A GREAT CENTRAL MISSION
THE LEGACY OF THE
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH IN ZIMBABWE

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The history of African Missions has been told heretofore from the perspective of white colonialist missionaries. Consequently, the data concerning Rhodesia/Zimbabwe missions has been understood basically from the western point of view. Little data has been adequately compiled from the African perspective.

This article is a segment of the larger history of that mission, told from the perspective of the indigenous Zimbabwean. The intent of this article is to lift up historical developments and the conflict over, and obstructions to, programs designed to develop indigenous leadership during the colonial period along with the time these developments took.

The story begins with the unilateral decision by the European powers to carve up Africa for their convenience and benefit, a decision in which the mission movement functioned as a support mechanism for white social control and domination of the African peoples.

Background: Preparing the Way for the Missionary

In 1884/5 the Berlin Conference was convened to formulate rules that would govern the process of territorial annexation by the colonial powers in Africa. It was agreed that all future claims to colonies or protectorates in any part of Africa should be formally registered. Fourteen nations signed the agreement.

The Conference, which affirmed the political, economic and religious alliance that existed between colonialists and missionaries—the linking of cross and crown, provided an umbrella of law and order for missionary work in Africa. Abolition of the slave trade and freedom of worship were guaranteed. The signatories clearly affirmed that the colonial powers:

\[\ldots\] shall, without distinction of creed or nation, protect and favour all religious, scientific or charitable institutions and understandings created and organized for the above ends, or which aim at instructing the natives and bringing home to them the blessings of civilization.\(^1\)

The partitioning of Africa gave an impetus to the colonial powers to develop roads, railways and water transport so as to occupy and to develop trade in the annexed areas. By 1919 there were railways in more than half the colonies in Africa. The building of railways had a great

influence on the inland thrust of missions into Southern Africa as missionaries could now penetrate into the interior of the continent.

Bishop Hartzell, Cecil Rhodes, and African Land

In 1896, the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church held at Cleveland, Ohio, elected Joseph Crane Hartzell as Missionary Bishop for Africa. Prior to his election, Bishop Hartzell had developed a special interest in Africa and had kept abreast of the unfolding events in Europe and Africa. For the next twenty years Hartzell gave himself tirelessly to the African continental field and had substantial success. In two decades he made thirteen trips to Africa, traveling one million three hundred thousand miles in the process.

Following his election to the episcopacy of Africa in May, 1896, he stated:

A few moments after my election, a clear and positive conviction came to me that... the Methodist Episcopal Church must have one or more great missionary centers. [A] complete outline map of the continent had become a part of my mental vision during the brief address I made to the General Conference in favor of electing a successor to Bishop Taylor, little dreaming that I would be the man selected.

This statement undergirded all of Bishop Hartzell’s future missionary activities in Africa. He arrived in Monrovia, Liberia on January 27, 1897. He spent nearly three months traveling through Liberia, the Congo, and Angola and returned to England in August.

He returned to visit East Central Africa later the same year, arriving at Umtali on December 10, 1897. It is said that two days later, on a Sunday, he preached to one woman and thirty-five men in one of the rooms of an Umtali establishment.

He described the new town and its surroundings in this manner:

When I saw the beautiful village on a plateau 3,500 feet above the sea and surrounded by picturesque mountains with no church work except that of the Church of England, I said, “Here is the place for a great central mission among Europeans and natives.” The location is healthful and on the advanced wave of civilization and under the flag of Great Britain.

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2Bishop Joseph Hartzell’s first trip to Rhodesia succeeded visits to study the work in Liberia, and a lengthy itinerary into the Congo and Angola on the west coast. He demonstrated a keen interest in developments in Africa during the scramble, which resulted in the 1885 Berlin Conference agreement. A paper he presented before a literary club in Cincinnati included a complete map of the continent of Africa which had become, by then, a part of his working knowledge. This foundation was certainly in the front of his mind during the brief address he made to the General Conference in 1896, the articulation of a vision which influenced his election to the episcopacy for Africa.

3Minutes of the First Session East Africa Central Mission Conference, (November 16, 1901), vi and vii.

4Minutes of First Session. Obviously, the Church of England had been established as a part of the British Colonial presence. The indigenous people, in the process, had been uprooted and their land occupied by the white, British subjects.
The site provided a strategic point from which to conduct a large and permanent work among both Europeans and natives (Africans) in Umtali (Mutare) which could hardly be surpassed. Bishop Hartzell learned that over the range of hills from Umtali was an abandoned Old Umtali, ten miles to the northwest of the new town. All the buildings were intact, offices and homes, as well as a church, and that place would be appropriate for the establishment of a mission center. In 1898 the British South Africa Company gave Bishop Hartzell a grant of some 13,000 acres at Old Umtali, as well as the abandoned buildings. The property was granted free and clear by the British South Africa Company.

Bishop Hartzell viewed this grant of land by the government of Rhodesia as a fulfillment of his conviction. Old Umtali was surrounded by what the bishop called "the teeming population of heathenism," which made it an ideal place to establish a mission. Eventually, Old Umtali would become a center from which educational and evangelical work for both Europeans and Africans was carried out. It soon developed leaders and influenced the conversion of the heart of Africa. For the Methodist Episcopal Church missionaries, Africa provided virgin ground for the planting of western or "Anglo-Saxon civilization" and Christianity.

**Arrival of Missionaries**

In October, 1898 the first missionaries, the Rev. and Mrs. Morris W. Ehnes, and the Rev. M. H. Reid, arrived. Rev. and Mrs. Ehnes opened a school and established a church among Europeans in Umtali. This was consistent with the agreement which mandated the establishment of church and school together. They were quickly followed by others, too numerous to mention here.

The coming of missionaries and the opening up of work at both Umtali Town and at Old Umtali was a milestone in the history of the Methodist Episcopal Church. In this effort, the American Methodist Episcopal Church joined forces with a host of other denominations and mission agencies such as the British Wesleyan Methodist and the Dutch Reformed Church. Bishop Hartzell recognized that potential denominational cooperation could well be a great and providential opportunity for a new spiritual empire in East Africa. Due in large part to the strategic location of the Mission the work extended in all directions—east, west, north and south.

The missionary activities of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the 1890's were greatly influenced both by the programs in the U.S.A. and the agenda of the British settlers. Consequently, the Methodist Episcopal Church developed a four-fold model for missions which not only reflected

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the historical ministries of Jesus Christ, namely, preaching, teaching, healing and feeding, but also responded to the colonial interest of inculcating western civilization among the African peoples. Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute provided the training model that was adopted and implemented at the Old Umtali Mission. Once this program was in place, missionaries were recruited specifically to fulfill the needs of the Mission.

The curriculum designed for the Mission Center included religious, educational and industrial instruction. Throughout, the distinctive stamp of Washington's Tuskegee Institute was clearly evident. The emphasis on self-help and self-reliance programs, with concentration in agricultural and mechanical arts as the prerequisite to economic independence, was fundamental. The whole ethos of the center was greatly influenced by his doctrine of hard work, frugality, and good manners. These programs were subject to approval by the government in order to receive grants, and were inspected and approved by government officials.

**Organization of the East Central Africa Conference**

By 1900 Bishop Hartzell was working with colleagues, bishops, and the general church to establish the New East Africa Mission Conference. These efforts culminated on November 16, 1901, with the formal establishment of the Conference, organized by Bishop Hartzell himself at Umtali. The Conference included the whole work of the church in East Africa south of the equator. With the base at Umtali now more fully secured, all that was left to be done was to turn Bishop Hartzell's dream into reality.

By 1908 the work at Old Umtali had increased dramatically. Preaching places/stations and schools were opened in the adjacent areas under Chiefs Mutasa, Makoni, Zimunya and Mutambara. The student enrollment at Old Umtali Center proper had increased to 129, including the wives of married students. These married women were formed into a Girls School under the auspices of the Women's Foreign Missionary Society.

The Teacher Training Class directed by a Mrs. Ferris, consisted of twenty three students selected from the more capable candidates. They received advanced training in reading, spelling and arithmetic. At the end of the year's training, these students became pastor-teachers. This

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6Matthew 4:17 and 23; Luke 9:6 and John 5:8. This missiological model is not atypical and can be seen in many other contexts in which the missionary societies established this work. In the case of the Methodist Episcopal Church model, it can be traced to the earlier efforts in Liberia, of which Bishop Hartzell was fully aware. On November 24, 1832 the first missionary to Liberia, Merville Cox, wrote: "My mind is planning for the good of my mission; a mission house, a school and a farm connected with it, and finally an academy, rise up in perspective before me. Hopes stop not here. Young converts, churches, circuits, stations and conference, I trust, will yet be seen in Liberia." (Earl S. Taylor: *The Price of Africa*, New York: Eaton & Mains, 1902) 167. These ideas laid down the foundation upon which many Methodist Episcopal Church missionary activities were developed.
particular group naturally evolved into a highly influential core. It was this group of Africans, by and large, that disseminated Christianity and western cultural values throughout the African communities. Old Umtali Mission quickly developed into the main center for pastor-teacher training and the dissemination of the gospel in Eastern and northeastern Southern Rhodesia.

**Extension of Work in Southern Rhodesia**

During the period 1905 to 1930 missionaries and indigenous pastor-teachers expanded and extended the work of the Methodist Episcopal Church to the northern part of Southern Rhodesia in particular. This was precipitated by exploratory visits made by Dr. Samuel Gurney into Mrewa-Uzumba areas under the jurisdiction of Chiefs Mangwende and Nyajina. Subsequently the Rev. (later Bishop) John M. Springer and his wife Helen (the former Mrs. Rasmussen) pioneered new stations at Mrewa, Mtoko and Nyadiri, being assisted by Doctor Gurney.

By 1915, in addition to the mission centers, where there were expatriate missionaries, the Rhodesia District included forty-two “Native stations,” each in the care of an African pastor-teacher. In many of these stations there were schools, with several preaching points. In total, 4,200 students fell under the care of indigenous teachers. Membership of the Rhodesia District in 1915 consisted of 1574 members, 1613 probationers, and 4809 unbaptized adherents. There were 179 children baptized during the same year. Nearly 3,400 people were enrolled in Sunday Schools.

The pioneering activity of Dr. Gurney in the northern part of Rhodesia requires some additional comment. In 1906 he settled at Kanyasa village. He reported the hostility of the area’s people to the Conference of 1910:

> It is a matter of profound regret to the missionary that so little has been accomplished. Others come up to conference reporting many precious sheaves which they have gathered from the fields in which they have labored, but the medical missionary can give no such glowing report. He can only tell of the uprooting of noxious weeds, the blasting of rocks and the preparation of the soil for seed. The harvest is as yet all in the future.

Depressed and frustrated he still gave expression to his great hopes for the future. In truth, Gurney pretty much single-handedly laid the foundation for the future development of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the northern part of Rhodesia. “Doctor Gurney has planted,” testified Herbert Howard in later years; “Mr. Greeley has watered, and I have entered in at the time of fruitage.”

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8 *Minutes of East*, 73.
9 *Minutes of East*. It is true that the present United Methodists and other denominations in the area are harvesting the fruit. Schools have been established nearly everywhere in Uzumba. Nyadiri Hospital serves not only the mission center, but the whole of Uzumba, Mtoko, and beyond.
By 1917, the paramount chief, Nyajina, who in earlier years had been a major barrier to the planting of the gospel in his area, had gone to the Native Commissioner of the area to inform him of his desire to receive missionaries. Isaiah Musamba, the only teacher who had been left to work in the area, had labored hard in Nyajina’s area, and had indefatigably continued preaching and teaching. He spent his time itinerating for days, and found several places where the people were ready for a teacher. Invitations had come from the Muskwe family, Kaseke, and from Chief Nyajina himself. In the course of time, Mr. Musamba and his one-time antagonist, Chief Nyajina, became very good close friends. Gurney planted, Greeley watered, but without the labor of Isaiah Musamba, Howard would have found little fruit to harvest.

At Mrewa Center work had progressed efficiently under the leadership of the teacher, Benjamin Kawadza. Already there had been some ten or twelve from Mrewa attending school at Old Umtali Mission with a view to return to their area to open more schools.

In the 1917 report to Conference, Herbert N. Howard highlighted what he considered to be his vision for Mrewa:

At this center we ought to have one of our secondary schools. Many young men from nearby and from our out-stations have signified their desire for such a school. . . . Your attention should be called to the strong desire on the part of the girls both in the proximity of Mrewa and from the out-stations for a girls’ school. No less than twenty girls have come to me asking that they be sent to old Umtali.10

In 1922 the government of Rhodesia confirmed the grant of a 4,000 acre farm for the establishment of a mission center at Nyadiri. Nyadiri lay between the Mrewa and Mtoko African areas. By January, 1923 the Rev. Thomas A. O’Farrell, Dr. Gurney and Lawrence E. Tull had a set of buildings ready for use. Three Women’s Foreign Missionary Society members, Francis Quinton, Bertha E. Ramsey, and Grace Clark, joined Dr. Gurney. The main task at this time was to create a mission. In 1923 Miss Quinton reported:

The first school room was the shade of one of the grass huts in which the workmen had lived. The pupils were three girls from Mrewa School, two tiny children, and their mothers. The equipment was two slates, two primers and a Bible.11

Dr Gurney died in 1924, leaving the medical work he had started in the hands of his African assistant Job Tsiga. Frances Quinton and her two W.F.M.S. colleagues, Bertha and Grace, continued with the development of the mission work at Nyadiri and in the surrounding area. By 1925, in its third year of operation, the school enrollment had increased from 3 to 65 girls.

In 1926 Rush F. Wagner, an agricultural missionary, arrived. He took charge of the Center, while Dr. Stanley R. P. Montgomery of Toronto took charge of the medical work.

At the end of 1926, Ona M. Parmenter, a W.F.M.S. nurse, arrived at Nyadiri Hospital to assist Dr. Montgomery. The doctor had also been appointed a government medical officer for the Mrewa and Nyadiri districts. This gave him a traveling function which brought the Nyadiri medical work to the attention of many Africans. His outside work demonstrated the character of Nyadiri Mission as a center with radiating influence in the northern part of the country.

In 1927 Grace Clark began evangelistic itinerations to the out-stations. Rush Wagner was making progress in establishing a boys’ boarding school which had forty students enrolled. In June 1927, Nyadiri Center was designated the functional and formal head of a new Nyadiri District. The Rev. Thomas O’Farrell was appointed Superintendent and Director of the Center. The Nyadiri venture had turned into the mission’s strongest advance in the north through the 1920s.

In 1921 church membership of the original Mrewa District numbered 148. By 1939 the area could boast 1,900 members. Between 1905 and 1930 the number of church/preaching places increased thirty-fold from 5 to 150. The number of schools had increased in the same period from 4 to 130. Significant increases were also achieved in teacher/student population. This conspicuous expansion of work both at Mission Centers and in rural areas resulted in the establishment of the Rhodesia Mission Conference in 1916, thus creating two separate Mission Conferences, the other being Mozambique.

It is interesting to observe that 25 years after the establishment of the East Central Africa Mission Conference in 1901, there was only one “native” ordained preacher in Rhodesia, The Rev. David Mandisodza, who was admitted to full membership in the Conference in 1926.

**Leadership Development of Indigenous People—Natives or Kaffirs**

The training of so-called “Natives” or “Kaffirs” began at the very start of missionary activities in Rhodesia. By 1911 there were 79 pastor-teachers who were trained to serve a dual role as the term implies. The number of native ordained clergy gradually increased, but not nearly as dramatically as the various lay offices in the church. In 1926 Rev. Mandisodza stood alone as the only “native” full member of the Conference. By 1930 there were 10, in addition to 115 unordained local preachers and 48 exhorters. Conference statistics reveal a continuous trend to train and include Africans in the preaching ministry of the church, but at lower levels in the hierarchy. While allowed to preach, the natives were prohibited, by and large, from assuming administrative roles.

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12It was not unusual for a very close relationship to develop between the mission doctors and the government medical officers as they often jointly developed rural clinics/dispensaries manned more often than not by missionary personnel.
Statistical returns from the score of years between 1941 and 1962 reveal that the number of missionaries had increased from 38 to 100; the number of ordained natives from 24 to 46. The number of local preachers, who, in fact, consisted of people in the rural areas, with much less education and with less potential for future leadership, increased from 428 in 1941 to 2,017 in 1960.

The conspicuous missionary presence in the primary decision making processes impeded the development of top level African leadership. The organizational pyramid created no space for capable, intelligent Africans. Issues of fear and insecurity, control and prestige blurred the vision of many missionaries with regard to the future of the Church on the African Continent.

A new and more revolutionary bishop, Ralph E. Dodge, put his finger on this crucial point:

The major blind spot of the total missionary program in Africa may well be the failure of white leaders to foresee the approaching rebellion and to train nationals for administrative responsibility. Although some colonial governments have shown interest in educating the masses in Central Africa, none have set about training Africans realistically for administrative responsibility under a democracy.13

Instead of teaching the African students to think independently and to develop fully as human beings, much of the curriculum, especially the religious elements, trained the African to be obedient. The African was trained to be a dependent person, mainly satisfied with pittance handouts. Initiative, resourcefulness, and self-help were discouraged. Ripples of this can still be seen in the way the African Church has developed.

In his book, *The Unpopular Missionary*, Bishop Dodge quotes one high-school pupil as saying:

The attitude of some of the missionaries toward the African is atrocious. Some missionaries wouldn't allow any Africans to sit on their chairs or ride in their cars. If you sit, they will spray where you have been sitting. Their children are advised not to come into contact with Africans.

Another proclaimed:

I dare say that many missionaries I have dealt with leave much to be desired about their earnestness of purpose in their Church work. There is an undeclared emphasis on seeking a livelihood and perpetuating their position as bosses over the Africans.14

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14 Bishop Ralph E. Dodge, *The Unpopular Missionary* (Westwood, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1960), 32. These are not exaggerated statements, for I can recall very well during my days at Old Umtali Mission in the late 1940's, that as a small boy, talk circulated in the boarding hostels about missionaries who sprayed their homes after an African had been in them and sat on their chairs. In fact, not many would bring Africans into their homes. The conversation would be finished before one entered the house.
No African involved in the church at this time could fail to recognize Bishop Dodge's criticism. "Some Missionaries refused to promote Africans," he observed with dismay, "saying that if they did so, they themselves would be forced to leave Africa."\(^{15}\)

The Mission Centers, with their better facilities, were under missionary control. The out-stations were placed under the jurisdiction of trained Africans, but administered by a district superintendent. No classes in the school systems could be extended beyond standard six, except for a limited number of teacher training schools and some industrial training schools. The first government secondary school was established at Goromonzi in 1946. In 1950 the Methodists started the South African Junior Certificate, over half a century after the establishment of their work in Southern Rhodesia. It took over 50 years to produce an African graduate in the Methodist Church in Rhodesia, and 59 years to have Africans appointed to responsible positions in administration.

**Intentional African Leadership Training**

The election of Dr. Ralph E. Dodge to the episcopacy by the African Central Conference in 1956 was a turning point in the history of the Methodist Church in Southern Rhodesia. Dr. Dodge had served as a missionary in Angola from 1936 to 1950, with an interlude spent working on a Ph.D. between 1940 and 1944. In 1937, he was elected Secretary of the Protestant Evangelical Alliance, an ecumenical movement in Angola. He returned to Angola in 1945 and served as pastor and District Superintendent working in Luanda, the capital city of Angola, and in the interior where he opened up new mission work. In 1950 he was invited to become the Foreign Division Secretary for Africa and Europe, a position he held until 1956. He then served as Bishop of the African Central Conference until 1968.

In his Foreword to the biographical account of the "revolutionary bishop," Bishop Abel Tendekai Muzorewa wrote:

Physical giants are measured in feet and inches, heroes and heroines of military careers are appraised in terms of the number and kind of battles they fought and won. But the person whom the reader is about to meet and experience is neither a physical giant nor a military hero. Yet in terms of the quality of his life, the degree of his commitment

\(^{15}\)Dodge, *Unpopular Missionary*, 32. This reminds me of my experience in 1957 at Nyadiri Mission as a Primary School teacher, when the principal of the school came into my standard five classroom with a letter, and asked me to explain what Bishop Dodge meant by the appointment of Africans. This missionary was angry, raising the letter as if she was talking to someone. Unfortunately for me, I had not seen or read the letter, therefore could not respond to her questions intelligently except to shout at the missionary with anger. As soon as the missionary saw that I was angry and shouting at her in defense of my ignorance of the issues involved, she left. This missionary eventually returned to the United States.
to ultimate values—to God, Christ, and the Church, his love for people, his indomitable spirit and his inimitable insight, Ralph Edward Dodge is indeed a giant and a hero.\textsuperscript{16}

Is it too much to say that Bishop Dodge was a man of God, a Moses who had been sent by God to salvage a sinking mission of Jesus Christ in Africa? Dodge came at a time when the hierarchical structure of the church was so dominated by missionaries that the chance for African advancement was apparently negligible. In the late 1950s there were nearly 400 Methodist missionaries in Africa, and at least 90 of them were in Southern Rhodesia.

Dodge immediately advocated the transfer of power within the church from the missionary community to indigenous leadership. His first action was to bring some Africans into his cabinet. While Rev. M. J. Murphree had promoted Mr. Elisha Mutasa to Old Umtali Primary School in the late 1940s, Dodge now appointed three highly skilled Africans to administrative positions at major Methodist Mission Centers. In 1957, Matthew Wakatama was appointed Principal of Old Umtali Teacher Training College; Amon Dangarembga and Davidson Sadza were appointed Headmasters, Dangarembga to Mrewa and Sadza to Nyadiri Primary Schools. With the inclusion of Africans on the Cabinet and the appointment of three African Heads, Dodge broke the long-standing domination of missionaries in these most critical decision making bodies.

Determined to prepare Africans for leadership in the Methodist Church, Bishop Dodge worked very closely with Bishop Newell Booth. A special appeal was made to the Methodist churches across the United States of America. The response was phenomenal, and in 1961, over forty Southern Rhodesians left for colleges and universities in Great Britain and the United States. By early 1965, most of the positions that had been in the hands of missionaries passed into the control of these Africans. Indeed, Bishop Dodge’s vision had turned into a reality.

Following the publication of his book, \textit{The Unpopular Missionary}, Bishop Dodge was labeled an enemy of the status quo in racist Southern Rhodesia. This resulted in his being declared “persona non grata” by the Smith Regime on July 17, 1964 and he was deported. His deportation stunned the nation, especially the oppressed majority—the African people. His departure was a great loss not only to the Methodist Church, but to all Africans in Rhodesia.

\textbf{Missionary Legacy}

For the missionaries Africa provided virgin ground for the planting of Western Christianity. Their goal was to offer what they considered to be the best of their culture and their faith.

However, in order to take advantage of the opportunities provided by mission institutions, the Africans had to become baptized Christians. This meant that one must adopt a biblical or western name. (In Africa,

\textsuperscript{16}Dodge, \textit{Revolutionary Bishop}, vii.
today, there are many Johns, Peters, Pauls, Nathans, Sarahs, and Susans.) To the African, his or her name was that person’s life history, a reminder of her/his accomplishments or moments of sorrow or joy. To become Christian, therefore, meant to reject the past. In short, the Mission Centers served as institutions for “deculturation” and, at the same time, “acculturation.”

Religious education was the core of educational life at the mission. The Mission Center was holy ground; anyone who stayed on it had to conform to its life style. Students who graduated from the mission schools either as teachers or as pastor/teachers had been transformed into devoted Christians. Christianity made an indelible imprint upon them, and through their instrumentality, upon many others.

Nevertheless, the education provided for Africans was intended to minimize the possibility that they might become a threat to the missionary position. By the late 1940s and 1950s, the tide had changed. Some Africans had gone to South Africa for further studies. When they returned, they were beginning to raise questions. Bishop Dodge’s development plan reinforced changes already in motion. For the Methodist Church in Southern Rhodesia, the period 1956 to 1968 was extremely significant. By 1968, an African Bishop, Abel T. Muzorewa, was elected for Rhodesia. During this period many Africans were enrolled at colleges and universities overseas. When they returned, they took over responsibilities in all of the Mission Centers, and later, in government departments in Zimbabwe at Independence in 1980. It should also be noted however, that while the missionaries were reluctant to develop higher education for the Africans, other factors mitigated against it as well. These included the facts that: (1) The Africans themselves initially were reluctant to go to school so that some of the early years of missionary work were spent in visiting people in villages and persuading them to come to the mission to learn. In some cases they had to be bribed with clothing and food. (2) Colonial governments did not encourage missionaries to introduce higher education, in fact, they frequently discouraged it. (3) Many Africans were very poor and could not afford higher education for their children. The conservative missionaries and the colonial governments took advantage of African ignorance and poverty and intentionally delayed the introduction of higher education for Africans; while at the same time encouraging the establishment of industrial schools, e.g., Domboshawa, which was established in 1920.

What the conservative missionaries and colonial governments did not realize was that they came with a very significant gift—a liberating book called the Bible. Archbishop Desmond Tutu made reference to this irony in an address to the Fifteenth World Methodist Conference in Nairobi in 1986:

... and when the white man came to Africa he came—we had the land, you see—and he came and he had a Bible. And he said, “Hello, hello.” And we said, “Hello,”
and he said, "Let us pray." And when we open our eyes we discover he's got the land now, and we've got a Bible. . . . But who said that that was a bad bargain? We are taking the Bible seriously, because when you came and you gave us this you gave us one of the most subversive things in a situation of oppression and injustice.17

Some missionaries, like the colonial powers, forgot that God intervenes in God's time. Zimbabwean Christians, on the other hand, with an increasing number of missionary allies, believed that God would lead them out of colonial oppression. Bishop Ralph Dodge, indeed, appeared on the scene at the right time and with a specific assignment from God, namely, to transfer power in the church to the Africans.

The legacy of the missionaries of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Zimbabwe is a mixed legacy. It is a story of contrasting attitudes and achievements, a complex saga of tragedy and triumph. Much more exploration of this story needs to be done. When all is said and done, however, an abiding reality must be affirmed. Jesus announced he had come that his followers might have life and have it more abundantly.