (Dube, 2017).

King (1959) put together a book, *Missions in Southern Rhodesia*, based on the accounts of different missionaries in different Missions in Zimbabwe about the work of their own Missions. King (1959: 9) remarks that the book was the result of the work of many people and that he was simply a compiler who sent out circulars asking for contributions (from different Missions) and then to put the material together in the form of a book. He (1959: 9) submits that he made few if any alterations to the manuscripts submitted as he "wanted each Church to tell its own story". King (1959:9) admits that:

As I have read these stories I have been impressed again at the cost in life and health of bringing the Gospel to Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe). Missionaries have died or watched loved ones die, stricken with fever and other diseases. Sometimes a start was made with work in a certain area but fever drove the Missionaries out. This sacrifice of life and health has not only been faced by European Missionaries, but also by African Christians. From the time of Makhaza, the first African Christian in Rhodesia to die because he was a 'follower of the Book', to the present day African Christians – Ministers and Evangelists and their families and others – have faced dangers to health and strength to preach the Gospel to people settled in backward, unhealthy areas of the country.

The accounts by Glen (1959) and Beckett (1994) are particularly important in my view, for this current article, because they were written by people who either were right on the ground in Gazaland or who had an opportunity to interview the missionaries on the ground. Reginald Glen was an SAGM missionary who responded to King's call (mentioned above) to submit an account of SAGM work in Gazaland. Beckett, on the other hand, is himself the son of another SAGM Missionary, Rev

Haward Beckett, whom I had an opportunity to interview when I was in Zimbabwe from 18 April to 18 May 2016 conducting fieldwork for my doctoral studies, from which I have extracted the information for this article. It is important to mention that the dissertation by Beckett (1994) was given to me by his father, Rev Haward Beckett, after I had interviewed him. It proved to be very significant in giving me perspectives of the SAGM missionaries themselves and the reflection of them by an SAGM missionary's son (Dube, 2017).

Along the same lines, Dhube (1997) is an account, of course not by a missionary or missionary's son but by the leader of the United Baptist Church, Dr Bishop Joshua Dhube, from the 1960s (transitional years) to around about 2004.

When the three pioneers left Johannesburg for Gazaland, Gazaland was relatively unevangelised (Kallam, 1978: 180-181). The three pioneers left Johannesburg for Chimanimani in March 1897. They travelled by ship to Beira and by rail to Chimoio. From there they trekked in on foot with African carriers who deserted them, carrying off most of their food and equipment. They lost a lot of time in trying to recover these necessities and were physically very weak when they finally reached Dzingire, near the border with Portuguese East Africa (P.E.A.). The late Chief Dzingire, then a young man, was very averse to these strangers invading his country. However, they built huts and prepared for the rainy season. In November it was decided that John Coupland should stay with the remaining supplies while the other two returned to the railhead to obtain more. On reaching the railhead they decided that Mr Kidd should return to the headquarters to give a report, while Raney returned to Coupland (Glen, 1958: 48, 49; Sinclair, 1971: 38; Procter, 1965: 18-19; Dube, 2017).

In the meantime, Raney found John Coupland very ill with malaria fever. The Humans and Moolmans, settlers in the area, were away at the time and Raney had no one to help him. As Raney sat down beside his colleague Coupland, distressed and discouraged, Coupland told him not to be troubled for it would be a promotion for Coupland if he were to die. He did pass away on November 14th, 1897, and Raney buried him the following day. Raney placed a stone on Coupland's grave on which he carved the one word, "Promoted" (from the conversation they had few days before) and the date (Glen, 1959: 49; Sinclair, 1971: 38; Beckett, 1994: 45; Kallam, 1978: 182-183; Procter, 1965: 18-19; Dube, 2017).

Procter (1965: 18-19) adds that Coupland was the first SAGM missionary to lay down his life for the evangelisation of the place at the border of Mozambique and Zimbabwe. He mentions that it is a miracle that Raney managed to survive as he struggled to build his house, being himself very weak (Dube, 2017).

Dhube (1997: 12) records: "A testimony from Chief Kodzevhu Dzingire, father of Chief Dzawanda Dzingire and his brothers David, James, Petro, et al, . . . He said years later: 'With these hands, I helped bury the first missionary and I could never

forget it. I've been a hard, stubborn man, but always in my heart was the thought that Christianity must be a great thing when a man was willing to die for the sake of telling it to others. Now that I have accepted Christ as my Saviour, I find that it truly is great.” Glen (1959:50) concurs with the aforementioned.

It is important to note that these pioneers were young men who sacrificed their careers to go on the trek. Beckett (1994: 35) points out, “Harry Raney was twenty-eight years old when the trek into Gazaland was undertaken ... At the time he offered himself as a missionary to Gazaland, he was chief engineer of the Mayer and Charlton mines ... John Coupland was a mason ... Neither man, however, could boast of any prior training to prepare them for what lay ahead ...”. Dhube (1997: 4-5) mentions that Dudley Kidd was an able administrator from the founding of the Mission in 1889 and that Kidd used his abilities in the siting of Rusitu Mission in 1897. Of the three pioneers, the third was not committed to staying in Gazaland. According to Dhube (1997: 6), the actual volunteer pioneers among these three were Raney and Coupland. Kidd only accompanied them to select the spot for the first station and see them properly started.

With Kidd having returned to the SAGM Johannesburg offices and Coupland dead from malaria, Raney had to find a new site for the mission. The site was moved from Dzingire to across the Nyahode river at Rusitu. The new site was a high elevation, with a good water supply (Beckett, 1994: 47, 51-52; Kallam, 1978: 184-185; Glen 1959: 49; Dube, 2017). Raney (1899: 83), one of the missionaries at Chingwekwe or Rusitu in those early years, had this to say: “On March 17th, 1898, I first came to this place where our huts now stand, and though we had been about the mountain for two days, this at once seemed just the place that was wanted, – good altitude, open, and plenty of good water and wood. April 20th saw us pitching our tent for the first time on Singwequi [sic!] Mountain, having obtained permission to build here.”

It is essential to insert here a few more quotes from Raney to bring to the fore his perceptions about the Ndaus and their cultural practices from late in the 19th century into the early 20th century.

There was undeniable suspicion about each other between the SAGM missionaries and the Ndaus in Chimanimani. Raney (1898: 36-37) writes that:

We have been a good time here, and yet how little there seems done; the natives have not yet learnt to put much confidence in us, but still have the idea that we want to get something out of them, or, in some way or other, mean them ill. We hear of some places where the people long to be taught the Word of Life, but here their core idea is what they can get out of us in the way of limbo or salt, and they will beg for matches, cotton, needles, etc. Only yesterday I visited the chief, N'Garema, and

though he was friendly and gave me milk, yet there still was suspicion on his part and he wanted to know if we were to take his land. But, praise God, the people are better than they were when I first pitched my tent here; then the children fled in terror at my approach and the women got out of the way, and all the time seemed in fear; now the children come round here to play or ask to be allowed to grind for us, the mill being a novelty to them, and the women show much more confidence in coming to sell their grain and eggs, etc. But when I ask them to learn a Zulu hymn or chorus, or suggest any learning, they say they are afraid and don't want to, the evil spirits will harm them if they do; even those who live and work here with us say the same. And so we have just to live down their superstition, and the effects of ill treatment they have experienced at the hands of some whites, and therefore pray for grace to live the Christ life before them which must eventually tell. This will, perhaps, help our friends to pray for us in a definite way, for we need your prayers.

Two years into the mission's existence at Rusitu in Chimanimani, Zimbabwe, Raney (1899: 84) expressed the desperate situation that the SAGM missionaries found themselves in, writing that, "As far as human eye can see, the natives are just where we found them, except that they have learned to know and have confidence in us. Only last week one of our work boys told me, while intoxicated (and they tell the truth then), that the people here say that if our teaching means giving up their beer, they want none of it, and would rather remain as they are. And then the Evil One says, what is the use of it all, what good have you done?" This shows that it was not easy to gain converts among the Ndaus because they did not want to give up their ways of life including beer drinking and, of course, other practices as well, with marriages being no exception (Dube, 2017).

The fact that SAGM missionaries had close relationships with settler colonialists and farmers has already been mentioned above and will be emphasised further as the article progresses. Raney (1899: 191) gives evidence of this, writing that: "So on our way to Umtali we stayed at Mr Martin's farm, and his son called the headman Sekuko and explained why we had come, and asked him to call his people for a service on the morrow (Sunday). Soon after breakfast on Sunday morning the natives began to arrive, and by the time we were ready we found the headman and 40 other men and boys, but no women. We had a good time, and the people were fairly attentive, but owing to Mr Martin, . . . having to use Zulu in interpreting, some of it would only be partly understood; however, some of the men remarked that they had understood a good deal of it, and said 'we have been only like monkeys before, we knew nothing.'" This relationship with white farmers, for example, seems to have helped SAGM in the evangelising efforts as exhibited here. What also stands out in the quote above is the fact that the missionaries appear to have succeeded to make

the Ndaou people pity themselves and envy the ways of the white missionaries. This would be important in the SAGM missionaries convincing the Ndaou people to 'hate themselves' and mimic the missionaries in several different ways (Dube, 2017).

Writing in 1900, Raney (1900: 109) repeats a sentiment that he had written a year earlier. He observes that, "Once again it is time for the Annual Report, and as I sit and think over the past year and the work here it does not seem that there is very much that is encouraging to tell about. The people about us here remain apparently as they were, wanting nothing so much as to be left alone to continue in their evil way of laziness and drink. Some of them are very candid and say they are quite content to live in the same way that their fathers did, and want no change." This supports what has already been stated earlier, that making converts was something the missionaries struggled with in their different 'fields'.

Some few years later Raney wrote, in a way justifying the colonialists' existence in Zimbabwe (then Southern Rhodesia). It would appear that he was convinced that British rule had helped save the Ndaou people from the cruel raids of the Matabele and Shangaans. Raney (1903: 59-60) records that, "The Matabele and Shangaans spent a great part of their time raiding the smaller tribes surrounding them, carrying off their women and cattle, and butchering the men by hundreds. Close to our station is a wood in which many people took refuge during one of Gungunyana's raids and he surrounded the place, and killed them all; and even now, the women will never go there for firewood. Now the people build their huts and plough their gardens, and no one dare harm them because of this advent of British rule; they can, and do get justice, and any white man ill-treating them is promptly punished. The cruel raids are a thing of the past, much to the sorrow of the stronger tribes, and joy of the weaker. The native is now the most independent person in the world ...". It is such sentiments, among others, that would make it very difficult for the Ndaou to distinguish between the colonialists and the missionaries.

Ndaou men were heavily criticised by Raney. He (1903: 60) asserts that: "The native is now the most independent person in the world; – his wives do most of the work in the fields and he has all the food he wants, and to spare. The agents from the mines come and ask him to go and work, guaranteeing him food and lodging, and from £2 to £3 per month; but very few will go. Money is nothing to them, and they prefer idleness and beer drinking here at home." Here again, Raney supported white settlers' ventures. It is clear that he would have loved to see Ndaou men leaving in droves to work in white owned mines, which they were reluctant to do. Raney's remarks, to a considerable extent, made him of the same mind as either the colonial government or the white settlers (Dube, 2017).

It has already been stated that the SAGM missionaries lacked appreciation of the Ndaou people and their ways of life. Raney (1903: 60) gives credence to this asser-

tion when he mentions that “This people are as mean a race as one can imagine, bound by the sins of lying, idleness and drunkenness, and with little, or no natural affection even for their own flesh and blood. Gratitude seems to be an unknown quantity. And yet, this is the material we have to work upon, and these are the people among whom we are sure God has some chosen ones. Workers have been labouring here for nearly five years, and though we cannot yet point to one who has been born again, we know God is working, and we can see a difference in them. They know about God, they have often heard His Word, but as yet prefer to go their own evil way...” Raney represents sentiments shared by many other missionaries of his time. They evidently were too quick to judge the people they had come to evangelise. A close study of the Ndaus would have shown that they had their own ways of showing gratitude, for example, compared to those that Raney was used to.

The suspicion about the white missionaries that has been mentioned by Raney above was also expressed by Estall. He (1898: 23) mentions that “Lately we have not seen so many natives about us as usual, as they are ploughing their gardens, and in consequence ‘beer-drinks’ ‘are the order of the day, and it is difficult to get them to do any work for us. But we have been very pleased to see the freedom of the ‘youngsters’ come and play about the place; we do not want to discourage anything of this sort, as it means not only the breaking down of any fear or superstition which may exist, but the creating of a friendly confidence, which may be of great use when a school is started amongst them. We do not find, however, very much desire to learn amongst them as yet, but believe that this also will be created in their hearts in time.” In this case, Estall shows appreciation of the fact that the youngsters at least were becoming more and more friendly to the missionaries. This is probably why missionaries in general would use the tactic of ‘catching’ the young ones first with their teachings (in schools and other places) with the aim of indirectly influencing the older people as well (Dube, 2017).

6. The importance of learning the local Ndaus language

The language issue was always a barrier for the missionaries who had not learnt the local languages. The locals also found it difficult to express themselves to the missionaries that did not speak their language. To add to this, there was also a challenge in the fact that the two had different worldviews. This further confounded the situation. Estall (1899: 74), writing from Chingwekwe, Rusitu (which he calls Singwequi, Luciti Valley) in March 1899 mentions that “This morning we had a visit from our friend the chief of the natives here, one of his names being N’Garema [misspelling for Ngorima]. We found it rather difficult to entertain our guest, not knowing his language nor fully understanding his customs. We offered him a chair to sit on, but he preferred *terra firma* and sat upon the floor of our hut. He is

friendly toward us and brought us a small quantity of milk as a present, for which of course we had to give him something in return! We offered him a tin of meat, but he shook his head and said he did not want that, and his reason was – that coming all the way from England it would by this time be bad! But in the presence of such a needy soul, one feels how utterly transformation must be the work of God.”

The missionaries laboured for a long time at Rusitu without any converts to show for it. Douglas Wood can be said to have been God’s blessing to the Mission at the time that he was at Rusitu. He was a most important influence at Rusitu, together with James Middlemiss and Estall. According to Dhube (1997: 13-14), “July, 1900, Raney joined Edgar Faithful in the just opened field of Malawi. Douglas Wood took his place at Rusitu. Later James Middlemiss was also transferred. Douglas Wood was a good language student. He and Estall began to communicate with the people in their own language. They were joined by a Zulu evangelist from Durban called Japheth. By Christmas Day, 1901, Wood reported for the first time that there were 120 men, women and children who attended a Christmas party at the Mission. Before he left for Johannesburg and eventually for England in 1907, he had translated the first Hymn 135: *Jesu Wakandida*,’ into Chindau and had compiled a brief Ndaugrammar and dictionary. It was Douglas Wood who was nicknamed *‘Mangwani iSondo’* because every Saturday he made rounds in people’s homes inviting them to church on Sunday.” Kallam (1978: 185-186) agrees with the aforementioned.

Beckett (1994: 82-83) likewise concurs, indicating that, “Raney was replaced by an able language student, Mr Douglas Wood. The latter, prior to his arrival in Gazaland, had spent some time in Zululand, occupied in an effort to develop a firm grasp of the Zulu language, as the framework of the ChiNdaug tongue is very similar to that of the Zulu, and a fair knowledge of the grammar of the latter is of great service. Wood spent the majority of his early days in Gazaland occupied with language work.” In December 1900, Wood initiated the translation of the Gospel of Mark into the Chindau dialect (Beckett, 1994: 84).

A few quotes from Douglas Wood will be inserted here to show what a major influence the man exerted on the SAGM work at Rusitu, Chimanimani.

First, Wood gives details about when and with who he embarked on the journey to Rusitu, Chimanimani. Wood (1900: 193) records:

... On June 30th, Mr Kidd, Faithfull, myself and Japheth, the Zulu interpreter for our station in Gazaland, bade farewell to our kind friends at Durban, with whom we had spent some happy days of fellowship, and embarked on board the *S.S. General*. At Delagoa Bay Mr Kidd went ashore to see the Swiss missionaries there, on his return bringing with him another native interpreter, who comes from our part and speaks the Chindoo [sic!] language, which is spoken by the people

around us. The history of this native, Jonda by name, is one of the many proofs of the value of the evangelistic work done in the Johannesburg compounds. He walked to Johannesburg to work, and there came in touch with Mr Robert Wilson, who for some time had been working among the compounds...

The fact that Wood himself had learnt the Zulu language together with his taking interpreters with him shows that he had mastered the principle that one needed to speak the people's language in order to appeal to them.

This is evidenced in Wood's routines at Rusitu as shown in the following quote. Wood (1900: 226) recalls that:

It is three months today since Mr Middlemiss and myself, with the interpreters, arrived at this station ... Life on the station has now got into working order ... The day begins with prayers in Zulu for the whole station, ourselves, interpreters, and any boys who may happen to be working here ... at 6am. Breakfast follows at 6.30, and our own united prayer and reading of the portion in English. For myself, the rest of the morning is taken up with the study in Shindao [misspelling for Chindau], with the interpreters, our present task being translating the Gospel of St. Mark into that language. Mr Middlemiss, Estall and myself have also started to study Zulu together, as the framework of the Shindao tongue is very similar to that of the Zulu, and a fair knowledge of the grammar of the latter is of great service.

Without learning the language of the people they were evangelizing, success would have been impossible. Learning and communication with the Ndaus in their (Ndaus) language significantly helped the missionaries to make inroads among the Ndaus. As established, Douglas Wood and the Zulu interpreter, Japheth were very instrumental in this regard. Later, the SAGM missionaries would use local Ndaus converts to go out and evangelize to fellow Ndaus people. These local evangelists were named as such "evangelists."

Another important thing that Wood did was to go out of the mission station to meet with the Ndaus people in their homes and communities. This also helped bridge the gap between the Ndaus and the missionaries (Wood, 1900: 226).

Wood himself records the progress that he had made at Rusitu. He (1900: 226) mentions that, "It is about a month now since we broke the ice and began to speak to the people direct, using our Zulu interpreter when our limited stock of Shindao had been used up." This demonstrates that his language skills and the help of the interpreters made a major difference. However, he also admits that the Ndaus found it difficult to differentiate the missionaries and the interpreters from the settler colonialists and the police. About this, Wood (1900: 226) writes that, "It seems that we

are often mistaken for the police, the Native Evangelist being dressed in European clothing as none of the other natives about here are, and that would account in great measure for the general helter-skelter that takes place, when we are beheld approaching.”

The efforts of Wood and others were to be rewarded. Wood (1905: 251) remarks that “. . . at last the Word of God has begun to take effect, and the Prince of this world has been cast out from his hitherto undisputed sway over this people. As you know, there are now three from this part of the district that have confessed Christ, and this has caused real alarm and anger in the enemy’s camp. They are two young men and a young girl, and it is the latter that has been the hardest blow to the Opposition . . .” This will be discussed further below.

Labouring for years on end without any conversions was a common characteristic feature of most of these early missions as this article has already emphasised before. Having one convert was a sincere cause of celebration. According to Glen (1959: 49), the first one to accept the gospel was a boy named Chiwanguwangu. The second was Mutendi, a young girl who, when she believed, was tied and beaten by her father and brothers but when she did not relent, she was allowed to go and learn at the Mission. She was married by Christian rites but died in childbirth. Her child, a girl, was brought up at the Mission as an orphan. According to Kallam (1978: 186-187), “. . . This (Mutendi’s conversion) infuriated the Chief because the girl had been given as a wife to an elderly man in the tribe, but she refused to go because he had other wives and she was a Christian. There was nothing the chief could do because the Native Commissioner supported the missionaries’ position.” There is implicit mention of the close connections between the missionaries and the colonial government authorities here.

Wood (1905: 251-252) records this as follows:

. . . They are two young men and a young girl, and it is the latter that has been the hardest blow to the Opposition, for a girl is a marriageable article, and that means cattle, and when she wants to be a Christian, all the fond plans made for her when still an infant are upset, and there is friction and much heart-burning. This girl was promised to a man with wives and grown up sons, living long way away, and now that she has come out boldly, she will not have her ancient suitor, whom she has never seen, and so the chief is furious. He came to see me this morning, and was exceedingly glum, quite oppressively so . . . They are waiting now for her elder brother to return, and then going to have another try to make her marry the man, as the brother, I believe, has already a wife given him by the expectant suitor, and should the bride not be forthcoming, then there will be complications . . . awaiting him . . . However, we have no fear, for we know that the law is on the side of any girl

who wants to marry according to her own heart, and not according to the business arrangements made long before the white man came into the country.

The relationship between the missionaries and the colonial government is further underlined here. They worked under the systems that were established by the colonial government and these systems were evidently appreciated by the missionaries.

We have seen how the interpreters were influential in the evangelisation of the Ndaу people in Chimanimani. Hatch (1905: 98-99) mentions the sad passing of Japheth due to malaria. Hatch (1907: 53), however, also reports that their numbers had been lately on the increase.

The trek into Zimbabwe included a well-calculated move to evangelise Mozambique as well although the Mozambique work failed. According to Procter (1965: 144) the pioneers set out for Gazaland (Rhodesia) to establish a bridge-head for the evangelisation of Mozambique which was described as “the largest unevangelised field in Africa south of the Equator” but the Chartered Company was adamant in refusing permission for the establishment of a permanent work.

SAGM autonomously ministered in the Ndaу area of Chimanimani for a long time and its influence in the area cannot be underestimated. To date the church that was born out of this Mission in Chimanimani, Zimbabwe, maintains a significant stronghold in Chimanimani District although other churches are also now present.

7. SAGM Missionaries’ Attitude Towards the Ndaу and their Culture

As has been mentioned earlier on, the SAGM missionaries were not willing to learn from the Ndaу when they arrived in Gazaland. The very reason that they did not know the people’s language but nevertheless expected to make converts speaks volumes about their attitude towards the Ndaу. They wanted to win the Ndaу to Christ but did not want to learn from them.

The missionaries were unapologetically intolerant of ways of life that stood opposed to their own ones. Shaw (2006: 275) points out, “The missionary is accused of cultural imperialism and intolerance because of the uncompromising emphasis on the supremacy of Christ, an emphasis that seems somewhat arrogant and intolerant at the present time when the value of other third world cultures and religions is being rediscovered. The history of missions in Africa is full of cultural insensitivity, petty denominational rivalry, arrogant attitudes, and unfair attacks against African tradition.”

According to Dachs (1973: 54), “It was from the missionaries’ understanding of a sinful world that the first practical difficulty arose. For in much of African society European missionaries of the nineteenth century were ready to find sin.”

As indicated earlier, the SAGM missionaries omitted the very important aspect of learning a people's language first before seeking to evangelise them. Before Douglas Wood's time the missionaries simply sought to impact on the lives of the Ndaу people without learning their language. Yet, according to Smith (1926: 37), "The missionary must be thoroughly at home in the language of the people and be acquainted with their mentality and manner of life". Smith (1926: 39) adds that, "In philosophy, as in evangelism, we must begin with man [sic] as he is – with men as we find them. The African . . . comes into the world with innate tendencies derived from distant forbears, human and subhuman. . .". The SAGM missionaries also ignored this principle of starting with what the Ndaу had so as to introduce them to the 'new'.

Missionaries in most cases sought to isolate the Ndaу from their social contexts. They wanted them to behave like Westerners and to ditch their identity and culture. The Ndaу did not exist as an isolated individual; he or she was a member of a group. He/she was born into a family, a clan or tribe, into a language and a traditional system of custom and belief. The African's social milieu differs from a European's (Smith, 1926: 39). The simple fact that one social heritage differs from the other does not mean that either of the two is wrong.

The missionaries in a sense could have used a completely different approach with different results. As Smith (1926: 40) emphasises, "Indiscriminate denunciation of African customs in preaching is merely mischievous – and foolish. . . Christianity comes to Africans with greater power when it is shown to be not destructive but a fulfilment of the highest aspirations which they have tried to express in their beliefs and rites."

It is supposed to be fully possible to embrace Christianity and yet remain fully Ndaу. Smith (1926: 41) asserts that, "It is not necessary for the African to become denationalized in order to become a disciple of Christ. . ." adding (1926: 48) that, "The acceptance by Africans of Christianity does not mean – at least, it ought not mean – that they cease to be Africans." Hatendi (1973: 146) notes that, "For the missionary 'conversion' means turning away from Shona culture and accepting the Western way of life. Faith in Jesus as Saviour comes last."

The missionaries failed to appreciate the culture of the African, among other areas of an African's life. Contrary to the missionaries' accounts, Hassing (1960: 259) submits that, "The African whom the missionaries found on arrival in Southern Rhodesia, was by no means without education. Within his [sic] own system the adult African was an educated person with his own folklore and tradition, his own system of law sanctioned by his religious ideas, his totem system and his taboos. The African kinship system was so complicated that it took a long time for the European intruder to understand it, and the African had a wide knowledge of the natural

world ... The African's insight into human life was deep, and his infinite number of proverbs revealed a profound human understanding." In other words, had the missionaries used a different set of lenses, they would have appreciated much of what they denigrated about African cultures. This is true at a broader level and at the level of SAGM missionaries in particular (Dube, 2017).

The SAGM missionaries, sadly, perceived themselves as far superior to the Ndaу they had come to evangelise. The Ndaу, for these missionaries, had to be rescued from their evil environment and from themselves, lest they self-destruct (Dube, 2017). According to Beckett (1994: 60), "Raney, Coupland, and Kidd, in accordance with this passage of scripture (Ephesians 6: 10-14), visualised themselves as soldiers enrolled in the 'Army of God', forcefully engaged in a titanic 'spiritual' battle against the 'Kingdom of Darkness'. These unseen forces of evil, covertly manifesting themselves through 'sin, superstition, and indifference' within the 'Native' population, seemingly resulted in 'a mass of human life where God is not known and where darkness, hopelessness, and death reign supreme...'. Beckett (1994: 60) adds that, "The souls of the Ndaу were seen to be held captive in a dark 'satanic thralldom', the devil disputing, 'every inch of ground ... determined that none of his captives shall be set free, without a great struggle' ...". The SAGM missionaries' attitude towards the Ndaу was in tandem with the attitudes of the other missionaries, their contemporaries. Bhebe (1979: 111) asserts that, "...all the missionaries saw themselves as fighting Satan in his own kingdom."

Several quotes from primary sources (from articles by SAGM missionaries recorded in the *South African Pioneer*) will be presented here to support the fact that the SAGM missionaries regarded themselves as God's instruments to save Ndaу people from darkness and hopelessness.

In 1898, Estall (1898: 23) writes, "More and more the intense need of the surrounding heathen has been laid upon our hearts; but the tremendous darkness and power of the devil and his hosts around us, we are unable to measure. Being, as we are, right among the ranks of the enemy, the Lord's promise to us, "... Behold I have given you authority ... over all the power of the enemy." Luke x. 19, R. V."

The Ndaу were not thought to be only heathens but to be people of a low class as well. Estall (1898: 24) gives evidence of this when he claims that: "Not only do the natives seem to be of the lowest type, socially and morally, but utterly without any mind regarding the Supreme Being. Some African tribes are known to have a practice of worshipping fetishes, but even this seems totally above these people here. Still, though they may not want you to bring Christ to them, they none the less need Him, and that need is a cry, and that cry, which comes to you and me, ascends to God, as did the cry of Israel in Egypt under the oppression of their taskmasters. And in response, the Lord said to Moses (Acts vii. 34): 'Come now, let me send thee

to Egypt ... that thou mayest bring forth my people' (Exodus iii. 10). 'Behold to obey is better than sacrifice.'"

In addition, Raney (1898: 36), writing within the same year as Estall, describes the situation as follows: "... but the lonely worker surrounded by the blank darkness of heathendom, where Satan's power is realized as nowhere else, where so much seems to retard and so little to help forward, writing on the spot just as things are ... from Gazaland, for we have been realizing that we 'dwell where Satan's seat is,' not so much from outward circumstances, as just in the quiet of our own inner life, and were not our feet planted upon the Rock, we should fail. But, praise the Lord, He is true to His promise, 'Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world' (and Gazaland is not that far), and so long as we have Jesus Himself abiding with us, Satan may rage, but thereby only reminds us the more of our weakness, and makes us cling closer to the Rock."

Another SAGM missionary, Middlemiss, shared the same sentiments as the other SAGM missionaries, alluding (1899: 6) to "... the spirit of faith in which we have been enabled to go into the enemy's camp in the Name of our Lord, who said, 'Now the ruler of this world shall be cast forth outside,' John 12.31." He (1899: 6) also prays, "... Oh Lord, do grant us that of Thee to live in us, that shall speak of Thee to the heathen (with whom we come in contact and those who only hear of us); directing the thoughts of their hearts to Thee, that they too may be brought to know Thee, as we know Thee ...".

Wood, likewise, shared the same perception. He (1902: 15) writes that "The fight here against sin, superstitions and indifference waves fiercer and yet more fierce as the days pass by, ... The devil disputes every inch of the ground, and is determined that none of his captives shall be set free, without a great struggle."

Writing much later in the 20th century, Beckett (1994: 61) comments that, "The missionaries saw themselves as ambassadors of this 'Good News' of salvation. They were 'lights', shining in the obscuring 'blackness' of heathen ignorance' ...". This attitude affected their work on the ground. They approached the Ndaus as people that had a culture that needed to be purged – ignoring, in the process, the good aspects of Ndau culture (Dube, 2017).

In line with the above, Beckett (1994: 61-62) adds, "The pioneer missionaries of the South Africa General Mission were to regard the culture and customs of the Ndaus in a characteristically scathing manner. There were numerous Native traditions to which the missionaries were directly opposed, viewing the occurrence of these practices as a 'big wheel in the devil's kingdom'". (For example, Raney saw beer drinking in large quantities as having the same effect as spirits.)

The Ndaus needed rescuing in a great many different ways according to the SAGM missionaries, for example, spiritually, physically, and mentally. Beckett (1994: 63)

remarks that “The Ndaus were seen to be ‘utterly without any mind regarding the Supreme Being’ . . . The SAGM missionaries considered the Ndaus to be ‘trapped’ within a world of fear and uncertainty, seemingly at the mercy of their patrilineal ancestral spirits, the ‘charlatan’ witchdoctors, and the malevolent witches or ‘*varoyi*’.”

As mentioned earlier, their minds also needed some “rescue” of some sort. Beckett (1994: 66-67) remarks that “John E. Hatch (an SAGM missionary) accused the Ndaus of possessing ‘reprobate mind which leads to murder’. The term ‘reprobate’, an ‘unprincipled’ and immoral person, confirms and augments the European concept of the ‘other’ – ‘backward’, ‘savage’, ‘heathen’, ‘inferior’, justifying missionary presence in Gazaland, yet not lauding the inherent ‘virtues’ of Western civilisation.”

In line with the aforementioned, Idowu (1973a: 426) states that, “‘Savage’ stands at the opposite end of the pole from ‘civilized’. The terms are antithetic to each other. Too often, peoples or cultures and religious practices are described as savage through sheer prejudice, lack of sympathy, or understanding.”

Beckett (1994: 68) adds that, “It has been argued, however, that the missionaries saw nothing good within the non-Western cultures. . . .” Here, it ought to be mentioned that some of the Ndaus practices were justifiably denounced, but ‘wholesale’ denouncing of almost all, if not all, Ndaus cultural practices was unfortunate and unnecessary. Practices that were justifiably denounced would include the killing of baby twins and of babies whose upper teeth emerged first.

Converted Ndaus were left with fluid identities. They were not really Ndaus in the fullest sense of the term, nor were they European. Beckett (1994: 68-69) makes it clear that “In essence, although the spiritual needs of Natives may have been met, a cultural vacuum (within new converts) tended to prevail. Converted Ndaus were no longer cultural, social or spiritual Ndaus. Neither, however, were they ‘Western’, European Ndaus.” Converted Ndaus became social misfits in their own contexts and among fellow unconverted Ndaus.

Kate Hatch (1918: 98) details how new converts suffered opposition and constant threats from their unconverted relatives, among them fathers and brothers. Wood (1907: 56) mentions a case in which a mother wanted to ‘break the cord’ with his son who had ‘confessed God’. Breaking the cord is a symbolical act in which two relatives hold each one end of a rope while the rope is cut in between. This cutting of the rope symbolises the end of the relationship between them (Dube, 2017).

Some of the Ndaus designations used by SAGM missionaries were particularly denigrating. Beckett (1994: 75) reports that “The Ndaus were described as ‘ignorant’, ‘uncivilised’, ‘idlers’, being of ‘the lowest type, socially and morally’ . . .”. Beckett (1994) notes that Kidd (an SAGM missionary), in 1904, saw the mental

state of the Ndaus as incapable of developing and as one to be pitied. The Ndaus were a 'misgrown child'. Beckett (1994: 77) further submits that "The missionaries perceived the Ndaus as being completely dependent upon the 'white man', incapable of implementing any original initiatives aimed towards development. The 'native' was a *'tabula rasa'*, a 'clean slate', possessing no history, no culture, simply awaiting, from the missionary, his or her salvation..."

The SAGM missionaries are said to have been overprotective of their converts. They had a strong fear that the converted would go back to their old evil ways. Beckett (1994: 112) mentions that "Missionary relations with Ndaus 'converts' would appear to have been very paternalistic in nature. The missionaries were 'protective of their flock', jealously guarding them from 'slipping back' into the ways of 'heathenism'."

The destruction of the Ndaus culture would appear to have been a 'grand goal' of the SAGM missionaries. Beckett (1994: 114-115) asserts that, "... the SAGM missionaries endorsed the destruction of Ndaus culture, without attempting to elucidate the fundamentals thereof. As such, in much of their behaviour, the SAGM missionaries clearly displayed the tenets of 'Western' Imperialist culture." Beckett (1994: 56-58) lists four principal assumptions held by the SAGM missionaries. They believed that non-Western cultures were evil in all aspects. They also believed that their own culture was a model of Christian lifestyle. Furthermore, they saw God's providence in British Imperial control – God's hand was at work in this Imperial mission. Lastly, they believed they were driven by the 'Great Commission'."

8. Ndaus People's Attitude Towards the SAGM Missionaries

It is of paramount importance to consider how the Ndaus responded to the above. Beckett (1994: 91) notes, "Initially, the Ndaus displayed an attitude of fear and suspicion toward the SAGM missionaries with whom they interacted..." Beckett (1994: 94) adds that, "A subtle form of passive resistance to missionary presence was, however, prevalent amongst the Ndaus, the former taking on a number of forms. Thus, ranging from an attitude of aloof indifference concerning the Gospel message to one of firm resistance to any notion of change..." Hence, according to him (1994: 96), "The Ndaus were obviously reluctant to turn from their age-old customs and religious beliefs, to adopt the Christian faith, about which they knew very little."

Although the earlier years of the SAGM missionary work among the Ndaus had been very difficult, without any converts to show for it, the latter years seem to have been much more fruitful. We have already noticed that under Douglas Wood, great inroads were made, and several Ndaus began to trust the missionaries, to the extent of celebrating Christmas with them at the Mission station at Rusitu in 1901. The attitude should have continued to change for the better after the Holy Spirit

manifestation in 1915 and during, as well as after, the influenza in 1918. Later years show that the SAGM missionaries worked with much acceptance among the Nda. Consequently, it seems that the initial negative reception died down as the SAGM missionaries continued to work among the Nda. Sadly, even this change of attitude among the Nda did not move the SAGM missionaries to reconsider their harshness and lack of tolerance for Nda customs and practices (Dube, 2017).

9. Missionaries and Imperialism

The relationship between missionaries and imperialism is complex. Shaw (2006: 274) calls the relationship between missionaries and the colonial government “The paradox of collaboration with the government...”. He (2006: 274) mentions that, “Colonialism was not an unmixed blessing for missions. ...Even while the missionaries cooperated with the forces of imperialism they also relished their role as leading critics of colonialism...”. In other words, the missionaries did not blindly support the colonial government in everything. They questioned and critiqued the government from time to time when the need arose.

The relationship between the missionaries and the colonial authorities cannot be easily dismissed. Hassing (1960: 301) mentions that, “Although the missionaries often opposed colonial policies and certain actions taken by the local administrators and in many affairs sided with the Africans, it was a mistaken idea that the missionaries were generally against the white people. They were for the British occupation of the country.” As Hassing (1960: x) puts it, “The relationship between the Christian missions and the expanding West was a real one”.

While they did not support the colonial government in everything, they shared some specific traits with it. Shaw (2006: 277) avers that, “There is sufficient documentary evidence to show that the racism and superiority attitude that is so often associated with colonialism was sometimes shared by the missionary...”. Such an attitude has already been demonstrated above to have hampered their understanding of the cultures of the people they evangelised.

Serving in Mission website, however, denies the accusation that missionaries were imperialists. Fuller (2007) maintains that, “Some critics allege that missionaries were colonial adventurers, extending the grasp of empire. SIM archives refute that stereotype, documenting the pioneers’ opposition to oppressive policies – imperial or nationalist. They considered that the colonizers (soldiers, administrators, and traders alike) had as much spiritual need as the indigenous peoples, and actively sought their conversion too.”

Some scholars argue that the African population had enough reason(s) to have held a negative attitude towards missionaries. Procter (1965: 34), for example, observes that, “If Africans turn against missionaries as they do against other Euro-

peans, there may be good reasons for it. The differences between white missionaries and the white foreign rulers are not always clear, even to African believers. Not only are the 'foreigners' all white-skinned, but they dress alike, eat the same kinds of food, and talk the same language. When they meet, it is apparently on equal terms. . . . Both employ Africans for wages and make rules governing hours and days of work, rest and holidays. The government officer imposes taxes and other obligations and issues identity cards and reference books, while the missionary keeps church records, issues cards – and talks of tithes and offerings. Both impose rules and make provision for the punishment of infractions, with police or school monitors to catch wrong-doers. . . . Undoubtedly much of the blame for this situation can be placed squarely on the shoulders of the missionary himself [sic] who has failed to adjust himself and adapt his ways to the life of the people and by so doing commend the Gospel to his hearers."

There is evidence of very good relationships and/or connections between the SAGM missionaries and the settlers, mostly settler farmers. There is mention of relationships between the SAGM missionaries and Kloppers (a farmer from Chimanimani); J.G.F. Stein (another farmer in Chikukwa, still in Chimanimani); and Marthinus Jacobus Martin (of the second group of trekkers after the Moodies' (Dunbar and Thomas) one) (Dhube, 1997: 6-7).

Interestingly, the relationship between SAGM missionaries and settler colonialism is further exposed in the fact that they seemed to have a very cordial relationship with the District or Native Commissioner (Dhube, 1997: 8).

Missionaries influenced the local social and political system in many ways, consciously and unconsciously. They altered concepts of economic development, gender and marriage, institutions of land holding, forms of music and dress (Rennie, 1973:7). They were, therefore, a sweeping force in the places where they did their work, and made enormous changes to the human landscape.

As already established, missionaries received tracts of land from the colonial government. As Zvobgo (1996: 366) indicates, "The generosity of Cecil John Rhodes and the British South Africa Company in offering Christian missionaries financial support as well as large areas of land on which to establish mission stations, made the evangelisation of the people of Mashonaland and Manicaland possible under the security of the new regime." It is irrefutable that the colonial systems aided the missionary enterprise to a very great extent.

In line with the above, Hassing comments that (1960: 233) "Cecil Rhodes . . . was very generous with his grants of land for missionary purposes, and many of the missionaries who wanted land, went straight to him, and he not only gave them a letter authorising them to peg out the land but in some cases even suggested on the map where they ought to go . . .". Hassing (1960: 234) adds that "Nearly all the

missionaries and the societies they represented accepted these gifts with gratitude, and considered themselves fortunate in being able to establish their new venture with such considerable resources at their disposal ...". Some Missions, however, did not accept such 'generous gifts' (Hassing, 1960: 317-318). The SAGM, for instance, did not receive a generous donation of land from the colonial government. There is evidence to show that it negotiated for land on its own with the chiefs, notably Dzingire and Ngorima.

Primary sources reveal that the SAGM missionaries were required to obtain permission from the colonial government to build although they had first negotiated for the site at Rusitu with the Nda Chief Ngorima. Raney (1898: 37) states that "At last, after waiting over a year since our application was sent in, we have been able to sign a draft of the lease of this piece of ground, and now we can think of more permanent buildings, for these huts are not conducive to health in this trying climate." Galf (1899: 54) similarly writes, "We are glad to be in a position to state that the site for our first station in Gazaland has at last been settled; the Government having granted us six acres in the 'Native Reserve' on a lease at a merely nominal rent. The position is the one we have been occupying since entering the country, and where Mr Raney, Mr Middlemiss, and Mr Estall have been living in temporary huts. They will now proceed to build a more permanent dwelling ready for other workers who will be joining them later."

According to Kopp (2001: 22-27), the Mission's missionaries tried as much as was possible to stay clear of politics and political commentary in the places they worked in. Kopp (2001:44) adds that "The AEF strictly forbade its missionaries from involvement in any kind of party politics ... its personnel were to distance themselves from political issues".

Beckett (1994: 3) sets out to explore the issue of 'The Bible and the Flag' in his dissertation. He writes that he did not wish to exonerate Christian missionaries from all the charges which have been levelled against them, charges pertaining to their inherently controversial 'conduct' within colonised Africa. Beckett (1994: 3) asserts that, "One must remember that they were 'products of their own history', and as such, were directly affected by the cultural, political, social and scientific perspectives of the British Imperialistic enterprise, from which they originated. Conversely, the missionaries were not 'passive acceptors' of all that was Imperialistic, and consequently, were free to reject or accept components of colonialism likely to stir controversy with Christian principles and precepts."

However, not all missionaries were the same. Their actions were also not homogeneous. According to Beckett (1994: 4) "From the outset, however, it is important to bear in mind that missionaries, the body of people embraced within the missionary enterprise, were extremely diverse in a number of aspects; theological, political, doctrinal, methodological, etc. Missionaries were not, as they have been portrayed

in much contemporary literature, one ‘homogeneous unit’, apparently void of any distinctive, definite characteristics”.

There are two extremes when it comes to analyses of missionaries. Some are over-defensive of their actions while others are over-critical. Beckett (1994: 13) asserts that both tenets of missionary analysis contain some elements of truth, but they tend to be far too generalised in their approach. He contends that a ‘middle road’ is required. Beckett (1994: 77-78) mentions that, “The SAGM missionaries interacted with the Ndaus, in a manner differing greatly from the colonial counterparts. Ideally, the missionaries had entered Gazaland with the intention of evangelising the human landscape, and, as such, the Ndaus presented the focus of their work. Their compatriots, however, were fundamentally concerned with the profits ensuing exploitation of the physical landscape. The human landscape was, in their eyes, of secondary significance, proving to be, in a majority of cases, a ‘veritable stumbling block’, cruelly disregarded, exploited as ‘cheap labour’.” In other words, while they had connections with settlers and colonial authorities, SAGM missionaries also had the welfare of the Ndaus at heart. This does not mean they were right in all they did but they seem to have had very good intentions even when they were wrong in their actions.

Missionaries were in a complex relationship with their fellow ‘white’ contemporaries – settlers and colonialists. For Beckett (1994: 79-80), “... although the missionaries distanced themselves from ‘the effects of the treatment they (the Ndaus) have experienced at the hands of some whites’, they were largely dependent upon the latter in several aspects; land for the mission station, the enforcement of a ‘European legal system’ to illegalise many of the customs practised by the Ndaus etc. The SAGM missionaries were, it would seem, in somewhat of a dilemma; part of the imperial enterprise, yet essentially alien from it, dependent upon its practices, yet seldom condoning the ‘harsh treatment’ of the indigenous population. The result – the apparent complexity displayed within the behaviour of the SAGM missionaries.”

It is prudent to gain an understanding of who the SAGM missionaries considered themselves to be. Beckett (1994: 100) declares: “... The SAGM missionaries perceived themselves as ‘servants of God’, not ‘tools of imperialism’, working to extend the ‘Kingdom of God’, not the British Empire, in Gazaland.” According to Kopp (2001: 16) mission history demonstrates that most missionaries supported colonialism but fought against its abuses. Nothing can be further from the truth than perpetrating a view that says the colonialists and the SAGM missionaries were one and the same thing.

10. Conclusion

The article has used desk analysis to present some content regarding the SAGM missionaries and their interactions with the Ndaus people of Chimanimani, Zimba-

bwe. First-hand information from SAGM missionaries who worked in Chimanimani, Zimbabwe, was given in the form of quotations throughout the article. These were from the *South African Pioneer*, an SAGM journal to which the SAGM missionaries contributed articles regarding their work in Chimanimani, spanning some few decades. The article found that the missionaries conduct was at most paternalistic and devoid of respect for the Ndau people's culture, religion, language, and practices, among others. The Ndau were also found to have had a very difficult challenge especially when it came to extricating or distinguishing the SAGM missionaries from their white counterparts (settler colonialists, settler farmers and any other white people).

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