

## Foreword

The Salvation Army is a respected institution in Zimbabwe today. Although it is not one of the major Christian bodies, its Zimbabwean membership is the largest of any Salvation Army “territory” internationally and its history deserves attention. Professor Murdoch’s *Christian Warfare in Rhodesia-Zimbabwe* is a scrupulously researched and multi-layered text that is essential reading for anyone interested in the modern history of Christianity in Africa. It is a seminal examination of the Salvation Army’s problematic encounters with Africans from the formative days of the colonial interlude to the first decade of black majority rule.

Through a systematic interrogation of multiple oral and written sources, Professor Murdoch’s narrative reveals some hitherto little known details about the Salvation Army’s ambivalent relations with Africans. Foremost, its basic aim between 1891 and 1908 was to promote mass emigration of England’s urban unemployed to settle on land seized from Africans. The Army’s later focus on Africans was initially a pragmatic response to Rhodes’ imperial preference for funding the ‘civilising’ of Africans through educational services, medical facilities and churches.

*Christian Warfare in Rhodesia-Zimbabwe* also reveals the Army’s exclusive recognition of white victims of the country’s nationalist struggles as martyrs. The Army’s pantheon of martyrs included three individuals; Captain Edward T. Cass was killed by Africans during the First Chimurenga in 1896 and two white teachers were killed by ‘unknown’ assailants at Usher Institute in June 1978, at the height of the Second Chimurenga. Many Africans also died because of their association with the Salvation Army, especially during the Second Chimurenga, but they were not recognized.

Professor Murdoch also explores the political and religious intricacies behind the Salvation Army’s ill-advised withdrawal of its membership from the World Council of Churches (WCC) in 1981. This move was triggered by the aforementioned killings of two white teachers at Usher Institute in June

1978 and the WCC's availing of grants to Zimbabwe's liberation movements for the procurement of educational material and food for Zimbabwean refugees resident in neighboring countries. Opposition to the WCC's support of the liberation movements was stirred by the Cold War anxieties of the Army's membership in the West. Again, though the Army condemned the purported violence of the African liberation fighters it never condemned the state sanctioned excesses of Ian Smith's right-wing regime.

In a nuanced way, Professor Murdoch's narrative also shows that Africans and many international Salvationists supported struggles for majority rule and opposed their organization's withdrawal from the WCC. That the Army's then international leadership disregarded these sentiments, coupled with their apparent indifference to the concerns of the oppressed Africans, shows that they were on the wrong side of history. That the Salvation Army has changed with the times and attempts to serve Africa more even-handedly today is to its credit.

Finally, *Christian Warfare in Rhodesia-Zimbabwe* is a rigorously researched and accessible text. It is both an excellent intervention and complement to Zimbabwe's burgeoning histories on the interface between Church and politics.

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