

**Religion, Education and the State: The Origins, Development  
and Significance of Church Affiliated Universities in  
Zimbabwe.**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis explores interactions between government and religious bodies in the evolution of church-related universities in post-independence Zimbabwe. Since the 1980s there has been an increased interest in the direct involvement of religion in university education. It is argued that the new interest by churches in setting up universities is a response to the exigencies of the modern world which regard knowledge as an essential feature in development.

A further dimension which this thesis examines is the triangular relationship involving religion, the state, and the university. The three parties have distinct but interrelated agendas and functions. While by definition a university has claim to autonomy and academic freedom, for an institution founded by religion, this creates tension as the institution tries to strike a balance between its identity and its relationship to the church. The question of identity is not confined to church-relatedness but extends to the role of such institutions in modern Zimbabwe. The study further attempts to locate emerging church affiliated universities in the discourse of endogenisation. The thesis proposes that if the new religious institutions are to have a significant impact, their pragmatic approaches should operate within an African epistemological framework which takes serious account of authentic endogenous knowledge systems.

## Declaration

This thesis has been composed by me and it is my own work. It has not been submitted for any other degree or qualification.

Signed.

Date 8-12-2006

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## List of Abbreviations

AACC	All Africa Conference of Churches
AAU	Association of African Universities
AICs	African Independent Churches
ASHA	American Schools and Hospitals Abroad
ATR	African Traditional Religion
AU	Africa University
BHEM	Board of Higher Education and Ministry
BSAC	British South Africa Company
BUSE	Bindura University of Science Education
CMS	Church Missionary Society
CODESRIA	Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa
CUT	Chinhoyi University of Technology
CUZ	Catholic University in Zimbabwe
DIDCO	District Development Committee
DNE	Department for Native Education
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
ELCZ	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe
ESAP	Economic Structural Adjustment Programme
FOCUZ	Friends of the Catholic University in Zimbabwe
GBGM	General Board of Global Ministries
GBHEM	General Board of Higher Education and Ministry
GCAH	General Commission on Archives and History
GCFA	General Commission for Finance and Administration
GZU	Great Zimbabwe University
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPLG	Institute of Peace, Leadership and Governance
MASU	Masvingo State University
MCA	Methodist Church Archives
MCZ	Methodist Church in Zimbabwe
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change

MSU	Midlands State University
NAZ	National Archives of Zimbabwe
NCA	National Constitutional Assembly
NCHE	National Council for Higher Education
NCHEA	National Council for Higher Education Act
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisations
NUST	National University of Science and Technology
(PF) ZAPU	(Patriotic Front), Zimbabwe African People's Union
PROPHE	Program for Research on Private Higher Education
RCZ	Reformed Church in Zimbabwe
SAMU	Southern Africa Methodist University
SAPEM	Southern African Political and Economic Monthly
SDA	Seventh Day Adventist
SRABNE	Southern Rhodesia Administrative Board for Native Education
SRCC	Southern Rhodesia Christian Conference
SRMC	Southern Rhodesia Missionary Conference
SRNMC	Southern Rhodesia Native Missionary Conference
SU	Solusi University
TCZ	Theological College of Zimbabwe
UCCZ	United Church of Christ in Zimbabwe
UMC	United Methodist Church
UMNS	United Methodist News Service
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
UTC	United Theological College
UZ	University of Zimbabwe
VIDCO	Village Development Committee
WADCO	Ward Development Committee
WUA	Women's University in Africa
ZANU (PF)	Zimbabwe African National Union (Patriotic Front)
ZCBC	Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference
ZCC	Zimbabwe Council of Churches

ZCTU	Zimbabwe Congress of Trades Unions
ZFTU	Zimbabwe Federation of Trades Unions
ZICOSU	Zimbabwe Congress of Students' Unions
ZINASU	Zimbabwe National Students' Union
ZOU	Zimbabwe Open University

## Introduction

Try as it would to use the university as an instrumentality for producing a leadership elite faithful to its philosophies and theologies, the church never succeeded very well. *Harvey Cox*.<sup>1</sup>

A church-involved college is the conviction that education is too important to be left solely to the state, that the state cannot answer every question that needs to be asked, that a student needs to know why and who, as well as what, when and where. *Thomas Price Jr.*<sup>2</sup>

If the Christian Church did not have schools of learning, it would have to create them in order to be responsible for its own life. This is not to denigrate the public universities. It is to suggest that the 'theological' purpose of colleges in the life of the church includes responsibility to live out through institutional forms the great religious quests for wholeness and freedom in Christian existence. *F. Thomas Trotter*.<sup>3</sup>

### Stating the problem

This thesis focuses on the dynamic interaction between religion and the state in the origin and development of religious universities in Zimbabwe. It explores the rationale and agendas of religious bodies in establishing universities. It further tries to tease out how religious bodies perceive their public role in a post-colonial context. The study examines whether establishing universities by churches in post-colonial Zimbabwe was a continuation of the fundamental principles of missionary initiatives or a radically new paradigm of mission dictated by the post-colonial context and contemporary global trends. Critical in the study is the link between the initiatives of churches in Africa and the impact of their international connections. The role of religious universities in society is interrogated alongside the discourse on Africanisation.

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<sup>1</sup> Harvey Cox, *The Secular City: Secularization and Urbanization in Theological Perspective*, (London: SCM Press, 1965), p. 218.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Price Jr., "What is a Church-involved College?" in *Trustee: A Quarterly Letter to Trustees of Church-related Institutions of Higher Learning*, vol. 27, NO. 1, (December 1972).

<sup>3</sup> F. Thomas Trotter, "The Case for Higher Education in the United Methodist Church," in *Into the Third Century: United Methodist Ministry in Higher Education. A Report to the 1984 General Conference from the National Association of Schools and Colleges of the United Methodist Church and the Division of Higher Education of the Board of Higher Education and Ministry*, (Nashville: United Methodist Church, 1984), p. 7.

Missionary principles took for granted Christianity's contribution in national matters. In the post-independence era churches find themselves in a context populated by diverse and sometimes aggressive contenders targeting their perceived traditional fields of operations. These new challenges have resulted in shifts by churches as they try to redefine themselves and their agendas. While the interest of churches in university education is a significant statement on mission, it has to be considered alongside patterns of the relationships between religion and politics.

The strategy by churches of creating an elite class through institutions such as universities was embraced by the state although with some safeguards. The post-independence government still saw churches in terms of the old missionary stereotypes as promoters of a good moral order and partners in development. Through the study of government and religious policies from this perspective this thesis seeks to draw attention to an interface involving religion, the state and the university in a way that has not been examined in such depth previously in the Zimbabwean context.

That, historically, education was an essential part of Christian missions, inasmuch as it was considered indispensable by colonial authorities, is axiomatic. The symbiotic relationship linking education, politics and religion since colonial days has been characterised by points of tension and relief as both government and churches have sought to achieve influence. This demonstrates that there is no such thing as neutral education. Churches in contemporary Zimbabwe enjoy the missionary heritage in all its aspects. It would be naïve nonetheless, to assume that the same trends of mission are applicable or relevant to the post-colonial church. In this thesis it is therefore necessary to situate my discussion of the new initiatives in university education within the broader mission of the churches. By virtue of each church's uniqueness, my approach portrays different patterns as well as forms of reaction from the government.



The emergence of church-related universities must be understood within the context of contemporary perspectives on the role of the university worldwide. It must be noted also that the changing role of the university, while assuming global features, is contextually conditioned. Paul T. Zeleza and Adebayo Olukoshi observe:

The historic assumptions that informed the founding of the modern African university and which shaped broad social responses to it have all but evaporated in the face both of the crises of the post-independence nationalist project and the neo-liberal onslaught on the entire fabric of the post-colonial model of development, a model in which the university occupied a central multifaceted role. The university's internal and external constituencies and competitors are more plural than ever as expectations of social access and accountability expand...<sup>4</sup>

Zeleza and Olukoshi further point out that it is now imperative to redefine the role of the university especially given the philosophical grounding which may be religious or secular and private. The new phenomenon comes as a direct challenge to the landscape of higher education in which public provision of university education was by and large the norm but now has to contend with "widespread competing sectarianism"<sup>5</sup> or religious and philosophical underpinnings which have serious ideological implications. While the traditional universities in Africa were state-run and had Western models, the monopoly of states in operating these institutions has been broken by new entrants for diverse reasons.

This thesis recognises that religious motivations in university education have to be understood in the context of global trends. The global context is placing more emphasis on the cogency of knowledge as essential for social and economic development while higher education institutions are the intellectual resource bases.<sup>6</sup> The result is that the university, being a knowledge factory, features as an important

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<sup>4</sup> Adebayo Olukoshi and Paul T. Zeleza, "The Struggle for African Universities and Knowledges," in *African Universities in the Twenty-first Century vol. 1. Liberalisation and Internationalisation*, ed. by Paul T. Zeleza and Adebayo Olukoshi, (Dakar: CODESRIA, 2004), p. 2.

<sup>5</sup> Adebayo Olukoshi and Paul T. Zeleza, "The African University in the Twenty-first Century: Future Challenges and a Research Agenda," in *African Universities in the Twenty-first Century vol. II. Knowledge and Society*, ed. by Paul T. Zeleza and Adebayo Olukoshi, (Dakar: CODESRIA, 2004), p. 606.

<sup>6</sup> M. Castells, cited in Robert Cowen, "Performativity, Post-Modernity and the University," in *Comparative Education*, vol. 32, NO. 2, (June 1996), p. 253.



player.<sup>7</sup> Since Christian mission is also about relevance, investing in university education has become as essential in the present age, just as commitment to the lower levels of education was in the missionary era. Even when taken from the perspective of the government, investing in human capital is viewed as an important aspect of national development.<sup>8</sup> George Subotzky and Gabriel Cele contend:

It is widely acknowledged that in the context of changing global relations and the rise of the new information technologies, producing relevant knowledge is central to the role of higher education in contemporary society. Within all spheres of society – the economy, polity and culture – knowledge has increasing salience as the central form of productive capital.<sup>9</sup>

The initiatives of churches may be viewed as an appropriate response to the global challenges. Nevertheless, the immediate question is on the ways in which the church universities have contributed through new models of intellectual discourse.

Church universities in Zimbabwe should be viewed as the fruit of the growth of the church in Africa. Modern Africa has experienced the remarkable growth of Christianity, as observed by Andrew Walls,<sup>10</sup> but also in Kenneth Ross' words, this phenomenon is part of the scandal of the "two Africas."<sup>11</sup> One Africa is of phenomenal Christian growth while the other is a cocktail of African disasters in the form of economic, political, and social problems. The paradox of Africa makes it an attraction to a variety of interested parties as well as being fertile ground for global

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<sup>7</sup> Teboho Moja, "Policy Responses to Global Transformation by African Higher Education Systems," in *The African University in the Twenty-first Century*, vol. 1, p. 21.

<sup>8</sup> Speech by the Minister of Higher Education at the 1994 Graduation Ceremony, Africa University, 17 December 1994. Information Office, Africa University. The argument on the link involving economic and social progress, and knowledge is a subject of interest from various scholars arguing from different perspectives.

<sup>9</sup> George Subotzky and Gabriel Cele, "New Modes of Knowledge Production and Acquisition: Peril or Promise for Developing Countries?" in *The African University in the Twenty-first Century*, vol. II, ed by P.T. Zeleza and A. Olukoshi, p. 343.

<sup>10</sup> Andrew F. Walls, "Towards Understanding Africa's Place in Christian History," in *Religion in a Pluralistic Society*, ed. by John S. Pobee (Leiden: E.H. Brill, 1976), pp. 180, 182). See also, Andrew F. Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History*, (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2002), p. 85.

<sup>11</sup> Kenneth R. Ross, "Doing Theology with a New Historiography," in *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, vol. 99, (November 1997), p. 94. Ross argues that generally many scholars discuss the "two Africas" with little attempt to integrate them. He argues for a one history approach to the study of Christianity in Africa.

mission initiatives. It is argued that the emergence of church universities is a corollary to a scenario of Christian growth, need and the quest for further growth. In this respect it is a redeeming factor of optimism in the face of African pessimism which gained momentum from the 1990s.<sup>12</sup> The growth of African Christianity is not just statistical but encompasses diversity in belief systems and ecclesiastical structures.<sup>13</sup> The religious university comes as a testimony to this growth. The quest for positive growth is evident in many social development programmes. But by embracing the more challenging university projects in the face of new global trends of the knowledge society and the knowledge economy, churches have forged a contemporary and highly relevant statement on mission.

The paradox of the two Africas gives the continent a particular image as perceived by outsiders. The perceptions of outsiders and the self-perception of those inside the continent have been a critical factor in the growth of African Christianity. As such the linkages of African churches through international networks whose axis is the West, have been a determinant factor in shaping the identity of Christian Africa. The role of the international networks was not only in assisting with resources for growth but also through their influence in a variety of ways.

Religions do not operate in a vacuum. A variety of contextual factors including, social, political and economic dimensions are important determinants in the operations of any religion. Although there may be similarities with other countries on the continent, Zimbabwe has its own unique picture insofar as the growth of Christianity is concerned. This picture includes, firstly, the missionary legacy and its continued influence. Secondly, the role of the government in post-independence Zimbabwe, its ideological struggles and how this has influenced policy and politics as well as relations with religious bodies. In this thesis I argue that the government's

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<sup>12</sup> Adebayo Olukoshi, "State, Conflict, and Democracy in Africa: The Complex Process of Renewal," in *State, Conflict and Democracy in Africa*, ed. by Richard Joseph, (London: Lynne Rienner, 1999), p. 451.

<sup>13</sup> Andrew Walls, "African Christianity in the History of Religions," in *Christianity in Africa in the 1990s*, ed. by Christopher Fyfe and Andrew Walls, (Edinburgh: Centre of African Studies, University of Edinburgh, 1996), p. 3.

interpretation of the social and political implications of religious universities disarmed some proposed university projects while enabling others. The government's challenge was to enhance its own hegemony by drawing limits beyond which religious bodies could not go. Yet at the same time it supported compliant proposals as good initiatives for growth in the name of nation-building.

The rise of religious universities raises some questions concerning their purpose and nature. Of particular concern would be whether the religious ideology underpinning the university is able to embrace principles of religious diversity. This question is important because over time religions have tended to be interested in serving their own people or at least their own interests. If the religious university embraces principles of pluralism and subscribes to the 'hotel' model as opposed to the family model of organisation then what are the implications for its role as an alternative to secular public institutions? In a hotel public spaces are neutral, though not necessarily completely value free, but what people do in their rooms is generally a matter of privacy.<sup>14</sup> A family is knitted together by certain norms. Which model better defines the purpose for the religious universities, and how do factors contributing to their origin and development testify to this? When making reference to the official opening of Africa University, Horace Campbell points out that a university emerging under the auspices of a religious organisation "raises fundamental questions on the relationships between spiritual reflection and knowledge production."<sup>15</sup> Campbell further draws a link between these contemporary relationships and the missionary legacy in the area of education on the African continent. While spiritual reflection and knowledge production were conspicuous features in missionary education, the same cannot be said to prevail in university education. Rather, spiritual reflection was critical in the development of

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<sup>14</sup> Ian Markam, "The Idea of the Christian University," in *The Idea of the Christian University: Essays on Theology and Higher Education*, ed. by Jeff Astley et. al., (Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press, 2004), p. 5.

<sup>15</sup> Horace Campbell, "Religion and Education in Africa: The Official Opening of Africa University in Mutare 23 April 1994," *Southern Africa Political and Economic Monthly (SAPEM)*, vol. 7, NO. 9, June 1994. See also, Horace Campbell, *Reclaiming Zimbabwe: the Exhaustion of the Patriarchal Model of Liberation*, (Trenton, N.J: Africa World Press, Inc., 2003), p. 59.

the visions for universities, but in the operations of the institutions it could not always take precedence over academic objectives.

The approach by churches to university education fits into the theory of mission by diffusion as expounded by James Cox who describes the process as symbolic of leavening in bread,<sup>16</sup> or as Eric Sharpe puts it: “The spreading of Christian ideas [...] in concentric circles, from the focus of the college.”<sup>17</sup> In this case, diffusion is from a designated centre within the same context as opposed to the cross-cultural process which is an invasion of one cultural context by another. Diffusion in the latter sense is negative as pointed out by Lamin Sanneh who prefers the concept of mission by translation.<sup>18</sup> The concept of mission by diffusion, as it is employed by Cox and Sharpe, is preferred here as it best fits into the role of the religious institution as perceived by the churches. The church university, through its combination of knowledge production, religious influences and Christian activities aims to radiate its influence to outlying communities or other nations. As will be shown in this thesis, churches did not hide the fact that, although their universities were to teach secular subjects, they were expected to radiate Christian influence or at least contribute to the formation of responsible citizens and a new breed of leaders on the continent. The effectiveness of the diffusion depends on the content of education imparted and methods used in implementing, and the extent to which each addresses itself to the issues in the African milieu.

In summary, the research problem comprises three aspects. The first dimension is the significance of the increased interest by churches to widen the scope of their mission to include the setting up of universities as attempts to redefine their social role in the face of new global and local challenges. The second one is the ideological

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<sup>16</sup> James L. Cox, *The Impact of Christian Missions on Indigenous Cultures: The 'Real People' and Unreal Gospel*, (Lewiston, New York: The Edwin Mellen Press), 1991, pp. 63-9.

<sup>17</sup> Eric Sharpe, *Not to Destroy but to Fulfil*, (Uppsala: Swedish Institute of Missionary Research, 1965), pp. 82-8.

<sup>18</sup> Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture*, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1989), p. 29.

implications of the origin and development of church universities in the interface between religion and politics. The third dimension has to do with the implied role of church-related universities in relation to social, political, economic and intellectual contestations.

Given the aforementioned, the hypothesis guiding this study is whether the emergence of church-related universities in Zimbabwe is a continuation of the colonial missionary strategies or a disruption exposing a distinct shift. Attached to this central research question is the interrogation of the historical religio-political dynamics and their implications on continuity or disruption.

### **Methodology and sources**

A method is a way of doing things. It is a means to achieve some desired goals. Choosing a particular method implies adopting its baggage of assumptions and priorities. This study integrates the qualitative empirical approach with the historical and comparative methods. The historical approach has been useful because the enquiry focuses on a particular historical context and seeks to explain the evolution of the institutions under study. The comparative element highlights similarities and differences in the initiatives of the different religious bodies and their institutions in the face of government policies. The need to interrogate the experiences of the different churches, institutions and the government and how they relate to each other makes the comparative study essential.

Using these approaches, the study attempts to take into account the whole spectrum of notable cases of church-related university projects in Zimbabwe. In this way, even projects that aborted are considered as a way of highlighting the dynamics of the initiatives and their attendant factors. Focus will primarily be on the following cases: Africa University (AU) under the United Methodist Church (UMC), Solusi University (SU) under the Seventh Day Adventist Church (SDA), Catholic University in Zimbabwe (CUZ), Roman Catholic Church, and Great Zimbabwe University (GZU) of the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe (RCZ). Although the University of Zimbabwe (UZ) is a public institution, some of its aspects are included



in the study mainly in comparative terms. Even from the selected institutions the study has in some cases appeared to focus more on some institutions than others. Comparisons have also been necessary because, by virtue of their diversity, the institutions under study exhibit different features which are of significance to the thesis. Africa University has been particularly outstanding in this study because of its multinational structure and because it is the oldest and largest private university in Zimbabwe. As such, it exhibits more significant factors, issues and a longer historical period compared to other institutions.

By its nature, this thesis has demanded an empirical approach in the gathering of material. The process of gathering material involved visits to national offices of the churches and the universities under study for interviews or in search of documented materials. Interviews were also carried out with individuals or groups. The National Archives of Zimbabwe (NAZ) provided substantial primary materials. However, save for a few exceptions, most of the materials do not go beyond the first decade of independence. Some primary documents were sourced from the universities and government's Ministry of Higher Education.<sup>19</sup> The Methodist Church Archives (MCA) in Harare proved to be useful as they contained many diverse and important documents. My visit to the United Methodist Church's General Commission on Archives and History (GCAH) at Drew University in Madison, New Jersey proved fruitful as the archival holdings contain substantial primary documents on the denomination, including its agencies and Africa University. A considerable number of documents consulted there, were not available in Zimbabwe. While in the United States, I had the opportunity to interact with some university and church officials as well as members at various levels. Online sources which include, for example, the Worldwide Faith News archives also provided valuable materials for the study.

### **Problems and limitations**

Any empirical enquiry has its own limitations some of which are dictated by the challenges or problems prevailing in the context under study. This study was carried

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<sup>19</sup> The name of the ministry has been changed several times since independence. In this thesis it will be referred to as the Ministry of Higher Education.

out at a time when there were serious political problems in Zimbabwe. The problems, which were compounded by what some government officials perceived as negative publicity in the media and other forums, made researchers including Zimbabweans, suspect. Some potential informants and officials in both government and the private sector were reluctant to part with documents and information or became selective on the type of materials they gave out.

## Literature

The role of religion in university education in the African context is an understudied area. With the exception of publications such as Alexander Kerr's *Fort Hare 1915 – 1948: The Evolution of an African College*, earlier literature mainly concentrated on government or colonial universities. Eric Ashby's seminal study of universities in Britain, India and Africa has contributed significantly to the study of university education particularly Africa.<sup>20</sup> It pays scant attention to the role of religion as the author's main interest is the development of colonial policy on university education. The same thrust is evident in the works of Alexander Carr-Saunders,<sup>21</sup> who focuses on the rise of colonial universities in Africa; Michael Gelfand, who chronicles the origin and history of the University of Rhodesia up to 1966,<sup>22</sup> and Norman Atkinson's chapter on the founding of the University of Rhodesia.<sup>23</sup>

The deficit is also evident in studies which focus on the role of the university in the development of African states. *The African University in Development*, by Asavia Wandira discusses the role of the university in development in the context of African aspirations for advancement. T.M. Yesufu's book, with contributions by various authors, discusses the subject of localisation of universities and contains case studies

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<sup>20</sup> Eric Ashby, *Universities: British, Indian, African: A Study in the Ecology of Higher Education*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966). See also, Eric Ashby, *African Universities and Western Tradition*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1964).

<sup>21</sup> Alexander M. Carr-Saunders, *New Universities Overseas*, (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1961).

<sup>22</sup> Michael Gelfand, *A Non-Racial Island of Learning: A History of the University College of Rhodesia from its Inception to 1966*, (Gweru: Mambo Press, 1978).

<sup>23</sup> Norman D. Atkinson, *Teaching Rhodesians: A History of Educational Policy in Rhodesia*, (London: Longman, 1972).

of twenty-seven African universities.<sup>24</sup> Toyin Falola<sup>25</sup> discusses the role of the university in the development of African intellectuals and the attitudes of newly independent governments to universities as strategic institutions for ideological purposes. Edwin Kanganga<sup>26</sup> has carried out a more recent study focusing on the historical development of state universities in Zimbabwe, Malawi and Zambia. Kanganga includes in his discussions the policy and governance issues in relation to state universities.

Since the 1980s, substantial literature touching on various aspects of higher education in Africa has emerged, but the role of religion in university education is still neglected.<sup>27</sup> Two recent volumes, edited by Paul T. Zeleza and Adebayo Olukoshi, provide diverse perspectives on universities in the twenty-first century.<sup>28</sup> The first volume deals with the question of what neo-liberal reforms and information technology mean for higher education in Africa. The second volume is concerned with the implications of social interaction in knowledge production, organisational systems and co-operation with government and civil society. The study nevertheless notes the emergence of two new types of private universities in Africa namely; secular profit-making universities and those with religious foundations.<sup>29</sup> Of these themes only one chapter is more focused, albeit not in depth, on religious

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<sup>24</sup> T.M. Yesufu, *Creating the African University: Emerging Issues in the 1970s*, (Ibadan: Oxford University Press, 1973).

<sup>25</sup> Toyin Falola, *Nationalism and African Intellectuals*, (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2001).

<sup>26</sup> Edwin W. Kanganga, "Universities in Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi: A Study of their Historical Development and Contemporary Roles," (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Leeds University, 1983).

<sup>27</sup> See for example: Bibliography of the Program for Private Higher Education (PROPHE), <http://www.albany.edu/dept/eaps/prophe/publication/bibliography.html> (Accessed 17 March 2006); Alma Maldonado-Maldonado, et. al., *Private Higher Education: An International Bibliography*, (Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts/Albany, New York: Center of International Higher Education and Program for Research on Private Higher Education, 2004). The bibliography contains material ranging from short articles, Conference, papers, postgraduate dissertations and books. See also, William Saint, *Bibliography on Higher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa*, [www.worldbank.org/afr/teia/pdfs/SSA\\_Higher\\_Ed\\_Biblio\\_5.pdf](http://www.worldbank.org/afr/teia/pdfs/SSA_Higher_Ed_Biblio_5.pdf) (Accessed 17 March 2006).

<sup>28</sup> P.T. Zeleza and A. Olukoshi (eds), *The African University in the Twenty-first Century, vols 1 and II*, 2004.

<sup>29</sup> Adebayo Olukoshi and Paul T. Zeleza, "Future Challenges and a Research Agenda," pp. 605–6.



universities.<sup>30</sup>

In comparison to the great interest shown in religion and education during the colonial period, specific studies on the subject in post-independence Zimbabwe are even fewer. Among the few significant scholarly works on government and religion in education policy after independence are studies by Obert Maravanyika,<sup>31</sup> Esther Chiadzwa<sup>32</sup> and Gerrie ter Haar et. al,<sup>33</sup> which raise significant curriculum issues. Rungano Zvobgo does not make reference to religion but his interest in the relationship between ideology and the government's policy on education is significant.<sup>34</sup> Zvobgo also looks at the philosophical foundations of higher education and the structure of the Ministry of Higher Education.

Two recent studies more relevant to the subject of religion and the university in Zimbabwe are Irene Chibanda's examination of some aspects of the funding of AU as a private university,<sup>35</sup> and Raymund Maunde's overview of higher education in Zimbabwe since the attainment of independence.<sup>36</sup> Maunde's study tends to be general, encompassing tertiary training colleges and universities in Zimbabwe and is not concerned with the interaction of government and churches in policy formulation. He only devotes one chapter to discussing church institutions.

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<sup>30</sup> Beverly Thaver, "Private Higher Education in Africa: Six Country Case Studies," in *The African University in the Twenty-first Century, vol. 1*, ed. by P.T. Zeleza and A. Ohukoshi.

<sup>31</sup> Obert E. Maravanyika, "An Investigation into the Evolution and Present State of Primary School Curriculum in Reformed Church Schools," (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Zimbabwe, 1986).

<sup>32</sup> Esther Chiadzwa, "Developing Multi-faith Education in Zimbabwe," (Unpublished MA Dissertation, University of Zimbabwe, 1990).

<sup>33</sup> Gerrie ter Haar, Ambrose Moyo and Simon Nondo (eds), *African Traditional Religions in Religious Education: A Resource Book with Special Reference to Zimbabwe*, (Utrecht: Utrecht University, 1992).

<sup>34</sup> Rungano J. Zvobgo, *State, Ideology and Education*, (Gweru: Mambo Press, 1997).

<sup>35</sup> Irene T. Chibanda, "The Funding of Private Universities: a Case Study of Africa University," (Unpublished MBA Dissertation, University of Zimbabwe, 2000).

<sup>36</sup> Raymund Z. Maunde, "The Evolution of Higher Education in Zimbabwe," (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Alaska-Fairbanks, 2000).

## **Structure of the study**

While this thesis is mainly concerned with the post-independence developments in the role of religion in universities, it is necessary to outline the main features of the missionary and colonial system of education. The first chapter, therefore, looks at the evolution of education and its role in the spread of Christianity. It examines the relationship between missionary and government policies in the colonial period and the impact of Western education on African religions and culture. The second chapter discusses the development and implementation of colonial policy and missionary attitudes towards university education. It interrogates factors that could be attributed to why establishing universities was not as popular with missionaries as was primary and secondary schools. The attitudes of African intellectuals and nationalists towards colonial university education are also discussed in the same chapter.

Chapter three is concerned with the post-colonial state's politics of difference as an attempt to break away from the colonial legacy. It examines ideological contradictions of the Zimbabwean government and their impact on policies. The government's attempt to break away from the colonial legacy is linked to attempts to develop a new education system. The chapter also examines government's search for an ideological common ground with established religion while at the same time attempting to assert its dominance over religious institutions. It discusses the government's attempts to co-opt churches in the early independence period using the rhetoric of nation building and socialism. The influence of missionary education on the ruling elite's attitudes towards traditional religion and Western capitalism is also discussed.

Against the background of the government's quest for intellectual hegemony, chapter four looks at efforts by various churches to establish universities and the attitudes of politicians and government officials. This chapter notes that the interface between attempts by churches to establish universities and government policies was a mix of both conflicting and complementary priorities. It notes that among the salient factors in the government's reactions were political priorities. The chapter traces the origin

and development of the idea of the university in some of the churches, the tensions that accompanied the process, and the political significance of the new universities as seen from the actions of the government.

Chapter five examines the applicability of the concept of university autonomy and academic freedom in the African context in relation to the identity of the universities as religious institutions. An attempt is made in this chapter to link the UZ student culture of activism to the new church universities. It also considers the political and social implications of the linkage. Autonomy and academic freedom are also discussed in relation to religious universities and the churches that sponsor them. On the other hand, the relationship between religious organisations and universities under their auspices on one side, and the government on the other, is analysed.

In chapter six the identity of the new church-related universities as African institutions and the tension between localisation and internationalisation forms the main thrust. An examination of the indispensable nature of international networks and the notion of the dependence of African universities on their Western partners is discussed. The question of Africanisation and the university's relationship with the context in which it operates is raised. The chapter further focuses on contestations regarding the possibility of endogenous knowledge systems or African epistemology in African universities.

### **Clarification of terms**

The concept of mission may mean different things to different people. In this study mission is understood as: "...more than proclamation of the Good News about Jesus Christ; it also has to apply the Gospel to the real problems and challenges facing people."<sup>37</sup> As defined by one Zimbabwean church leader, Enos Chomutiri, mission is: "The church's concern and action on human need."<sup>38</sup> University refers to a higher institution of learning which confers degrees and engages in research. The state, as

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<sup>37</sup> F.J. Verstraelen, *Zimbabwean Realities and Christian Responses*, (Gweru: Mambo Press, 1998). p. 25.

<sup>38</sup> Interview with Enos Chomutiri, 21 January 2005, Masvingo.

defined by Naomi Chazan et. al., relates to “the organised aggregate of relatively permanent institutions of governance”<sup>39</sup> Government applies to those who occupy, manage and claim authority to control the structure.<sup>40</sup> In spite of the differences in definitions the two terms, state and government, are used interchangeably as is the case in some post-independence literature and public media on Zimbabwe.<sup>41</sup> This does not suggest that they are synonymous. Having set the context of the study through this introduction, the following chapter examines the evolution of educational policies and the role of missionaries in the colonial context.

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<sup>39</sup> Naomi Chazan et. al., *Politics and Society in Contemporary Africa*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner, 1992), p. 39.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Campbell, *Reclaiming Zimbabwe*, p. 2, makes a similar point citing: Jeffrey Herbst, *State Politics in Zimbabwe*, (Harare: University of Zimbabwe, 1990); Ibbo Mandaza (ed), *Zimbabwe: The Political Economy of Transition*, (Dakar: CODESRIA Books, 1991); and, Lloyd M. Sachikonye (ed), *Democracy, Civil Society and the State: Social Movements in Southern Africa*, (Harare: SAPES Books, 1995).

## Chapter One

### Missionaries and Education

Educate [...] that your converts may deal with all these questions. A Church will always be in slavery to others when it is an ignorant Church. An ignorant man is always slave to someone else. Knowledge is power. It is no good altering your regulations and your rules unless you can take advantage of these alterations. If your workers are capable of governing the Church they will govern the Church. If they are incapable they will not govern it. To make them capable you must educate them – not merely a theological but a wide education. Trust them with the knowledge which has made you powerful, and then you can leave your Church and your work confident that they will work out their own salvation. *Lord William Gascoyne*.<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

Studies on education during the colonial period in Zimbabwe have been carried out by several scholars, each focusing on a particular area. Ngwabi Bhebe<sup>2</sup> discusses missionary activities in the Matabeleland region of Zimbabwe. His book discusses how missionaries established missions and schools and the difficulties they faced. Chengetai J.M. Zvobgo looks at the history of the Wesleyan Methodist Church from 1891 to 1945.<sup>3</sup> In his history of Christian missions from 1890 to 1939 he includes contributions of various mission bodies to education.<sup>4</sup> Rungano J. Zvobgo focuses on secondary education in the Wesleyan and Anglican Churches from 1934 to 1971.<sup>5</sup> E.K. Mashingaidze examines the roles of various missionary bodies in primary education in the period between 1890 and 1930.<sup>6</sup> J.G. Kamusikiri discusses the role played by the

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<sup>1</sup> W.H.T. Gairdner, *Edinburgh 1910: An Account and Interpretation of the World Missionary Conference*, (London: Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier, 1910), p. 104.

<sup>2</sup> Ngwabi Bhebe, *Christianity and Traditional Religion in Western Zimbabwe 1859 – 1923*, (London: Longman, 1979).

<sup>3</sup> Chengetai J.M. Zvobgo, *The Wesleyan Methodist Missions in Zimbabwe 1891 – 1945*, (Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications, 1991).

<sup>4</sup> Chengetai J.M. Zvobgo, *A History of Christian Missions in Zimbabwe, 1890 to 1939*, (Gweru: Mambo Press, 1996).

<sup>5</sup> Rungano J. Zvobgo, "Government and Missionary Policies on African Secondary Education in Southern Rhodesia with Special Reference to the Anglican and Wesleyan Methodist Churches, 1934 to 1971." (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1980).

<sup>6</sup> E.K. Mashingaidze, "Christian Missions in Mashonaland, 1890 – 1930," (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of York, 1973).

Methodist Episcopal Church and the American Board for Foreign Missions in primary education.<sup>7</sup> J.K. Rennie discusses the contribution of mission education in the rise of African nationalism in Zimbabwe.<sup>8</sup> Norman D. Atkinson's study looks at government policies in education covering policies for Africans, Coloureds and Europeans. He devotes a full chapter to the establishment of the University of Rhodesia.<sup>9</sup> The literature cited has differences in perspective but the assertion that missionaries contributed significantly in education and that they often colluded with the colonial powers is a recurrent theme.

### **Education and the spread of Christianity**

The division of education into religious and secular originates in Western dichotomies of social reality. These dichotomies have led to the division between religious groups and the state in their roles in society. The churches provide education with a religious grounding while the state provides secular education. Over time the state has seen it as its rightful duty to provide and control secular education. As institutions under the control of the state the involvement of churches in education was expected to serve the interests of the state in addition to its own mission of spreading the gospel.

Churches pioneered the provision of education in Zimbabwe. The government only became involved at a later stage. When the churches provided education in the early days the division between secular and religious education was minimal. This division became more evident as the state became more interested in creating citizens who were going to serve its secular interests, which included labour. With the passage of time the relationship between churches and the state was strained. It was a relationship in which the partners were, in many respects, at cross-purposes, although at times they acquiesced to each other's demands.

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<sup>7</sup> J.G. Kamusikiri, "African Education Under the American Methodist Episcopal Church in Rhodesia: Objectives, Strategies and Impact, 1898 – 1966," (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of California, 1978).

<sup>8</sup> J.K. Rennie, "Christianity, Colonialism and the Origins of Nationalism among the Ndebele of Southern Rhodesia 1890 – 1935," (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Northwestern University, 1973).

<sup>9</sup> Atkinson, *Teaching Rhodesians*.



The common version in missionary studies is that education was the handmaid of evangelism. Missionaries themselves believed that the aim of education should be to evangelise the African. At the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910 a report on Africa acknowledged that education was, “an indispensable factor in the spread of Christianity.”<sup>10</sup> Commission III summarised the role of education in the missionary enterprise under four headings as follows: “Education as a tool for evangelism,” “Developing the community through the school,” “Spiritual and moral development,” and, “Facilitating the social development of the people.” Presenting education as a tool for evangelism meant that pupils would be taught to read the Bible and Christian books on their own.<sup>11</sup> Spiritual and moral development included removing the mindset of old unchristian beliefs. The social development of people included imparting skills to the local people so that they could lead useful lives and also form a human resource base for leadership roles in the church.

The missionaries’ general notion of Africa has been expressed graphically by Adrian Hastings:

Neither in the nineteenth nor the early twentieth centuries did the missionaries give much thought in advance to what they would find in Africa. What struck them, undoubtedly, was the darkness of the continent: its lack of religion and sound morals, its ignorance, its general pitiful condition made worse by the barbarity of the slave trade. Evangelisation was seen as liberation from a state of absolute awfulness and the picture of unredeemed Africa was often painted in colours as gruesome as possible, the better to encourage the missionary zeal at home.<sup>12</sup>

Such an understanding of the African influenced the agendas of churches and their strategies for christianising the African through preaching and teaching. Hastings further argues that the new missionary attitudes rendered pre-Christian African values

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<sup>10</sup> World Missionary Conference, 1910, *Report of Commission III: Education in Relation to the Christianisation of National Life*. (Edinburgh: Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier, 1910), p. 172.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 369.

<sup>12</sup> Adrian Hastings, *Church and Mission in Modern Africa*. (London: Burns and Oates, 1967), p. 60.

redundant. The converted African was taken as a, “*tabula rasa* on which a wholly new religious psychology was somehow to be imprinted.”<sup>13</sup> The remaking of the African was therefore a primary missionary aim.

## Co-operation

The coming of the missionaries to Southern Rhodesia had the support and encouragement of Cecil Rhodes and his British South Africa Company (BSAC). Rhodes offered annual grants to bodies coming to do missionary work in the country. Rhodes’ motive in making such an offer to the churches was premised on their “civilising” influence on Africans. In a letter written in 1898 to Captain Lawley, who was the Deputy Administrator in Bulawayo, Rhodes introduced the leader of a party of Brethren in Christ missionaries in this way:

This class I think is better than policemen and cheaper [...]. I think you might grant him a farm say fifteen hundred morgen in the middle of the natives [...] say in the Matopo to deal with Umgululu and Somabula (troublesome native leaders).<sup>14</sup>

Along these lines the BSAC offered to

...aid and assist in the establishment and propagation of the Christian religion and the education and civilisation of the native subjects of the king, by the establishment, maintenance and endowment of churches, schools and trading stations...<sup>15</sup>

Such a strategy, according to the *Rhodesia Herald* of 3 May 1895, would, “...make Rhodesia safe for the (European) shopkeeper, the farmer and the labour recruiter and to make it easier for the masters to deal with their boys.”<sup>16</sup> In the process the company stood to gain politically and economically. There was considerable criticism abroad and so involving missionary organisations in his endeavours would give credibility to Rhodes’s activities.<sup>17</sup> In Terence Ranger’s view, Rhodes was more interested in what the

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Terence O. Ranger, *Voices from the Rocks*, (Harare: Baobab, 1999), p. 48

<sup>15</sup> Marshal W. Murphree, *Christianity and the Shona*, (London: The Athlone Press, 1969), p. 7.

<sup>16</sup> See also Zvobgo, “Government and Missionary Policies,” p. 36

<sup>17</sup> Zvobgo., *History of Christian Missions*, p. 2f.



company stood to gain than in benefits which natives could have. He had little or no concern for the natives to the extent that his company did not have a clear native policy.<sup>18</sup>

Missionaries reciprocated to the open gestures of company rule by offering their support to the company's activities. One example of such an attitude is a meeting which pioneer Methodist missionaries, Owen Watkins and Isaac Shimmin had with Rhodes in 1891. As they were negotiating for more mission farms Watkins, according to his journal account promised Cecil Rhodes that he was going to make a good report of the country and the company's activities. He also reminded Rhodes that the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (WMMS) which he represented, "... was a very great one and most important in England."<sup>19</sup>

In a letter to Marshal Hartley, Shimmin, who was to succeed Watkins as the local Methodist leader, expressed his personal support and admiration for Rhodes in this way: "I had dinner with Rhodes [...] one is inclined to indulge in unmitigated hero worship when in his company. He is born a ruler of men, a wise statesman who has done more for the prosperity of Africa than any government or governor has done during the past century."<sup>20</sup> The cordial relationship between missionaries and Company Administration made it possible for the church to be granted more land for mission stations. Rhodes himself fought hard to convince the somewhat sceptical secretary of the Company, Dr Harris and the Administrator, Dr Jameson:

Then Mr Rhodes said, 'Well, Harris, you remember the Wesleyans will do good to the country – all their people will be of the right sort – they will not bring in loafers, who can do nothing but drink whisky at four pounds a bottle.' Then turning to me he said, 'What do you say to this? Suppose we give you three farms to start with – then when you get them going, if you want more and the mission is a success, why [not] apply for

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<sup>18</sup> Terence O. Ranger, *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia 1896 - 7*, (London: Heinemann, 1967), p. 51.

<sup>19</sup> Owen Watkins, "Journey to Mashonaland," Private Journal, 9 July 1891, p. 15, MCA, Harare. cf. Brandon Graaf, *Modumedi Moleli*, (Gweru: Mambo Press, 1988), pp. 17–18.

<sup>20</sup> Letter from Isaac Shimmin to Marshal Hartley, 20 October 1893, MCA, Harare.

more and I will promise your application will receive a favourable consideration.<sup>21</sup>

The relationship between churches and the rulers served as a solid foundation for the future of religion's role in education. However, the real concern was what each side sought to gain from the other.

### **African agents**

As more opportunities arose missionaries found themselves in need of more manpower. In practical terms it was difficult to bring in more missionaries. The missionaries also realised that as a matter of strategy they needed Africans to assist in the work. In correspondence to Marshal Hartley, Isaac Shimmin observed: "We could find immediate work for a dozen at least native teachers at important centres. I hold the view very strongly that the best way to reach the natives is by the natives themselves, of course, under English Superintendents."<sup>22</sup>

The African agents had a twofold task. On the one hand they carried out catechical duties while on the other they were to assist in providing basic education. As far as the missionaries were concerned the two tasks were inseparable. The evangelists played an important role in the establishment of mission stations. The Wesleyan Methodist, Modumedi Moleli made the initial contact with chief Nenguo, before Shimmin went there, for the final negotiations to start a mission station. The evangelist also stayed behind to run the mission school. Although these evangelists had only acquired elementary education, in the eyes of the missionaries they qualified to assist in evangelising their fellow Africans through preaching and teaching.

Schooling for children, as envisaged by the missionaries, was designed to help in destroying tribal practices like polygamy, witchcraft, *kuzvarira*,<sup>23</sup> and *mashave*<sup>24</sup> (alien

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<sup>21</sup> Watkins, "Journey to Mashonaland."

<sup>22</sup> Letter from Isaac Shimmin to Marshal Hartley, 29 November 1893. MCA, Harare.

<sup>23</sup> A form of credit marriage common among some Zimbabwean tribes whereby a poor family especially in times of famine would pledge a daughter to be married to a wealthy man who would in turn give food

spirits) so as to safeguard a Christian future.<sup>25</sup> For example, education would help to weaken polygamy in three ways:

Firstly, by taking and educating boys while still young it would be possible to instil in them a higher conception of morality which was not possible to those who were older and set in their ways [...]. Secondly, by educating girls it would give them increased independence of mind and strengthen them to refuse to be married to polygamists. Thirdly, by increasing the horizons of the boys it would encourage them to seek fulfilment in other ways away from laziness which encouraged them to have more women.<sup>26</sup>

John White, a prominent Wesleyan Methodist missionary, claimed success in a report to the District Synod of Mashonaland in 1894:

Quite a transformation is taking place in the poor heathens' lives. Infanticide, once so common, is now a rare occurrence; the *mashaba* (*mashave*) and other superstitious practices are disappearing; the women taught by the evangelists' wives, are beginning to clothe themselves in civilised dress; the people attend regularly our services [...]. Statistics are most encouraging. It was reported that 3000 people regularly listen to the preaching of the gospel; 700 children meet in schools.<sup>27</sup>

In an effort to consolidate their work the missionary strategy was to have central stations from where the evangelists would go out to outlying villages to preach and teach. This facilitated the setting up of village or kraal schools.

### Central stations

As the work continued to spread, different denominations saw the need to establish institutions for the training of ministers, teachers and evangelists. The Wesleyans opened training institutions at Waddilove in Mashonaland and Tegwani in Matebeleland.

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or cattle. Sometimes very young girls were pledged in marriage and this was often done without their consent.

<sup>24</sup> In most cases missionaries could not distinguish between alien and ancestral spirits and so bundled them in one category.

<sup>25</sup> W.R. Peadar, *Missionary Attitudes to Shona Culture 1890-1923*, (Salisbury: Central African Historical Association, Local Series N0. 27, 1970), p. 11.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>27</sup> John White, "Our First District Synod in Mashonaland," in *Work and Workers in the Mission Field vol. 4, 1895*, ed. by F.W. Macdonald, (London: WMMS, 1895), p. 21.

Tegwani was also to include industrial training. The Methodist Episcopal church (later called United Methodist Church) established Old Umtali and Nyadire. The Anglicans established St Augustine's at Penhalonga. Although the levels of training in these institutions were low, this marked the beginning of another aspect in the agendas of the churches, designed to develop a manpower base that would fulfil their perceived objectives of mission by diffusion. After training, the teacher-evangelists would be deployed in outstations within or closer to villages. According to John Melusi, "As soon as we could read and write we went out to teach."<sup>28</sup>

The plan of operation was articulated by A.S. Sharp, a Wesleyan missionary: "Our plan of operation is already showing itself to be a wise one. Our object is to establish a mission village on each of the farms, which we occupy, where the English missionary resides, and then work the surrounding villages from these centres."<sup>29</sup> This approach saw the establishment of many primary schools around main mission stations. Those who joined the central mission station would have already done some elementary education in the outlying schools. Central mission stations also played the important role of model villages. Those who attended mission were expected to live as Christians and avoid non-Christian practices.

### **Impact of government legislation**

E.W. Smith has argued that Christian missions enjoyed considerable support and sympathy from the government. However, Ranger further argues that many pressures came from the same government.<sup>30</sup> While the church wanted to evangelise through education the colonial state wanted political control.

The legitimacy of the BSAC was based on a Royal Charter granted by the British

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<sup>28</sup> Graaf, *Modumedi Moleli*, p. 124.

<sup>29</sup> A.S. Sharp, "Chairman's Tour," in *Work and Workers in the Mission Field*, vol. 9, 1900., ed. by F.W. Macdonald, (London: WMMS, 1895), p. 19

<sup>30</sup> Terence O. Ranger, *State and Church in Southern Rhodesia 1919-1939*, (Salisbury: Historical Association of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, Local Series NO. 4, 1960 ca.), p. 2.

Government in 1889.<sup>31</sup> Under the terms of the charter, the Company had authority to administer the country on behalf of the British government. Within a few years the involvement of the British government in the country became nominal. The Company was able to use its autonomy to develop its own administrative structures. The imperial policy makers nevertheless, still had influence over Company administration.

It must be understood that missionaries got involved in education on their own initiative. At first missionary societies only involved the government in requests for more land. As missionary enterprises grew and increased in numbers it became necessary for the government to put in place control mechanisms. The control measures had an impact on church policies inasmuch as activities and reactions of the missions influenced the government to develop new policies to protect its own interests.<sup>32</sup> These mechanisms came at a time when there was a growing need among churches for financial assistance to maintain the missions.

The first Education Ordinance was put in place in 1899. According to Order 'B' of this law, the government made grants available to schools on the condition that industrial training was part of the curriculum. The grants were ten shillings for every pupil but not more than fifty pounds per school.<sup>33</sup> Many churches and missionary bodies welcomed this move by government because they would be rescued financially. However, at the same time, through this new development, churches were giving up their autonomy. Emphasis on industrial education was meant to prepare Africans as labour for the Europeans.<sup>34</sup> It was also based on the assumption that Africans were lazy and

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<sup>31</sup> Claire Palley, *The Constitutional History and Law of Southern Rhodesia 1888–1965*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), p. 33.

<sup>32</sup> Charles P. Groves, "Missionary and Humanitarian Aspects of Imperialism from 1870 to 1914," in *Colonialism in Africa 1870–1960: The History and Politics of Colonialism 1870–1914, vol. 1*, ed. by L.H., Gann and Peter, Duignan, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 473.

<sup>33</sup> British South Africa Company, *Reports on the Administration of Rhodesia 1898–1900*, Education Ordinance Order 'B' 1899, p. 345.

<sup>34</sup> R.J. Challis, "The Foundation of the Racially Segregated Educational System in Southern Rhodesia 1890–1923, with Special Reference to the Education of Africans," (Unpublished DPhil Thesis, University of Zimbabwe, 1982), p. 51.



irresponsible.<sup>35</sup> According to R.J. Challis the government had to use financing as an instrument of control to ensure state security and see to it that mission schools would not become “seedbeds of subversion.”<sup>36</sup>

The 1899 Education Ordinance also covered European education. White community schools were offered some financial assistance on condition that their minimum attendance was twenty-five pupils. However, due to the sparse European population distribution it was difficult in many cases to fulfil this condition and so it was relaxed in the 1903 legislation. Under this Ordinance European schools could qualify for grants on the strength of recommendations from Education Department officials.<sup>37</sup>

The 1903 Education Ordinance repealed the 1899 legislation. Its terms treated Africans differently. According to Order ‘D’ of 1903 a school could qualify for a grant only if it had a minimum enrolment of forty pupils and an average minimum attendance of 150 a year. Under the new law industrial education was to be systematically taught. Emphasis was also put on the teaching of the English language, hygiene and discipline. The re-emphasis on industrial instruction and the inclusion of English language were probably influenced by proceedings of a conference held in Bloemfontein that same year. At the Conference, Southern Rhodesia was represented by H.G. Duthie, an Inspector of Schools. A resolution passed at the Bloemfontein Conference stressed the need for systematic industrial education and English language in the school curriculum.<sup>38</sup>

Order ‘D’ was amended in 1907 and later several times over. The amendments were influenced by representations from the Southern Rhodesia Missionary Conference

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<sup>35</sup> T.T. Moyana, *Education, Liberation and the Creative Act*, (Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1989), p. 49.

<sup>36</sup> Challis, *Racially Segregated Educational System*, p. 120.

<sup>37</sup> British South Africa Company, Education Ordinance NO. 1, October 1903, Order ‘D’ Section 2, p. 87. See also, Zvobgo, *History of Christian Missions*, p. 179; and Atkinson, *Teaching Rhodesians*, p. 43-4.

<sup>38</sup> *The Bloemfontein Friend*, 14 October, 1903.

(SRMC). The 1907 amendment classified schools into First Class, Second Class and Third Class. Conditions for First Class schools<sup>39</sup> were that they had to be boarding and under European supervision. They had to have government approval before they could operate. Schools in this category were required to be open at least four hours a day for an average of 180 days a year. Two hours of every teaching day had to be devoted to the teaching of industrial subjects. Industrial subjects in this case included, farming, brick-making, road-making, building, carpentry and iron-making. These subjects were targeted at African males. Females were expected to do domestic subjects, which included; sewing, cooking, washing, ironing, and general house work. Males who did farming as a subject had to show that they could efficiently cultivate an acre of land each if they were to qualify for grants. English language, Hygiene and Discipline were compulsory. If the school met all conditions required in the First Class group it would qualify for a grant on the basis of one pound for every pupil enrolled for the whole year.

In the Second Class were day schools, which had to be under European supervision. Schools in this group were expected to offer at least two hours of learning a day for 180 days in the year. The main subjects were; English, Discipline and Hygiene. Industrial subjects were optional. Grants were on the basis of ten shillings for each pupil enrolled for the year.<sup>40</sup> Third Class schools, also known as kraal schools could be run by African teachers but under the control of a missionary society. They were required to operate for at least two hours a day in an academic year of 100 days. Pupils in these schools were taught to understand and speak the English language. The pupils also had to master the habits of discipline and hygiene. Industrial subjects were not priority areas. Annual grants for this category were calculated on the basis of five pounds for twenty pupils a year.<sup>41</sup> Kraal schools as their name suggests were located in outstations sometimes in almost inaccessible areas. Many African teachers who were trained at the bigger stations were sent to the Kraal schools. Third Class schools fitted well in the missionary strategy

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<sup>39</sup> Zvobgo, *History of Christian Missions*, p. 179-81.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

of evangelism. As a result they multiplied rapidly under the guiding philosophy of mass education for mass evangelism.

The government's preference for European supervised schools is seen by the higher levels of aid that it was prepared to give. The same line of thinking related to the BSACs policy on religion. European supervised missions enjoyed the protection and support of Company Administration. The Company's attitudes may be related to its fear of influences from radical movements from the north and the south of the country. There were reports of radical movements in South Africa and brands of Christianity in Malawi which were regarded as subversive. The groups were branded radical and subversive because of their Ethiopian tendencies.<sup>42</sup> Ethiopianism was a new religious movement among some sub-Saharan Africans characterised by a quest for religious and political freedom. The movement started in the 1880s when some South African blacks began forming independent churches.

The 1907 legislation shows where the government's interests lay. First Class schools were meant to create a disciplined and special workforce to help meet European economic needs. The stringent conditions for such schools made it difficult for them to be established in large numbers. As a result only a few Africans could have access to them. The government wanted a limited number of Africans to be trained at this level. Emphasis on English, Hygiene and Discipline had ideological connotations. English as a medium of communication conveyed with it Western modes of thought and cultural values. Hygiene and Discipline were being presented from a European perspective. The government did not want troublemakers (undisciplined Africans). The First Chimurenga Shona uprising of 1896 was still fresh in the minds of the Europeans.<sup>43</sup> Africans

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<sup>42</sup> Carl F. Hallencreutz, *Religion and Politics in Harare*, (Uppsala: Swedish Institute of Missionary Research, 1998), p. 70.

<sup>43</sup> Chimurenga is a Shona term for uprising. In 1896 Africans in Southern Rhodesia particularly the Shona took up arms against the whites. Some mission stations were also targets of attack. The uprising, inspired by Shona spirit mediums was essentially a clash of two religions: Christianity and African Traditional Religion on the one hand, and white settlers on the other. When the ZANU PF government started its controversial Land Redistribution exercise it cited the First Chimurenga as the origin of the process of



therefore had to be controlled through the inculcation of new values, which were seen as a means to domesticate them. Schools, if unchecked, would give negative influences to the Africans. This partly explains why there was a shift from encouraging literacy or academic education to encouraging industrial subjects. First Class schools, which were under European supervision and regarded industrial subjects as compulsory, enjoyed more generous grants than the other categories. In 1904 the Chief Native Commissioner for Matabeleland said, "The native, in his ignorance almost invariably abuses a purely book education, utilising it only as a means of defying authority and oppressing his 'raw' fellows."<sup>44</sup>

Later in 1910 his colleague in Mashonaland stated in his report, "The policy should be to develop the native's natural proclivities first, on lines least likely to lead to any risk of clashing with Europeans."<sup>45</sup> The type of education, designed for the Africans was that which would only enable them to serve Europeans. Industrial subjects were structured in such a way that Africans could not compete with Europeans but work in households, mines, farms and lower clerical ranks.

The Chief Native Commissioner of Mashonaland clearly stated the government's position, which was also shared by Europeans in general:

It is labour we need in this country, and it is yet to be proved that the educated native who can read and write turns out to be a good labourer. As far as we can judge, the native who can read and write will not work on farms and mines, but will rush to the towns and obtain employment where he can exhibit his knowledge and training.<sup>46</sup>

Some missionaries echoed the same sentiments. John White, who was generally sympathetic to Africans, believed that it was futile to provide special skills to Africans

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regaining land and total independence. The liberation war was the Second Chimurenga and the Land Redistribution was the Third Chimurenga.

<sup>44</sup> Chief Native Commissioner, Matabeleland, Annual Report for 1904, Government Printer, Salisbury.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, Mashonaland, 1910.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

because no European would employ a skilled African.<sup>47</sup> Another missionary, S.D. Gray said:

The whole trend of education in Rhodesia is moving from the merely scholastic, the simple inculcation of the 3R's, and is becoming more definitely practical. Increasingly it is becoming related to life – not life in the great centres of Western Civilisation but life as it touches them in the native reserve, in the village community and in their relation to the future."<sup>48</sup>

While the government was busy trying to put in place checks and balances on African education, churches, on the other hand, were trying to develop it their own way. The fact that the government had not yet established its own schools and so relied on the co-operation of churches on matters of education gave the missionaries an advantage. Nevertheless, as missionary financial reliance on government grew the government was in a much stronger position to influence and impose its policies.

The Department of Education encouraged churches to continue providing rudimentary education which promoted industry and discipline to Africans. According to the Director of Education, simple basic education which had literary and industrial elements was commended on the whole continent as

the best method of raising the native in the scale of civilisation and of making him a more useful member of the state. The influence of the missionary is slowly but surely freeing the native from the deadening influence of the world of the spirits, raising the level of his intelligence and increasing his capacity as a worker.<sup>49</sup>

As the settlers established themselves in sectors which became pillars of the economy, Africans became more and more attracted to the European way of life. This led to migrations to urban centres and development of new attitudes among Africans.

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<sup>47</sup> Minutes of the Southern Rhodesia District Synod, 1911, MCA, Harare.

<sup>48</sup> S.D. Gray, *Frontiers of the Kingdom*, (London: Corgate Press, 1923), p. 109.

<sup>49</sup> Report of the Director of Education for the year 1919.

Increasingly for many Africans it was necessary to have some form of education in order to be employable. The Christian thrust had a new rival in the form of emerging secular urban ways of life.

In 1923, Chartered Company rule came to an end making way to the Colony of Southern Rhodesia granted by Letters of Patent.<sup>50</sup> In the new dispensation the government and missionaries found themselves at cross-purposes in relation to Third Class schools. The government's negative attitude to Third Class schools had the support of the Phelps-Stokes Commission Report published in 1922.<sup>51</sup> The Commission's report, which was also in favour of the development of industrial education, noted that Third Class schools were becoming too many and difficult to monitor.

In 1925 the government appointed a Commission on native education led by F.L. Hadfield. The Commission identified a number of causes for the rapid expansion of Third Class schools:

- 1) The command to preach the gospel to every creature and the missionaries' desire to reach the masses in the shortest possible time. Experience taught the missionaries the necessity for preaching centres, and the pace was accordingly forced.
- 2) The demands of native converts for schools.
- 3) The desire aroused amongst the Natives generally for education.
- 4) The establishment of a school at one kraal leading to applications for schools from other kraals in order to gain equal status.
- 5) The aim of some denominations to 'occupy the land' as an exclusive field of operations.
- 6) The practice of some mission bodies of following up converts into districts where schools already existed.

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<sup>50</sup> E. Windrich, *The Rhodesian Problem, A Documentary Record 1923-1973*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd, 1975), p. 9.

<sup>51</sup> The Phelps Stokes Commission was set up on the instigation of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society which influenced the Foreign Missions Conference of North America to request the Phelps Stokes Fund to sponsor an enquiry into the state of education in Africa. The committee was led by Thomas Jesse Jones, a sociologist. The Commission's report had a significant impact on both the colonial government and missionary bodies and it influenced policy development.

7) The system of government control under which an indigenous native must be attached to some particular kraal for administrative purposes. This has been interpreted to mean the Native teacher must actually live at a kraal and not simply be responsible to a headman. Instead of building in the centre of a group of villages, the teacher builds at one village out of reach of other kraals, which accordingly demand schools of their own.

8) The payment of grants on capitation basis without regard to the qualifications of the teacher. A teacher with a salary of 30 pounds receives no higher grant than one with a salary of 10 pounds and with the latter the grant goes a long way towards the total cost of the school. In the more remote districts a moderately equipped teacher is by some missionaries thought to be good enough.<sup>52</sup>

The Hadfield Commission was aware of the value of Third Class schools to missionaries. They acknowledged that the schools were established for evangelical purposes and that the academic qualifications were not a priority.

Both the government and churches agreed that there was a need to improve standards of kraal schools.<sup>53</sup> The positive attitudes did not really lead to meaningful changes in legislation. Conditions for the opening of kraal schools such as the Government notices 203 of 1923 and the three mile limit remained in force. These conditions continued to cause frustrations among missionaries in their efforts to expand or safeguard their territories. The government proceeded to cut down on aid to such schools. As a result churches found themselves in a difficult position. R.J. Zvobgo notes that reduced financial aid made missionaries less dependent on the government. The result was that financial aid as a tool for control was weakened.<sup>54</sup> On the other hand the church, found itself in a weaker position to offer any meaningful development in education.

In April 1936 heads of denominations signed a memorandum on native education

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<sup>52</sup> "Report of the Commission Appointed to Enquire into the Matter of Native Education in all its Bearings on the Colony of Southern Rhodesia, 1925," p. 57.

<sup>53</sup> Minutes of the Southern Rhodesia Missionary Conference, 23 – 25 June, Harare, Miscellaneous Documents (Box), MCA, Harare.

<sup>54</sup> Zvobgo, "Government and Missionary Policies," p. 85.

through Christian missions.<sup>55</sup> The memorandum, which was addressed to the Governor, the Prime Minister and Members of Parliament called on the government to put as much effort in African education as it put in the education of Europeans. The memorandum presented statistical evidence based on reports from the Department of Education. The statistics showed a downturn in African education. The memorandum linked the downturn to reductions in financing.

Developments from 1923 onwards saw a shift in the government's approach to industrial education. Instead of simply offering industrial education for labour, there was a new emphasis on developmental aspects, which were more refined than before. Through the efforts of H.S. Keigwin, the Director of Native Development, a new approach was developed. The new approach saw the establishment of two government institutions, Domboshawa (1921) and Tsholotsho (1922). The two offered industrial courses such as Building, Carpentry and Agriculture. Keigwin's scheme was to offer relevant education to Africans within their village settings. The new developmental thrust received commendation from the Phelps-Stokes Commission whose emphasis was on the "essentials of education" which were identified as health, family life, the environment, recreation and religion. Harold Jowitt, who succeeded Keigwin in 1929 continued with the emphasis to relate African education to communal life. There had to be a close relationship between the school curriculum and the African's everyday life in the community.<sup>56</sup> Jowitt further argued that educational development along these lines must relate to the pace of social and economic development in the communities. As Atkinson notes, some European settlers believed that Jowitt's scheme would reduce the momentum in the quest for an educated African elite likely to advocate for political power. The move also tied in with the policy on separate racial development supported by the Industrial Conciliation Act of 1934 and the Land Apportionment Act of 1930.

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<sup>55</sup> "Memorandum to the Governor, Prime Minister and Members of Parliament on the Subject of Native Education through Christian Missions." 6 April 1936, Miscellaneous Documents (Box), MCA, Harare. Also published under the same title in the *Bantu Mirror* 18 April 1936. The SRMC criticised government apathy towards African education.

<sup>56</sup> Atkinson, *Teaching Rhodesians*, p. 111.



The focus of development was not individualistic but communal.<sup>57</sup> Students trained at Domboshawa and Tsholotsho would be sent back to their villages and work for the government as field officers commonly referred to as demonstrators. Domboshawa also trained Jeanes Teachers who played a supportive role in community education. They could be responsible for a range of fifteen and twenty schools where they moved around assisting teachers.<sup>58</sup> A Jeanes training school for women was opened at Hope Fountain mission under the London Missionary Society. The phenomenon of Jeanes schools was not unique to Southern Rhodesia. Schools of a similar nature were established in Kenya, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland.<sup>59</sup> Churches had several schools offering industrial education. In spite of the new approach Africans became more and more attracted to the urban centres.

### Urban education

Religious groups concentrated on providing education in the rural areas because the majority of the African population lived there. As migration to towns increased, concern was expressed over the need to maintain Christian oversight to the urban African. African young men who went to town abandoned Christianity because of urban influences some of them coming from Europeans.<sup>60</sup> Educational authorities saw the need to provide education for the children of Africans living permanently in urban areas. The Southern Rhodesia Administrative Board for Native Education (SRABNE) acknowledged that the damage to native citizenry through lack of education in the urban areas would be "a menace to the country."<sup>61</sup> It was feared that uneducated Africans in the urban areas would destabilise the country. Educating the urban African also meant preparing him to fit into the demands of Western urban civilisation.

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<sup>57</sup> "Village Education in Africa: A Report of the Inter-territorial Jeanes Conference," (Lovedale: Lovedale Press, 1935), p. 13. cf., Richard Gray, *The Two Nations, Aspects of the Development of Race Relations in the Rhodesias and Nyasaland*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), p.134.

<sup>58</sup> H.C. Finkle, Interview, File AOH/F15, NAZ, Harare.

<sup>59</sup> Gray, *The Two Nations*.

<sup>60</sup> Bhebe, *Christianity and Traditional Religion*, p. 152.

<sup>61</sup> SRABNE minutes, 21 September 1937, File S542N8, NAZ, Harare.



In relation to these concerns was the debate over whether urban education should be made compulsory. No firm decisions were made on the issue of compulsory education, probably due to lack of appropriate resources.<sup>62</sup> As has already been noted earlier, churches were reeling under the effects of the depression and lack of government support. The matter remained on the agenda of the Administrative Board for Native Education up to the late 1930s. Churches expected the government to build schools in urban areas while municipal councils were reluctant to commit themselves.

In an effort to address the need for urban education for Africans five denominations, Presbyterian, American Methodist Episcopal, Salvation Army, Church of Christ and the Wesleyan Methodist, joined together to form a United School in the Makokoba township of Bulawayo.<sup>63</sup> This new development was an innovation insofar as missionary strategies for mission through education were concerned. In Salisbury the United School was organised by Presbyterians, the Reformed church, and Wesleyan Methodists.<sup>64</sup>

### **Right of entry**

As the number of government schools increased, especially in urban areas, churches faced another challenge. Under the “right of entry” system ministers of religion could regularly visit schools for sessions on religious instruction with pupils. Each denomination had access to its own pupils in the school. Section 21 of the 1938 Education Act stated that ministers of recognised denominations should be given access to their members in government as well as aided schools. Such ministers were to be allocated thirty minutes after school assembly every morning. During Company Rule, Cecil Rhodes had in 1899 expressed support for the idea. The Education Ordinance of 1899 had included these views but at that time they were insignificant because all

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<sup>62</sup> SRABNE minutes 16–17 December 1931, File S235/485, NAZ. Cf., Hallencreutz, *Religion and Politics in Harare*, p. 139.

<sup>63</sup> *Native Mirror*, vol. 2, N0.7, February 1935.

<sup>64</sup> Hallencreutz, *Religion and Politics in Harare*, p. 141.

schools at that time were under mission bodies. The “right of entry” system had its own pitfalls. Ministers were already overburdened with circuit or parish work resulting in frequent failures in fulfilling appointments at the schools. The system was criticised for promoting sectarian interests among churches. Frank Mussell, a missionary, identified three main problems. The first one was that the clergy who visited the schools were outsiders and strangers to the school environment. Problems of continuity and relevance with regard to the general atmosphere of the school could arise. Secondly, the clergy did not have training in the field of education and so their methods and approaches were likely to be inconsistent with educational conventions. Thirdly, there was no fixed syllabus; each clergyman was left to his own means.<sup>65</sup>

If the “right of entry” system was not appropriate, then something had to be put in its place. The debate shifted to the teaching of Religious Education by school teachers and not the clergy. A committee made up mainly of Protestant churches drew up a syllabus for biblical instruction. The Department of Education approved the syllabus. The Wesleyans in 1939 supported the new development with the following resolution:

The syllabus of Religious Instruction which has been approved by the Education Department should become a normal part of the school curriculum, and annual examinations conducted in the subject; and that where the “right of entry” is exercised by any minister of religion, he should teach at least according to the lines laid down in the syllabus.<sup>66</sup>

Making the subject examinable made it as important as others. The problem was that pupils would look at it as just one of the school subjects without reference to its evangelistic thrust.

The major part of the debate, on the teaching of Religious Education in schools, centred on whether it was really necessary to integrate it as part of the school curriculum and whether it could be taught objectively. In 1941 the Bulawayo Branch of the Rhodesia Teacher’s Association made the following resolution on the matter:

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<sup>65</sup> *Rhodesian Methodist*, vol. 15, 1939.

<sup>66</sup> Minutes of the Methodist Synod Minutes, for 1928, MCA, Harare.

School teachers should teach scripture by the objective method (i.e. a non-partisan approach).

The teaching of scripture should be optional (only those who wanted to teach should teach).

Specialist teachers may be appointed in the bigger schools. Religion would be taught within the school. This would render the “right of entry” system unnecessary.

Religion is all embracing as it can relate to art, drama, and philosophy (one can teach religion within any subject).<sup>67</sup>

These resolutions were probably influenced by the Spens’ Committee report submitted in 1938 in the United Kingdom.<sup>68</sup> According to the report, proper education came with one’s awareness of the “existence of a religious interpretation of life.” There was need for scripture to be taught for understanding. The report described Religious Instruction as a part of Religious Education. It called for the appointment of specialist teachers of scripture and also the allocation of adequate time for the subject. It is important to note that the resolution from the Rhodesia Teachers’ Association was supposedly drawn up professionally. The teaching of Scripture by the objective method was unlikely to achieve desired results as expected by the churches.

Emphasis on objectivity would not strike a balance between cognition and affection. There would be no call to commitment, yet this was the essence of the Christian religion. Further, the lack of denominational bias would in itself be a problem. Some people interpreted this development as an invasion by secularism, especially in cases where non-Christian teachers taught the subject. One missionary teacher argued in 1948:

If by ‘secular education’ is meant literacy, I agree, but if secular education means education divorced from Christian training, that is a different matter [...]. On every hand we see evidences of the terrible decline in every moral standard which has followed the decay of religion, a decay that has taken place when the ground of secular education has been more fertile than ever before. And so I believe that more than ever

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<sup>67</sup> *Rhodesian Methodist*, vol. 18, 1941.

<sup>68</sup> Kenneth D. Exely, “Spens’ Report,” in *Dictionary of Religious Education*, ed. by J.M. Sutcliffe (London: SCM, 1984), p. 328-9.

we need a Christian attitude to life and to bring up children as instructed Christians.<sup>69</sup>

This statement implies that objectivity in religion is inapplicable or undesirable. This view is consistent with the whole purpose of including religion in the school curriculum as far as the missionaries were concerned from the beginning. The teaching of religion would help to mould good characters. This would call for an invitation to commitment. As far as the churches were concerned the goal of education whether in mission schools or elsewhere was the same. It was generally believed that through the co-operation between the government and churches, non-denominational schools could be made as Christian as mission schools. Missionaries believed that better teaching standards came through Christian teachers who also instilled Christian virtues in pupils.

### **Educated Africans**

While efforts were being made to address the educational needs of the urban native, the job market in the towns had its own fears on the calibre of mission trained Africans. Prospective domestic employers, especially women, described mission educated natives both male and female as, "self-assertive and impudent [...] not as honest as raw natives"<sup>70</sup> This statement implies that the general expectations of white Rhodesians in the education of natives had not, up to this point, been fully met if at all they had.

The 1930s saw a heightened interest in education by the Africans. A new class of Africans with advanced primary education advocated for reforms in education. The Southern Rhodesia Native Missionary Conference (SRNMC) which had been formed in 1928 had on its agenda the need for higher education within the colony and the need for African ministers to be in charge of central boarding as well as kraal schools.

The *Native Mirror*, a newspaper which targeted native readership was from the 1930s replete with contributions by Africans on education and how it related to the status of the

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<sup>69</sup> Principal's Address, Waddilove Jubilee, 1948. MCA, Harare.

<sup>70</sup> Commission on Native Education, p. 85.

African. Concern over the status of the educated native was no longer a matter solely for the SRNMC and a few ministers. Educated natives expected to be treated in almost the same ways as the whites. A writer to the letters column of an April 1933 edition of the *Native Mirror* complained that educated natives were being ill treated in many ways by the Europeans. Examples of ill treatment given were: not being allowed to walk on the pavement and when employed as policemen they could only wear shorts. In response, the editor of the paper challenged Africans to improve their race through education so that they could be in charge of enterprises where they could look after fellow Africans and treat each other well. Jasper Savanhu, a native activist emphasised that it was the "...duty of the educated African to shape the destiny of [his] race."

Tsuneo Yoshikuni gives an account of political activism expressed through worker protests after World War I up to 1921.<sup>71</sup> Yoshikuni does not link the worker protests with education but it can be argued that education played the role of a catalyst in African political consciousness. Educated Africans became more active in the political arena after that period. African leaders, both the clergy and the laity, were involved in political activities. Ministers such as Mathew Rusike, Thompson Samkange and Esau Nemapare were active in political organisations. Among the active lay people were Aaron Jacha, Enock Dumbutshena, Charles Mzingeli and Jasper Savanhu.<sup>72</sup>

Increased African consciousness led to greater demands by Africans for better conditions. The African trade union movement spearheaded campaigns leading to a series of strikes in 1948. The government was increasingly worried. Education was targeted as a possible source of these problems. The government ruled that any plans for the establishment of new secondary schools should get approval from the Department of

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<sup>71</sup> Tsuneo Yoshikuni, "Strike Action and Self-help Associations: Zimbabwean Worker Protest and Culture after World War I," in *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol. 15, NO. 3, (April 1989), (pp. 440-68).

<sup>72</sup> See for example, Terence O. Ranger, *Are We not also Men? The Samkange Family and African Politics in Zimbabwe, 1920-64*, (London: James Currey Ltd., 1995), pp. 87-122.



Native Education (DNE) before implementation.<sup>73</sup> In 1948 the government planned to curtail the expansion of Junior Secondary Schools arguing that the economy could not absorb those who were already enrolled. Churches strongly opposed the idea and it was abandoned.<sup>74</sup>

Although Africans called for better conditions they were not always in agreement. In an article to the *Bantu Mirror* written on 5 February 1938 L.M. Sebetso argued that education should enable Africans to be useful members of society and give them a voice in matters of governance. The article called for equal educational opportunities for both Africans and Europeans. The article created a lot of debate among Africans. The most determined attacker on Sebetso was Charlton Ngcebetsa, a South African. Ngcebetsa called Sebetso a “Utopian Reformer” whose advocacy for equal educational opportunities was misguided. Ngcebetsa went on to attack leading ministers in the Native Missionary Conference for hampering progress in education because of their selfishness and negative attitudes towards teachers from the Union of South Africa.

African self-consciousness and growing political activism did not deter the development of unpopular policies by the government. The Prime Minister, Godfrey Huggins, expounded his ideas on the race question in an address at a gathering at Ntabazinduna mission in 1938. He argued that in the native areas the native must be allowed to rise to any position. In the European areas the Black man would only be a labourer and should not compete with the White man.<sup>75</sup>

### **Secondary education**

Up to 1935 the emphasis on education was at primary school level. Missionaries began to lobby for secondary education in 1934. C.J.M. Zvobgo cites three reasons for this new

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<sup>73</sup> Rungano J. Zvobgo, *Transforming Education: The Zimbabwean Experience*, (Harare: College Press, 1985), p. 20.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> *Bantu Mirror*, 23 April 1938.



move.<sup>76</sup> The first reason was that more pupils than before were attaining full primary education. Secondly, there was need for more educated candidates for the ministry. Thirdly, with the increase in the numbers of pupils in upper primary classes it became necessary to have teachers with qualifications above Standard Seven. Missionaries were also against the arrangement of recruiting teachers from South Africa because they were strangers to the context. They were also against sending young people to South Africa for further training because of fears that they would be attracted by the higher wages offered there.<sup>77</sup> Sending pupils to South Africa was also deemed undesirable because many of the institutions offering higher education in South Africa were non-denominational.<sup>78</sup>

In 1936 the SRMC appointed a committee to consider the subject of higher secondary for Africans in the colony. In the ongoing debates on secondary education the missionaries were divided on the course of action to follow. One group advocated for the establishment of an interdenominational secondary school. This group believed that it would be more economical to follow this approach. The group which opposed the interdenominational idea feared that their doctrinal beliefs would be diluted. The special committee proposed the establishment of a national institution for higher education. All missionary societies were to be invited to participate. The committee wanted the project to be modelled on the Fort Hare scheme in South Africa where each denomination would be expected to provide a hostel.<sup>79</sup>

The Anglicans did not favour the idea of a united effort. Plans for establishing their own institution were already at an advanced stage. The proposal for establishing an interdenominational secondary school failed to bear fruit. However, the Missionary

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<sup>76</sup> Zvobgo, *History of Christian Missions*, p. 264.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> Report of the Committee on Higher Education for Natives in Southern Rhodesia at Morgenster 13–14 July 1937, Miscellaneous Documents (Box), MCA, Harare.

Conference meeting in 1938 resolved as follows:

This Conference is convinced that the time has come when the initial steps should be taken to establish Secondary Education for the Native people of this Colony, and we would urge that the Government make adequate financial provision in the new regulations for this development [...]. The Conference expresses its strong conviction that Secondary and Higher Education should fall within the Missionary Education System, and that the co-operation between Missions and the Government be continued throughout the whole range of Native education.<sup>80</sup>

The first initiative for the setting up of secondary education came from the Anglican church at St Augustine's mission in Penhalonga.<sup>81</sup> Father Alban Winter, the principal of the mission, spearheaded the transition from its focus of giving industrial education to secondary education. The government did not support this initiative as it saw it as a departure from the main focus of education for development. The mission had to rely on outside donations which included the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel and the Beit Trust. Later, in 1939, the government sought the co-operation of the Missionary Conference for a joint effort in establishing an African Secondary school. As pointed out by N. Atkinson the government had to also move into secondary education because if they allowed the churches to lead the way, they would find it difficult to exert their authority on policy matters, especially the curriculum, taking into account the church's traditional strategy of education for evangelism. An agreement was reached in 1941 for the establishment of Goromonzi Secondary School. The school's governing council comprised equal representation from government and the Missionary Council. The school was opened in 1946. Inspired by this development more denominations started upgrading their older and bigger missions into secondary schools.

The role of churches in secondary education was further enhanced during the leadership of Garfield Todd and later, Edgar Whitehead as Prime Ministers. When Todd came into power as Prime Minister in 1954, one of his priorities was to encourage greater co-

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<sup>80</sup> Proceedings of the SRMC, Bulawayo, June 1938, Miscellaneous Files, MCA, Harare, p. 11.

<sup>81</sup> Atkinson, *Teaching Rhodesians*, p. 118.

operation of churches and the government in improving African education in the colony. The DNE and the Southern Rhodesia Christian Council (SRCC) met in 1954 and came up with four recommendations. The first one covered the provision of more grants so that more primary and secondary schools could be established. The second recommendation called for the DNE and the missionary body to jointly supervise and administer the secondary schools. Thirdly, the government was to provide scholarships for less fortunate pupils in secondary schools. The final recommendation called for the inclusion of technical and commercial education in secondary school curriculum.<sup>82</sup>

When the government drew up its Five Year Plan in 1956 it included most of the recommendations. Correspondence courses at secondary level were also introduced. Edgar Whitehead who became Prime Minister from 1958 to 1962 continued with Todd's policy. The DNE and the SRCC continued to co-operate in secondary education. They recommended that not less than 20% of those who passed the Junior Certificate level should be allowed to proceed to the Cambridge School Certificate (CSC) level. Those who successfully passed their CSC and Sixth Form would be allowed to proceed to University.<sup>83</sup> The government increased its budget for African education and further resolved to establish teacher training and technical colleges to absorb the secondary school graduates.<sup>84</sup>

Atkinson and R.J. Zvobgo attribute the liberalism of Todd and Whitehead to the pressure from African Nationalism and Trade Unionism.<sup>85</sup> It was therefore a forced progressiveness. In his two reasons Zvobgo ignores another very important factor as the source of this progressiveness. Todd had a missionary background and so was sympathetic to the input of missionaries. There was also a significant shift by

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<sup>82</sup> Minutes of the Executive Council of the SRCC held in Salisbury in 1954. Miscellaneous Documents (Box), MCA, Harare.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 10 November 1959. Cf., Report of the Secretary for African Education 31 December 1965, Government Printer, Harare, p. 19.

<sup>84</sup> Report of the Director for Native Education for the year 1959, Government Printer, Harare, p. 4.

<sup>85</sup> Zvobgo, *Transforming Education*, p. 24.

missionaries in giving up their supposed right to give education and emphasis on elementary education.

The significant gains made under Todd and Whitehead were eroded when the Rhodesia Front (RF) Party came to power in 1962. Churches were required to hand over their primary schools to local Councils. Under the RF's New Education Plan only 12½% of Primary School graduates could be admitted into F1 secondary school. F1 secondary schools concentrated on academic subjects. Thirty-seven and half percent of the primary school leavers would be accepted into vocational secondary schools (F2). The remaining 50% were left out in the cold.<sup>86</sup> The RF policy was based on racial segregation. Furthermore it came soon after the RF's Unilateral Declaration of Independence in 1965.

## **Conclusion**

The missionary strategy of putting education at the centre of their operations paid off well as it effectively transformed, in many respects, the African way of life. Established mission stations had the dual role of educating and evangelizing. In this regard the approach was more of "education for evangelism" than "education and evangelism." The education for evangelism approach implies that the former is subordinated to the latter. It means that evangelistic aims determine the content and methods used in imparting education. Education and civilization were conceptualized within a Western ideological framework. The transformation of the Africans was not on their own terms but on the terms of an external worldview. Conversion was therefore, not just spiritual but included social, cultural as well as forms of knowledge. In the missionary scheme, education was inseparable from the evangelistic thrust. Preaching and teaching were applied together. The missionaries believed that through their efforts they were introducing the Christian civilization which would free the Africans from the negative influences of their religion and culture. The establishment of central stations was a

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<sup>86</sup> Annual Report of the Secretary for African Education for 1966, p. 3.

diffusive strategy through which the missionaries hoped to create an elite class of Africans which would influence the surrounding areas.

While the lower stages of education fulfilled the purposes of mass evangelization, its more advanced levels created an elite class which, though attracted to Western ways of life, posed a challenge. Their commitment to Christianity was reduced as they were attracted to the secular and urban ways of life and became more politically conscious. The government and religious bodies shared the common objective of civilizing the Africans but did not always agree as the former sought to dominate and apply legislation which weakened operations of church institutions. It took more than four decades for both churches and the government to introduce secondary education for Africans, and even then the enrolment numbers at this level remained low. Could this be taken as an indication that both missionaries and the government were averse to higher forms of education? This question will be discussed in the next chapter with reference to university education.

## Chapter Two

### Religion and Higher Education in the Colonial Context.

Preach expressly on Education. 'But I have no Gift for this.' Gift or no Gift, you are to do it, else you are not called to be a Methodist Preacher. Do it as you can, till you do it as you would. Pray earnestly for the Gift, and use the means for it.<sup>1</sup>

#### Introduction

Commenting on the American Methodist Episcopal Church's attitude to education W.C. Barclay says: "Integral and fundamental in the Methodist heritage was a vital interest in education and a deep concern for the establishment of schools throughout the length and breadth of the (American) nation."<sup>2</sup> The inaugural American Methodist Episcopal Conference, in Barclay's view, tried to be true to the Wesleyan injunction on education which had been included in minutes of the earliest British Methodist Conference and was regarded as tradition. Inspired by this tradition the AMEC established schools, colleges and universities.

All annual conferences in the United States were by resolution of the General Conference, urged to "establish, as soon as practicable, literary institutions under their own control." At a later stage in 1868 a Board of Education was set up and given the mandate to incorporate colleges and universities which were operating under different Annual Conferences so that they would be under centralised control.<sup>3</sup> Under another General Conference decision, a University Senate, whose membership was to be appointed by the Bishops, was set up. The role of the Senate was to ensure acceptable academic standards as well as fulfilment of the church's expectations in its universities and colleges. Only those institutions which matched the requirements could be "designated as colleges in the official lists of the educational institutions of

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<sup>1</sup> W.C. Barclay, *Early American Methodism, 1769-1844, vol. 2*, (New York: The Board of Missions and Church Extension of the Methodist Church, 1950), p. 400.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> W.C. Barclay, *Early American Methodism, 1845-1939 vol. 3*, (New York: The Board of Missions and Church Extension of the Methodist Church, 1957), p. 108



the church.”<sup>4</sup> These resolutions reflect a focused plan of operation in the home missions.

In another context the Wesleyan Methodist church in Britain was experiencing a clash of aspirations with respect to university education. On the one hand was the urge to establish public schools and universities as a means to furthering the mission overseas as well as contributing to society in Britain. On the other hand there was the perceived need to maintain Methodism. It was feared that public schools and especially universities would be subject to negative external influences. Yet if the church did not take up the challenge to establish institutions at this level the social pressure for intellectual advancement could have a negative impact. In 1845 S.D. Waddy expressed the church’s fear of the universities when he noted: “A degree adds dignity to man in the public eye [...] few Methodists who go to either university come away Methodists.”<sup>5</sup>

The two cases cited above represent two different positions on attitudes of churches towards university education. One may be led to conclude that these attitudes influenced church policies on university education in the mission field. But the picture that arises on further examination implies that the question of the involvement of missionaries in university education is a complex one and therefore demands examination from several angles.

Logic would have begged that given the impressive role of missions in pioneering and developing school education as shown in the last chapter, the next stage would have been university education. This line of thinking can only be validated by the assumption that missionaries regarded university education as a viable tool of evangelisation. This chapter seeks to examine the critical question of the extent to which missionaries were involved or at least interested in university education in

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Henry D. Rack, “Wesleyan Methodism 1849 – 1902,” in *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain*, vol. 3, ed. by Rupert Davies, A. Raymond George, and Gordon Rupp, (London: Epworth Press, 1983), p. 150.

relation to the efforts of the government. A superficial reading of the whole question of university education may lead to the conclusion that missionaries were never interested in university education or at least they were sidelined by the government. While there is some truth to such a claim, it however, demands further exploration on the extent to which missionaries were involved or at least interested in university education. In order to put the whole discussion into perspective, it is necessary to examine the main forces at play, namely: the ecumenical missionary endeavours, evolution of colonial policy, cases of missionary efforts in university education on the continent, African pressure and the founding of the University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. It is envisaged that this discussion, in addition to examining the attitudes of missionaries to university education, will serve as groundwork which will put into perspective discussions on churches and university education in post-independence Zimbabwe. Any study of the role of churches in university education in the post-colonial period should take into account the colonial legacy. The colonial era serves as a background in which some of the ideas for university education in independent Zimbabwe have roots and therefore has a great bearing on the church's role in modern Zimbabwe.

The central question of the attitudes or contribution of missions guides the examination of the broad picture to university education during the colonial period. The central question has to be discussed in relation to four hypotheses. The first hypothesis is that the involvement of missionaries in education during the colonial period developed with time from elementary to higher education. The process was cut short by unpopular government policies from the 1960s which severely undermined missionary activities in education. The second hypothesis is that churches were never interested in higher education from the beginning. The best forms of education suited to their missionary strategies were primary, secondary and tertiary excluding university. Thirdly, missionaries considered university education to be beyond their capacity in terms of resources and so they abstained from the process or chose to play supportive roles. The fourth one is that missionaries deliberately avoided full involvement in university education because of the fear that it would backfire to challenge their hegemony and create a secularised African elite which would be difficult to control. This fear was tied to anxiety over the

implications of having large numbers of highly educated Africans who had the potential to fan nationalism.

### **Missionary efforts in university education**

Reference has already been made to the fact that the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910 signalled a major policy shift on missionary approaches to education. Commission III which included Michael Sadler<sup>6</sup> as a member, sent out a questionnaire to missionaries in various parts of the world. In the questionnaire missionaries were requested to express their opinions on the success or failure of previous policy in relation to Christian commitment and contextual thought among the converts.<sup>7</sup> The questionnaire also required responses on the use of English and the desirability of including industrial subjects and agriculture on the curriculum. Most of the responses from the mission fields alluded to the weakness of mission education in tending to alienate those who were brought into contact with it from their context. The reason given was that there was too much emphasis on literary subjects, especially English language.<sup>8</sup>

The conclusion of the Commission's report recognised the need to establish Christian Colleges and Universities: "But there ought to be Christian Colleges in the great strategic centres-in some instances, we may hope, a Christian University-where the education of a first-rate kind, judged by educational no less than by religious standards."<sup>9</sup> The stage for university education had already been set by calls from protestant missions and local Japanese churches which had come up with resolutions for university education in Japan.<sup>10</sup> Similar plans were also being drawn up for China.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Sadler had served as an educational advisor to India in 1901 and also as Chairman of the Calcutta University Commission which drew up proposals for university education in India.

<sup>7</sup> *Report of Commission III*, p. 2.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 373.

<sup>10</sup> Gairdner, *Edinburgh 1910*, p. 127.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 132.

Despite the calls made for churches to consider teacher training as a high priority area,<sup>12</sup> and to consider venturing into university education, missions to Africa were not able to take up the latter challenge. Available evidence suggests that missionary bodies on the whole continent, with the exception of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in Sierra Leone, which preceded the Missionary Conference, and the Scottish Presbyterian Mission in South Africa, did not play a major role in the emergence of university education in this early period. It is therefore, necessary to look at Fourah Bay and the South African Native College (later called Fort Hare).

Fourah Bay College was initially established as a mission school in 1816 and, two years later, was transformed into a seminary for the training of ministers and catechists.<sup>13</sup> Metcalfe Sunter, the principal of the college, and Henry Cheetham who was Bishop of Sierra Leone, proposed that the college should be opened to fee paying non ministerial students. In their proposal they wanted it to be a university to enable students to benefit from a deeper and wider education. The influence of the church would also be spread through the new venture. The CMS office in London under the leadership of Henry Venn was reluctant to make too many concessions except to say that the college could admit fee paying students who should be of a proven Christian character. The debate for a university was joined by educated Africans notably, James Africanus Horton of Sierra Leone, Wilmot Edward Blyden of Liberia and Casely Hayford of Ghana.<sup>14</sup> With the support of the acting governor there was demand for a government sponsored African university. In 1876 it began offering university courses under the University of Durham and eventually began admitting fee paying students but the curriculum remained narrow, focusing on theology and the humanities only.<sup>15</sup> In the course of time secular subjects were added to the curriculum. In 1960 it was granted a Royal Charter and became the University College of Sierra Leone.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.

<sup>13</sup> Ashby, *Universities: British, Indian, African*, p. 162.

<sup>14</sup> Gerald T. Rimmington, "The Development of the University in Africa," *Comparative Education*, vol. 1, No. 2, (March 1965), p. 105.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 167ff.

<sup>16</sup> Carr-Saunders, *New Universities Overseas*, p. 85.

The founding of the South African Native College at Fort Hare in 1916 was spearheaded by the Free Church of Scotland<sup>17</sup> with the involvement of the Methodists and the Anglicans. The ecumenical arrangement in building the college,

was that at the one college there should be denominational hostels erected and conducted by the Churches, which, in consultation with the Council, would each nominate and maintain a missionary educator to supervise the students in their own hostels. This would ensure that students, who inevitably must come from denominational schools and training colleges, would not be disturbed in their allegiance to their own church, while the ordinary subjects of the curriculum, which for the most part are not susceptible of theological bias, would be the more direct responsibility of the Principal and the teaching staff.<sup>18</sup>

The Methodists and the Presbyterians agreed, “to transfer their theological classes from Lesseyton and Lovedale respectively to the hostels proposed for Fort Hare...”<sup>19</sup> The new college was solely for natives who could not be admitted in existing higher education colleges for racial reasons. The churches involved saw it as a continuation of their evangelising mission at a higher level. The constitution stated: “the College shall be a Christian College, and while no special religious tests may be applied, all members of the staff shall be Christians and of missionary sympathies.”<sup>20</sup> This was captured by General Louis Botha, the Prime Minister who was also Minister for Native Affairs in his address at the opening ceremony of the college: “Without education the best and greatest would be unfitted for the highest service; and yet the world is full of educated men, who by reason of their being devoid of moral sense are useless to God and man. Education without character is but poor equipment for the struggle of life.”<sup>21</sup> In terms of the Higher Education Act N0 30 of 1923 the college was recognised as having the dual role of a Secondary School and University College.<sup>22</sup> According to Alexander Kerr, the first principal of the college, the curriculum was designed to meet the needs of both internal and external students. Internal students included those who would be in the office of chief or headman.

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<sup>17</sup> Ashby, *Universities: British, Indian, African*, p. 345.

<sup>18</sup> Alexander Kerr, *Fort Hare 1915–48: The Evolution of an African College*. (London: C. Hurst and Co., 1968), p. 11.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 222

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>22</sup> H.R. Burrows, *A Short Pictorial History of the University College of Fort Hare 1916–1959*. (Lovedale: Lovedale Press, 1961), p. 5.



There were both internal and external programmes. External programmes, which led to the Bachelor's degree were examined by the University of South Africa. In 1951, control of the college passed from the hands of the missionaries when the college was affiliated to Rhodes University and became known as the University College of Fort Hare.<sup>23</sup> In accordance with the Extension of University Education Act, promulgated in 1959, Fort Hare was compulsorily taken over by the government and its affiliation with Rhodes University was terminated.<sup>24</sup>

Fort Hare stood out as a special case in the contribution of the missionaries to university education in South Africa. It should however, be noted that Christian bodies were instrumental in the founding of other universities in South Africa as acknowledged by F. Postma who was the Vice Chancellor of the University College of Potchefstroom for Christian Higher Education in his address at a graduation ceremony at Fort Hare in 1941:

I would remind you in this connection that the University of Cape Town, the University of Stellenbosch, the Rhodes University College, the Huguenot University College, the Potchefstroom University College for Christian Higher Education, and to a very large extent the University of Pretoria and the University College of the Free State have come into existence, some through the initiative and support of leading men and women of different Churches, others through the direct support of churches themselves.<sup>25</sup>

Elsewhere, in 1945 the Catholic order of the Congregation of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate founded Pius XII (also known as Roma) university in Lesotho. The college's statutes were formally approved by the Sacred Congregation for Seminaries and universities in 1955.<sup>26</sup> Its main aim, according to Toyin Falola, was to cater for the marginalised African students under the apartheid system. It later became a secular institution and in 1964 was renamed the University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland.<sup>27</sup> In 1954 the Catholic Church established Lovanium University in Zaire,

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<sup>23</sup> Falola, *Nationalism and African Intellectuals*, p. 188.

<sup>24</sup> Ashby, *Universities: British, Indian, African*, p. 347.

<sup>25</sup> Kerr, *Fort Hare*, p. 223.

<sup>26</sup> UNESCO, *The Development of Higher Education in Africa, A Report of the Conference on the Development of Higher Education in Africa, Tananarive, 3-12 September 1962*, (Paris: UNESCO., 1963), p. 276.

<sup>27</sup> Falola, *Nationalism and African Intellectuals*, p. 192.



a brainchild of the Jesuit Fathers.<sup>28</sup> Another one was established in Ethiopia in 1958.<sup>29</sup> Similar projects in Nigeria and Uganda were not successful.<sup>30</sup> Hastings tries to highlight the source of motivation for the Catholics:

The Catholic missionaries, full of legitimate pride in the fine system of Catholic schools which had grown up in the various territories, could hardly bear to be thus excluded from control of the apex of the educational pyramid and a number of Catholic University projects emerged in the same years.<sup>31</sup>

Virtually all the church universities were eventually either taken over by governments or closed down sometimes under acrimonious circumstances. Zaire is an interesting case where efforts by the state to contain what it perceived as an increasingly powerful church led to a religious clampdown which even affected church institutions. The university was nationalised in 1971 during a confrontation between Mobutu's government and the churches.<sup>32</sup> The conflict included the Mobutu government's move to control church institutions as well as to suppress religious activity in favour of Mobutuism.<sup>33</sup>

The position of the World Missionary Conference through Commission III did not immediately bear fruit on a wide scale at least in the area of university education. It is necessary to consider why missionaries did not aspire to participate in university education. Firstly it must be understood that the primary level of education in which the churches did so well was less complex and cheaper to run. Furthermore, it allowed for individualistic endeavours characteristic of the missions where each denomination applied education in exclusive fields. When they introduced secondary

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<sup>28</sup> Adrian Hastings, *A History of African Christianity 1950-1975*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 12. See also, Falola, *Nationalism and African Intellectuals*, p. 182.

<sup>29</sup> John Baur, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa: An African History 62 – 1992*, (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1994), p. 273.

<sup>30</sup> Hastings, *Church and Mission*, p. 83.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> Hastings, *History of African Christianity*, p. 192.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 193. The government ordered that Christmas would no longer be recognised as a holiday, Christian symbols including crucifixes and pictures should be removed from schools, hospitals and other public places. The teaching of religion in all schools was to cease and be replaced by studies on Mobutuism. Citizens were ordered to drop their Christian names in favour of African ones. Mobutu himself was a prophet who had been sent by God to liberate the country.

and tertiary education they were improving on what was already there. For example, in Southern Rhodesia, secondary education at St Augustine's was established on existing primary structures. The same could be said for other denominations such as Waddilove for the Wesleyans, Morgenster for the Dutch Reformed, and Old Umtali for the American Methodist Episcopal. Participation in university education called for a new paradigm shift, which the churches appeared ill equipped in a number of ways.

Apart from the shortage of financial resources, the failed ecumenical initiative to start an interdenominational secondary school was already an indication that university education would be too much to ask of the missionaries. University education was considered too costly and therefore better undertaken by the state.<sup>34</sup> The existing partnerships between churches and the state in other areas led the missionaries to consider playing a supportive role even though they did not always agree with the government's policies. It was more prudent to be at least involved and hope to influence the direction of policy than to be detached.

Comments made during an All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) meeting for African church educationists in Salisbury in 1962 may lend credibility to this claim. The Conference which was chaired by the Fort Hare graduate and one time Principal, Z.K. Matthews met from December 1962 to January 1963 had as its theme, 'Christian Education in a Changing Africa.' It took place after the UNESCO sponsored Conference for Ministers of Education in Africa in Addis Ababa. The AACC's main focus was on: the activities of the church in education, Church and State relations, the context of education, personnel issues and new challenges for the future. The Conference acknowledged the special contribution by churches to education in Africa. It proceeded to redefine the Christian school as one which, without necessarily having any special claim to holiness is dominated by people willing to witness and assume responsibility in linking education and God's will for

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<sup>34</sup> Baur, *2000 Years of Christianity*, p. 273. See also, Rimmington, "The Development of Universities in Africa," p. 106.

the students.<sup>35</sup>

The new definition was a departure from the traditional rigid conservatism common among missionaries, which required conformity without alternatives. The new definition was in a way an effort to come to terms with the reality of having non-Christian pupils or staff in church institutions on the one hand, and the involvement of Christian teachers in secular institutions, on the other.<sup>36</sup> There was also recognition that education should not be used as a tool for conversion but through the awareness it brought could help the individual to have his eyes and ears opened to God. This redefinition indicates the awareness of the church to trends in Africa where secularisation was taking root. It also recognises the phenomenon of secular institutions and the need for churches to adjust themselves to them.

In the report on 'New Challenges,' the Conference noted that governments should be encouraged to develop non-denominational universities which should not be dominated by individual churches. If the government failed to establish such universities, churches should take up the challenge. It was further resolved that churches should influence the recruitment of Christian staff in universities.<sup>37</sup> This resolution was almost on the same lines as the conclusion of Commission III of the World Missionary Council in 1910. The conference did not comment on cases where governments took over universities from church control as had been experienced in South Africa in 1959.

### **Evolution of colonial policy on university education**

After the First World War, Britain began to develop educational policy in its colonies in tropical Africa. An Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies, set up in 1923 as a result of pressure from the missionaries, expressed the need for the expansion of resources for higher education in the colonies.<sup>38</sup> In A.M. Carr-

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<sup>35</sup> "Christian Education in Africa" *The Report of the All Africa Churches Conference on Christian Education in a Changing Africa*, 29 December 1962 to 10 January 1963, (London: AACC, 1963), p. 33f.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99f.

<sup>38</sup> Ashby, *Universities: British, Indian, African*, p. 190.

Saunders' observation, the move by the Colonial Office to set up the Advisory Committee was prompted by the 1922 report of the American Phelps Stokes Fund<sup>39</sup> which, though principally concerned with primary and secondary school education, also made some remarks about university education. Thomas Jesse Jones the head of the Phelps Stokes Fund was invited to attend the first meeting of the Advisory Committee.

The committee's membership included people with wide ranging experience in education in the mission field: W. Ormsby, Parliamentary Under-Secretary (chair); Sir Frederick Lugard, who had made some significant contribution to educational development in Nigeria and Hong Kong; Sir James Currie who had served as Director of Education and was in charge of Gordon College in the Sudan; Sir Michael Sadler, and J.H. Oldham who represented protestant missionaries; and Hanns Vischer, who worked in northern Nigeria as Director of Education. The Committee's terms of reference were: "To advise the Secretary of State on any matters of native education in the British Colonies and Protectorates in Tropical Africa, which he may from time to time refer to it, and to assist him in advancing the progress of education in those Colonies and Protectorates."<sup>40</sup>

The committee only began to focus on university education ten years later when in 1933 one of its members, James Currie, produced a report on the need for the founding of universities in tropical Africa. The Advisory Committee recommended a gradual elevation of selected colleges to university status in a process more or less similar to the stages which university colleges in England attained university status.<sup>41</sup> The recommendations which were endorsed by the Colonial Office did not find support from several Directors of Education on the continent. The West and East African Directors argued in 1935 that higher education was not yet an urgent demand.

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<sup>39</sup> The Phelps Stokes Commission was set up on the instigation of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society which influenced the Foreign Missions Conference of North America to request the Phelps Stokes Fund to sponsor an enquiry into the state of education in Africa. The Commission was led by Thomas Jesse Jones a sociologist. The Commission's report had a significant impact on both the Colonial government and missionary bodies and it influenced further policy development.

<sup>40</sup> Ashby, *Universities: British, Indian, African*, p. 426, n. 1.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 194.

Although the Advisory Committee continued to meet, not much headway in university education was evident until the end of the second world war.<sup>42</sup> A.J. Channon, another committee member wrote a memorandum challenging the reluctance to establish universities in the colonies because “of a genuine fear of the political and economic consequences of the production of a highly educated class among the native populations...”<sup>43</sup> He argued:

The real progress of the peoples and their ability to stand on their own feet will only be ensured by early and active help and encouragement in the development of the top of the educational structure, in order that an educated section of the community may emerge as soon as possible [...] we must endeavour to find among students of these universities, men who besides becoming fully adequate of their future professional activities, go much further and develop into citizens exerting, by their powers of leadership, a real influence in the promotion of the happiness and welfare of their own people...<sup>44</sup>

Almost running parallel to the Advisory Committee were a series of commissions namely the: Currie Sub-committee, in 1933; De la Warr, in 1936, focusing on East Africa; Channon, in 1943, focusing on East and West Africa; Elliot, in 1943, focusing on West Africa; and the Asquith Commission in 1943. The first three commissions laid the groundwork for the establishment of universities in Africa. Of interest for the purpose of this study is the work of the Asquith Commission which in Ashby’s view produced Britain’s blueprint on university education in Africa.

The membership of the Asquith Commission was as follows: Sir Cyril Asquith (Chair); Sir Donald Cameron (also a member of the Advisory Committee); A.M. Carr-Saunders, H.J. Channon (also a member of the Advisory Committee); Sir Fred Clarke; J.F. Duff (also a member of the Advisory Committee); The Lord Hailey; Sir James Irvine; Sir Richard Livingstone; R. Marrs; Miss Lilian Penson; Miss Margery Perham (also a member of the Advisory Committee); R.E. Priestley (also a member of the Advisory Committee); J.A. Ryle; R.V. Southwell and J.A. Venn. The Commission’s terms of reference were

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<sup>42</sup> Rimmington, “The Development of the University in Africa,” p. 106.

<sup>43</sup> H.J. Channon, “Memorandum (1940): ‘Some Observations on the Development of Higher Education in the Colonies,’” in Ashby, *Universities: British, Indian, African*, (Appendix), p. 481.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 485.



to consider the principles which should guide the promotion of higher education, learning and research and the development of universities in the colonies [...] and to explore means whereby universities and other appropriate bodies in the UK may be able to co-operate with institutions of higher education in the colonies in order to give effect to these principles.<sup>45</sup>

The Asquith Commission's report highlighted that university education should be residential and its main roles should be to nurture leaders, enhance multicultural relationships and tolerance among various tribes.<sup>46</sup> Further, it also stressed that through the hiring of high quality staff the university must distinguish itself as a centre for learning and research.<sup>47</sup> The commission recommended that University Colleges in Africa should be affiliated to the University of London in a special relationship to ensure recognition and an acceptable standard of their degrees. In line with the Commission's recommendations the Inter-University Council (IUC) for higher education in the colonies was set up in 1945. The council was made up of representatives from universities in the United Kingdom and the colonies as well as co-opted members. The Inter-University Council's role was mainly advisory. The Council was expected to visit colonial universities and assist through their advice. Alongside the IUC was the Grants Committee which could recommend assistance for universities in the colonies. According to A. Wandira, in addition to ensuring international standards, the special relationship scheme also aimed to safeguard the thrust of adapting educational policy to local standards.<sup>48</sup> The point on adaptation however, is disputed by Ashby who argues that the Asquith doctrine served as a vehicle for the transplantation of the British model of university to Africa with little room for adjustment to local conditions.<sup>49</sup>

The Asquith commission facilitated the introduction of the British model of university. According to E. Sadler, through the university the British government would continue to have some intellectual influence even when African states attained

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<sup>45</sup> Kanganga, "Universities in Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi," p. 102.

<sup>46</sup> Ashby, *Universities: British, Indian, African*, pp. 215 and 217, Ashby observes that in the 1950s the report was transformed from hypothesis into dogma at the hands of its enthusiasts and became popularly known in discourse as the Asquith doctrine.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 217f.

<sup>48</sup> Wandira, *African University in Development*, p. 16f.

<sup>49</sup> Ashby, *Universities: British, Indian, African*, p. 225.



self-rule.<sup>50</sup> It is however, important to note that the new thrust of the colonial, especially British government's policy towards university education was a result of several other factors. Falola cites three reasons.<sup>51</sup> The first one is that the colonial government realised that the alliance of its officers and African Chiefs would not hold for long. The educated African elite were criticising and exposing the manipulation of chiefs by colonial officers. The African elite class posed a challenge to this patronage and there were problems. Secondly, the colonial government noted the resoluteness of Africans as their demands for university education grew and were likely to use that as an excuse for political protest. Thirdly, the numbers of Africans seeking to go abroad for further education were increasing. It was considered politically imprudent to allow many Africans to go for further studies in the United States because of the fear that they could be negatively influenced by the ideas of such radical figures as Marcus Garvey and his Black Nationalism. Given these reasons the colonial government saw it necessary to make concessions on university education so that they could have control and at the same time maintain their ideological hegemony. In spite of the concessions made to establish university education the colonial government still wanted to keep the numbers of educated Africans low to ensure that their authority would not be undermined.

It is significant that there was influential Christian representation on the Advisory Committee, Oldham representing protestant churches and Sadler who chaired the commission on education set up by the World Missionary Conference in 1910. However, no prominence seems to have been given to the role of the church in university education. This suggests an underlying assumption that university education was the responsibility of the state and not missionaries. The Phelps Stokes Commission had recommended that the government needed to be more involved in education. Hastings notes with approval that the government had continued to recognise the role of missions in education especially the lower levels only: "But whereas government had been willing in most places to leave primaries and even secondaries in denominations' hands, it was not willing to do so, *and quite rightly* (italics added), at the post secondary level."<sup>52</sup> Hastings does not however, explain

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<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> Falola, *Nationalism and African Intellectuals*, p. 189.

<sup>52</sup> Hastings, *Church and Mission*, p. 82f.

why he thinks the government should monopolise university education. Nevertheless it may be deduced that Hastings' line of thinking was consistent with the argument that through the Asquith doctrine the British government wanted to maintain its intellectual hegemony over its colonies even beyond independence. Colonial administrators by and large stood out as better custodians of the colonial ideology than the missionaries. Conversely, as African nations attained independence universities were considered vital state instruments for perpetuating the ideologies of the new regimes. In this sense university education was regarded as a secular function which was the preserve of the state.

### **Nationalist pressure**

Several scholars subscribe to the position that the emergence of university education in Africa was the direct result of African pressure. There is a link between the evolution of colonial policy on university education in the colonies and advocacy by some Africans on the continent. The most outstanding earliest proponents for higher education in Africa were three West Africans; James Africanus Beale Horton a former student of Fourah Bay College, Edward Wilmot Blyden a Presbyterian cleric of Negro origin, and J.E. Casely Hayford. As early as 1862 Horton, who was already a medical doctor, was campaigning for a university. Horton's efforts later found support from Blyden whose line of thinking was inspired by African race consciousness. Blyden advocated for a West African university with a truly African character. In 1911 Hayford advocated for a West African University free from Western influences and aiming to raise African national consciousness. In South Africa the Wesleyan Methodist John Tengo Jabavu spearheaded the campaign for higher education for Africans leading to the founding of Fort Hare. Jabavu was later joined by Z.K. Matthews, a Presbyterian who became the first graduate of Fort Hare in 1924 and became a member of staff. He was even invited together with Alexander Kerr to be a member of the De La Warr Commission. Nnamdi Azikiwe, a Nigerian, called for reforms in university education. He believed that the prevailing system of university education was not suited to the African situation. These protagonists for African universities were products of missions yet in their advocacy they were pressing the government and not churches to establish universities. This might imply that they saw the churches as incapable of being effective in university education. W.

Saayman has argued that Z.K. Matthews' role in South African Christianity was a form of 'subversive subservience.' To some extent he acknowledged what the missionaries had done in helping Africans but he also believed that some of their contributions had had a negative impact. As a reaction to the negative impact: "He was one of the Christian leaders who saw to it that the gospel 'escaped' from the hands of missionaries in order to be appropriated authentically by African communities."<sup>53</sup>

On the other hand, for example in the case of the University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, lobbying for a university was made by European settlers.<sup>54</sup> The settlers wanted higher education for their children which would be of the same standard as European universities. In Angola and Mozambique the Portuguese government focused its attention on university education for European settlers.<sup>55</sup>

### **The University of Rhodesia and missionary involvement**

In the previous chapter it was noted that significant strides in primary, secondary and teacher training education were made during the Todd and Whitehead eras. That was also the time when the University of Rhodesia was established in 1955 as a Federal project. In Atkinson's view the university project was significant in three ways. The first one was the large scale of expansion in secondary education which provided more candidates to university education and created the need for teachers in specialised areas especially at the Sixth Form level. This would include research and curriculum development. Secondly, Africans would then be able to access university education within the Federation without having to go to other colonies. In any case the government of South Africa had resolved that they were no longer going to admit foreign students. Thirdly, the university was an important experiment at racial integration

It is to be noted that there was a design to establish regional universities, each

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<sup>53</sup> Willem Saayman, "Subversive Subservience: Z.K. Matthews and Missionary Education in South Africa," in *Missionalia*, vol. 25, NO. 4, (1997), pp. 531-2.

<sup>54</sup> Falola, *Nationalism and African Intellectuals*, p. 192.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 203.

catering for a cluster of countries, West Africa, East Africa and Central Africa. The University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland was the last to be established under the auspices of the Asquith Commission.<sup>56</sup> In the mid 1940s Rhodesian settlers began lobbying for a university. This move was partly motivated by “the growth in the white population” and, as Gelfand further notes: “it was anticipated that when the war was over many of them would require further education.”<sup>57</sup> There was a general feeling that it was necessary for Europeans in the country to get higher education to match or supersede the rapid increase of educated Africans in the country.<sup>58</sup> This was important for survival: “...if the white man were to survive, each child of European descent would have to be given the fullest opportunity to keep abreast, and a local university was important because there was a number of intelligent Rhodesians who could not afford to go to outside universities.”<sup>59</sup>

The early stages of discussions on the question of a university in Rhodesia were mainly concerned with the fulfilment of European aspirations. It was widely believed that Africans were not yet ready for education. On the other hand was the generally projected negative impact of university level education for Africans as C.T. Loram, writing much earlier in 1917, put it:

The fear of ultimate Black supremacy, which looms in the eyes of many of the Europeans in the habitats of South Africa, has made them inclined to scrutinise closely any attempts at higher education of the natives [...]. The appearance, again, within recent years of Native political associations founded and officered by educated Natives has not tended to allay the suspicions of the Europeans that higher education and political aspirations are indissolubly connected. When, therefore, the proposal for an Inter-state Native College was so enthusiastically taken up by the South African Natives, there was distinct feeling among a large section of the Europeans that this movement was due in considerable part, to the teachings of Ethiopianism.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Ashby, *Universities: British, Indian, African*, p. 258.

<sup>57</sup> Gelfand, *Non-Racial Island of Learning*, p. 13.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> David Welsh, “Some Political and Social Determinants of the Academic Environment,” in *Student Perspectives on South Africa*, ed. by Hendrik W. Van Der Merwe and David Welsh (Capetown: David Philip, 1972), p. 30.

These sentiments were also shared in Rhodesia.

Gelfand, nevertheless, argues that as early as 1936 there were already ongoing debates in some circles, on the possibilities of university education for Africans. In June 1936 the Southern Rhodesia Missionary Conference received a report from a special committee, which noted that there was a definite need for the provision of university education for Africans. Gelfand notes:

The Conference had no doubt that a more advanced education was essential, but the question was whether more advanced courses should be begun in existing institutions or whether a new one should be started for higher education with the idea that it might be the beginning of a 'Native University' in Southern Rhodesia.<sup>61</sup>

The Missionary Conference adopted the idea of a separate institution as proposed by the special committee and invited all missionary societies to lobby the government and seek the support of the Africans in the endeavour. Such an institution according to the Missionary Conference should be run by the churches rather than by government. The Conference was under the conviction that missionary involvement in secondary education should continue unabated and that interactions with the government had to be maintained.<sup>62</sup> It was this form of co-operation which had resulted in the establishment of Goromonzi Secondary school.<sup>63</sup>

Inspired by the Hungary born Jewish businessman, James F. Kapnek's pledge to donate £20,000<sup>64</sup> towards the university fund, the Rhodesia University Association (RUA) under the chairmanship of Manfred Hodson a lawyer, was formed.<sup>65</sup> The Association, which was made up of Rhodesian settlers, intensified its lobbying including pressing for a motion on the university in the Legislative Assembly. As a result of the pressure, in 1946 the Legislative Assembly agreed that a university for Southern Rhodesia would be established as soon as was feasible. The Association

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<sup>61</sup> Gelfand, *Non-Racial Island of Learning*, p. 28.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, See also, *Proceedings of the Southern Rhodesia Missionary Conference*, 1936, p. 11.

<sup>63</sup> *Proceedings of the Southern Rhodesia Missionary Conference*, 1938. Cited in Gelfand, *Non-Racial Island of Learning*, p. 29.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15. Kapnek's donation was a thanksgiving for the allied victory in the Second World War.

<sup>65</sup> Atkinson, *Teaching Rhodesians*, p. 150.



proceeded to negotiate with the Salisbury municipality for a site at Mt. Pleasant. The following year an endowment fund was set up and Trustees were formally appointed.<sup>66</sup>

A committee chaired by Sir Harold Cartmel-Robinson, which was appointed in 1949 in the same year, presented a proposal for the urgent establishment of a university for Central Africa.<sup>67</sup> The Cartmel-Robinson committee made reference to the “real need in Central Africa for a College for the higher education of Africans.” The recommendations were not immediately implemented for several reasons, of which two are significant for this study.<sup>68</sup> Firstly, the government of Southern Rhodesia did not accept some of the recommendations.<sup>69</sup> Secondly, the committee’s proposal for an African university with the most preferable site being an African township saw it working at cross purposes with the powerful white settler lobbyists who already had some influence over the government, both politically through their advocacy and financially through their donations to the endowment fund.

The committee presented a revised report in 1951 and re-emphasised the need: “There is a sincere desire amongst Africans for higher education, and the cost of thwarting that desire might well be great.”<sup>70</sup> The most preferable site according to the revised report was the African township of Highfield.<sup>71</sup> This was in contrast to the RUA sponsored site of Mt. Pleasant, a European area according to the Land Apportionment Act. The Cartmel-Robinson committee had probably given prominence to the project for an African university on the assumption that the RUA initiative was a foregone conclusion which could then run parallel to the African

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<sup>66</sup> H. Cartmel-Robinson, “Central African Council: Report of the Special Committee on Higher Education for Africans in the Central African Territories, 20 June 1951,” Appendix A, in A.M. Carr-Saunders, (Chairman), “Report of the Commission on Higher Education for Africans in Central Africa,” (London and Salisbury: Central African Council, 1953), pp. 42-3.

<sup>67</sup> Atkinson, *Teaching Rhodesians*, p. 148.

<sup>68</sup> Carr-Saunders, *New Universities Overseas*, p. 1.

<sup>69</sup> Cartmel-Robinson, “Central African Council,” p. 62.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68. The other two most preferred sites were Lusaka in Zambia and Bulawayo if there was not going to be close association between the African University and the settler sponsored one at Mt. Pleasant. The committee however, left the final decision on the question of a site in the hands of the Commission which was to be appointed.



project. In the year 1952 the Legislative Assembly of Southern Rhodesia passed the University Charter and Inaugural Board (private) Act.<sup>72</sup> Membership of the inaugural Board was biased towards the donors who held the highest quota of nine representatives.

It is important to note here that there was much hesitation on the idea of a multiracial university. This thinking was premised on the belief

that the African population was in a backward state and had no tradition of civilisation enabling it to support high standards of culture in a university without the aid of European students [...] the majority of European students would refuse to attend a university swamped by African students, as their backwardness would inevitably lower its standards of culture.<sup>73</sup>

Advocates for the idea of “Western Christian civilisation”<sup>74</sup> added that since

the demand for higher education came mostly from Europeans, they were better placed to establish a university in the Western tradition and as most of the funds came from them, their college should be established first. Then, if Government funds permitted, the African College could be started and probably adapted to the type of education received in the African secondary schools and to their lower living standards.<sup>75</sup>

However, in spite of their initial views in support of two separate colleges, the Southern Rhodesia Missionary Conference issued a statement, on 8 August 1953, asserting its support for a multiracial institution.<sup>76</sup> The interests of churches in the university project were not confined to racial equality but they also advocated for the creation of a Faculty of Divinity supported through the Theological Education Fund. The department of theology was eventually opened under the Faculty of Arts.<sup>77</sup> Churches saw this development, in addition to chaplaincy programmes, as fulfilling their quest for involvement in university education. Theology was viewed as having

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<sup>72</sup> Carr-Saunders, *New Universities Overseas*, p. 42.

<sup>73</sup> Gelfand, *Non-Racial Island of Learning*, p. 57.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 75.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 78.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 146.

the double role of “preparing students for the ministry and for teaching religion in schools.”<sup>78</sup>

Meanwhile, towards the end of 1950 the South African Government had issued a press statement to the effect that, “in view of the fact that educational facilities for the native population in the Union are inadequate, native students from territories outside the Union will no longer be admitted to primary, secondary and higher educational institutions in the Union.”<sup>79</sup> This put more pressure for an African university in Rhodesia and probably helped to speed things up. The majority of African Rhodesian students studying outside the country were in South African universities. Acting on the recommendations of the Cartmel-Robinson committee the British government proceeded, in 1952, to appoint a commission headed by Sir Alexander Carr-Saunders, from the University of London and also chairman of the Inter-University Council for Higher Education in the Colonies, to work on the finer details. The other members of the commission were, A.V. Hill from the University of London; Alexander Kerr, the founding principal of Fort Hare who had retired in 1948; A.G. Young from the University of Cambridge and Walter Adam, secretary of the Inter-University Council for Higher Education in the Colonies. The terms of reference of the commission were:

- (a) to review the observations, with regard to a site for the College, made by the committee (Cartmel-Robinson) and to make recommendations about such site;
- (b) to make recommendations with regard to the type of courses which should be provided at the college, and qualifications for admission, and the priority which should be assigned to such courses;
- (c) to draw up a draft Constitution for the College including the composition of the College Council;
- (d) to advise upon the form of ‘special relationship’ with an established university;
- (e) to advise on the requirements of staff for the College, and how best to obtain the right type of persons for such staff;
- (f) to make recommendations regarding the type of buildings required, and the priority in which they should be erected;

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<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 197.

<sup>79</sup> Carr-Saunders, *New Universities Overseas*, 1953, p. 1.

- (g) to prepare estimates of capital and recurrent expenditure for the first five years;
- (h) to prepare a programme of steps which should be taken to establish the college;
- (i) to make such other recommendations as the commission may consider to be useful or expedient.<sup>80</sup>

Working very closely on the Asquith principles the commission rejected the suggestion of establishing two co-operating institutions divided on racial lines and instead proposed an inter-racial university at Mt. Pleasant. The university would serve the Central African countries of Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland.<sup>81</sup> A Royal Charter was granted in 1955 and the institution was named as the University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland.

When the Federation broke up in 1963 the University became a national institution for Southern Rhodesia.<sup>82</sup> Following the Unilateral Declaration of Independence by the Rhodesia Front government in 1965 the University experienced many problems associated with lack of funding because of sanctions and protests by staff and students relating to the political situation. In 1970 Queen Elizabeth formally resigned as the University College's first President.<sup>83</sup> The College became the University of Rhodesia.

### **Safari to learning crusade**

While the missionaries generally supported the University of Rhodesia some doubted its adequacy and capacity to absorb all aspiring students. The most prominent figure was the American born, Bishop Ralph Dodge of the United Methodist Church. Between 1956 and 1960 Dodge introduced the Safari to Learning Crusade. The programme gave scholarships to African students primarily from the United Methodist Church, enabling them to study in Europe, Asia and the United States. Dodge who argued that the local college was not doing enough, expressed his

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<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>81</sup> It should be noted that discussions on the university project preceded the federal scheme which came into effect in 1953, bringing together the three territories of Central Africa. *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> Malawi and Northern Rhodesia subsequently established their own universities in 1964 and 1965, respectively, see Atkinson, *Teaching Rhodesians*, p. 156.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 165.

motivations:

I appreciated what a university education had done for me. I aspired for the same opportunity for my own children [...]. If a university education was desirable for white Americans, it should also be encouraged for black Africans. If they were to assume responsible positions in church and society, black Africans needed training as much as whites.<sup>84</sup>

Dodge's vision also included, as argued by his successor Bishop Abel Muzorewa, establishing a university at Old Mutare in the 1960s.<sup>85</sup> Muzorewa further states that "unwelcoming sceptics told him that it could not be done without the collaboration of other denominations." By 1965 there were 122 African students studying overseas under the programme.<sup>86</sup>

Dodge's programme was similar to student airlifts which were spearheaded by the Kenyan trade unionist and poet, Tom Mboya, who argued that the University College of East Africa was not producing enough graduates.<sup>87</sup> The innovation to higher education, of airlifts and safari to learning however, went beyond the provision of scholarships and also gave the US the opportunity to spread its political tentacles in the face of a perceived Soviet communist threat to influence Africa.<sup>88</sup> Students would be exposed to American values and practices which could have an impact on their home countries, as an official in the American Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs put it:

the United States now has a better opportunity than any other nation in the world to influence trends of African development. We have no record of colonial domination in Africa, and therefore there are no residual antagonisms rooted in past unpleasant relationships to condition attitudes against the United States.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Quoted in, Dickson Mungazi, *The Honoured Crusade: Ralph Dodge's Theology of Liberation and Initiative for Social Change in Zimbabwe*, (Gweru: Mambo Press, 1991), p. 78.

<sup>85</sup> "Mission Memo," *New World Outlook*, July-August 1991.

<sup>86</sup> Mungazi, *The Honoured Crusade*, p. 78.

<sup>87</sup> N.T. Chideya, "American Scholarship Programmes for African Students, 1959-75," in *Zambezia*, vol. 9, No. 2, (1981), pp. 139-40. See also, T. Mboya, *Freedom and After*, (London: Deutsch, 1963), ch. 7; I. M. Smith, "The East African Airlifts of 1959, 60, 61," (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Syracuse, 1966).

<sup>88</sup> Chideya, "American Scholarships," p. 139.

<sup>89</sup> Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 138.

Apart from strong opposition from the government of Ian Smith concerning the Safari to Learning Crusade, opposition from fellow missionaries appeared even stronger and it led to Dodge's deportation. The cause of opposition from missionaries was "not because they were against the advancement of Africans" but that the accelerated "advancement of Africans [...] threatened the security of their continued employment."<sup>90</sup>

Two letters present a somewhat contradictory picture. The first one signed by seventy-three Methodist ministers and dated 20 July 1963 expressed support for Dodge but acknowledged that some of their number might have clandestinely communicated with the government. It read:

At the Conference held in Mrewa in 1963 there was a discussion about the rumours that some missionaries had written to the Government urging it to deport Bishop Dodge. We the undersigned publicly pledge our total and unconditional support to Bishop Dodge. We are appalled by the action taken by the government in deporting him and ask that the decision be rescinded to enable him to carry on his important work. Deportation is not the solution to national problems.<sup>91</sup>

The second one, written a year later by Ruth Bartholomew expressed shock: "I was shocked [...]. I could not imagine any of our missionaries who could go outside of our church to handle an inside church matter in this manner."<sup>92</sup> Advocacy for higher education for Africans was, however, not the sole reason for Dodge's deportation as he often clashed with the government on many issues.

## Conclusion

Several conclusions can be drawn with regard to missionaries and university education. It is difficult to endorse the position that missionary bodies favoured a gradualist approach or that the evolution of colonial policy interrupted the process. Missionaries did not totally negate the idea of the university but entering into such projects in co-operation with government was adopted as a more viable alternative as

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<sup>90</sup> Mungazi, *The Honoured Crusade*, pp. 80-1.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 80.

<sup>92</sup> Cited in, *Ibid.*



it would provide opportunities to influence the policy making process. The involvement of churches in the Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies, and their contributions through various means on the subject of university education demonstrates their intentions to influence policy.

The heavy financial commitments involved in setting up universities were a deterrent factor for the missionaries. The huge financial commitments which university projects called for, and the expected returns from institutions which were clearly not suitable as evangelistic tools, were not worth the investment.

University education was considered less effective as a missionary method compared to schools. The schools were based in the communities and served as centres from which outreach programmes were held. Even in cases where pupils came from various parts of the country, the school was part of the mission station and it was easier for the missionaries to apply their rules or evangelistic programmes. Such a model would be difficult to apply in a university setting where academic freedom, autonomy and preoccupation with international standards stood out as the hallmarks. Finally, while there were some fears in that contributing to university level education for Africans could erode gains that had been made; this was not an overbearing factor in the minds of many missionaries.



## Chapter Three

### **Politics of Difference and the Quest for New Paradigms: Post-Colonial Ideological Contradictions and the Struggle for Intellectual Hegemony.**

#### **Introduction**

According to Karl Marx, “the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e., the class which is the ruling *material* force of society, is at the same time its ruling *intellectual* force [...]. [They] regulate the production and distribution of the ideas of the age.”<sup>1</sup> Any institution or organisation involved in the distribution of ideas will, according to this statement, have to come to terms with the agenda of the rulers. The rulers try to control the production and dissemination of ideas as a strategy for retaining power. It is assumed in the statement that the ruling class gets involved in the conceptualisation and dissemination of ideas. Ideas regulate how people behave. In spite of a divergence of ideas rulers in any situation try to influence their subjects to behave in certain ways. This thesis can however, be contested on the grounds that in any situation the ideal and the actual can be different. Ideas of any dominant group can be so influenced by other groups, including rival ones, that the ideas which it may claim to have may be rendered superfluous leading to ideological ambiguity or even confusion. The governing class may have the advantage of state machinery at its disposal but its ability to consistently maintain a power structure and influence, to its advantage may be eroded.

This chapter argues that the post-colonial period in Zimbabwe (1980 to the present) was characterised by contradictions. In the first instance, the post-colonial state hoped to re-mark the ideological landscape with politics of difference, a synthesis resulting from the liberation struggle, which in itself was an antithesis to colonial rule. The contradictions, which were mainly ideological, pitted the state’s aspirations for a socialist state against the prevailing forces of neo-colonialism. The tensions

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<sup>1</sup> C.J. Arthur (ed), *Karl Marx and Frederick Engel: The German Ideology Part One*, (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1970), p. 64.

between the socialist thrust and the Western capitalist *status quo* exposed the lack of depth in the state's commitment to the former. The contradictions affected government policy on education and its attitude towards religious organisations. Zimbabwe was therefore a case, as pointed out by Tsenay Serequeberhan, of neo-colonialism regenerating, "in an indigenous guise – what previously was imposed from outside by the exclusive and explicit use of (colonial) violence."<sup>2</sup> When the government found itself under intense pressure from what it viewed as neo-colonial forces, it sought to revive nationalistic attitudes by trying to infuse anti-imperial rhetoric into the education system. Ideological influence in the education system, including universities, has always been on the agenda of the state since independence. Delays in implementing it were a question of timing. The chapter further highlights the significance of the impact of government politics and policies on the development of state universities and the rise of church related universities from such a context.

### **Politics of difference and contradictions**

Commenting on Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony Jeff Haynes points out that it involves conceptualising a context of aspirations and the means to achieve them within a particular framework. Groups and institutions are manoeuvred or manipulated such that their co-operative interaction with the power holders is viewed as a fulfilment of the ideals of the frame of reference. Haynes writes: "In order to perpetuate hegemony successfully it is necessary for the dominant strata to maintain a more or less consensual moral order which has the status of common sense."<sup>3</sup> When common sense is given ideological flavour, it becomes not just common knowledge but normative as dictated by those who have power. In the African context ruling elites generally lack the patience and the commitment to attain hegemony through consensus. The quest by authorities to achieve or maintain hegemony often involves coercion more than "social and popular consent alone." Religious organisations and institutions often find themselves targets of a system

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<sup>2</sup> Tsenay Serequeberhan, *The Hermeneutics of African Philosophy*, (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 21.

<sup>3</sup> Jeff Haynes, *Religion and Politics in Africa*, (London: ZED Books, 1996), p. 8.

characterised by the two extremes of rewards for compliance on the one hand and threats of punishment or sanctions on the other.

Government and political leaders strive to maintain power and influence over the populace. This involves influencing policy directions of institutions and organisations. “As a result, a hegemonic striving unites individuals and groups within the national power structure, including mainstream religious leaders.”<sup>4</sup> Mitchell Dean argues along the same lines but more forcefully by pointing out that governance involves pastoral power or biopolitics on the one hand and sovereign power on the other. He refers to biopolitics as the government’s preoccupation with “administration of life” operating at the level of the people. At this level, measurable activities which may include health and sanitation, family planning, mortality, environmental issues, unemployment issues, land redistribution (in the case of Zimbabwe), education and standards of living, are targeted. Echoing the same point, Tania M. Li argues that preoccupation with such measurable phenomena is about legitimacy. “...in the postcolonial era, concern with welfare and improvement falls under the rubric of ‘development’ and provides many governing regimes with a significant part of their claim to legitimacy.”<sup>5</sup> Sovereignty “is characterised by a power of life and death,” in which the government uses “laws, decrees, and regulations backed up by coercive sanctions ultimately grounded in the right of death exercised by the sovereign.”<sup>6</sup>

Almost running parallel to the state’s hegemonic behaviour are religious groups which in their own terms also try to have social and spiritual influence. Leaders of religion “will be concerned with perpetuating and promulgating a version of religion

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>5</sup> Tania M. Li, “Compromising Power: Development, Culture and Rule in Indonesia,” *Cultural Anthropology*, vol. 14, NO. 3. (1999), p. 296.

<sup>6</sup> Mitchell Dean, “Demonic Societies: Liberalism, Biopolitics, and Sovereignty,” in *States of Imagination: Ethnographic Explorations of the Postcolonial State*, ed. by Thomas B. Hansen and Finn Stepputat (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2001), pp. 46–7. Dean discusses this theory with reference to Michel Foucault’s concept of power.

which is also an ideology of domination, and aims to strengthen and bolster their social and theological position.”<sup>7</sup> Haynes is not however, concerned about the spiritual motivation of religion in its agenda. The interaction of religion and the government is a game of power as well as perceptions of power. It is a contest for influence in which religion claims to derive its rights and legitimacy from spiritual forces superior to the state. The sacred, which is the core of religion, is a no-go area for the state or other secular institutions. Religious organisations define themselves as custodians or conduits of the sacred and they claim exclusive rights. Religious beliefs represent particular ideas about life. In the Weberian tradition, as Edgar Mills put it, religion

sanctifies, stabilises, legitimates and gives meaning to taken-for-granted structures and practice and processes in daily life: it strengthens people’s loyalties to existing frameworks of power [...]. On the other hand the sacred criticises and finds fault, pointing out finitude and error in human efforts, directs goals and hopes beyond the present and the mundane, pressing for reform and renewal.<sup>8</sup>

In the African context the debate of separation between church and state is normally overshadowed by government obsession to control or dominate religion. In the eyes of the state religion is an institution to be dominated because of, in the first instance, its reputation of service through institutions such as education and health which have led to it being accorded the status of a development partner to the state. Secondly, for its belief systems, which impose an ideological challenge but may be manipulated to the advantage of the state. Rhetoric about the reputation of churches in colluding with colonialism portrayed them as bodies that were open to manipulation by groups other than themselves.

The state’s agenda is anchored on political ideals that are believed to be the *telos* of its aspirations for national development. In the Sub-Saharan African context, independence from colonial domination is viewed as the beginning of a new

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>8</sup> Edgar W. Mills, “The Sacred in Ministry Studies,” in *The Sacred in a Secular Age: Toward Revision in the Scientific Study of Religion*, ed. by Phillip E. Hammond (London: University of California Press, 1985), p. 167.

dispensation for self-determination. The new government strives to assume total political control over all institutions. The challenge is that many African governments assumed power with almost paranoid notions that colonialism was to blame for all the problems in the country. Yet the new African states attempted to use exotic models of ideology and governance that did not always work. The mix of external models of governance and ideology bore the hallmark of a site of conflict. Ideological models that leaned towards Marxist-Leninist ideals often conflicted with the Western models that were deeply entrenched in the education system as well as religious groups. The nationalistic forces spearheading the fight for independence were themselves products of the Western systems of thought which they were trying to dislodge. The nationalists were groomed in Western capitalist intellectualist thought patterns and idiom which they internalised and so rendered socialism irrelevant.

When the Zimbabwe African National Union, Patriotic Front (ZANU (PF)) assumed power in 1980, there was a rallying cry to bring the nation under the banner of socialism. Socialism was to be the vehicle through which the new government sought to define and implement its programmes of action. It was deemed to be the best ideology that could facilitate the dismantling of colonial structures which worked against the black majority in favour of the minority group of whites. Socialism was touted to be the most humane ideology able to address people's needs realistically. The path to socialist transformation was to be gradual. Private property was to be accommodated for some time "until circumstances are ripe for social change."<sup>9</sup>

Although they promulgated socialism as the reigning ideology, the ruling party was confronted with two contending ideologies. While they desired to subscribe to socialism, they also had to come to terms with capitalism and its concomitant value system deeply entrenched in various institutions and the population in general.

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<sup>9</sup> Griff Foley, "The Zimbabwean Political Economy and Education 1980-1982," Henderson Seminar Paper NO. 52, (Department of History, University of Zimbabwe, August 1982), p. 14.



Capitalist orientated institutions, taking education as an example, actually contributed to the obstacles confronting the ruling class. Griff Foley argues:

Despite fifteen years of armed struggle the nationalist movement remained in the control of petty bourgeoisie leaders, whose commitment to socialism was rhetorical, and whose style of work was centred on accumulation of personal power. The rhetorical commitment to socialism and authoritarian power-broking style of work, have understandably, carried over into independence [...] the ruling class has concentrated its energies on taking control of the state, developing an alliance with local and foreign private capital.<sup>10</sup>

Given their strategic positions of power the new ruling elite acquired properties and businesses and other forms of wealth that were, in themselves, symbols of capitalism. This further weakened their commitment to socialism and as Ibbo Mandaza points out: “political principles and ideological commitment appeared mortgaged on the altar of private property.”<sup>11</sup> It is, however, questionable whether, in spite of the articulation of its ideology, ZANU (PF) ever won the full commitment of all its rank and file. There was, therefore, a division within the ranks of the party and government between thoroughgoing Marxists and ‘capitalists in Marxist clothing’. The Party’s failure to implement the Leadership Code lends credibility to this observation. The Leadership Code was introduced in 1985 as a means of regulating the conduct of party and government leaders especially on the matter of acquiring wealth. In Mandaza’s observation, one of the weaknesses of the Leadership Code was that it was meant for those who were in leadership only. The exclusion of the masses implied that they were beyond the pale of the same socialist principles as the Leadership Code.<sup>12</sup> The Tanzanian style Leadership Code was, in Elphas Mukonoweshuro’s view, a contradiction to the whole idea of equality in the new Zimbabwe as it created a scenario of “socialism for the leadership and capitalism for

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>11</sup> Ibbo Mandaza, “The State in Post-White Settler Colonial Situation,” in *The Political Economy of Transition*, ed. by I. Mandaza, p. 51.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.



those with the potential to lead society but who would rather accumulate capital without the strictures of the leadership code.”<sup>13</sup>

Maurice Nyagumbo, a leading ZANU (PF) figure was quoted by *The Herald* of 5 June 1986:

We are meeting difficulties in implementing the Leadership Code because leaders have acquired property and do not seem prepared to part with it [...] we should call an emergency congress and tell the people that we are unable to fulfil one of our important resolutions [...] mainly that of scientific socialism, because the leaders acquired property and [...] appear to have adopted capitalism, become property owners and appear to be deceiving our people.<sup>14</sup>

As reported in the same edition of *The Herald*, Nyagumbo claimed that he sold the farm he had bought in Manicaland province in compliance with the Leadership Code. He claimed that when he bought the farm at independence he was not aware that the Party had officially adopted scientific socialism as its ideology. The irony of it all is that this professed ignorance was coming from the Party's Secretary for Administration who also had the additional portfolio of acting Secretary for the Commissariat. The Willogate scandal that saw many ministers implicated in corruption further emphasised the extent of the lack of commitment in the party and government's chosen ideological path. Following reports from the Bulawayo based newspaper, *The Chronicle* in 1988 concerning scandalous activities implicating several cabinet and high ranking government officials a Commission of enquiry under High Court Judge Justice Wilson Sandura was set up in December 1988. Several cabinet ministers including Dzingai Mutumbuka, the Minister of Education and Nyagumbo himself were implicated in the scandal and so had to resign. As a result Nyagumbo committed suicide shortly after.

The same trend continued as the leadership code was 'conveniently forgotten' by ZANU (PF). By the 1990s more high-ranking party and government officials were

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<sup>13</sup> Elphas Mukonoweshuro, "Leadership Code Undemocratic," in *Moto*, NO.54, July, 1987, p. 7. See also Christine Sylvester, *Zimbabwe: The Terrain of Contradictory Development*, (London: Dartmouth, 1991), pp. 74–5, who adds that some party leaders tried to circumvent the code by registering their assets in other peoples' names.

<sup>14</sup> Cited in Mandaza, "Post-White Settler Colonial Situation," p. 53.

openly involved in acquisition of assets and business ventures. At another level, the quest for wealth was to manifest itself from the year 2000 onwards in the implementation of the controversial land reform programme where cabinet ministers and top ranking party leaders allocated themselves prime farming land, which had been expropriated from the white commercial farmers, and refused to hand back the excess allocations.

Dominique Darbon adds another point to the whole array of debilitating factors, tribal and regional politics within ZANU (PF). Darbon attempts to link networks of tribal cliques and alliances within the ruling party dating back to the liberation war days with the need by clique leaders to use material resources to maintain their cliques and reinforce their positions. In this case the propensity to acquire wealth became an issue for clique leaders.<sup>15</sup> Masipula Sithole makes the same observation with respect to the division of ZANU (PF) and Patriotic Front, Zimbabwe African People's Union (PF) ZAPU) along the two main ethnic groupings in Zimbabwe namely, Shona and Ndebele. The politics of regional and tribal groupings had influence in national politics such that the President always had to try to make a balancing act in top government appointments such as the security services and the vice presidency. Tribal and regional politics, although sometimes labelled as a legacy of European rule, actually antedated colonialism. Colonialism reinforced existing regionalism by institutionalising and legalising it into tribe or clan specific provinces.

When churches set up missions their areas of operation were determined by the comity agreements where denominations claimed particular areas which in most cases coincided with the demarcations of colonial administrators. By doing this they introduced the divisions of Western Christianity to the African context. The government of the day sought to minimise interdenominational friction by ensuring that the geographical boundaries were observed.<sup>16</sup> The result was that Africans educated in specific areas grew up in specific Christian traditions that were marked out by specific dialects. As an example, the United Church of Christ in Zimbabwe

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<sup>15</sup> Dominique Darbon, "Keeping Afloat," in *Zimbabwe in Transition*, ed. by Simon Baynham, (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell International, 1992), p. 13f.

<sup>16</sup> Ali A. Mazrui, *The Africans: A Triple Heritage*, (New York: Brown and Company, 1986), p. 264.

(UCCZ) hymnal is in Ndau, the church is predominantly a Ndau speaking church. The United Methodist Church, which settled in Manicaland, has a specific bias on Manyika dialect. As will be argued later, in the 1990s tribal and regional politics had great influence in the pattern of the establishment of universities and tertiary colleges. Politicians coming from a particular province had affiliations with the dominant churches from that area even when in some cases they were not active Christians. When churches required assistance in lobbying for government approval on their programmes, there was a tendency to solicit the assistance of ‘products’ of their mission schools in government or ‘our politicians’ by virtue of regional association.

Although Mandaza critiques the lack of a clear articulation of ideology and the ironic commitment to capitalism, he appears sympathetic to the government’s plight when he argues that it was asking too much to expect ZANU (PF) leaders to adhere to the letter and spirit of socialism when they were operating in a capitalist environment.<sup>17</sup> The capitalist environment was not a challenge which the party had not anticipated. The weakness was in the failure to balance socialist rhetoric with its pragmatic reverse side, a task not in itself easy.

Prior to independence in 1980 there were hints on lack of ideological clarity, or at least belief that scientific socialism had to be adapted to the context as shown in Robert Mugabe’s address to the ZANU (PF) Central Committee in 1977:

The Party has accepted scientific socialism as its guiding philosophy [...]. We who have accepted socialist theory as the basis of practice in our own countries, have a duty to read and understand what the fathers of that theory actually say. We also have to examine the theory in the light of our history and the environment of our country.<sup>18</sup>

Mugabe’s statement hints at two brands of socialism associated with two popular African politicians. On the one hand is scientific socialism as promulgated by Kwame Nkrumah, and on the other hand is Julius Nyerere’s contextualised African socialism. Nkrumah rejected the idea of African socialism arguing that any claim of

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<sup>17</sup> Mandaza, “Post-White Settler Colonial Situation,” p. 53.

<sup>18</sup> Robert Mugabe, *Our War of Liberation: Speeches, Articles, Interviews*, (Gweru: Mambo Press, 1983), p. 38.

tribal, national, or racial socialism is a negation of objective reality in favour of parochialism. He advocated for what Serequeberhan describes as “a general and abstract - universal, context-neutral, and value-free theory – on a specific and particular historico-cultural situation.”<sup>19</sup> In this regard the scientific nature of socialism is grounded on historical materialism. Julius Nyerere’s notion of socialism described by Valentin Y. Mudimbe<sup>20</sup> and, W.R. Duggan and J.R. Civile<sup>21</sup> as the most pragmatic of all forms of African socialism was based on the idea of African communalism. According to Nyerere African traditional communal life is already socialist:

The true African socialist does not look on one class of men as his brethren and another as his natural enemies. He does not form an alliance with the ‘brethren’ for the extermination of the ‘non-brethren.’ He regards all men as his brethren – as members of his ever-extending family. *Ujamaa*, then, or ‘familyhood,’ describes our socialism.<sup>22</sup>

Nyerere also tried to fuse his contextualised brand of socialism with his Christian beliefs. The fusion of Christianity, African tradition and socialism remained an incomplete endeavour although his *Ujamaa* concept was popular. When Nkrumah came into power he failed to apply his theories on scientific socialism. Although Nyerere demonstrated some commitment to the implementation of his theories which was extended to include discourse on African socialism at the University of Dar es Salaam, the socialist agenda largely remained a personal rather than a national project and so did not have a bright future. Mugabe’s socialism wavered between the two extremes represented by Nkrumah and Nyerere and he appears to have been considerably influenced and therefore attracted to Nyerere’s African socialism although he hinted on the need to further contextualise it to national challenges. What comes out in all this is that socialism proved a difficult ideology to implement in independent African countries.

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<sup>19</sup> Serequeberhan, *Hermeneutics of African Philosophy*, p. 34.

<sup>20</sup> Valentin Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy and the Order of Knowledge*, (London: James Currey, 1988), p. 94.

<sup>21</sup> W.R. Duggan and J.R. Civile, *Tanzania and Nyerere: A Study of Ujamaa and Nationhood*, (New York, Maryknoll: Orbis, 1976), p. 181.

<sup>22</sup> Mudimbe, *Invention of Africa*, p. 95.

In practice there was, as Jeffrey Herbst has pointed out, a cautious effort by ZANU (PF) to continue with its alliance through nominal allegiance with the communist block on the one hand and to avoid alienation from the West which was, in some respects, supporting the Zimbabwean nationalist movements on the other.<sup>23</sup> There was also an effort to eschew the hard line approach to socialism witnessed in Mozambique and Angola which had proved counter-productive.<sup>24</sup> Zimbabwe's efforts to introduce a new dispensation under a different ideology relegated scientific socialism, by default, to the level of a revolutionary romanticism. ZANU (PF) was therefore following the same path as other nationalist parties in Africa that had embraced capitalism in contrast to their original attempts to follow socialism. Socialism was therefore only used "to maintain their populist base."<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, it was seen as a way of differentiating the new rulers from the previous ones.<sup>26</sup> ZANU (PF's) ideas in the transitional period can only be seen as reformist rather than revolutionary.<sup>27</sup> It was reformist in the sense of their attempt to displace settler regime hegemony with its attendant structures and introduce their own. The Transitional National Development Plan, while critical of the simplistic view that the old structures would be destroyed to make way for the new dispensation, acknowledged that

the challenge lies in building upon and developing on what was inherited, modifying, expanding and, where necessary, radically changing structures and institutions in order to maximise benefits from economic growth and development to Zimbabwe as a whole.<sup>28</sup>

As an ideology of liberation socialism was attractive but as a basis for governance it was impracticable.

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<sup>23</sup> Jeffrey Herbst, "The Consequences of Ideology in Zimbabwe," in *Zimbabwe in Transition*, ed. by Simon Baynham, p. 48.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Rob Davies, "The Transition to Socialism in Zimbabwe: Some Areas for Debate," in *Zimbabwe's Prospects: Issues of Race, Class, State, and Capital in Southern Africa*, ed. by Colin Stoneman (London: Macmillan Publishers, 1988), p. 21f. Davies rightly acknowledges that there was a remnant of thoroughgoing socialists within ZANU (PF) who, however, did not have a significant impact on party policy. Mandaza, "Post-White settler Colonial Situation," makes the same point.

<sup>26</sup> Herbst, "Consequences of Ideology," p. 51.

<sup>27</sup> Davies, "Transition to Socialism," p. 19ff, discusses reform and revolution as theories of transition and argues that Zimbabwe's transition was more reformist than revolutionary.

<sup>28</sup> Government of Zimbabwe: *Transitional National Development Plan: 1982/83–1984/85*. (Harare: Department of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, 1982), p. 1. See also, Sylvester, *Terrain of Contradictory Development*, p. 71.



## Attitudes towards religion - typologies

As far as the government was concerned, ideological issues were a matter of identity and as such notable institutions such as churches were regarded as candidates to be grafted into the political corpus. There were deliberate attempts by the government to co-opt religious bodies for the purpose of manipulating them to its own ends. Jean-François Bayart has observed that religions do not usually present “stiff resistance to the logic of co-option.”<sup>29</sup> The critical factor is the extent and impact of the co-option – whether it elicits docility or active involvement in the government’s agenda.

Debates on the relationship between the state and religion, more commonly Christianity have been approached from various perspectives. Max Weber delineates three strands of church and state relationships.<sup>30</sup> He labels the first one, hierocratic, whereby the power of the state is anchored by religion. The second type, theocratic, denotes full religious authority over the state. Thirdly, the caesaro-papist type is when the state dominates religion. The three typologies presuppose that government and religion will always be locked in a symbiotic relationship – and that it is a question of which pattern of the relationship is prevailing at any given time. K. Medhurst expands Weber’s typologies to four.<sup>31</sup> Only two are worth mentioning here. According to Medhurst, the confessional polity arises as a modified product of a mellowing traditional religious and political system and is characterised by pluralism in both religious and political spheres. Religious organisations, especially those which are dominant, are separated from the government in a more or less formal way but continue to maintain links. The second type called the religiously neutral polity refers to governments which constitutionally declare themselves as secular and have no special relationship with any particular religion. It suggests the self-definition of the state as ecumenical,<sup>32</sup> but in practice this does not seem to

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<sup>29</sup> Jean-François Bayart, *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly*, (London: Longman, 1993), p. 188.

<sup>30</sup> Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology* vol.3, ed. by Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, trans. by Ephraim Fischhoff et. al., (New York: Bedminster Press Inc., 1968), pp. 1159-64. Cf. Haynes, *Religion and Politics in Africa*, p. 87.

<sup>31</sup> K. Medhurst, “Religion and Politics: A Typology,” *Scottish Journal of Religious Studies*, vol. 2, NO. 2, (1984), pp. 115-34.

<sup>32</sup> Ali A. Mazrui, “Piety and Puritanism under a Military Theocracy: Uganda Soldiers as Apostolic Successors,” in *Political-Military Systems: Comparative Perspectives*, ed. by Catherine M. Kelleher (London: Sage Publications, 1974), pp. 108-9.

always hold. For example, the US constitutionally subscribes to the religiously neutral polity but in practice Christianity links well with the ideas of the ruling classes. Rembert G. Weakland,<sup>33</sup> writing in 1992 introduces two other dimensions. While his third model is the common state religion model the second one which he calls monastic entails religion's flight from the world. His first model characterises religion as a private affair but religious organisations may participate in social development including setting up institutions while avoiding political involvement. The policy of the Zimbabwean government is a combination of the religiously neutral, plural and private. As is the case in many other contexts in Africa, political attitudes or policy on religion are determined by many variables such that in practice the patterns of engagement are always shifting, mainly under the influence of the incumbent regime's agenda and the reaction of religious groups. It is therefore not always helpful to apply the theory of separation of church and state in distinct terms as is the case in many Western countries.

### **Traditional religions.**

During the liberation war indigenous religions in various localities in the country played a pivotal role among the freedom fighters. As Mandaza points out, African Traditional Religions (ATRs) had greater influence on the fighters than the Marxist ideology.<sup>34</sup> The main source of inspiration were the heroes of the 1896-7 uprising, Mbuya Nehanda and Sekuru Kaguvi and other mediums such as Chaminuka. Terence Ranger<sup>35</sup> and David Lan<sup>36</sup> observe that there was a degree of continuity between the First Chimurenga in which Nehanda and Kaguvi featured, and the liberation war era in which several mediums participated. Some spirit mediums were even taken to live in the guerrilla camps where their role was to provide spiritual protection to the fighters. According to John Gwitira, a liberation war fighter, the decision by the guerrillas to consult spirit mediums was made spontaneously in the field and not by the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA)

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<sup>33</sup> Rembert G. Weakland, *Faith and the Human Enterprise: A Post-Vatican II Vision*, (New York, Maryknoll: Orbis, 1992), pp. 49–51.

<sup>34</sup> Mandaza, "Post-White Settler Colonial Situation," p. 31.

<sup>35</sup> Terence Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness and Guerrilla War in Zimbabwe*, (Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1985).

<sup>36</sup> David Lan, *Guns and Rain. Guerrillas and Spirit Mediums in Zimbabwe*, (Oxford: James Currey, 1985).

leadership.<sup>37</sup> A considerable number of the guerrillas were educated at Christian missions but they accommodated the traditional beliefs. The motives behind this were varied ranging from genuine beliefs in the ancestral spirits to ideological reasons.

The ZANLA commanders had different views on the whole question of ancestral spirits. Solomon Mujuru<sup>38</sup> allowed a congress of ancestral spirits, which had been organised by one of the mediums, to take place. In retrospect he argued that he did not believe in traditional religion but regarded it as a viable tool to mobilise the masses and to enforce discipline notwithstanding the fact that three quarters of the guerrillas had a rural background with a strong belief in the spirits.<sup>39</sup> The same sentiments are echoed by Josiah Tungamirai, another ZANLA commander, who describes accommodation of the mediums as

purely a tactical manoeuvre aimed at winning the hearts and minds of the Dande people [...]. With the help of spirit mediums the guerrillas were able to carry out in the Dande area their clear-cut instructions to politicise the masses, to cache arms and to recruit would-be fighters [...]. Spirit mediums Chipfeni, Chidyamauyu, Chiodzamamera, Mutota and Mbuya Nehanda played a major role in the recruitment of young men and women to go to war.<sup>40</sup>

There were some opposing attitudes towards ATRs from some sections of ZANLA. Dzingai Mutumbuka recounted how the mediums saved the lives of many people including guerrillas through their ability to predict raids from the enemy and to provide special protection to the fighters.<sup>41</sup> In spite of the division between those who believed in the ancestral religion and those who did not, ATRs functioned at two levels in order to meet a single cause which was the objective of the war. It must,

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<sup>37</sup> Janice McLaughlin, *On the Frontline: Catholic Missions in Zimbabwe's Liberation War*, (Harare: Baobab Books, 1996), p. 240. McLaughlin also observes that some of the guerrillas relied on both Christianity and Traditional Religion, see p. 239. ZANLA was the military wing of ZANU (PF).

<sup>38</sup> Solomon Mujuru and Josiah Tungamirai were educated at mission schools in Mashonaland East and Masvingo respectively but there is however, no evidence to prove that their lack of belief in ATR was a result of their mission education background. Cf. McLaughlin, *On the Frontline*, p. 242.

<sup>39</sup> McLaughlin, *On the Frontline*, p. 242.

<sup>40</sup> Josiah Tungamirai, "Recruitment: Building up a War Machinery to Wage the War of Liberation," Conference on Zimbabwe's Liberation War, University of Zimbabwe, Harare, 1991, p. 15ff. Others like Perence Shiri, and Kundai Hudson echo the same thoughts

<sup>41</sup> McLaughlin, *On the Frontline*, p. 243.

however, be noted that the Christian background of some of the fighters had an impact on their attitudes to Traditional Religions. The liberation war fighters were as ambiguous and divergent in their attitudes towards traditional religion as was the case with socialism, although the former seemed to have fared better as a populist source of inspiration for war.

Given its ambiguity towards traditional religion, the post-colonial government was selective as it treated ATRs at its own convenience. On the one hand was the continuation of the Nehanda liberation thesis<sup>42</sup> yet on the other, traditional religion was largely ignored. On Independence Day the government preferred that the new Zimbabwe flag be publicly blessed by Catholic Archbishop, Patrick Chakaipa without reference to traditional religion. Traditional rituals for independence were localised.

With reference to Jan Platvoet's essential features of traditional religions, two are worth considering in relation to the attitude of the government.<sup>43</sup> Firstly, ATRs have more of localised or regional characteristics than national. In spite of attempts to nationalise Nehanda, for example, she remains largely a Shona spiritual leader to the exclusion of the Ndebele. Lan writes:

Almost but not quite, for the ancestors that have occupied our attention [...] are the ancestors of only one of the ethnic groups of Zimbabwe. The Shona make up the majority of the population but the efforts of the Ndebele, the Shangaan, the Sotho and the Venda ethnic minorities were also highly significant to the achievement of independence [...] however, only the religious and political institutions of the Shona have contributed to the symbolism of the new state [...] If Zimbabwe is the spirit province of the great Shona ancestor

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<sup>42</sup> When the ZANU (PF) government started seizing white owned commercial farms and even invading some non – indigenous (or more specifically) businesses and factories which had no connection with it, the rationale was that this was the third Chimurenga which Nehanda had started in 1896-7. Using the claim that land belonged to the ancestors and must be returned the state continued to perpetuate the Nehanda liberation thesis. Lan, *Guns and Rain*, p. 226, referring to the Dande says, "Political ideology [...] derives from a conceptualisation of the relationship between lineage and land as a product of the passing of time. The lineage that has lived in territory the longest is considered its owner."

<sup>43</sup> Quoted in James L. Cox, "Characteristics of African Indigenous Religions in Contemporary Zimbabwe," in *Indigenous Religions: A Companion*, ed. by Graham Harvey, (London: Cassell, 2000), pp. 231-2.



Nehanda, then it follows that there are two distinct Zimbabwe. There is the nation/spirit province, owned by the ancestors of the Shona people in which the Shona have the perpetual, inextinguishable right of autochthons to live and govern forever. And there is the territory that was Rhodesia, the borders of which were drawn by politicians in Britain and Portugal [...] within this second Zimbabwe live the Shona but also the Ndebele, the Shangaan, the whites and the other marginal ethnic groups as well.<sup>44</sup>

This was in spite of the fact that both the Shona and Ndebele had claims to the Njelele shrines in the Matopo hills south west of Bulawayo and saw it as a source of inspiration during the 1896-7 uprising.<sup>45</sup> Joshua Nkomo the leader of (PF) ZAPU gave an account of having visited the shrine in 1953 and heard the voice of Mwari admonishing them that the liberation war effort had the support of Mwari.<sup>46</sup> The shrine became contested territory between ZANU (PF) and (PF) ZAPU and their respective military wings. Until his death, Nkomo continued to visit the shrine in his personal capacity.<sup>47</sup>

Secondly, ATRs are not institutionalised and do not present themselves as a unified force. The inability of the government to deal seriously with a non-institutionalised religion exposes Western influence on the whole question of attitude to religion as an institution. The concept of institutionalisation brings with it formal and intellectualised protocols which fit into Western paradigms. At another level, the fact that ATRs did not have institutions themselves made them a less formidable challenge to state hegemony than Christianity. The Western religious stereotyping to which even some African scholars reacting to the West are guilty of presupposes: no sacred texts, no known founders, unclear distinction between sacred and secular, no institutions, pre-scientific, no proselytising agenda. ATRs were not regarded as a significant area for study in the Christian biased Religious Education curricula in schools. This was despite the fact that following some curriculum changes in 1983, the UZ's department of religious studies produced many graduates whose areas of studies included ATRs, to teach in schools. Sylvester has argued that although

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<sup>44</sup> Lan, *Guns and Rain*, p. 222.

<sup>45</sup> M.L. Daneel, *The God of the Matopo Hills*, (The Hague: Mouton, 1970), pp. 30-5.

<sup>46</sup> Ranger, *Voices from the Rocks*, p. 216.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 254.



traditional religion could not be associated with oppressive forces as it historically predated capitalism, it still could not enjoy the full Marxist embrace because of its perceived “pre-scientific backwardness.”<sup>48</sup> Nevertheless, ATRs continued to have influence at the grass roots level.

## Christianity

The Zimbabwean ruling elite, in spite of attacks on Christianity, had a special interest in the church although they claimed to be a secular government. The majority of the government ministers and party leadership were either mission educated or had strong links with Christianity. Churches had acted as surrogate mothers in their intellectual and spiritual journeys, yet they had been bed fellows with colonialism. Christianity therefore presented itself as a paradox; repulsive because of its organic links with colonialism and at the same time attractive because of what it could offer through its institutions. The Western educated intellectuals in government were keen to engage churches in ideological debates in an effort to win them over. In response to a question on the relationship between the ruling party and the churches the Prime Minister had this to say:

Our party accommodates all kinds of religious views, whether they be Christian or traditional African religious beliefs. At this stage we believe in mobilising all forces which agree with us on the destruction of the colonial system and the establishment of a government deriving its authority from the majority of the people. We believe in working in harmony with all church institutions and all progressive forces that accept this. We also maintain that as we operate in the country just now, the reality of our social religious system must be taken into account. The churches by and large are the dominant influence among our people. They have established schools, hospitals and clinics in the rural areas and they are there to serve the people. We have adopted the policy that we must deliberately work together with them, seek their assistance, get them to understand what we are fighting for, that our cause is not anti-Christian [but] it is anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism – and that the churches should assist us in attaining the objectives of a just society.<sup>49</sup>

Mugabe’s appeal for co-operation from the churches was also a veiled warning. The government and party would only work with churches which agreed with its

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<sup>48</sup> Sylvester, *Terrain of Contradictory Development*, p. 154.

<sup>49</sup> Mugabe, *Our War of Liberation*, pp. 154-5.

ideological stance. The same line of thinking can be discerned in the State President, Canaan Banana's speech to the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe Conference in 1983. Banana stressed that the government welcomed "honest, factual and constructive criticism."<sup>50</sup> The implication of the statements is that the new government was expecting churches to co-operate and not confront it. The government was aware of the ideological threat which the church posed given that most of the mainline churches, though under indigenous leadership still carried with them a lot of Western influence which could be manipulated to work against the new regime. The mission churches, in spite of conflicts with colonial governments in some cases, had played a significant role in sustaining the same administrations because they shared similar cultural backgrounds and civilizing objectives.<sup>51</sup> The nature of the relationship between European administrators and missions was deep seated. It was a relationship not only evident at the institutional and ecclesiastical level but more potently at the ideological as well. Yet the government's appeal to the churches for co-operation seems to have been aimed at changing the pattern of relationships between the churches and Western hegemony in terms of allegiance.

Many governments in Africa have been preoccupied with winning the support of the churches and using them as an ideological apparatus. The relationship between the government and the church would be defined as simply a partnership for development. David Maxwell has described the nature of the relationship as a case of the state loving the church for its body; that is its resources. Addressing a gathering of church representatives Mugabe tried to make a link between religious freedom and partnership with reference to one of the thirteen fundamental rights and freedoms in the 1980 ZANU (PF) election manifesto:

The right of a person to believe in religion is a fundamental freedom. Accordingly, a ZANU (PF) government will respect and promote the role of the church and avoid completely interfering with the spiritual life of the church. The church and the state must thus, feature as partners in the promotion of the welfare of the human being.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Methodist Church in Zimbabwe: Minutes of Conference, 1983, MCA, Harare.

<sup>51</sup> Haynes, *Religion and Politics in Africa*, p. 85.

<sup>52</sup> "Mugabe Seeks Church Co-operation." Press Statement, Ministry of Information, Harare, 30 April, 1982, p. 3.

Attempts by the government to link the relationship with the socialist ethos were superficial. Mugabe, a professing Catholic, sought to allay the fears of the church that socialism was incompatible with Christianity by arguing:

If Christianity's main criticism of socialism or communism is that there is too much of materialism and little of God, my retort is: Give it a God, the God of socialism, but please never the God of capitalism! In my view the Christians should feel more at home in a socialist environment than in a capitalist one.<sup>53</sup>

The argument that Christianity and socialism are compatible was treated at great length by Canaan Banana, an ordained Methodist minister, when he was President. In his two books,<sup>54</sup> Banana argues that Christian beliefs are essentially socialist but the church has allowed itself to be influenced by other ideologies which do not work for liberation. The Prime Minister, Robert Mugabe, also argued there were similarities between the socialist ideology and Christian teachings.<sup>55</sup> Buriro-Esizeni (threshing floor), a theological reflection centre, was established as a forum to discuss grassroots religious ideas and to try to influence transformation of church structures. David Maxwell attributes the emergence of Buriro-Esizeni to the initiative and dynamism of the church with the help of the state.<sup>56</sup> Banana became the patron of the short lived centre and got involved in its initiatives. The focus of the state in dealing with the churches was on leadership and this kind of relationship saw the demise of Buriro-Esizeni. Maxwell comments:

The dynamism of the local established churches withered away and Buriro-Esizeni was allowed to die. The containment of local Christian communities by the centre was part of a wider process of post-war demobilisation of rural communities by a centralising state which naturally preferred to do business with the hierarchies of a centralising church.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> State President's Address to Urban Rural Mission, Southern Africa Regional Meeting, Gweru, 7 May 1984, Miscellaneous Files, MCA, Harare.

<sup>54</sup> Canaan S. Banana, *The Theology of Promise: The Dynamics of Self-Reliance*, (Harare: College Press, 1982), and *Towards a Socialist Ethos*, (Harare: College Press, 1987).

<sup>55</sup> Herbst, "Consequences of Ideology," p. 49.

<sup>56</sup> David J. Maxwell, "The Church and Democratization in Africa: The Case of Zimbabwe," in *The Christian Churches and the Democratization of Africa*, ed. by Paul Gifford, (Leiden: E.H. Brill, 1995), p. 110.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 111.

In his addresses to church gatherings, Banana expressed disappointment that the churches were failing to take up the challenge put before them by the state. He further claimed that churches had even failed to stimulate debate among their members and to enter into dialogue with government leaders concerning socialism and the role of Christianity.<sup>58</sup> He noted that the government had made repeated calls to hear views of churches but the latter had not shown interest.

In his attacks Banana claimed that churches felt insecure and uncertain of their future in the new dispensation:

As a result of their inertia and paralysis, the churches in Zimbabwe are now lagging far behind the events in the country, and often totally lost as to where the Zimbabwean masses are, and where they are going politically, socially and economically [...]. I am persuaded to believe that the church is fearful for its survival in emergent Africa, including here in Zimbabwe, because of its reluctance to adapt, indigenise and exorcise itself of Western mythology [...]. When one talks about indigenising the church, the uninformed reactionaries rush to put in black faces in the administration, in an attempt to give the impression of change. This window dressing fools no-one except perhaps the church establishment itself.<sup>59</sup>

Banana may have been correct in his assertion concerning the failure of the churches to indigenise but the claim that they were not moving with the masses is inaccurate. If anything at all the churches remained with the people as they continued to wield considerable influence. The nature of the influence which churches had on the people was not necessarily based on fundamental theological innovations but in many cases a continuation of the missionary legacy nourished through ecclesiastical structures and institutions. The power and influence of churches were based on their main characteristic of spiritual conversion and the joining of new communities which fulfils the human "need to belong." John Lofland and Norman Skonovd have noted another dimension, that the underside of the quest to effect spiritual conversion is intellectual conversion.<sup>60</sup> Robert Mugabe acknowledged the influence of

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<sup>58</sup> State President's Address to Urban Rural Mission.

<sup>59</sup> President's Address to the Sixth International Association of Mission Studies, Harare, Department of Information, 9 January, 1985.

<sup>60</sup> John Lofland and Norman Skonovd, "Conversion Motifs," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, vol. 20, NO. 4, (1981), pp. 373–85.

Christianity when he addressed centenary celebration gatherings of several churches in 1991. He acknowledged that churches had a long history of serving the people socially and working for good Christian morals and so were a great source of influence.

It is necessary to note that Banana's sentiments are evidence of a man struggling to balance two different worldviews. To justify that Zimbabwean socialism could have a Christian face he appealed to the Latin American brand of Liberation Theology. On the other hand he also had to promote ZANU (PF) ideals as other government and party officials were doing.<sup>61</sup> Carl F. Hallencreutz's description of Banana's ideas as state theology<sup>62</sup> lends credibility to the claim that he was a link between churches and state and his theological ideas were representative of state theology on the religious front. Banana was considered from a government perspective "a special resource" who would take advantage of his credentials as a Methodist Minister to influence Protestant churches to counteract residues of sympathy which Bishop Abel Muzorewa and Rev Ndabaningi Sithole were still getting from some Christian circles.<sup>63</sup>

Banana may have wanted the church to take advantage of his presence in government. As a minister of religion in government he saw himself as a representative of the church in ruling circles, in which case churches would be perceived to have had an advantage. His presence in government could help to facilitate dialogue because there was someone who understood the church. This could explain why he was disappointed with the rather sluggish responses of churches to government overtures. Whatever motives Banana might have had in his appeals for churches to make their presence felt his calls, together with those of other

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<sup>61</sup> Paul Gifford, "The Role of the President: The Theology of Canaan Banana," in *Church and State in Zimbabwe*, ed. by Carl F. Hallencreutz and Ambrose Moyo, (Gweru: Mambo Press, 1988), p. 425. In the same chapter, pp. 411–33, Gifford demonstrates that Banana went to great lengths trying to prove that Christianity and Socialism are compatible. This attempt to forge an ideological common ground between Christianity and Socialism is significant.

<sup>62</sup> Canaan S. Banana, *The Church and the Struggle for Zimbabwe*. (Gweru: Mambo Press, 1996), p. 16.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7. Hallencreutz also argues that Mugabe would use the same strategy by taking advantage of his Catholic background to interact with the Catholic community.



government officials were patronising to the churches. The government needed a partnership with the church that would complement, rather than conflict with its views.

The challenges which the government faced were not only with individual churches but also with ecumenical bodies. After the defeat of his party in the 1980 elections, Bishop Abel Muzorewa continued as leader of his political party and head of the UMC and an influential member of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC). The post-colonial government often accused Muzorewa and Ndabaningi Sithole, and their political parties of selling out and so was wary of their potential influence.<sup>64</sup> The presence of Sithole and Muzorewa on the political and religious landscape was evidence of conflict between church and state. The influence of Muzorewa in ZCC had led the council to support the unpopular Internal Settlement prior to independence, which had excluded the guerrilla movements. The government therefore, also treated ZCC with suspicion. Banana became embroiled in ZCC internal politics leading to the dismissal of the secretary general who was aligned to Muzorewa.<sup>65</sup> Foley<sup>66</sup> has observed that, in line with its socialist aspirations, the government was making an attempt to control the churches along with other institutions such as labour unions which it had “demobilised.” The only difference was that the churches were much more complex than the labour unions and the university.

The major concern of the churches at independence was whether the new government would accept their participation in nation-building. The fears were founded on the general belief among many people that the socialists were anti-Christian. This belief had been fuelled by the anti-guerrilla propaganda which had been spread by the Smith government and Muzorewa and Sithole’s political parties.

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<sup>64</sup> Banana, *Church and the Struggle*, pp. 234 – 62. Muzorewa was head of the United African National Congress (UANC) which briefly assumed power in 1979. ZANU (PF) and (PF) ZAPU often accused Muzorewa of selling out by co-operating with the oppressive regime of Ian Smith. Sithole was the former secretary general of ZANU which became ZANU (PF) to be led by Robert Mugabe. He retained the name ZANU for his party claiming that it was the genuine and original party.

<sup>65</sup> Maxwell, “Church and Democratisation,” pp. 112-13.

<sup>66</sup> Foley, “Zimbabwean Political Economy and Education,” p. 17.

Some freedom fighters had openly attacked the church as an agent of oppression. Some church members especially in rural areas were threatened and had to hide their uniforms out of fear that they might be attacked by the freedom fighters. The President of the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe, Rev. Andrew Ndhlela complained: "The Christians all over the country are not at all at ease. There is still fear among the Christians. In some areas, people are not allowed to attend church services by the comrades. We are concerned that some of our young liberators are opposed to the church."<sup>67</sup> Some Christians expressed fears that under the new government church institutions such as schools and hospitals would be nationalised. The uncertainty of churches was also based on the fact that many of the mainline churches still had links with their overseas partners or mother bodies, located in Western countries. They had achieved autonomous status and had indigenous leadership but they still relied on external financial assistance.

As a way of strategy the churches made overtures of co-operation to the state. The President of the Methodist Church informed the Annual Conference that he had "sent a telegram of good wishes to the new government in power."<sup>68</sup> He also proposed that the Conference should send its greetings to both the Prime Minister and the Head of State. Conference was also requested to pray for the blessing of the new government.<sup>69</sup> In 1985 the new Methodist President, Caspen Makuzwa acknowledged that the new government was humane and there was reason to thank God. His reason for such a positive comment was that the government had adopted a policy which promoted education, health and the general welfare of the people as well as freedom of worship.<sup>70</sup> As the fears and anxieties of churches over government attitudes subsided, some sections became more and more critical of the government. The Catholics were more outstanding in attacking unpopular

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<sup>67</sup> Andrew M. Ndhlela, "President's Review," Minutes of Conference 1980, Methodist Church in Zimbabwe, MCA, Harare.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> "President's Review," Minutes of Conference, 1985, Methodist Church in Zimbabwe, MCA, Harare.

government policies and the violence in Matabeleland region which had been perpetrated by the army.<sup>71</sup>

### **A post-colonial education system.**

In line with its socialist ideals the government had aspirations for an education for liberation modelled on Paulo Freire's theories.<sup>72</sup> According to Freire, the banking method of education is a construct of an oppressive system and it presupposes an uncritical absorption of information as given by the teacher. Through the banking method the student who in this case represents the oppressed, internalises and even tries to imitate the oppressor. According to the Freirean theory the banking method was an essential aspect of colonialist system of education. Critical consciousness or education for liberation was viewed as an antithesis to the colonial construct.

The government made a deliberate attempt to link this model of education with war experiences particularly in the camps. During the liberation war the two major liberation movements, ZANU (PF) and (PF) ZAPU, tried to develop new educational systems with socialist leanings. Initially educational programmes in the war camps were under the Commissariat.<sup>73</sup> Education was taken as part of military training for the guerrillas.<sup>74</sup> In the 1970s more focused programmes were developed. By 1977 a department of education, initially headed by Rusununguko Kadungure, who was in the same year replaced by Dzingai Mutumbuka, had been established.<sup>75</sup> Expansion in educational work was necessitated by the increase of war recruits and refugees who were kept in the camps.<sup>76</sup> With time teacher training programmes were introduced in the camps. All programmes were built into the ideological aspirations of the liberation struggle.

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<sup>71</sup> Maxwell, "Church and Democratisation," p. 117ff.

<sup>72</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, (New York: Faber and Faber, 1970). See also, Paulo Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness*, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1974).

<sup>73</sup> Janice McLaughlin, "We did it for Love: Refugees and Religion in the Camps in Mozambique and Zambia during Zimbabwe's Liberation Struggle," in *Church and State in Zimbabwe*, ed. by C.F. Hallencreutz and A. Moyo, p. 129.

<sup>74</sup> ZANU (PF), *The New Teacher: Decolonising the Classroom*. (Harare: ZIMFEP, 1987), p. v.

<sup>75</sup> McLaughlin, "We did it for Love," p. 130.

<sup>76</sup> ZANU (PF), *The New Teacher*, p. vi.

Nathan Shamuyarira described the national liberation struggle as “a vast school” which would remove colonial institutions and structures.<sup>77</sup> There was a general consensus among the leadership that the liberation struggle had to more importantly win the “hearts and minds of Zimbabweans.”<sup>78</sup> This attempt to reconfigure the ideological base of education was carried on into independence.

Using the liberation war educational initiatives as a basis, the post-colonial government tried to create a new thrust of education with a strong socialist bias. Shamuyarira described the socialist ethos as, “the most important element in the superstructure,” because it helped to develop “national consciousness and culture, and shapes the hearts and minds of young boys and girls at an impressionable age.”<sup>79</sup> The originally perceived approach of education for critical consciousness was not achieved and had met its fate together with socialism. Curriculum is an important force which provides essence to the role of education as an ideological state apparatus and sense of genuine national identity. It has to be born out of a process in which the ideological framework is consistent and can stand the test of rival views and entrenched beliefs of other stakeholders.<sup>80</sup>

Education was seen as a means to achieve the ideological objectives, and so was a special case. Addressing an education seminar the Prime Minister said:

If it is the mission of education to turn young men and women who are attuned to the requirements not only of their physical environment but of their social environment as well, the ideological aspect must necessarily constitute an integral part of the educational experience

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<sup>77</sup> Nathan Shamuyarira, “Education and Social Transformation in Zimbabwe,” *Development Dialogue*, 1978:2, (Ovre Slottsgatan: Dag Hammarskjold Centre, 1978), p. 65.

<sup>78</sup> ZANU (PF), *The New Teacher*, p. viii.

<sup>79</sup> Shamuyarira, “Education and Social Transformation,” p. 1.

<sup>80</sup> Jonathan Jansen, “The State and Curriculum in the Transition to Socialism: The Zimbabwean Experience,” in *Comparative Education Review, Special Issue on Education and Socialism*, vol. 35, NO. 1, (February 1991), pp. 78-9. Churches led by the Catholics strongly opposed plans by the government to introduce a Marxist-Leninist syllabus called Political Economy of Zimbabwe. See pp. 84-9.

[...] our schools, our entire educational system, must inculcate a socialist consciousness among our young people.<sup>81</sup>

In an effort to enhance the new thrust, an education review committee was set up in 1983 and it came with six major aims of education:

1. to promote the personal development and fulfilment of each individual.
2. to develop in him attitudes of self reliance.
3. to develop his ability to adapt to social and technological change.
4. to develop his understanding of the social and political framework for development.
5. to develop his understanding of the basic principles of education with production.
6. to develop adequate manpower resources related to needs of the economy.<sup>82</sup>

The basic socialist strategy was to introduce mass education. Along these lines primary education was declared free and compulsory. However, in reality, schools continued to charge fees using the different label of levies because of the limited funding which the government could afford to give. Like the socialist rhetoric, free and compulsory education remained an elusive ideal as experienced in other African countries.

The government also made an effort to place special emphasis on education with production which according to the Minister of Education, Dzingai Mutumbuka, was, "about applied science, applied maths, applied history, applied geography and applied use of language. All these academic disciplines have a very important role to play in improving life and solving problems and they must be developed in such a way that they serve useful functions."<sup>83</sup> Mutumbuka's comment was an attempt to prove that academic subjects also had a direct relationship with education with production which the government generally related to practical skills and actual

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<sup>81</sup> Robert Mugabe, Address to Education Seminar, Press Statement, Ministry of Information, Harare, 28 August, 1981.

<sup>82</sup> Government of Zimbabwe: Education Act, 1987, Sub-sections 5 and 6, Government Printers, Harare.

<sup>83</sup> Dzingai Mutumbuka, Address to Education with Production Workshop, Harare, Department of Information, 9 May 1984.



productive activity. The concept was rather an all pervading one as defined by Rungano Zvobgo: "It is a philosophy or educational experience which seeks to integrate theory and practice not just in the so called practical subjects but in every aspect in school curriculum. It seeks to make school experience productive throughout life."<sup>84</sup> Education with production as originally defined with its socialist flavour was not a success story. As Rungano Zvobgo notes, there was lack of clarity in the way the concept of education with production was understood at various levels from the ministry down to the local school. With the passage of time and in the face of new challenges such as the advent of trade liberalisation which had strong external influence, the government's concern shifted:

Although education represents a long-term investment in human resources, its provision needs to be balanced with investment in immediately productive areas if the economy is to sustain the costs implied. The trend so far has been for social sectors such as education to grow at the expense of the productive sectors.<sup>85</sup>

The World Bank criticised the strong emphasis on vocationalisation in education, their main argument being that from a purely economic viewpoint vocational courses were inadequate in that they could not effectively influence attitudes and values among the people.<sup>86</sup> The World Bank was in essence calling for a balance between vocational and non-vocational subjects.

It has to be noted that the government's emphasis on education with production was almost along the same lines as the emphasis given by the colonial administrators and the missionaries. The difference being that the post-colonial government attempted to relate education with production to socialism. The new government might have been fearful, as was the case with colonial rulers, of the danger of putting too much emphasis on academic education which would eventually create intellectual elites who would be critical of its policies. If there was such a fear, it was not misplaced as events in the late 1980s to 1990s later showed.

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<sup>84</sup> Zvobgo, *Transforming Education*, p. 53.

<sup>85</sup> Republic of Zimbabwe (1990a) *Economic Policy Statement: Macro-Economic Adjustment and Trade Liberalisation Including the Budget Statement*, Government Printer, Harare, 1990, p. 9.

<sup>86</sup> Anders Narman, *Education, Training and Agricultural Development in Zimbabwe*, (Paris, International Institute for Educational Planning, UNESCO., 1991), p. 28.

The government's drive towards increased educational opportunities saw it making repeated appeals to churches to build more schools and to upgrade schools which did not have Advanced Level status. Churches did not build new schools but increased enrolment in the existing institutions. Churches with schools were given room to apply their beliefs within the limits of the Education Act which stipulated that there should be no discrimination on grounds of religion, class, creed, race or gender. A new structure of governance of schools was introduced in an effort to democratise education. Parents were given more room to participate in the decision making process, especially relating to development, in the school. Non-state schools, such as those under missions, were under the dual control of the church and the government. The government paid salaries and grants to the mission schools and facilitated the deployment of teachers as well as the control of curriculum standards. The churches regulated the running of their schools through Boards of Governors which they appointed. The churches as responsible authorities could have influence on the appointment of teaching staff but the final decision lay with the Ministry of Education. Churches however, had a say in the appointment of Heads of schools. Moreover, the churches could, organise Christian programmes as extra curricula activities.

Although the Education Act prohibited discrimination, churches continued to make special preferences to their members on enrolment and recruitment of teachers although the latter was not always easy to fulfil because of teacher shortages especially in critical subjects. The idea of the churches was to use the mission school as a means of evangelism. However, in the post-colonial era the role of the mission school as a means of evangelism was eroded although many churches still believed that this function was still intact. The churches were not able to adjust to the new challenges and continued to embrace the old missionary assumptions. These saw the churches fulfilling the development role in education, but struggling to fulfil the spiritual role. Church secondary boarding schools virtually developed into elitism as they had to charge high fees and levies so that they could adequately finance their operations. Most churches were not able to provide grants to their schools, leaving the schools to depend on small grants from the government and large fees and levies. The statutory requirement that parents should be consulted gave them more power in

the running of the school and at times even challenged the church on its failure to sustain the school financially.<sup>87</sup> The Education Act prohibited discrimination on enrolment of pupils and so the church schools could not openly discriminate against those who were not its members. School development committees were as a result often composed of non church members and this created conflict with the church Boards of Governors. The churches hoped to attract their own members to come and teach at their schools but most churches were not always successful because of shortages. Some church schools ended up with their members in both the teaching and student body in the minority. This seriously diluted the objectives of the church schools.

In the rural areas the government introduced new structures. At the base of the structure was the Village Development Committee (VIDCO) followed by Ward Development Committee (WADCO) and then the District Development Committee (DDC) and the Provincial Committee under the Governor who had the dual role of monitoring both government and party policy. Through these structures the government aimed at increasing grassroots participation and decision making but at the same time maintaining a tighter grip on the populace.<sup>88</sup> Parents in rural areas were accorded more room to participate in the affairs of the schools. District Councils had education departments which spearheaded policy making and development. An education executive officer reported to the District Administrator who was accountable to the District Council elected through the VIDCO and WADCO structures.<sup>89</sup> These new structures were designed to ensure political control through community participation; a populist communist strategy. Traditional authority through the chiefs was for some time sidelined until the late 1990s.

Although there was ambiguity on the philosophical and ideological basis of education in the early years of independence, there was a marked rise in enrolment and number of schools under the general policy of universal education. The number

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<sup>87</sup> Solmon Zwana, "What Makes a Church-Run School Christian?" *Methodist Word*, March 1996.

<sup>88</sup> Darbon, "Keeping Afloat," p. 4.

<sup>89</sup> Rungano J. Zvobgo, "Education and the Challenge of Independence," in *Political Economy of Transition*, ed. by I. Mandaza, p. 335.

of secondary schools rose from 197 in 1980 to 1,200 in 1985. Enrolment in the same period rose from 74,966 to 497,766.<sup>90</sup> In 1990 the number of school leavers was 214,121 and the cumulative total between 1982 and 1990 was 916,177.<sup>91</sup> The phenomenal rise in enrolment was not matched by an increase in the numbers of trained teachers. In Primary schools the government had to employ untrained temporary teachers. In secondary schools the small number of qualified teachers was complemented by temporary untrained teachers and expatriate teachers from several countries which included Britain, Australia, Germany and the United States. The government later entered into an arrangement where Zimbabweans were sent to Cuba for training as secondary school science teachers. Government's celebrated achievements in primary and secondary education were basically in three forms: increase in enrolments, removal of racial segregation in the system, and democratisation of education which allowed parents to have a say in the running of schools.

### **University, cadre formation and the struggle for intellectual hegemony.**

The rise in the numbers of school leavers was a source of political pressure. The tertiary colleges could not cope with the increase in the numbers of applicants. The job market could not accommodate the large numbers. The University of Zimbabwe, the only university in the country during the early years was under great pressure and so had to limit admissions by requiring higher Advanced Level passes. This was against the background of an increase in student enrolment from 1,481 in 1979 to 4,482 in 1985.<sup>92</sup> By 1999 the University of Zimbabwe's enrolment had shot up to 10,000. In addition, the university also experienced a series of academic staff resignations: between 1980 and 1984, 272 university staff had resigned. In 1998 alone the University experienced a record loss of 140 members of academic staff because of low salaries.<sup>93</sup> In an effort to match the large enrolment figures the university had to rely on expatriate staff from various Western countries and again

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<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 342-3.

<sup>91</sup> Fay Chung, "Education: Revolution or Reform?" in *Zimbabwe's Prospects*, ed. by C. Stoneman, p. 130.

<sup>92</sup> Brian Raftopoulos, "Human Resources Development and the Problem of Labour Utilisation," in *Political Economy of Transition*, ed. by I. Mandaza, p. 289.

<sup>93</sup> Departmental Committee on Service Ministries: 6<sup>th</sup> Report, Vote N0. 17 – 1999 (Ministry of Higher Education and Technology). Presented to the Parliament of Zimbabwe on 18 May 1999, Section 8.10.3, Harare, Government Printers, 1999, p. 3.



Canada, United States and Britain featured. In some cases the expatriate staff had to be supported by external funds while working at the university. According to Brian Raftopoulos, there was a notable increase in the influx of Western aid in the university's programmes. New staff development programmes were initiated in an effort to make up for the shortage. The university had to rely on Western countries for the staff development programmes where some students were sent to the United States, Britain and Canada as research fellows. This however, did not change the university's fortunes for the better as those who had been staff developed left for more lucrative posts in other countries. As Raftopoulos notes, of the fifty five who were on staff development fellowship programmes in 1985, twenty one were in the US and twenty five in the UK.<sup>94</sup>

In spite of the problems bedevilling the institution, the government viewed the university as a strategically very important institution. In a speech on the role of the university in 1981 Mugabe highlighted the need for the university to produce graduates who would actively participate in resolving the nation's problems through its threefold role of teaching, researching and as a seat of knowledge. Emphasising the importance of the university to be conscious of its context, Mugabe continued:

An African University cannot be a mere carbon-copy of an alien institution: it must take root amidst African traditions and culture: it must be actively engaged in "cadre formation", the training of the minds of men and the extension of their skills horizon to meet urgent social needs [...]. The scope and orientation of the University of Zimbabwe must take into account the scope and orientation of our own socio-economic system and try to serve and save the world context in which it exists [...]. We must at all costs ensure that the young people who come out of our institutions of higher learning, have a socialist people-centred orientation [...] the African University must acclimatise itself to the African environment: from being a University in Zimbabwe to an authentic University of Zimbabwe.<sup>95</sup>

Cadre formation in the university meant the inculcation of socialist consciousness or at least loyalty to the government among the students who in turn would be the 'apostles' of ideological change and mass mobilisation. When Mugabe addressed a

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<sup>94</sup> Raftopoulos, "Human Resources Development," p. 296.

<sup>95</sup> Robert G. Mugabe, "The Role of the University in Zimbabwe," Press Statement, Department of Information, Harare, 7 September, 1981.



seminar on education in Zimbabwe at the University in August of 1981 he emphasised the government's quest for educational reform for socialist purposes,<sup>96</sup> the same line taken by the two ministers of education, Dzingai Mutumbuka and Joseph Culverwell in most of their early addresses. Relating cadre formation to the university had the potential of government interference in the university. It remained to be seen how cadre formation would relate to academic freedom and the autonomy of the university. The ruling party's aspirations on the university were also captured in the 1980 election manifesto which stated that university education would be 'largely free.' This, however, proved impossible in reality. Although the university was valued for its strategic position as a seat of knowledge and research, its contribution to the ideological debate remained ambiguous. The struggle to define an ideological path for the ZANU (PF) government may have been common in political rhetoric but it was not seriously adopted in local academic discourse. It was taken as the preserve of the politicians. As Herbst<sup>97</sup> points out, lecturers at the University of Zimbabwe were reluctant to do research on Zimbabwe in the early 1980s because of fear of victimisation. Furthermore, as discussed in chapter five the institution became a seed bed of activism involving some academics and students as the 1980s closed.

Mugabe's concept of cadre formation had overtones of the Tanzanian model of socialism in the university to which reference has been made earlier in this chapter. University students in Tanzania were required to spend at least two years in National Service.<sup>98</sup> The University of Dar es Salaam's role as a centre for African socialist discourse made it an attraction to Marxist scholars from various parts of the world. The National Service Programme in Zimbabwe covered three broad areas namely; political education, farming methods and military craft and it was intended to instil in the students, patriotism and awareness of their obligations to the nation.<sup>99</sup> The

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<sup>96</sup> Robert G. Mugabe, "Education in Zimbabwe," Department of Information, Harare, 27 August 1981.

<sup>97</sup> Herbst, "Consequences of Ideology," p. 51.

<sup>98</sup> A.S. Meena, "Post-Secondary Training and University Education, in *Education for Liberation and Development: The Tanzanian Experience*," ed. by H. Hinzen and V.H. Hundsorfer, (Hamburg: UNESCO Institute for Education, 1979), p. 189. Cf. Ali A. Mazrui, *Political Values and the Educated Class in Africa*, (London: Heinemann, 1978), pp. 225-8. Although many countries throughout the world have over time had various forms of national service, the Tanzanian model is significant because of its affinities with the model which the Zimbabwean government wanted.

<sup>99</sup> Meena, "Post-Secondary Training and University Education," p. 189.

nationalist cadres were intended to help instil or rather enforce discipline and a sense of responsibility in the community. The university cadres were to be virtually a second army. With reference to Nkrumah's strategy of using the military, William F. Gutteridge says that the army is used "as part of a comprehensive scheme to stimulate national consciousness and a sense of discipline, and thus to ward off the dangers of disintegration."<sup>100</sup>

Soon after independence Mugabe's government had established a Youth Brigade made up of party youths to mobilise the communities and even carry out menial duties largely in public places. The idea of this kind of cadre was to re-emerge towards the close of the 1990s with the introduction of a National Youth Service which effectively served as a government militia. The government's rationale for establishing the Youth Militia was that it should defend the nation against imperialism and neo-colonialism<sup>101</sup> as well as to cultivate "nationalism and patriotism" and instil in the young people pride in "their culture, their history and their country."<sup>102</sup> Although skills training and survival skills were mentioned as part of the training curriculum, military training and political indoctrination were dominant. Liberation war veterans and army officers took leading roles in facilitating the training. One youth who was a member of the militia pontificated: "We are ZANU (PF)'s 'B' team. The army is the 'A' team and we do the things the government does not want the 'A' team to do."<sup>103</sup> National Youth Service was declared compulsory. In July 2002 the Minister of Higher Education and Technology directed that students leaving secondary school would not be given their 'O' or 'A' Level certificates unless they had gone through a six month National Service Training programme.<sup>104</sup> In the same year circulars were sent out to tertiary

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<sup>100</sup> William F. Gutteridge, "Education of Military Leadership in Emergent States," in *Education and Political Development*, ed. by James S. Coleman (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965), p. 442.

<sup>101</sup> "National Youth Service Training, 'Shaping Youths in a Truly Zimbabwean Manner:' An Overview of Militia Training and Activities in Zimbabwe October 2000 – August 2003." A report produced by the Solidarity Peace Trust, Zimbabwe and South Africa, 5 September 2003, p. 10. <http://www.solidaritypeacetrust.org.za> (Accessed, 13 November 2003).

<sup>102</sup> "National Service to Instil Patriotism among Youths," *The Chronicle*, 26 April 2001.

<sup>103</sup> "National Youth Service Training," p. 4. There were many reported cases of violence perpetrated by the youths in various parts of the country.

<sup>104</sup> "National Service to be Compulsory," *The Herald*, 2 July 2002.

institutions instructing them to admit only students who had undergone National Service.<sup>105</sup> The requirement was widened to include entry into the civil service.<sup>106</sup> Students who were already enrolled in the tertiary institutions were required to undergo a compulsory course entitled National Strategic Studies.<sup>107</sup> Educational institutions were viewed with suspicion and teachers were often accused of influencing students to have negative attitudes against the government.<sup>108</sup> In a number of cases in the rural areas the youth militia set up bases at schools and sometimes abducted teachers for political re-education and punishment.<sup>109</sup> Temporary teachers who did not undergo the training were told that their contracts would not be renewed.<sup>110</sup> The situation was ambiguous with respect to church-related institutions. However, a potential conflict existed because the violent activities of the militia and reports of rape and torture in the camps were morally repugnant and would provoke criticism from churches.

These developments were evidence of a sense of siege which the government felt itself to be under. By the late 1990s there was an indirect admission that the education system had not responded favourably to the ideals of independent Zimbabwe and so the state had to invade the system by the use of 'political commandos.' The government strategy of creating an intervention at the stage preceding entry into higher education was designed to enlist new patriotic student bodies in the tertiary institutions especially the universities. This was an attempt to create a new type of university different from the Asquith tradition. The strategy however, remained superficial as it was not designed to tackle epistemological issues. A further weakness was that the new quest was born out of necessity caused by a new academic class which was challenging the *status quo* that always related its

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<sup>105</sup> "National Youth Service Training," p. 20. Cf., "Government to Introduce a Patriotism Course," *The Zimbabwe Independent*, 29 November 2002.

<sup>106</sup> "Reverse Self-hate, Rejection," *The Herald*, 26 July 2002.

<sup>107</sup> *The Zimbabwe Independent*, 29 November 2002.

<sup>108</sup> Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum report: "Teaching Them a Lesson," Harare, 2002.

<sup>109</sup> "National Youth Service Training," p. 49. Cf. "War Vets Turn Schools into Training Barracks," *The Daily News*, 4 January 2002.

<sup>110</sup> "Temporary Teachers Forced to Join National Service," *The Daily News*, 18 May 2003.

legitimacy to the liberation struggle. The new strategy was therefore biased in favour of state aspirations.

The Zimbabwean government never really dropped its idea of cadre formation in the university since it was conceived in the 1980s. The lull, which occurred between the early 1980s and the late 1990s, was mainly part of the ideological ambiguity and student activism in which demonstrations were in favour of the government and socialism. It was given impetus by the new challenges. Patriotism in this case meant loyalty to the ruling party and therefore completing the quest for cadre formation. Apart from the anti-imperial and anti-neo-colonial rhetoric the state still lacked a rational strategy to weaken these ideological orientations thereby leaving them virtually intact. An elaboration of the context in which the government saw itself under siege is in order here.

It is significant that the policy on cadre formation was reinforced in the 1990s at a time when the government was in a weak economic position and going through what Jonathan Moyo describes as “an irretrievable legitimacy crisis.”<sup>111</sup> As the first decade of independence came to a close it was apparent that socialism had failed to solve various problems which included unemployment, and a weakening economy which could not adequately finance education, health and other vital programmes. The government adopted the International Monetary Fund (IMF) sponsored Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) as a new strategy to tackle economic challenges. The weakening economic situation and the adverse effects of ESAP had a negative impact on university funding which saw a deterioration in standards and increasing frustrations among staff and students.

Protests on the deteriorating political and economic situation became a national issue. There were a lot of food riots in the late 1990s. The ongoing civil society activism led to the formation of the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) in 1997, whose membership included the ZCC, a grouping of mainly mainline

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<sup>111</sup> Jonathan N. Moyo, “State Politics and Social Domination in Zimbabwe,” in *Journal of Modern African Studies*, vol. 30, No. 2, (1992), p. 330.



protestant churches, the UZ students' union, Zimbabwe Congress of Trades Unions (ZCTU) and some Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). Church groups were polarised, some actively joined civil society activism while some took a wait and see attitude, while others continued to openly support government policies. The government was desperate for the church's support. If the church could be on the side of the government it could be a neutralising influence. Maxwell has noted that during this period the government needed the church more than the church needed it.<sup>112</sup> ZCC eventually pulled out of the NCA arguing that they had played their role in the founding of the organisation and in any case it had gone political in its activities. The rejection of the government-sponsored draft constitution which the NCA and other civil groups had campaigned against, followed by the creation of a new political party, intensified the pressure on the government. University lecturers and students as well as former students took centre stage in activities in the new opposition party and civic society. Most of the academics were from the Faculty of Law and Political Studies departments. It was against this background that the government sought to consolidate its hegemony through militia programmes. Sikhumbuzo Ndiweni, the ZANU (PF) Information and Publicity Secretary for Bulawayo Province was quoted by *The Chronicle*: "...the mistake that the ruling party made was to allow colleges and universities to be turned into anti-government mentality factories."<sup>113</sup> There were however, some academics who remained pro-government. Three academics, Claude Mararike, from Social Studies and Vimbai Chivaura from the English Department and Sheunesu Mepereki from the Department of Soil Science were involved in Zimbabwe Television programmes, Nhaka Yedu (Our Heritage) and Tsika Dzedu (Our Culture) in which they critiqued Western intellectual and cultural domination and called for the need to re-assert African beliefs, culture and philosophy.

At a time when the government was under intense political and economic pressure it allowed new developments in University Education which saw the emergence of new state and private universities. The National University of Science and Technology (NUST) opened its doors in 1991. Another four state universities were established

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<sup>112</sup> Maxwell, "Church and Democratisation, p. 108.

<sup>113</sup> *The Chronicle*, 26 April 2001.



thereafter, Bindura University of Science and Technology, in 1996 (Mashonaland Central Province); Zimbabwe Open University, in 1998; Masvingo State University, in 1999 (Masvingo Province); Midlands State University, in 1999 (Midlands Province). The Vice Chancellors appointed to the new universities were from the UZ. With the exception of NUST and Bindura the other universities were upgraded from tertiary college status. With the exception of Bindura University the other three Vice Chancellors belonged to the regions where they were appointed to serve. As can be noted the universities were distributed in various provinces throughout the country. In virtually all cases politicians based in the various provinces were active sometimes to competitive levels in lobbying for establishment of universities in their home regions.

The establishment of state universities was driven by three main factors namely; increase in the numbers of secondary school leavers, manpower development and the clamour for region based universities. The new universities did not reflect a major paradigm shift in terms of intellectual orientation. The only new factor in the case of NUST and Bindura was the orientation to science and technology. It is interesting that the government opened new universities at a time when it was under pressure from two sources namely: activism by UZ students and lecturers in alliance with civil society and dwindling financial resources to support the institution.

It is significant that churches resolved to establish universities against this background of university activism and national financial constraints. In Manicaland, where there was no state university, the United Methodist Church established Africa University in the town of Mutare in 1992. The Seventh Day Adventists established Solusi University in 1994. The Catholic University in Zimbabwe was established in 1999 and the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe established the Great Zimbabwe University in 2001. The Methodist Church in Zimbabwe attempted to establish the Southern Africa Methodist University without success from 1996. Reference has been made in this chapter to problems by the churches in the financing of secondary boarding schools and yet they still saw the establishment of universities as a necessity. However, the new phenomenon may be viewed as an attempt by the churches to re-assert their influence in the field of education.

## Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to demonstrate that when the ZANU (PF) government came into power they wanted to introduce politics of difference disengaged from colonial ideologies, and assert their hegemony. The government's socialist agenda was ambiguous and there was no political commitment to assert the ideology. The socialist aspirations were without commitment but they were also victims of entrenched capitalist forces which even influenced the ruling elite to embrace wealth and attendant Western values. The socialist aspirations later mutated into anti-neo-colonial and anti-imperialist attitudes which became more pronounced when the government was under political pressure.

Cadre formation was a strategy designed to penetrate educational institutions so that it would eventually bring in a new paradigm in terms of the Zimbabwean political and social worldview. The state did not, however, clearly articulate its perceived new paradigm which would displace neo-colonial influences. If the motivation for the programme to combat neo-colonialism was driven by the pressure that the government was experiencing, then by implication the new orientation would most likely fade out when the threat went away. Educational institutions were a distinctive target for the government because of their capacity to influence the nation. Furthermore, churches would be important allies in these endeavours. Tertiary institutions were a special category because they produced teachers capable of influencing communities. The government realised in the 1990s that it had failed to introduce an effective and long lasting system of education for liberation. The state always had the desire to use the National Youth Service approach for cadre formation but they kept it in abeyance until the end of the 1990s when they were experiencing problems.

The neglect of indigenous religions was partly due to Western influences and partly to their perceived usefulness in social and physical development. Their tolerance and openness was a weakness in that they did not pose any serious threat. Neither did they have any potential to participate meaningfully in nation building initiatives; a factor which could have attracted the interest of the state in its development programmes. In this way the government played into the hands of Christian

organisations in so far as religious supremacy was concerned. Although the government appeared critical of the attitudes of churches it was desperate to get the co-operation of churches in nation-building. Yet the call for co-operation had to be balanced with a political agenda confronted by new forces of democratisation and economic stagnation. With this context in mind, the next chapter examines a new dimension of church and state partnership in nation building.

## Chapter Four

### Conflict and Complementarity: Church Aspirations and the Evolution of Government Policy

The Africa Higher Education Consultation was a holy audacity! [...]. What arrogance! In an era when colleges and universities here celebrate centennials and bicentennials, and institutions abroad proudly trace their roots to the fourteenth century, how dare upstart United Methodists *create*, of all things, a *university*, and of all places, in *Africa!* (sic). *Julius S. Scott Jr.*<sup>1</sup>

#### Introduction

This chapter is concerned with the origins of church universities in Zimbabwe and the development of relevant policy by the government. On 18 April 2005 Zimbabwe held Silver Jubilee Celebrations commemorating twenty-five years of independence. *The Herald* published a Silver Jubilee edition which carried a commemorative article with the title: "Zimbabwe Excels in Education."<sup>2</sup> The article lauded the significant expansion in higher education from one public university in 1980 to eight public and five private in 2005. Among the five private, one was secular, while four were church-related. In 2004 the university sector had a combined enrolment of 47,000 students.<sup>3</sup> The founding of new universities was enabled by the passing of legislation in 1990. This new development coincided with centenary celebrations of the mainline Christian denominations which took place at different times in the 1990s. President Mugabe was invited as an honoured speaker to most of the celebrations. In his addresses, the President acknowledged the contribution of churches in various areas including education and appealed that the same trend of development should continue in addition to revitalising the nations' moral fibre.<sup>4</sup> As Maxwell rightly observes, this put churches in a favourable position.

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<sup>1</sup> Julius S. Scott Jr, "Nairobi Consultation Proposes Bold, Historic Plan," *Colleague: Africa Special Edition*, Summer-Fall 1986.

<sup>2</sup> "Zimbabwe Excels in Education," *The Herald*, 18 April 2005.

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Washington Mbizvo, 21 April 2005, Harare.

<sup>4</sup> Oscar Wermter, "Time to Choose," *Moto*, November/December 1992. See also, Maxwell, "Church and Democratisation," p. 119. Maxwell argues that due to the economic and political difficulties which the government was experiencing the church found itself in a stronger position in its relations with the government and so Mugabe had to take a conciliatory approach to court the co-operation of churches in national development.

Going against the current in the 1990s,

powerful international forces promoting a neo-liberal agenda and led in the African context by the World Bank had suggested literally that Africa had no need for universities because the return on investment which it received from its expenditure outlay was both too low and unjustifiable.<sup>5</sup>

The World Bank preferred investment in primary, secondary and vocational education. From its own position, the Zimbabwe government in this period not only experienced external pressure from the World Bank and like minded institutions or organisations but also internal pressure in the form of the economic downturn militating against expansion. Yet there was also internal pressure in the form of the high demand from the large numbers of secondary school graduates as well as churches which desired to establish universities.

Celebrations evoke memories and suggest achievements. The double celebrations by churches of their centenaries and the national Silver Jubilee evoke a sense of celebration of mission. Situating the university in the context of the contemporary missions of churches requires unmasking the agendas of those churches in the face of government policy.

The post-independence era presents a picture where perceived tasks of churches are not necessarily intertwined with education as was the case in the missionary period. As they celebrated their centenaries, on the one hand churches were happy with the achievements made but also felt they could do more. By and large, while significant strides had been made especially in relief and community development, many churches felt that they were celebrating what missionaries had achieved more than what the indigenous leadership and post-colonial churches had.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Olukoshi and Zeleza, "Struggle for African Universities and Knowledges," p. 2.

<sup>6</sup> Interview with Densen Mafinyani, 16 November, 2004, Harare.



## **Thaver's typologies and the Zimbabwean scenario**

Beverley Thaver's study of private higher education in six countries in Sub-Saharan Africa tends to be generalised and does not give detailed insight into the dynamics of each case.<sup>7</sup> The case studies identified four factors which have contributed to the emergence and growth of private universities. The first one is the obvious failure by public universities to meet the increased demand for higher education which in the case of Zimbabwe is a corollary of the massive expansion in primary and secondary education which saw many Advanced Level students failing to get places at the university. In addition to establishing more of its own universities the government allowed non-state actors to provide higher education hoping to "deflect student demand away from public institutions under growing financial pressures."<sup>8</sup> Prior to that, government strategy was to allow some tertiary colleges to offer degree courses under the supervision of the UZ. This approach was still not to the satisfaction of the government as it did not cut the demand substantially. Further, it put more strain on the already burdened UZ.

The second factor has to do with what Thaver calls the "discourse of access." Due to financial constraints state sponsorship for higher education has decreased. The failure by the governments to meet the increased demand meant that some vulnerable groups would be denied access by the circumstances. The discourse of access includes an agenda for university education which accommodates those who would otherwise fail to access education such as marginalised groups like women and the poor. This typology overlaps with the first one in the sense that by allowing new players to provide university education the government was in a way creating more opportunities for aspiring candidates. According to the aims of church-related universities, access is an integral part of their missions and is derived from the general theology of accommodation of churches. However, in some cases, access to

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<sup>7</sup> Thaver, "Private Higher Education in Africa," pp. 70-1. The order in which Thaver presents the typologies has been altered because of the significance of the religious factor in the context of this study.

<sup>8</sup> William Saint, *Universities in Africa: Strategies for Stabilisation and Revitalisation*, Technical Paper NO. 194, Africa Technical Department Series, (Washington DC: The World Bank, December 1992), p. 43.

university education does not necessarily mean providing opportunities for the disadvantaged groups in society as it may not necessarily mean lower fees, although this may be partly catered for through scholarship awards.

For some organisations this typology would mean special provision or affirmative action to accommodate specific groups. Africa University claims that it has a deliberate strategy of targeting less privileged groups like women, the disabled and the poor<sup>9</sup> but this is not explicitly stated as a major policy thrust. The Apostolic Constitution of the Catholic Church regards access as an important aspect of the university's mandate:

Every Catholic University feels responsible to contribute concretely to the progress of the society within which it works: for example it will be capable of searching for ways to make university education accessible to all those who are able to benefit from it, especially the poor or members of minority groups who customarily have been deprived of it.<sup>10</sup>

The only university in Zimbabwe which best fits into this typology in terms of providing access through an explicitly stated affirmative policy is the secular Women's University in Africa (WUA) established in 2002. The main objective of the WUA is to address "gender disparity through catering for mature women from the African continent that for a long time have been educationally disadvantaged especially at tertiary level. The university targets women who have attained the minimum qualifications and have gained enough experience to undertake degree studies."<sup>11</sup> The mission statement further states: "The Women's University in Africa is dedicated to reducing gender disparity by providing a gender sensitive and socially responsible educational institution."<sup>12</sup> The varying levels of access among the five

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<sup>9</sup> Rukudzo Murapa, "Private Universities: The Case of Africa University," in *Zimbabwe Journal of Educational Research (ZJER)*, vol. 12, NO. 3, (Human Resources Research Centre, University of Zimbabwe, November 2000), p. 91.

<sup>10</sup> *Ex Corde Ecclesiae (from the heart of the church): Apostolic Constitution of the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II on Catholic Universities*, Vatican, 15 August 1990, Part 1 Section 34.

<sup>11</sup> Women's University in Africa, Information Brochure, n.d., Admissions Office, Mt. Pleasant, Harare.

<sup>12</sup> Women's University in Africa, Mission Statement, Admissions Office, Mt. Pleasant, Harare.

private universities are symbolic when one considers their impact in relation to their combined total enrolment which does not even exceed a quarter of the total university enrolment in the country. East Africa presents a slightly different but similar picture. In 2000, the number of private universities in Kenya was more than public ones although the total enrolment of the latter remained higher.<sup>13</sup>

Thirdly, concomitant with the failure by many African governments to adequately fund public universities has been the influence of the World Bank's new "market instrumentalist logic" which argues for the self-sustenance of state universities. The main 'push factor' are the difficult economic conditions.<sup>14</sup> Under the influence of the market ideology in university education even public universities have been under pressure to adopt business strategies for the sake of their survival. In 1998 the Zimbabwean government sought to privatise accommodation and catering services in an effort to reduce its budget on state universities and polytechnics.<sup>15</sup> There was, however, fierce resistance from students.<sup>16</sup> A former Pro-Vice Chancellor at UZ argues for a market model which has to do more than privatising services in the institutions but regarding knowledge itself as a marketable commodity:

If it be argued that 'selling knowledge' detracts from the mission of the university, an appropriate response would be that it is better to produce knowledge and sell it than to be an unproductive institution which is concerned about the sanctity of the kind of knowledge that exists in the outer regions of space and has no chance of being generated for the real world in which we live.<sup>17</sup>

The void created by governments' failure to match increasing demand for university education saw the rise in privately sponsored university education driven by the

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<sup>13</sup> Thaver, "Private Higher Education in Africa," p. 73. Cf., C. Nwamuo, *Report of a Study on Private Universities in Africa*. (Accra: AAU, 2000).

<sup>14</sup> Fredrick M. Nafukho, "The Market Model of Financing State Universities in Kenya: Some Innovative Lessons," in *The African University in the Twenty-first Century vol. 1*, ed. by P.T. Zeleza and A. Olukoshi, p. 126.

<sup>15</sup> Graham Hill, "The Role of Traditional Universities," in *ZJER*, vol. 12, N0. 3, p. 32.

<sup>16</sup> Charles Nherera, "The Role of Emerging Universities in Zimbabwe," in *ZJER*, vol. 12, N0. 3, p. 52.

<sup>17</sup> Emmanuel A. Ngara, *The African University and its Mission*, (Roma: Institute of Southern African Studies (ISAS), 1995), pp. 123.

profit motive. In some parts of the continent there have been new institutions, especially in East Africa, whose establishment is based on principles of the market ideology.<sup>18</sup> The use of business approaches in university education under the management of “educational entrepreneurs” presents education as a commodity and this has significance on the nature of higher education.<sup>19</sup> The significant question is what benefits will accrue to the provider of that commodity or service.

Church-related universities in Zimbabwe present a different picture in that although their tuition fees are by far more expensive compared to the public institutions they do not seem to have the for-profit motive. A clause common in the charters of Africa University, Solusi University, Catholic University, and Great Zimbabwe University states: “The University shall be a non-profit making organisation. Any surplus of institutional expenditures shall accrue to the institution and no dividend shall be paid to the owners or sponsors of the university.” Profit or surplus is not for the benefit of individual owners or sponsors but the institution. One should note that there is some allowance for surpluses to be made but it is limited to the institution. This is necessary because although the church-related university benefits from grants from the sponsoring church, these mainly focus on capital expenditure.<sup>20</sup> According to John W.Z. Kurewa<sup>21</sup>, the founding Vice Chancellor of Africa University:

It makes perfect business sense to guarantee first class facilities and a high quality of education as well as to remain viable by passing costs to the consumer although efforts, with limitations, are made to assist the disadvantaged. External financial assistance from donors mainly concentrates on capital projects although there is some assistance towards recurrent expenditure [...]. We must always think of the future. This is why we have created an endowment fund which is benefiting from direct donations and surplus funds. A self-sustaining

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<sup>18</sup> P.G. Altbach, “Private Higher Education: Themes and Variations in Comparative Perspective,” in *Private Prometheus: Private Higher Education and Development in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, ed. by P.G. Altbach, (Boston: Greenwood, 1999), pp. 1-15.

<sup>19</sup> Andrea Useem, “In East Africa, New Private Colleges Fill a Growing Gap between Supply and Demand,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education* vol. 46, NO. 3, (10 September 1999), pp. a65-a66.

<sup>20</sup> Murapa, “Private Universities,” p. 88.

<sup>21</sup> Interview with John W.Z. Kurewa, 19 October 2004, Africa University, Mutare.

university will enjoy considerable measure of autonomy from the responsible authority.

The university aimed to have sixty percent of its income for recurrent expenditure coming from fees.<sup>22</sup>

Kevin Kinser and Daniel C. Levy,<sup>23</sup> on the one hand, and P. Frumkin<sup>24</sup> on the other acknowledge that “distinguishing for-profits from nonprofits has often involved a ‘name game.’” Kinser and Levy further argue that “for profit institutions may distribute profits to owners” but non-profit educational “institutions cannot be organised to benefit private interests, their assets must be permanently dedicated to charitable purposes, and net earnings cannot be distributed to owners or shareholders.”<sup>25</sup> The major argument is not so much in the generation of money as in how the profits will be used, which in the case of the non-profit universities is for the benefit of the organisation in “capital investment, future operating expenses, or endowments.”<sup>26</sup>

Although the for-profit characterisation does not apply to Zimbabwean church universities, in 2004 for example, a student at a church-related university had to pay almost ten times the fees charged at the heavily subsidised state universities. This raises the argument for sustainability of the church institution where it has to be run with an optimum budget in order to survive. According to William Saint writing in 1992: “Private higher education in Africa is expensive to provide and costly to attend. A newly established Catholic university in Cameroon, for example charges

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<sup>22</sup> Murapa, “Private Universities,” p. 88

<sup>23</sup> Kevin Kinser and Daniel C. Levy, *The For-Profit Sector: US Patterns and International Echoes in Higher Education*, PROPHE Working Paper 5, (February 2005).  
<http://www.albany.edu/dept/eaps/prophe/publication/paper/PROPHEWPS.doc> p. 7. (Accessed 28 April 2005).

<sup>24</sup> Peter Frumkin, *On Being Non-Profit: A Conceptual and Policy Primer*, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2002), pp. 10–16.

<sup>25</sup> Kinser and Levy, *For-Profit Sector*. p. 7.

<sup>26</sup> The World Bank, *Constructing New Knowledge Societies: New Challenges for Tertiary Education*, (Washington DC, 2002), p. 74.



roughly US\$2,700 in tuition fees room and board.”<sup>27</sup> At AU the tuition fee for the academic year 2003-2004 was US\$2,500, excluding room and board.<sup>28</sup> According to Washington Mbizvo, the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, one area of tension between government expectations and church aspirations is the level of fees charged by the private church universities.<sup>29</sup>

Some government officials argue that church universities should have been cheaper because of the perceived traditional reputation of the church in providing access and opportunities for the disadvantaged. The same perception is shared by many university students. This attitude mainly stems from understanding the church as a charitable organisation capable of even subsidising its clientele. At the inception of AU there was a certain measure of charity. Students were not required to pay any fees. Instead they received grants for living allowances, books and other expenses. When the university decided to introduce fees there was stiff resistance as students failed to appreciate that they had to pay for their own education.<sup>30</sup> In spite of the high fees charged the motive of church-related institutions is clearly not to make profit inasmuch as it is not to fill a void. But is providing access the motive of the churches? This leads to an examination of Thaver’s fourth factor.

Although Thaver does not treat the fourth characterisation in detail, she notes that religious groups have viewed the university as a necessary component of their agenda in the light of modern challenges. Religion-sponsored universities have mainly come from Christian and Muslim organisations. As Thaver notes, the demand for university education is linked to the need to promote religious interests in the university system. While from a government viewpoint churches are addressing a need by coming to the rescue through establishing more universities, there is an

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<sup>27</sup> Saint, *Universities in Africa*, p. 43.

<sup>28</sup> Africa University: Fee Structure for 2003 – 2004 Academic Year, Bursar’s Office, Africa University.

<sup>29</sup> Interview with Washington Mbizvo.

<sup>30</sup> Murapa, “Private Universities,” pp. 88-9.

acknowledgement that the church's agenda is more than merely filling this void. The religious factor offers its own unique case which embraces Thaver's three factors and excludes the 'for profit motive.' Beyond the discourse of access is the religious factor which provides diversification and alternatives to the public university paradigm which had been in existence for almost four decades. The question of what these religious interests are can best be answered by an examination of the evolution of church-related universities in the context of government policy.

The emergence of church-related universities in Zimbabwe can be divided into two episodes or categories. The first episode represents churches which attempted to set up universities in the first decade of independence. Churches in this category are part of strong international networks and their organising bodies have had experience in university education elsewhere in the world. The second category is that of churches which by and large are locally driven, mainly in terms of vision, initiatives to establish universities. One significant characteristic of this category is that most of the churches in this group describe themselves as autonomous from the former 'mother churches' unlike the qualified autonomy of the first category churches.

### **The first episode**

The idea of church-related universities has its roots in the early independence period in two separate churches namely, the Seventh Day Adventists and the United Methodists. By the 1980s the SDA was operating over eighty-four colleges and universities in various parts of the world including East, West and Southern Africa. In 1956, the board of regents of the Eastern Africa Division of the General Conference of the SDA agreed to the upgrading of Solusi mission so that it would become a senior college, running post-secondary courses, some of which would lead to diplomas and degrees.<sup>31</sup> The upgrading of the college was prompted by the need to equip church workers so that they "would be more fully qualified to meet the leadership challenges of an increasingly sophisticated and more highly educated

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<sup>31</sup> "Appendix I. 10B, The Seventh Day Adventist Church, Solusi College – a Summary Statement," in, Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Establishment of a Second University or Campus, Chaired by P.R.C. Williams, (February 1989), pp. 124-5.

church membership.”<sup>32</sup> The college’s degrees were, however, not recognised by the government both before and after independence. In search of recognition for the college’s diplomas and degrees, the church engaged various universities and the government in discussions. However, the government was not willing to grant them any recognition and therefore advised them to seek affiliation with an SDA university after which the Ministry of Education and Culture “would assess qualifications obtained at Solusi in the light of criteria laid down from time to time for the recognition of degrees and diplomas other than those issued by the University of Zimbabwe.”<sup>33</sup> After the Permanent Secretary’s written response in 1984, the church successfully negotiated affiliation with Andrews University in Michigan, United States, thereby assuming university college status. However, government still did not recognise Solusi degrees.<sup>34</sup> The affiliate relationship formally ended in 1998 four years after Solusi was granted its own Charter by the government.<sup>35</sup>

According to the *The Herald* of 15 June 1994, some of the reasons why the government could not recognise Solusi as a university were:

‘A’ Levels were considered necessary for university entrance qualifications in Zimbabwe. Instead Solusi College had accepted ‘O’ Level entry qualifications equivalent to the USA high school certificate.

The government wanted reassurance of Solusi College’s continued source of its funds.

Solusi College’s physical facilities were expected to be of university standard.

The government was not happy with some elements in Solusi College’s Charter on gender and religious issues.<sup>36</sup>

Solusi, officials believed that the refusal to recognise their institution was political. When Solusi was seeking recognition, Matabeleland province was perceived as

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 124.

<sup>34</sup> “Appendix I. 10B, The Seventh Day Adventist Church – Solusi College,” p. 124. See also, Parliamentary Debates, vol. 16, NO. 39, 14 November 1989, Government Printer, Harare.

<sup>35</sup> Solusi University Bulletin, 2004 -2006, (Harare: Solusi University and Benaby Printing and Publishing, 2004), p. 3.

<sup>36</sup> See also, Maunde, “Evolution of Higher Education in Zimbabwe,” p. 180.

supporting dissident elements fighting against the government.<sup>37</sup> Even politicians aligned to the project did not openly identify with the project as did others in other denominations. Prominent politicians aligned to the SDA only openly showed their association with the university in the 1990s.<sup>38</sup> The conditions set by the government relate to the 1990s after policy had been set while the college's reactions refer to both the 1980s and the 1990s thereby suggesting negative attitudes on Matabeleland from those in power. Nevertheless, the lack of policy before 1990 remained the central setback.

In spite of the affiliation arrangement the church still hoped to attain full university status but without appropriate government legislation this remained a remote possibility. Furthermore, the government did not at this stage consider university education provided by the church a necessity. The government was still concentrating on improving access and the quality of primary and secondary education. Even though there was a call for religious bodies to be partners with government in development matters, university education was still not a priority. Moreover, the government was not ready to accommodate initiatives in what would have been considered non-traditional areas of partnership. Any new initiatives by religious bodies had to be in congruence with the state's agenda.

This explains why initially some churches tended to focus on degree level institutions such as theological colleges, which concentrated on training and development of their own personnel. In 1988 the United Theological College (UTC), owned by six participating Protestant churches to train their ministers, made efforts to be given degree granting status. When this failed they successfully negotiated for affiliate status with the University of Zimbabwe. Under this arrangement the UZ examined UTC students and awarded them a diploma in religious studies. The

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 182.

<sup>38</sup> When Solusi was granted its Charter, Simon Khaya Moyo, the Minister of Industry and Commerce wrote a congratulatory letter to the Solusi Vice Chancellor, "Letters to the Editor," *The Chronicle*, 14 July 1994. At the conferment of an honorary doctorate to John Nkomo, he was described by Solusi University and SDA officials as a longstanding member who had done a lot for the church including mediating in a feud within the church. "Solusi to Honour Nkomo," *The Zimbabwe Independent*, 2 September 2005. See also, "Solusi Honours Nkomo," *The Daily Mirror*, 6 September 2005.

college hoped to go a step further and become an autonomous degree granting institution.<sup>39</sup> When Canaan Banana retired from the Presidency, he joined the UTC teaching staff as an honorary lecturer and began spearheading the campaign for UTC to be granted degree status by the government. Among the debilitating factors, however, were the lack of interest in the project from potential donors and clear legislation on the part of government. Around this period several other church-related colleges, most of which were from the evangelical group of churches and were already offering degree courses, also sought government recognition, but to no avail. The result was that those who opted to continue offering degrees knew that these were only recognised within the churches themselves.

As UTC was struggling to be elevated to degree-granting status, one of its key member churches, the UMC had reached advanced stages in preparing to establish its own university, although it maintained interest in the ecumenical college. In the early stages of the proposal for a United Methodist University, UTC had been listed as one of the eight possible sites in Africa alongside Old Mutare, but it was later dropped.<sup>40</sup> This development in a way weakened the UTC resolve because of two main reasons. Firstly, the Faculty of Theology at AU was going to be one of the two founding faculties at the new university and it had further studies in ministerial formation as its main thrust. Secondly, donors who could have been approached by UMC to support the UTC initiative would naturally be redirected to AU. The case of how AU came to be established is significant and will now be dealt with in some detail.

### **Better late than never**

The official version links the birth of Africa University to pioneer missionary, and a product of the Central Illinois Conference,<sup>41</sup> Bishop Joseph Crane Hartzell, who had

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<sup>39</sup> United Theological College: Minutes of the College Council, 21 June 1989, College Council File, UTC Library, Hatfield, Harare. Cf. United Theological College, Evaluation Report, 1997, UTC Library, Hatfield, Harare.

<sup>40</sup> Report of the Consultation on African Higher Education Development, 30–31 July, 1986, Nairobi, GCAH: Africa-All Africa-Institutions: African University (Methodist) Proposal, Box: 2531-2-4:52.

<sup>41</sup> "Vice Chancellor Kurewa Sends Greetings," Plenary Session Proceedings, Tuesday, April 23, 1996 United Methodist General Conference, p. 34. <http://www.gcah.org/GC96/vbtim23b.html> (Accessed 8 May 2005).



a vision soon after arriving in Zimbabwe in 1897. According to the local tradition, which has been adopted even in official circles, as Bishop Joseph Crane Hartzell stood on top of Chiremba Mountain overlooking Old Mutare, he had a vision of hundreds of African young people in the plain below going to school carrying books in their hands.<sup>42</sup> Hartzell shared his vision with Cecil Rhodes and he was granted the piece of land which had originally been the settler town of Mutare. The valley is the site where AU was built. Mt Chiremba is situated to the west of AU. At the eastern foot of the mountain is Old Mutare mission whose two primary and secondary schools were named after Bishop Hartzell. United Methodists regard the founding of AU as the consummation of Hartzell's vision. A closer reading of the narrative of the vision will show that it was not specific about a university. But as a subject of contemporary interpretation, a link was established which saw the AU initiative as a fulfilment of the vision which became not only the basis but also an inspiration of the dream of faith. Ordinary UMC members who are familiar with Africa University, especially those who live at the Old Mutare mission and in some parts of Manicaland, argue that there is a direct link between Bishop Hartzell's vision and the establishment of Africa University. For example, as stated by Lance Kagurabadza: "It was not coincidence but God's design, and as is sometimes the case with visions God may not reveal every detail. It is the essence of the vision for which we were awaiting fulfilment. When the Africa University idea germinated we knew that the dream had been fulfilled."<sup>43</sup>

Hartzell's vision and its subsequent realisation were deemed consistent with the widely celebrated tone of the Christmas Conference in 1784 which was the genesis of a tradition that saw the birth of many UMC related institutions of higher

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<sup>42</sup> "Africa University to Install New Chancellor," *United Methodist News Service (UMNS)*, March 2004. <http://www.wfn.org/2004/03/msg00079.html> (Accessed 10 March 2004). Cf., M. Chambara, Interview, 19 October 2004, Mutare. See also, Chomingwen Pond, "Mt Chiremba, Where Africa University Began," *The United Methodist Church in Mission*, GCAH: Africa-All Africa- Institutions-Africa University, Box: 2554-3-3:07.

<sup>43</sup> Interview with Lance Kagurabadza, 21 October 2005, Old Mutare Mission.

learning.<sup>44</sup> Samuel Dubois Cook, President of Dillard University in the US and a member of the AU Site Selection Committee notes:

In recent years, the United Methodist Church took the unprecedented, courageous, and inspired step, with all its challenges, responsibilities, and rich possibilities, of establishing Africa University in Zimbabwe to celebrate the intellectual love of God and provide the gifts of learning access, hope, self-esteem, dignity, self-realization and love to sub-Saharan Africa [...]. The spiritual and intellectual line from the Christmas Conference of 1784 is very clear and direct – “to give the key of knowledge.”<sup>45</sup>

F. Thomas Trotter, a renowned UMC theologian and philosopher on higher education,<sup>46</sup> writing in 1987, the last year of his term of office as General Secretary of the GBHEM, elaborates on the theological justification for the church’s involvement in higher education:

...for Methodist people, loving God requires *knowing* God. This epistemological basis for Wesleyan thought grounds Methodist practice in a passionate concern for learning. To love God is to want to know God. To want to know God is to understand the world. To understand the world, one needs schools of learning. The theological circle for Methodists is the circle of faith and learning.<sup>47</sup>

The above picture portrays a church with a rich tradition in education and a well articulated theological basis. Yet on further scrutiny the picture portrayed on the canvass exposes an uneven implementation of the ideals and values which span over almost two hundred years.

According to Bishop Emilio de Carvalho of Angola: “...for over 170 years of missionary work in Africa, the United Methodist Church never built an enduring institution of higher learning on the African continent. It built universities in China, Japan, the USA, India, Latin-America and Korea, but as I have said, none in

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<sup>44</sup> T. Michael Elliott, et. al., *To Give the Key to Knowledge: United Methodists and Education, 1784–1976*, (Nashville: National Commission on United Methodist Higher Education, 1976), p. 13.

<sup>45</sup> Samuel D. Cook, “The United Methodist Church and its Predominantly Black Colleges: An Enduring Partnership in the Intellectual love of God,” in *The Future of Religious Colleges*, ed. by P. Dovre, (Cambridge UK: William Eerdmans, 2002), p. 251.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> F. Thomas Trotter, *Loving God With one’s Mind: Selected Writings, Essays, Articles, and Speeches*, ed. by R.H. Conn, (Nashville: BHEM., the United Methodist Church, 1987), p. 104.

Africa.<sup>48</sup> That it took so long to consider the continent of Africa is evidence of the low status given to university education in Africa as a mission priority. This phenomenon is common to other denominations as well and implies a carry-over of colonial attitudes to higher education for Africans. The low status given to university education does not mean lack of interest in mission in Africa but it points to the selective nature of projects to be undertaken. If the argument were to be that Africa was not ready for university education, what has changed in Africa now that makes the continent ready? The failure by Africans in strategic leadership positions within the ecclesiastical structures to argue that university education was an important function of the church, and to consistently articulate this position accordingly, is a contributory dynamic. A lot, however, depended on the extent to which they could influence their partner churches overseas. Reference will be made below to pockets of resistance within the UMC family itself, against the university project. This factor may have weakened the resolve of those, not necessarily Africans, who may have attempted to advocate for a church-related university in Africa. Church leaders were then content with sending their own ministers and some lay people abroad, along the lines of Bishop Ralph Dodge's African Safari of Learning and Tom Mboya's airlifts, for university education or to support university chaplaincy.

The general picture in Zimbabwean churches is that the transition from colonialism to independence and from mission to church as well as indigenous leadership was not matched by an immediate redefinition of mission priorities. However, neo-missionary attitudes still prevailed as the local church still expected the former mother bodies to direct new frontiers. Even if local churches were to attempt to spearhead new areas, they lacked the resources and so would be dependent on the assent of the richer partner churches overseas. This explains why some of the locally initiated university projects never took off or found themselves in financial crises. A

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<sup>48</sup> Emilio de Carvalho, "Chancellor's Speech," Africa University: Address and Orations on the Occasion of the Installation of the Chancellor, 23 April 1994, GCAH: Africa-All Africa-Institutions: African University, Box: 2550-6-5:01.

good example is the lack of interest of the Methodist Church in Britain in the MCZ initiated university project. As a result the project could not take off the ground for financial reasons as the MCZ had hoped to get assistance from their British partner. Overseas churches had access to resources and therefore commanded a lot of power and influence. The UMC General Conference, though made up of representation from all parts of the world, was still dominated by the Americans. Furthermore, as pointed out by some informants, the neglect of such a big continent as Africa was a case of prejudice.<sup>49</sup>

According to one version, pragmatic steps towards the establishment of a university in Africa by the UMC date back to 1984.<sup>50</sup> In 1984 Bishop Arthur Kulah of Liberia made a speech entitled, "The case for International Education" on the need for a UMC related university in Africa, at an annual meeting of the GBHEM. At the same meeting when Bishop Emilio de Carvalho of Angola gave the Wilson Lecture, he "highlighted the deleterious effects of the legacies of colonialism and illiteracy on African communities."<sup>51</sup> Bishop Carvalho further encouraged the UMC "to move beyond the borders and do more today than ever before to provide support for university education in Africa." Bishop Kulah's address appears to have been part of a wider initiative by the West African section of the United Methodists. Some regional representatives had already begun to lobby the Americans for a university before Kulah's official presentation to the GBHEM. Kulah, who had been elected Bishop of Liberia in 1980, placed considerable emphasis on leadership development with the aim of equipping the church's membership with various skills.<sup>52</sup> An

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<sup>49</sup> This point was made by several people interviewed, for examples: Interviews with: J.W.Z. Kurewa; Maxwell Chambara, 20 October 2004; P.T. Chikafu, 18 October 2004, Africa University, Mutare; David K. Yemba, 18 October 2004, Africa University, Mutare; Langton Kuvheya, 16 February 2005, Harare; Daniel Chitsiku, 19 October 2004, Africa University, Mutare; and Chioniso Gwonyambira, 19 October 2004, Africa University, Mutare.

<sup>50</sup> "Fact Sheet," Africa University, Mutare, 1992, Information Office, Africa University. Cf., Introduction to Africa University Handbook, n.d., Information Office, Africa University, Mutare.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> "World Division: The Situation in Africa," *New World Outlook*, April 1982. See also, "Liberia – Mission Profile," GBGM, [http://gbgm-umc.org/country\\_profiles/countries/lbr/Missionprofile.stm](http://gbgm-umc.org/country_profiles/countries/lbr/Missionprofile.stm) (Accessed 7 June 2005).

interesting combination of these two official originators of the African initiative is evident here. One of the main arguments by the two Bishops was that “increased access to higher education was key [...] to peace, stability and development in Africa.”<sup>53</sup> The link between higher education and development was further supported by the argument noting the phenomenal growth of Christianity in Africa, and projections that by the year 2000, 20% of the world’s population would be in Africa.<sup>54</sup>

Kulah’s courage to speak out and his passion for a well trained and enlightened church was complemented by Carvalho’s experience and influence within the structures of the UMC. The other version, which appears to be dominant, credits Carvalho as having made the first inspiring address after which Bishops Kulah, Herbert Skeete and others joined in support.<sup>55</sup> Apart from serving as Bishop in Angola since 1972, Carvalho served as a director of the GBGM from 1976 to 1984; chairman of the Executive Committee of the Africa Central Conference of the UMC from 1980 to 1988; between 1984 and 1992 he served as a director of the GBHEM; from 1980 to 1991 he was Vice President of the Council of Bishops of the United Methodist Church. He later became President of the Council of Bishops of the UMC from 1991 to 1992.<sup>56</sup> These various capacities were in addition to his involvement in theological education and international ecumenical bodies such as the World Methodist Council and the World Council of Churches.

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<sup>53</sup> “Africa University to Install New Chancellor.”

<sup>54</sup> “Africa University Progress Report, 1989-1992, and Plan of Development 1993-1996,” (General Conference Edition, The United Methodist Church), May 1992, GCAH: Box: 2577-6-1:05. See also, “Daily Christian Advocate,” (Advance edition), p. F-58, Appendix to John Kurewa, R. E. Reeves, J. S. Scott Jr. and K. Yamada, “Africa University Master Plan,” October 1988, GCAH: Africa-All Africa-Institutions: African University (Methodist) Proposal, Box: 2532-3-4:13.

<sup>55</sup> *The Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church, 2004*, (Nashville: United Methodist Church Publishing House, 2004), Resolution 304, p. 762. See also, “Daily Christian Advocate” (Advance edition), p. F-58.

<sup>56</sup> Bishop Calvin McConnell, “Installation of the Chancellor,” Address and Orations.



Bishop Kulah's version,<sup>57</sup> which he describes as "my portion of the story," suggests that the idea of the university was conceived in April 1981 when Bishop David Lawson, Bishop Herbert Skeete and Bishop Kulah himself attended a committee on higher education of the GBHEM. During the proceedings of the committee the Chairperson asked each member to reflect on higher education around the world especially thinking about his or her own area. The Chairperson of the committee posed the challenge for the group to reflect on higher education. In a way this sowed the seeds for what was later to be called the Africa Initiative:

When the time came for me to reflect on higher education in Africa, I told the group that as far as I knew there were no institutions of higher education built by the United Methodist Church in Africa. I went on to tell the group that while it is common knowledge that our church has built outstanding universities in the Philippines, Japan, India, Brazil, and Cuba, I did not know of any universities in any of the countries in Africa sponsored by the United Methodist Church.<sup>58</sup>

Questions were raised regarding this revelation:

The questions went like this, "Why didn't we build a college or university in Africa? Why did we neglect Africa for so long? Why didn't someone tell us about it? Did the leaders of our church know about this, if so, why didn't they do something about it? What can we do? Is it too late to do something?"

I said to the group, "Never mind that it took so long; never mind that Africa has been neglected; never mind that the idea of building a college or university was never brought to your attention. You can now do something about it. You can be the medium, the bridge through which a university can be built in Africa." I went on to say, "It is better to be late than never."<sup>59</sup>

The 1981 brainstorming and subsequent discussions paved the way for consultations which were initially confined to the West African region. The West African Conference with the influence of Kulah had an early start which provided the basis in preparations for official presentations.

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<sup>57</sup> Bishop Arthur F. Kulah, "Better Late than Never, (John 11:1-6)," Sermon Delivered at the Official Opening of the Africa University, Old Mutare, Zimbabwe, Sunday, April, 24, 1994, Address and Orations.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

Following the presentations of Kulah and Carvalho at the GBHEM on the need for a UMC university, a West African Committee on education under the auspices of the West Africa Central Conference drafted a proposal which it presented to the GBHEM in early October 1984 entitled, "Proposal for a United Methodist university in West Africa." In the proposal it was argued that "Africa's underdevelopment emanated from its lack of provision for higher education."<sup>60</sup> The GBHEM adopted the proposal, which came to be known as the 'Africa Initiative,' for further consultation in both Africa and the United States.

A series of consultative meetings was held in West, East and Southern Africa. Initially, the primary focus was the need to establish a UMC pan-African theological seminary which would be able to confer degrees.<sup>61</sup> However, arising from the consultations, it was later realised that the college should offer more than theology.<sup>62</sup> Among the consultations which were held at various levels, four are worth mentioning here. The first one was a visit to Liberia by a group of directors of the GBHEM in January 1985 to consult with Annual Conferences in the region.<sup>63</sup> In August of the same year another group of directors took part, as observers, in a consultation on theological education in Harare at which delegates from Liberia, Sierra Leone, Mozambique, Zaire and Angola were present.<sup>64</sup> The theological education consultation was sponsored by 'Africa Church Growth and Development.'<sup>65</sup> The idea of a theological consultation had been discussed and agreed to in 1983.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Carvalho, "Chancellor's Speech."

<sup>61</sup> Interview with P.T. Chikafu.

<sup>62</sup> Interview with J.W.Z. Kurewa.

<sup>63</sup> "Daily Christian Advocate," (Advance edition), p. F-58.

<sup>64</sup> Minutes of the Executive Committee: Board of Higher Education and Ministry, The United Methodist Church, May 16 – 17, 1985, p. 13. Evanston, Illinois, GCAH: GBHEM, Records of Higher Education Division, 1953 -1993, Box: 1076-3-3.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

The following year saw two more consultations being held in Monrovia and Nairobi. The Monrovia consultation was convened on the suggestion of Bishops Carvalho and Kulah. It was made up of mainly educational leaders of African conferences and did the groundwork for the Nairobi meeting scheduled to meet soon after the Conference of the World Methodist Council, to be held in the same city at the end of July 1986.<sup>67</sup>

As can be noted, at this stage, the West African Lobby group was wielding considerable influence and so it is no surprise that of the four consultations two were held in Liberia. As pointed out by one informant,<sup>68</sup> West Africans especially Liberians, were keen to have the university in their region. They wanted to exploit their historic relationship with Black Americans which dated back to the days of slavery.

The Nairobi consultation adopted nine key proposals from Monrovia. The salient issues included willingness for the university to

be opened to the participation of other Methodist and non-Methodist churches on the conditions and at the level to be mutually agreed upon [...] to begin at a selected and already existing institution under United Methodist control in Africa and expand upon it [...]. To begin with a single working language official to the country in which the university will be located, and to follow specific criteria in the choice of a site.<sup>69</sup>

The Nairobi meeting signalled the beginning of more focused discussions as it drafted a resolution which was sent to the GBHEM, "asking it to formally move

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<sup>66</sup> Bonnie T. Adkins, "Africa Church Growth and Development 1981 – 1990," in, *New World Outlook*, March – April 1991

<sup>67</sup> Minutes of the Preliminary Meeting of Educational Leaders to Respond to Issues Raised by the Board of Higher Education and Ministry of the United Methodist Church Regarding African Initiatives in Behalf of Higher Education in Africa, Virginia, Liberia, 28–29 May 1986. GCAH: (Geographic Areas) Africa-All Africa-Institutions: Africa University (Methodist) Proposal (minutes), Box: 2531-2-4:53.

<sup>68</sup> Interview with P.T. Chikafu.

<sup>69</sup> Report of the Consultation on African Higher Education Development, Nairobi, 30–31 July 1986. Cf., Minutes of the Preliminary Meeting of Educational Leaders."

towards the development of a proposal for the 1988 General Conference to establish a University in Africa under the United Methodist Church sponsorship.”

After the Nairobi conference, the GBHEM, having received the Nairobi proposal, appointed a Site Selection Committee under the Chairmanship of Dr James T. Laney who later became the US Ambassador to South Korea. The committee was made up of three representatives from the US, one each from Sierra Leone and Liberia (for the West African Conference), and one each from Zaire and Angola (Central Africa Conference).<sup>70</sup> At the beginning of 1987 the committee visited the following countries in search of a suitable site: Burundi, Liberia, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, Zaire and Zimbabwe. The committee’s selection criteria as developed in the Monrovia consultation included the following:

Is the country accessible to the international community, e.g. is it easy to travel in and out of the country? Are there less immigration formalities?

Is the political system or form of government reasonably stable and amicable to international participation?

Is the economy reasonably stable? Can the country ensure a stable condition for currency control? Is the currency easily convertible?

Will the government allow or even guarantee academic freedom of the institution?

Is there an existing United Methodist Institution (with or without ecumenical participation) that can be expanded to the desired level of a university?

Is land easily available for present and future expansion?

Does the country have the least language barrier?<sup>71</sup>

Ironically, Liberia, which had been the subject of intensive lobbying in the very early stages and in the forefront of promoting the West African initiative, had been tainted by the unease, not long before, emanating from the takeover of government by the armed forces. Of particular concern was the Liberian government’s heavy handed treatment of students at the state university. In 1982 a group of students breached a

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<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> Minutes of the Preliminary Meeting of Educational Leaders.”

military decree which prohibited political activities and they were arrested and sentenced to death by firing squad.<sup>72</sup> They were granted clemency at the eleventh hour. As Kulah and his regional colleagues were trying to promote the initiative, the Armed Forces of Liberia invaded the University of Liberia on 22 August 1984.<sup>73</sup> The soldiers committed many acts of brutality which included rape and murder. The relationship between the government and the church was an uneasy one. The violent coup which took place in 1980 had deposed the Vice President Bennie D. Warner who was also the Bishop of the United Methodist Church in Liberia.<sup>74</sup> Werner was attending the General Conference in the US when the coup took place. When Kulah took over there was no improvement in the relationship as reported by Tracy Early:

...a country with human rights conditions creating a special problem for United Methodist was Liberia. The government of Liberian President Samuel Doe stopped subsidies of United Methodist medical and educational work after Bishop Arthur Kulah attacked a decree that forbade criticism of the government.<sup>75</sup>

Mutare in Zimbabwe was judged the most suitable site in terms of the criteria set.<sup>76</sup> Despite the dissident problems experienced in Matabeleland, Zimbabwe was viewed as showing "more signs of stability, prosperity and hope than other African nations."<sup>77</sup> One needs to look at several factors in addition to those which answered to the criteria set by the search committee. Firstly, at independence the government pronounced a policy of reconciliation which saw attitudes towards Mugabe as a hard line Marxist changing. Secondly, was the successful demobilisation of the two main guerrilla groups and Rhodesian armed forces and their integration into a single army. Thirdly, the most encouraging factor was the unity negotiations between ZANU (PF) and (PF) ZAPU which resulted in the signing of the Unity Accord on 22 December

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<sup>72</sup> Alaric Tokpa, "Liberia," in *The State of Academic Freedom in Africa 1995*, (Dakar: CODESRIA, 1996), p. 165.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> "World Division: The Situation in Africa."

<sup>75</sup> Tracy Early, "1985 Missions in Review," *New World Outlook*, January 1986.

<sup>76</sup> "Daily Christian Advocate," (Advance edition), p. F-59.

<sup>77</sup> C. Lacy, "Viewpoint: 'God Bless Africa,'" *New World Outlook*, October 1988.



1987 leading to cessation of hostilities between army factions of the two parties.

Even perceptions of leading church figures saw Zimbabwe in positive light:

No transition from colonial or white power in African nations has been easy. But in Zimbabwe, despite the poor press coverage we get in this country, there has been a remarkable degree of reconciliation and healing [...] (integrating) the two main insurgent armies into a new army with the old Rhodesia militia. This was an extraordinary thing and it seems to have worked [...]. Zimbabweans are proud of the fact that the settlement of their war for independence brought reconciliation instead of retribution. The result is a stable government with a substantial proportion of the former white colonial people still living and working in the country.<sup>78</sup>

On another front, the UMC in Zimbabwe was viewed as a promising church, the "...membership increase from under 20,000 in 1982 to over 61,000 in 1988" reflects a church that "has grown strong and is providing not only vital spiritual leadership but also outstanding leadership in education, medical services, and in the political arena."<sup>79</sup> These factors portrayed Zimbabwe as a very promising country.

The GBHEM meeting in October 1987 accepted the Site Selection Committee's recommendations and prepared a formal resolution for the establishment of Africa University for approval by the General Conference of 1988. The Zimbabwe Annual Conference meeting in December 1987 donated about 1,500 acres which were part of the Old Mutare mission land north of Mutare town for the university. This was only a formality because the Zimbabwe Conference had already offered the land when it lobbied the Site Selection Committee.<sup>80</sup> The site selection committee must have found the "vast stretch of land in a beautiful and scenic valley with rich red soil suitable for agriculture"<sup>81</sup> very appealing.

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<sup>78</sup> Trotter, *Loving God with one's Mind*, p. 107f.

<sup>79</sup> Adkins, "Africa Church Growth and Development."

<sup>80</sup> Interview with M. Chambara.

<sup>81</sup> Carvalho, "Chancellor's Speech."

While the Site Selection Committee was carrying out its assessments the Zimbabwe Annual Conference, in anticipation of a decision in their favour, started negotiations with government. Intense lobbying also targeted insiders at various levels who questioned the wisdom of establishing a university at this stage in the history of the church. As a result, the General Conference meeting in St Louis, Missouri on 30 April 1988 endorsed “the African initiative to create the first ever UMC university in Africa after [...] years of the existence of the church on the continent [...] approved by a very wide majority of eight hundred and fifty five votes in favour and one hundred and twenty one against with six abstentions...”<sup>82</sup> The approval signalled the birth of Africa University and the General Conference proceeded to direct the General Council on Finance and Administration (GCFA) to accommodate a total budget of twenty million dollars in the budget for the 1989 to 1992 quadrennium. Ten million was to be raised through apportionments and the other through World Service special gifts.<sup>83</sup> The decision of the General Conference sealed the policy of the UMC on university education in Africa which included its willingness to fund the project from international sources. The nature of the university was international from the onset, that is, in the rupture, the financing, and the ecclesiastical structures which adjudicated the process.

An inaugural nineteen member Board of Directors of the University was appointed.<sup>84</sup> It consisted of eleven Africans and eight Americans. Of the eleven Africans; Liberia, Sierra Leone, Angola, Burundi and Mozambique had one each on the Board. Bishop E. Carvalho represented the Angolans. Zaire and Zimbabwe had each three including Bishop Muzorewa. Other notable names on the Board were Bishop F. Herbert Skeete, Chairperson of the GBHEM and Dr Roger Ireson who succeeded Dr Thomas F. Trotter as General Secretary. It is interesting that the international scope of the Board’s membership, while reflecting to some extent, some fair distribution of

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<sup>82</sup> “1988 General Conference Report to the 9<sup>th</sup> Session of the Zimbabwe Annual Conference,” *Official Journal of the Zimbabwe Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, 1988*, (Mutare: United Methodist Church, 1988), p. 172.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 179.

representation on the African continent was, outside Africa, monopolised by the United States. There were no representatives from Europe and Asia on the Board. This pattern of representation is also evident in the composition of subcommittees and task forces such as the subcommittee appointed by the Board of Directors to work on the master plan and the task force appointed to meet the Presidential Commission of Inquiry. The only Africans in these two cases were Zimbabweans. The composition later changed to accommodate representatives from other regions as well.

The subcommittee appointed by the Board of Directors consisted of: Richard E. Reeves, a member of the Board of Trustees; Julius S. Der Scott Jr.; Dr Ken Yamada, a former General Secretary of the GBHEM; and J.W.Z. Kurewa,<sup>85</sup> a Zimbabwean academic, UMC minister and Senior Secretary to the Parliament of Zimbabwe. The subcommittee was tasked to work on a master plan which would evolve into a charter for the university. The master plan was to have the following structure: assumptions, institution, mission, educational goals and objectives, governance, administration, organisational chart, academic programme, student developmental services, financial resources, building plans. A draft of the master plan was presented to the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees which met in Harare on 18 and 19 October 1988. Originally, the full Board of Trustees had been scheduled to meet on these dates but it was realised that this was not necessary because the Zimbabwe government did not have a policy on private universities and was not as yet ready to take any action on the UMC proposal. It was therefore a case of the church's aspirations not matched by government policy.

### **The delay: aspirations without policy**

The Seventh Day Adventists and United Methodists were ready to establish universities before the government was. The SDA had to wait for ten years since its initial contacts with government while for the UMC it was five years. The position of the UMC was frustrating in that the denomination's highest decision making body's

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<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 180. Kurewa was employed by government from 1980 to 1989.

approval of the AU project and its pledge for financial support were clear signals that the church was ready to embark on the project. Daniel C. Levy<sup>86</sup> has pointed out that in a number of cases not only in Africa, the emergence of private universities caught governments by surprise. Consequently the governments were in some cases unable to immediately respond positively to the challenge, resulting in delayed policy making processes. In the case of Zimbabwe, the government had probably underestimated the church's seriousness on the project and as well not foreseen the political implications which demanded careful consideration. The government then saw itself unable to give a ready response because there was no appropriate legislation in which case the long process of drafting and tabling the appropriate bill had to be followed.<sup>87</sup> The fact that the church was proposing to enter the new area of university education was in itself a challenge that the government needed to carefully consider. This aspect slowed down the process of coming up with a relevant piece of legislation. Reference has already been made to the State's struggle for intellectual hegemony. Murapa<sup>88</sup> points out that the government was struggling with three questions which had legislative implications, namely the nature, need for and role of a private university. Murapa, however, overlooks the fact that these questions had to be located within the real challenge before government, which was not a question of policy reflected by appropriate legislation but the ideological implications of the new phenomenon. The State President speaking at the official opening of AU in 1994 had this to say:

The arrangements governing the relationships of co-operation between the Government of Zimbabwe and non-governmental organisations in the provision of education are intended to ensure harmony between the two parties [...]. Some of you might legitimately ask, why it seemed to take so long to grant the United Methodist Church a Charter to establish Africa University and other proposed universities. The time taken to grant Africa University and other proposed universities has to do with the nature and character of Africa University as well as other proposed universities. Africa University, as an institution of higher learning, has a more explicit international dimension in terms of its management, control and financing, its objectives and its student

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<sup>86</sup> Daniel C. Levy, "Unanticipated Development: Perspectives on Private Higher Education's Emerging Roles," PROPHE, Working paper N0. 1, (Albany, NY, April, 2002), p. 9. <http://www.albany.edu/~prophe/publication/unanticipated.doc> (Accessed 3 May 2005).

<sup>87</sup> Carvalho, interview with the *Manica Post*, 6 April 1990.

<sup>88</sup> Murapa, "Private Universities," p. 82.

intake and staff recruitment. We therefore had to look at all these aspects of Africa University, study them within government and, at times, in consultation with your Board of Directors in order to satisfy ourselves that the project was viable.<sup>89</sup>

Inspired by the international nature of their project, UMC representatives applied pressure on the government. Protracted negotiations between the UMC and government continued for five years raising fears in UMC circles that their membership and potential donors would lose interest as they grew tired of waiting. Another cause for anxiety in UMC ranks expressed by Kurewa, at that time the prospective Vice Chancellor, was that the long delay would result in the project becoming more expensive.<sup>90</sup> Some of the pressure also came from sceptics within the church. Zimbabwe had been recommended by the Site Selection Committee from a list of other interested African countries and the 87% vote at the General Conference in favour of the project, though overwhelming, meant that there were some within the UMC family who were wary of the idea of a university at all, or at least were unhappy with the selection of Mutare.

There was also a historical antecedent of opposition to the church's continued involvement in higher education. At the General Conference of 1972 pressure had been brought to bear on the church to "abandon the mission of higher education and turn it over to the public universities."<sup>91</sup> The proposition was put in abeyance by the appointment of a National Commission of United Methodist Higher Education which published a five volume report arguing for the church's continued involvement in higher education.<sup>92</sup> The work of the national commission not only saved higher

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<sup>89</sup> R.G. Mugabe, Speech at the Official Opening of Africa University, Mutare, 23 April 1994. Information Office, Africa University.

<sup>90</sup> *Manica Post*, 1 June, 1990.

<sup>91</sup> F. Thomas Trotter, "The Church's Mission in Higher Education in the Twenty-first Century," The Wilson Lecture delivered on 18 October 2002 to the GBHEM staff in Nashville and published in the *Quarterly Review: Journal of Theological Research for Ministry*, vol. 1, (Spring, 2003), p. 76.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.* The volumes which were published are: (1) T. Michael Elliott et. al., *A College-related Church: United Methodist Perspectives*, (Nashville: National Commission on United Methodist Education, 1976); (2) T. Michael Elliott et. al., *Toward 2000: Perspectives on the Environment for United Methodist and Independent Higher Education*, (Nashville: National Commission on United Methodist Education, 1976); (3) T. Michael Elliott et. al., *To Give the Key to Knowledge*; (4) T. Michael Elliott et. al., *Ministry on Campus: A United Methodist Mission Statement and Survey Report*, (Nashville: National Commission on United Methodist Education, 1976); (5) T. Michael Elliott, et. al., *Endangered Service: Independent Colleges, Public Policy, and the First Amendment*, (Nashville: National Commission on United Methodist Education, 1976).



education from being turned over to the public sphere but also created fertile ground for future projects such as AU. Of special note was the recasting of the mission statement:

The United Methodist Church is in Higher education because it is the nature of the church to express itself in the intellectual love of God. For the United Methodist and Christian, explicit is the assumption that the world is knowable and is the expression of God's Being and Will. For the Christian, there must be a response to the implications of this world viewed in terms of human events. The "purpose" of church-related institutions is deeply and inextricably related to reflection on the "purpose" of God.<sup>93</sup>

This did not however, mean that those who were not for the idea were silenced as Trotter remarked with reference to his own experience as General Secretary of the GBHEM from 1973 to 1987:

A great enterprise in those years was the development of the vision for a university in Africa. The task was judged by many to be too far out of the box. Were not other boards responsible for missionary areas? Did not the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry have enough on its plate with domestic colleges and professional ministry? And wouldn't the project take resources away from already agreed-on initiatives?<sup>94</sup>

Trotter further notes one of the sources of the opposition: "It was high risk, innovative, and accomplished in spite of serious bureaucratic opposition in some sectors of the general administrative apparatus of the church. But the rank and file ministry and laity found it to be important, imaginative and have supported it with enthusiasm."<sup>95</sup> Among the negative suggestions was that church-related institutions were becoming irrelevant and unable to "provide morally safe environments for students" and so the solution would be "to encourage students to attend public universities, because, there moral pretensions are not claimed."<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Quoted in Cook, "Black Colleges," p. 248.

<sup>94</sup> Trotter, "The Church's Mission in Higher Education," p. 72.

<sup>95</sup> F. Thomas Trotter, "The False Promises of Structure as Mission: A Response to Daniel Church's Proposals for the General Council on Ministries," *Occasional Papers*, NO. 98, (Nashville: GBHEM, April 2002), p. 7.

<sup>96</sup> Trotter, "The Case for Higher Education," p. 3.

James H. Salley, AU's Associate Vice Chancellor for Institutional Advancement, relates similar negative and pessimistic attitudes encountered:

When the Africa Initiative was passed by the 1988 General Conference in Saint Louis, Missouri, there were naysayers who said we would never lay a brick, build a building, graduate a student, or make an impact on the African continent. One high-level United Methodist Church Official was heard to say: 'It is just like pouring money down a rat hole.'<sup>97</sup>

While opposition in some continents had to do mainly with the question of resources, lack of interest and prejudice, negative comments from Africans were more to do with the choice of the site. Some of these sentiments were openly expressed.<sup>98</sup> With such a situation who would want to allow a situation were detractors might find reason to advocate for a review of the whole decision? The choice of site also created objections even beyond Africa. It was argued that by establishing a university in Zimbabwe the United Methodist Church was collaborating with Mugabe's Marxist government thereby raising fears "of exposing students from other African nations to a socialist nation."<sup>99</sup>

Towards the 1988 General Conference there was apprehension in some quarters concerning the site for the university. Officials in the GBGM, GCFA and GBHEM expressed the need for caution as evidenced by a memorandum from Doris E. Hess pointing out the need to be aware of the "long range" involvement for higher education in Africa, and flexibility of location." According to Hess, "strong feeling was expressed that something must be said on possible location of a new institution. It will read as 'an appropriate site *maybe* (sic) Zimbabwe."<sup>100</sup> As a result it was agreed that the resolution to the General Conference should be amended and not make the site too specific: "This action would make it possible to consider other sites if something should things go awry with the Zimbabwe plan."<sup>101</sup> However, the

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<sup>97</sup> "Africa University Springboard for Local, International Students," *The Herald*, 25 February 2005.

<sup>98</sup> Interview with P.T. Chikafu.

<sup>99</sup> Lacy, "God Bless Africa."

<sup>100</sup> Memorandum: "Redesign BHEM Africa Initiative Petition," Doris E. Hess to Peggy Billings, Doreen Tilghman and Charles Germany, 8 March 1988. GCAH: Africa-All Africa-Institutions: African University (Methodist) Proposal, 1988, Box: 2532-3-4:13.

<sup>101</sup> Glen Larum, "Zimbabwe Approval Assured but Delayed," *United Methodist Reporter*, 4 March 1988.

proposed amendment was not incorporated in the final petition to the General Conference.<sup>102</sup> The most probable reason was that the Minister of Higher Education had agreed to write a letter of assurance, to be presented to the General Conference, confirming that he, together with President Mugabe were in support of the project.<sup>103</sup>

The church lobbied politicians and members of parliament in the Manicaland province. To further emphasise its seriousness the Minister of Higher Education, David Karimanzira, who had just been appointed after the 1990 general elections, was invited to tour the site of the proposed university. To welcome the Minister at the site were over 200 local people as well as church members; an expression of their support for the project. Also present were local politicians and Members of Parliament, the Attorney General, who was not only present in his official capacity but was expressing solidarity with his home province, and a local traditional chief Abisha Mutasa.<sup>104</sup> Addressing the gathering at the site, the Minister of Higher Education assured the UMC that the government was working on the matter:

A bill that will pave the way for the establishment of other universities in Zimbabwe has been drafted and is currently under review by the Ministry of Higher Education before it goes to parliament this month [...]. The Attorney General has finished drafting the Bill and I will have a look at it, make my recommendations and then send it back to the Attorney General before it is tabled in Parliament.<sup>105</sup>

In apparent response to complaints that the government was taking its time the Minister justified the government's position arguing that the government could not move any faster than the legislative process and that furthermore its agenda was not solely on private universities:

I am aware of the urgency of this case but we have to legislate for the existence of other universities before we start building. We are also waiting for the same bill to build our own university of science and technology in Bulawayo. All I can say is that it will be in parliament as early as June.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> "Daily Christian Advocate," (Advance edition), pp. F-58-60

<sup>103</sup> Larum, "Zimbabwe Approval Assured but Delayed."

<sup>104</sup> *Manica Post*, 1 June, 1990.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

Speaking on the same occasion, the ZANU (PF) Provincial Chairman for Manicaland, Zororo Duri supported the Minister and “thanked the government for responding favourably to the construction of a university in his province.”<sup>107</sup> Duri went on to assure the church leadership that the political leadership in the province were fully behind the project and “that should the Bill be introduced in parliament he and other backbenchers would support it.” Addressing an election campaign rally in Manicaland, President Mugabe pledged government support to the AU project.<sup>108</sup> The City of Mutare expressed its support for the project by pledging not to bid for a state sponsored university or campus so that it would not “weaken or jeopardise the case for the UMC to establish their university in this area.”<sup>109</sup> Apparently, Manicaland politicians, even those with different political persuasions regarded the project as more than a UMC initiative but also their own and so they were active in lobbying their colleagues and government officials who were not part of the province. An interesting case is the active lobbying<sup>110</sup> by the influential, outspoken and charismatic Edgar Tekere, a former Member of Parliament and ruling party stalwart who had just formed his own opposition party, the Zimbabwe Unity Movement.

Hesitation on the part of government could be linked to problems at the state university. Given the increase in student activism at UZ there was some apprehension concerning how the government would be able to control private universities. It was a question of how to handle not only the church-related university but also the sponsoring church itself. It was also a question of fears based on the state’s need to maintain its hegemony. Hence, there was a reluctance to accommodate new players in higher education who may turn out to be conduits of external influences or institutions which might produce graduates with intellectual leanings rivalling the *status quo*.

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<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>108</sup> Roger W. Ireson, “Africa University Update,” *Africa University Journal*, June 1990, BHEM, Nashville.

<sup>109</sup> Correspondence: V. M. Matamisa (Town Clerk – Mutare) to S. Mphisa (Secretary – Commission of Inquiry into the establishment of a Second University/Campus), 5 August 1988, in Africa University: Progress Report and Plan of Development 1992 (Box).

<sup>110</sup> Interview with M. Chambara.

Towards the end of 1990 the Bill was finally passed into law but AU had to wait for another year before the Charter could be granted on 21 January 1992.<sup>111</sup> The church was, however, given the green light to commence construction in 1991 on the strength of negotiations between the government and the church.<sup>112</sup> The Provincial daily newspaper, *Manica Post*,<sup>113</sup> carried an editorial in which it described the imminent opening of the university as “an historic occasion considering the tedious negotiations that have taken place behind the scenes over the months.” The editorial further criticised the red tape in government which had contributed to the delay. It is interesting that while those in the higher structures of the UMC were worried by the delay, a significant number of ordinary church members viewed the whole process from a spiritual perspective. To the membership in general, the question of a UMC university in Mutare was a foregone conclusion. Joseph Hartzell’s vision on Mount Chiremba was not reversible. They were not even interested in the bureaucratic process but in the realisation of the dream. Not many even bothered to consistently follow the progress of events.<sup>114</sup> As a demonstration of support for the project, over 3,000 people attended a four hour long groundbreaking ceremony at the proposed site on 6 April 1991.<sup>115</sup> Among the guests at the ceremony which was officiated by the Minister of Higher Education were UMC Bishops from the US, Agency officials and some foreign diplomats.

### **Towards a policy: the Williams Commission**

In the face of the serious challenge from churches, the government had to come up with the necessary legal framework. Its agenda went beyond the issue of private

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<sup>111</sup> Zimbabwe Government: Proclamation 1 of 1992, Statutory Instrument 29 of 1992, Government Printers, Harare.

<sup>112</sup> “Editorial,” *Manica Post*, 2 November, 1990.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>114</sup> Interview with M. Chambara. This observation is based on District Superintendent Rev. M. Chambara’s personal assessment arising from his interactions with church officials and members at various levels both within his District of Mutare Central and beyond.

<sup>115</sup> Minutes of the Executive Committee, BHEM, The United Methodist Church, New Orleans, Louisiana, 9 May 1991. Records of Higher Education Division 1953-1993. See also “Mission Memo,” *New World Outlook*, July–August 1991; N. Lambert, “Breaking Ground for Africa University,” *Africa University Journal Special Edition*, April 1991, BHEM, Nashville; E. der Carvalho, “O My God, What a Morning!” *Africa University Journal*, July 1991.



universities. While as contained in Murapa's observation,<sup>116</sup> the government had to assess the nature, need for and role of private universities in Zimbabwe the government itself was concerned with the role and expansion of universities. Advocates for a State sponsored new university for science and technology were also frustrated by the delays.<sup>117</sup> The state university was the subject of lobbying from Matabeleland where it was argued that the second state university had to be built there to ensure balanced national development. This had serious political overtones.

The signing of the National Unity Agreement on 22 December 1987 seems to have inspired Mugabe's government and given them confidence to break new ground in various sectors including tackling the challenge of higher education. As the seeds of the ESAP aimed at economic liberalisation were about to be sown; when the one party state idea was being vigorously contested both within ZANU (PF) and outside; as new political parties were being conceived and as tremors of student activism spiced by anti-government demonstrations at the UZ and polytechnics were increasing, a Presidential Commission of Inquiry was set up to look into the establishment of a second state university or campus. The Commission was appointed in April 1988 under a government Statutory Instrument.<sup>118</sup>

The idea of a second state university first came up in 1982 in relation to the report of a committee set up at the University of Zimbabwe to investigate the high failure rate of UZ students during the years 1980 and 1981.<sup>119</sup> It is interesting that church organisations on the one hand, and university academics as well as administrators on the other, were thinking about expansion in university education although with different motives. There is no available evidence suggesting government interest in establishing more university institutions in this early period.

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<sup>116</sup> Murapa, "Private Universities."

<sup>117</sup> "NUST, Historical Background," *History of the National University of Science and Technology*. <http://www.nust.ac.zw/about/abthistory.htm> (Accessed 5 May 2004), p. 2.

<sup>118</sup> Government of Zimbabwe: Statutory Instrument 59A of 1988, provided for under Commissions of Inquiry Act Chapter 80, Government Printer, Harare.

<sup>119</sup> "NUST, Historical Background," p. 1.

The Commission's membership was diverse in terms of expertise and nationality: The chairman, Peter R.C. Williams was the Director of the Education Programme in the Commonwealth Secretariat in London; Professor R.F. Amonoo was a lecturer in the Faculty of Arts, University of Ghana; Professor Z. Krajina was a professor of medicine and former Rector at the University of Zagreb in Yugoslavia. Zimbabwean nationals in the Commission were: Dr S. Mahlahla, the Director of the National Planning Agency in the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development; Professor Emmanuel A. Ngara, Pro Vice Chancellor at the University of Zimbabwe; Dr Godfrey G. Sikipa, the Principal Medical Director in the Ministry of Health; Mrs S.R.N. Dangarembwa, the only woman member, was a Commissioner in the Public Service Commission; M.F. Haddon was an Executive Director responsible for mining operations in the Zimbabwe Mining Development Corporation; Rev. Griffiths Malaba, a Methodist minister, was a Personnel Executive with a local company. He had also served the Ministry of Education for a long time, dating back to the colonial days, in various capacities. Malaba was not on the Commission as a representative of churches or religious bodies but by virtue of his experience in education. Samuel C. Mumbengegwi was the Deputy Secretary responsible for institutions in the Ministry of Higher Education.<sup>120</sup> The Commission was given six months from 25 April to present its findings but the final report only came out on 14 February 1989.

The Commission worked within the following thirteen terms of reference:

1. To investigate the need for and assess the feasibility of setting up a second university/campus bearing in mind the manpower requirements and development objectives of Zimbabwe.
2. To review existing programmes at the University of Zimbabwe and other tertiary institutions with a view to assessing their adequacy in meeting the manpower requirements and development objectives of the nation.
3. To make recommendations on whether the second university/campus should have a science and technology bias and any other alternative bias, taking into account the need for rapid technological and industrial development in Zimbabwe.

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<sup>120</sup> Williams Commission, p. iii. See also "History Background: Commission" *History of the National University of Science and Technology*, <http://www.nust.ac.zw/about/abthistoryCommission.htm> (Accessed 5 May 2004).

4. To investigate and make recommendations on the need for tertiary institutions to fill existing and new gaps in the education system and the economy, with particular reference to the following areas- distance and continuing education, co-operatives, rural development, agriculture, forestry, manufacturing and any other areas relevant to the development needs of the nation.
5. To make recommendations on the relationship between the proposed university/campus with the university of Zimbabwe and other tertiary institutions.
6. To make recommendations on the structure of the new university/campus, including the student enrolment, the number of staff required, the administrative structure and the disciplines to be covered.
7. To consider the desirability of constructing a health science building for the University of Zimbabwe School of Medicine.
8. To determine the capital equipment and recurrent costs for the first five to ten years of the project and suggest ways of financing it.
9. To make recommendations on the location of the university/campus bearing in mind social, political, economic and other relevant factors.
10. To consult as widely as possible with Government, University, Parastatal, Provincial and private sector authorities and personnel as well as with other members of the public, on all matters pertaining to its terms of reference.
11. To recommend a plan for integrating and co-ordinating the various forms of higher education existent at various institutions in the country.
12. To examine the relationship between other tertiary forms of higher education and the university; and
13. To produce and submit its report not later than six months after the establishment of the Commission.<sup>121</sup>

As can be seen from the terms of reference, the government's concern was expansion of public university education and the need to reconsider the role of the university in relation to science and technology as part of national development objectives. The Commission noted that the government's quest for a new social order can be achieved mainly through socio-economic development strategies which are in line with the ruling party's ideology.<sup>122</sup> A significant portion of responses submitted to the

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<sup>121</sup> Government of Zimbabwe: Statutory Instrument 59A of 1988, Government Printer, Harare.

<sup>122</sup> Williams Commission, pp. 1-2.

Commission in writing was limited to the terms of reference and therefore did not focus on issues such as the provision of university education by private organisations.<sup>123</sup>

Curiously, although the government was officially aware of the intentions of the SDA and the UMC on university education and had responded by stating that there was no policy to deal with the proposals, the thirteen terms of reference excluded the question of non-government provision of university education. The government seemed not prepared for the challenge of liberalising higher education by allowing new players to come in. Nevertheless, the government only asked the Commission to also consider the issue after the Statutory Instrument outlining the terms of reference had already been gazetted.<sup>124</sup> The oversight suggests lack of government interest in the private provision of university education. However, in the course of the Commission's work the subject of private universities became a major issue as a result of pressure from those Christian denominations aspiring to have universities.

Surprisingly, only a handful of church organisations responded to the Commission's general call to make submissions. The following church organisations and church related tertiary institutions submitted evidence: Solusi College – SDA (written and oral); General Conference of SDAs (written); UMC, meeting in Harare (written and oral); United Methodist Church, meeting with representatives in Mutare (oral); The Theological College of Zimbabwe affiliated to the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe, meeting in Bulawayo (written and oral); Anglican Diocese of Harare (written); ZCC (written); Zimbabwe Catholic Bishop's Conference (ZCBC) (written); Bondolfi Teacher's College - Catholic (oral); Morgenster Teacher's College – RCZ (oral); Nyadire Teachers' College – UMC (oral). Oral evidence was more interactive and gave those who were submitting, especially interested parties like churches, an opportunity to argue for their case. The interest of churches in presenting evidence was not so much on the original terms of reference as outlined in

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<sup>123</sup> See for example, Geoffrey T.Z. Chada, "Paper Submitted to the Commission of Inquiry into the Establishment of a Second University in Zimbabwe" (G.T.Z. Chada's Personal Papers, Harare), 14 July 1988.

<sup>124</sup> Williams Commission, p. xi.

the statutory instrument but to present their cases. The UMC describes the meeting of their representatives with the Commission on 17 August 1988 as an opportunity for them "to prove that they are not newcomers in the task of establishing universities."<sup>125</sup>

It is significant that only three churches out of a long list of Christian denominations in the country and only one Anglican Diocese out of four submitted evidence. Only four out of the total of 176 of the Commission's oral interviews were held with churches. Seven church organisations out of a total of 156 submitted written evidence. Evidence by the three church-related teacher training colleges was submitted in response to a direct invitation by the Commission. The colleges were part of the educational institutions recognised by the government which were to be visited by the Commission as it gathered evidence. Churches were not put in the mandatory category of organisations which the commission *had to meet*. It was left to them to respond to the Commission's general invitations to the public advertised in the print and electronic media. This raises two important questions. Firstly, concerning the role of churches as important stakeholders that needed to be consulted on national issues. Secondly, the extent to which the churches understood themselves in terms of their right to participate in an important policy-making process such as this one? The poor response by the churches may be attributed to level of interest in the topical issue.

For its part the government did not regard churches as a special constituency to be consulted. C. Kapfunde's survey on factors influencing the formulation of education policy in Zimbabwe suggests that:

In spite of the fact that church bodies played a significant role in the provision of education in Zimbabwe, respondents' ratings seem to suggest that these exercised influence which was not crucial. In their ranking of unofficial policy actors, respondents placed church bodies into third position [...] due to the fact that church bodies were rarely consulted on matters of policy but that these groups acted to

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<sup>125</sup> Official Journal of the Zimbabwe Annual Conference, p. 180.



implement government programmes, block or slow down policies to which they did not subscribe.<sup>126</sup>

Although Kapfunde's study makes no specific reference to the Williams Commission or university education the results of his survey are significant as they expose state attitudes to religious bodies in policymaking. By implication, the question of non-government provision of university education was not initially ranked as one of the critical issues. The main contributory factor which led the Government to request the Commission to include non-government organisations was the pressure through lobbying and the proposals coming from the SDA, the UMC and the Theological College of Zimbabwe. It is these three organisations, apart from the ZCBC, ZCC and the Anglican Diocese of Harare, who engaged the Commission in various ways including submission of written and oral evidence in which they argued for the need to establish their own universities.

In spite of the Commission's strong emphasis on science and technology in the terms of reference, proposals submitted by the three church groups after the Commission had visited their sites, did not concern themselves with this thrust but with what they considered their religious mandate. The SDA church and the Theological College of Zimbabwe were more concerned with recognition of degrees they were already offering. The alternative of being affiliated with the UZ had not yielded any positive results.<sup>127</sup> It was hoped that once the government recognised their degrees the institutions would automatically be recognised as universities. The request of the SDA through its submission<sup>128</sup> to the Commission was twofold; that "Andrews University degrees earned at Solusi College be assessed in accordance with the criteria established by the Ministry of Education for recognition of American degrees, so that graduates from Zimbabwe may more fully serve their country without any undue hardship." Secondly: "Recognising the urgent need for additional tertiary educational opportunities in Zimbabwe, that an accreditation commission be

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<sup>126</sup> C.L. Kapfunde, "An Analysis of Factors Influencing the Shaping of Educational Policy in Independent Zimbabwe," (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Zimbabwe, 1997), p. 168.

<sup>127</sup> "Evidence to the Commission of Inquiry into the Establishment of a Second University or Campus, Theological College of Zimbabwe," in Williams Commission, p. 57.

<sup>128</sup> "Appendix I. 10B, The Seventh Day Adventist Church – Solusi College."

established to evaluate for recognition purposes any programmes of higher learning developed in the future by non-government institutions.”

### **The Commission’s recommendations and the passing of legislation**

While commending the role of non-government organisations in the provision of university education, the Commission emphasised the need for government to put in place safeguards to ensure that its interests were looked after. It was recommended that all private universities would need to be registered and regulated by an accreditation body. Five sets of conditions covering; governance, financing, curriculum, student enrolment and staffing, were proposed as guidance for those aspiring to be involved in private provision of university education.<sup>129</sup> The first set stipulated that the institution should be established and run in terms of the laws of Zimbabwe and the government should have the right to inspect the university. The government of Zimbabwe should directly be represented on the governing Board of the university. Apart from government representatives on the Board, “a reasonable proportion of the remaining Board Members should be persons of distinction, chosen in consultation between the Government of Zimbabwe and the university sponsors.” Furthermore, the government should be represented in the student admissions and staff recruitment bodies.

Secondly, there should be proof of a steady and reliable source of funding for the university. There should be consultation on the level of fees to be charged. Non-government universities shall be non-profit making organisations. Thirdly, the university’s curriculum should take into account the Zimbabwe context, and “its general orientation should accord with the philosophy of the Zimbabwean society.” In relation to this: “Priorities for the development of faculties and schools must be set so as to reflect the development needs of Zimbabwe as well as the interests of the sponsors, provided that such interests are not in conflict with those of Zimbabwe.” Fourthly, student admissions should be based on merit without discrimination on grounds of religion, ethnicity, colour, race, sex, or political opinion. In the case of international institutions the majority of students admitted should be Zimbabwean,

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<sup>129</sup> Williams Commission, pp. 61–2.

and entry qualifications for students should be equivalent to those of state universities. According to the fifth set, there should be non-discrimination in the appointment of academic staff. They “should be of a calibre that would qualify them to teach in any one of the national universities of Zimbabwe.” Preference in the appointment of staff should be given to qualified Zimbabweans. The Commission further recommended that the government should set up two bodies. One body would co-ordinate non-degree granting higher education, and the other would deal with accreditation and regulation for the establishment of new private universities.<sup>130</sup>

Following the Williams Commission’s report, the government proceeded to enact the National Council for Higher Education Act (NCHEA) in 1990, but did not create a non-degree granting tertiary education body. Through a subsequent Statutory Instrument, a number of Acts were assigned to the Minister of Higher and Tertiary Education and thereby giving him overall control of all aspects of tertiary education and training.<sup>131</sup> The council was established as a semi-autonomous body but answerable to the Minister of Higher Education and the State President. New state universities would be established through Acts of parliament and private universities through the granting of Charters which would be statutory instruments. Vice Chancellors of the State universities would be members of the NCHE. It is interesting to note that the format and content of clauses in the Acts for state universities are in many cases similar and modelled on the UZ Act of 1990, while those of private universities are similar mainly in structure and not content. The NCHE is regulated by the NCHE Act 32/1990. Applications for the establishment of private universities have to be accompanied by a draft charter which covers seven points: a) the name of the university; b) objects and functions; c) membership and governance; d) administration of the university; e) the finances; f) appointment, removal and conditions of service for staff; g) admissions, rights and discipline of

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<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 94-6.

<sup>131</sup> Statutory Instrument 219/1997, Assignment of Functions, Minister of Higher Education and Technology. The Acts assigned to Minister were as follows: Manpower Planning and Development Act Chapter 28.02; National Council for Higher Education Act Chapter 28.08; National University of Science and Technology Act Chapter 25.13; University of Zimbabwe Act Chapter 25.16; and The Zimbabwe Institute of Development Studies Act , NO. 12/1984.

students.<sup>132</sup> Considerable emphasis was placed on the financial aspect and applications were expected to present a clear business proposal.<sup>133</sup> The business proposal according to Joyce Mkushi, Executive Secretary of the NCHE, should have a strategic plan and cash flow projection both covering five years.<sup>134</sup> The government was very concerned about poorly planned and funded projects which would eventually cause problems of internal conflicts arising from scarcity of funds. Poorly planned and inadequately funded universities posed a threat to standards in higher education and they could result in chaotic situations. By way of reflection, Ignatius Chombo, a former Minister Higher Education, writing in 2002 noted that NCHE had been limited to the granting of Charters to upcoming universities without concern for operations in terms of quality and relevance in the institutions.<sup>135</sup>

### **Justification by history versus the fear of 'mushrooms' and subversion**

The real fears, while including the international nature of the proposed universities, were that the churches were proposing to enter an area of service which was completely new. These fears were expressed not only before and during but even after the passing of legislation. Questions were bound to be asked concerning the nature of the relationship between church and state in this sphere. On the other hand those who supported the involvement of churches in university education argued that churches had a good reputation in providing education to the nation and their complementary role should not be curtailed. When the report of the Williams Commission was tabled in Parliament most members, particularly back benchers, made reference to the role played by churches in education in the country and saw that as justification for church involvement in university education.<sup>136</sup> In line with its findings the Commission had outlined the following points which had been articulated in favour of churches:

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<sup>132</sup> Government of Zimbabwe: National Council for Higher Education Act 32/1990, Chapter 25:08, Para 20. Government Printer, Harare.

<sup>133</sup> Interviews with E. Chomutiri and J.W.Z. Kurewa.

<sup>134</sup> Letter from F.J.F. Mkushi to the Chairman of SAMU, 22 September 2003, SAMU File, MCA, Harare.

<sup>135</sup> Ignatius Chombo, "Higher Education and Technology in Zimbabwe: Meaningful Developments in the New Millennium," in *ZJER*, vol. 12, NO. 3, p. 9.

<sup>136</sup> Parliamentary Debates, vol. 16 NO. 38, 9 September 1989, Government Printers, Harare.



- a) Church organisations have continued to play a complementary role in educational provision at sub-university level. They should be allowed to play a similar role at university level.
- b) The establishment of such institutions will help to relieve the pressure of demand for higher education by qualified applicants.
- c) The infrastructure for private universities will remain permanently in situ. This is an investment which will benefit the country even if the private organisation should opt out at a later stage.
- d) The international connections of the institutions will enrich the educational experience of the students and contribute to the generation of foreign exchange.
- e) Non-governmental universities provide an opportunity for the mainstream churches to train their clergy at degree level in the context and environment of the Zimbabwean culture and ideology instead of abroad.<sup>137</sup>

Commenting on the prospects of a university in Masvingo a few years later, Josiah Hungwe, the Governor and Resident Minister of the Province, was quoted by *The Chronicle* of 2 August 1995, saying that he preferred a church university to one run by the government or the private sector. Hungwe, who claimed to have a special attachment with the RCZ, said that the missionaries had done a lot in the province by establishing a number of schools and related institutions and they had to complete their mission by setting up a university:

If the private sector wants to set up their own university, the door is open but our preference as people brought up by missionaries is that we want a church related university since they are the people who introduced education to this province [...]. Apart from setting up Victoria High and primary schools, the government had done very little for the province as opposed to missionaries who had a number of schools, hospitals and tertiary colleges dotted around the province.<sup>138</sup>

This is significant coming from a member of both the ruling party and government. Nevertheless, the statement should be understood in the context of the euphoria of centenary celebrations which some churches were still holding. The government tried to see churches as partners and not rivals. The capacity of churches to mobilise resources and attract foreign funding as had apparently happened with AU was overestimated. There was also the generally perceived notion of the positive

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<sup>137</sup> Williams Commission, p. 58.

<sup>138</sup> "Governor Prefers Church Varsity," *The Chronicle*, 2 August 1995.



influence of churches which, if properly handled, could tame the wild students and bring in a new university culture. This line of reasoning appeared far fetched when one considers the numerous student strikes at mission schools and also that such schools contributed significant numbers of students to the UZ. As an added inspirational factor, Africa University had held its official opening ceremony graced by the President in April and its first graduation in December the previous year, 1994. Solusi University had been granted its Charter in the same year. Hungwe as a politician who always spoke openly about his membership of the RCZ belonged to the group of politicians and government ministers who appeared sympathetic to churches. Furthermore, there was already a sense of competition in the scramble to set up universities and politicians tended to align themselves with the churches they belonged to as well as lobbying for their regions.

Arguments against allowing church involvement expressed mainly by some government ministers and officials bore hallmarks of political fears more than anything else. The arguments were outlined by the Commission as follows:

- a) Church organisations have vested interests which may conflict with those of the state.
- b) They promote sectarian beliefs which may undermine national unity.
- c) They are likely to influence their protégés with an ideological outlook which is alien to the Zimbabwean culture. This is certain to cause conflict.
- d) Non-government universities will be potential hives of subversive activities.
- e) Monitoring the universities' academic standards and the relevance of their curricula to Zimbabwe's needs will pose a problem. There is need to align university expansion with the country's development requirements and plans.
- f) Such offers are suspicious; sympathetic organisations usually make donations of funds to government projects. Church organisations should do the same.
- g) Churches discriminate on religious grounds. This discrimination will be practiced in admission into church universities.

- h) Allowing one church to establish a university will create a precedent. A mushrooming of church universities is not desirable in the educational system of the country.<sup>139</sup>

It is clear from these sentiments that there is no reference to the question of the ability of churches to establish universities. These views betray underlying suspicions on church organisations. The negative views expressed were rather more to do with beliefs that the university was a delicate institution which if placed in the wrong hands could be difficult to control once the banners of autonomy and academic freedom were raised. The UZ was already creating a lot of problems for the government and several opposition politicians and leaders of the labour union were always keen to address the students on campus.

A report in the *Africa University Journal* quoted Fay Chung, the Acting Minister of Higher Education: "It is government policy to allow private universities provided that they provide the quality education we want and are subject to safeguards to protect Zimbabwe's interests."<sup>140</sup> As she addressed parliament in November, Chung acknowledged the role of churches in providing education, but tried to defend the reasons why there was need for government to take precautions:

Government recognises that mission schools have contributed significantly to African education in Zimbabwe. Government recognises that mission schools are very essential. Government has never been against mission schools as long as the institutions come up to the required standards and do not allow their institutions to be used for anti-Zimbabwe activities.<sup>141</sup>

In the same speech, apparently referring to UZ students who had heckled her and the Vice President Joshua Nkomo, Chung criticised "some confused elements in our society [bent on using] these precepts of [academic freedom] as an excuse for anarchy, hooliganism and *anti-patriotism*..." (emphasis added). In the Catholic affiliated *Moto* magazine of September 1989 Chung was quoted describing the students as "anti-government, malcontents and subversive elements." The government's attacks hinted at a hidden hand influencing the students. The

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<sup>139</sup> Williams Commission, p. 58.

<sup>140</sup> Roger W. Ireson, "Report from Africa," *Africa University Journal*, Office of Interpretation, GBHEM, October 1989.

<sup>141</sup> Parliamentary Debates Vol. 16, No. 41, 16 November 1989, Government Printers, Harare.

government was so nervous that as debate on the report of the Williams Commission was beginning, two journalists of the ZBC who had interviewed a UZ law lecturer who was criticising government policies were suspended from their jobs.<sup>142</sup> Attempts to stem the problem through the University of Zimbabwe Amendment Act of 1990 only created more problems with the students, lecturers and even non-academic staff. The government's new strategy was to give more powers to the university administrators as well as ensure appointment of high level personnel sympathetic to the government and ruling party.

Government fears were that if the problem could reach high levels at the state institution what more in private universities where it did not have a direct influence except through legislation. Would church universities not become fertile grounds for anti-government activities? It is in this context that one may take suspicions, though coming much later, from the MCZ interim Board of Trustees that the government was dragging its feet to grant them a Charter because some of its members had strong links with the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). The member had actually been on the MDC's shortlist of candidates for the Mayor of Harare City.<sup>143</sup> One of the founders had been a prominent member of Muzorewa's UANC while the other, a former Chief Justice was a founding member of the Forum Party.<sup>144</sup> In general churches appeared to be sympathetic to opposition parties or civic bodies and pressure groups which sometimes criticised government policies. During the student activism which started in the late eighties and spilled into the nineties some of the denominational chaplains at the UZ were supportive of student actions and they criticised the way both the university authorities and the government were handling the students. When the state withdrew scholarships for student leaders, the ZCC offered to support them financially.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Parliamentary Debates 30 and 31 May 1989, and 5 July 1989, Government Printers Harare.

<sup>143</sup> Minutes of the Southern Africa Methodist University Interim Board of Trustees held on 11 June 2001. SAMU Files, MCA, Harare.

<sup>144</sup> Thandeka C. Nkiwane, "Opposition Politics in Zimbabwe: The Struggle within the Struggle," in *The Politics of Opposition in Contemporary Africa*, ed. by Adebayo O. Olukoshi (Uppsala: Nordiska, Afrikainstitutet, 1998), p. 102.

<sup>145</sup> Interview with D. Mafinyani. See also, ZCC Roundtable Conference, Harare, ZCC, 18-24 March 1993, quoted in Maxwell, "Church and Democratization," p. 119.

Government concerns on “what political connection they [private universities] represented both locally and in terms of US foreign policy,”<sup>146</sup> were based on the fact that if they fell into the wrong hands or influences, private universities could become purveyors of subversive activities. This line of thinking should also be considered along with political differences with Muzorewa and Sithole. The two clerics were still active politically and commanded considerable respect and influence in their respective churches and beyond. They also, especially, Muzorewa, commanded considerable influence within the ZCC and this was a cause for concern to the government.<sup>147</sup> As observed by Thandeka Nkiwane,<sup>148</sup> the United Parties which evolved from the United African National Congress under Muzorewa drew a lot of its support from the United Methodist Church membership of which he was Bishop. Beyond the UMC membership, were those who subscribed to the Bishop’s “personal political agenda.”<sup>149</sup> Furthermore, both Muzorewa and Sithole came from the same province of Manicaland where Edgar Tekere was based. Since 1987, Manicaland province

had become the hotbed of Zimbabwean politics, courtesy of Edgar Tekere, who used his home base to launch an anti-corruption campaign against senior members of the ruling party. Besides, Manicaland was a particularly sensitive province because, since independence, the ruling party [...] had to contend with supporters of the Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole and Bishop Abel Muzorewa, both of whom ZANU (PF) had sought to humiliate because of their role in Zimbabwe-Rhodesia’s 1979 ‘internal settlement’[...] these two politicians were internal to the ruling party’s intra-unity problems [...] ZANU (PF) [also] had to contend with its Manicaland supporters who wanted to know what had really happened to Herbert Chitepo, who was assassinated in Zambia in March 1975...<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Roger W. Ireson, “On Casting Your Net,” *Colleague*, Spring-Winter 1992.

<sup>147</sup> Sara Rich Dorman, “Inclusion and Exclusion: NGOs and Politics in Zimbabwe,” (Unpublished DPhil. Thesis, University of Oxford, 2001), p. 134. See also Carl F. Hallencreutz, “Church and State in Zimbabwe and South Africa,” in *Religion and Politics in Southern Africa*, ed. by Carl F. Hallencreutz and Mai Palmberg (Uppsala: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1991), pp. 159–65; Carl F. Hallencreutz, “Ecumenical Challenges in Independent Zimbabwe: ZCC 1980–1985,” in *Church and State in Zimbabwe*, ed. by Carl F. Hallencreutz and Ambrose Moyo, pp. 251–303.

<sup>148</sup> Nkiwane, “Opposition Politics in Zimbabwe,” p. 99.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>150</sup> Jonathan N. Moyo, *Voting for Democracy: Electoral Politics in Zimbabwe*, (Harare: University of Zimbabwe, 1992), pp. 36-7.

Tekere was expelled from ZANU (PF) in 1988<sup>151</sup> for speaking out against corruption and the one party state, a stance which made him popular with students at the UZ.<sup>152</sup> He proceeded to form his own political party in 1989,<sup>153</sup> which contested the 1990 general elections and did fairly well.<sup>154</sup>

While the government may have considered Muzorewa a potential political danger, the UMC saw him as a potential risk because of his political involvement. Fellow Bishops from Africa were against the involvement of Bishops in what they called secular politics, often citing the experience of Bennie Warner of Liberia. Some church leaders in the US “said privately that the church in Zimbabwe has suffered from their Bishop’s political role.”<sup>155</sup> As a result there were attempts to push him to the periphery of the project as he himself noted when protesting about the exclusion of his brother from the Planning Committee for the Academic programme:

In order to eliminate Gwinyai the committee was ill advised and misled into believing that if any person with the ‘Muzorewa name’ was seen to be part of the staff in any way, the Government would not approve the university. Trash! This is of course deliberate, unfortunately emanating from those with jealousy, fear and with the remotest experience of teaching at university. At present a total of six Muzorewas are employed in either Government or Quasi-Government organisations (*parastatals*) including one of them who even reports to the President’s Office.<sup>156</sup>

Muzorewa’s attack was directed at the interim administration of AU and some ministers of the Zimbabwe Annual Conference whom he accused of being jealous. It is important to note at this point that Kurewa’s relationship with top government officials and many ruling party politicians had been nurtured over the years when he held a senior position at the parliament offices. As such he was in a strategic position

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<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32. Cf., Norbert Tengende, “Workers, Students and the Struggle for Democracy: State – Civil Society Relations in Zimbabwe,” (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Roskilde University, 1994), p. 322.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 304 and 306.

<sup>153</sup> Moyo, *Voting for Democracy*, pp. 32 and 35.

<sup>154</sup> Tengende, “Workers, Students and the Struggle for Democracy,” p. 375. Cf. Moyo, *Voting for Democracy*, pp. 145 and 156.

<sup>155</sup> “Mission Memo: News and Analysis of Developments in Christian Mission,” *New World Outlook*, December 1984.

<sup>156</sup> Letter from Abel T. Muzorewa to Emilio der Carvalho, 23 November 1990. GCAH: Africa-All Africa-Institutions: African University (Methodist) Proposal, 1990, Box: 2528-4-4:11.



where he could be privy to government thinking and then advise the church accordingly.

At another level was the fear that the church universities would become sites of theological feuds where each denomination would attempt to entrench itself in its doctrinal standards and ideology,<sup>157</sup> a phenomenon reminiscent of the rise of Protestant colleges in America before 1900.<sup>158</sup> In this way the universities would become think tanks for more intensive denominational competition and rivalry which could be unhealthy for the nation. Christopher Jencks and David Riesman however, contend that what may appear as a sectarian feud on some “theological issue was probably a convenient symbol and symptom of a cultural division between ethnic groups, between social classes, between urban and rural ways of life, or all three at once.”<sup>159</sup> The concern that universities might fuel sectarian feuds did not apply to all denominations. Some sections of the government had inherited the colonial attitude of suspicion towards the SDA’s strong isolationist stance and doctrinal beliefs which tend to attack other denominations.<sup>160</sup>

The fear that by allowing one church to build a university the government was opening floodgates which might be difficult to manage was genuine. The main concern was on the maintenance of standards as well as order in the higher education sector. The case of Kenya was often cited to support the argument that too many private universities might have a negative impact. When the government of Kenya ran an open system of private universities, as many as fourteen non-governmental universities mushroomed, raising concerns in government circles.<sup>161</sup> Kenya was one of the first countries to encourage non-government universities as early as 1969.<sup>162</sup> The Commission’s concern with reference to the experience of Kenya was that some

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<sup>157</sup> Interview with Stanley T. Mauridi, 20 March 2005, Harare.

<sup>158</sup> Christopher Jencks and David Riesman, *The Academic Revolution*, (New York: Anchor Books, 1968), p. 314.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 315.

<sup>160</sup> Bhebe, *Christianity and Traditional Religion*, pp. 106 and 132.

<sup>161</sup> Williams Commission, p. 59.

<sup>162</sup> “Report on the “International Conference on the Role of Private Universities in Africa” *AAU Newsletter* vol. 10, NO. 1, January – April 2004.

of the new universities offered low quality courses and were not well financed. Aborted attempts and universities that flopped in Zimbabwe soon after being established justify the government's reservations, as will be seen later.

### **The second episode**

The second episode universities were not from churches only. Between 1991 and 2004 seven new state universities were established. Four of them were upgraded from teacher training or university college status to fully fledged universities. This was in line with the report of a Commission of Inquiry set up in 1994 and led by Professor C. Chetsanga. The Chetsanga Commission recommended the devolution of some degree courses to teacher training colleges in order to release pressure from UZ.<sup>163</sup> When the NCHE bill was passed into an Act of parliament floodgates were opened with more churches expressing their desire to build their own universities. When the efforts of the AU were proving to be a success, virtually all the mainline churches began to express intentions to start their own universities. However, the scramble for space in university education also registered some aborted attempts. The RCZ first expressed its intention of establishing a university when the State President attended their centenary celebrations in 1991. According to E. Chomutiri, who was the Moderator:

The President welcomed the idea and encouraged us to pursue it further. He did not see why we should not take the project given the record of the churches in Zimbabwe in providing education and other services. The Synod then took up the matter and as a result of further deliberations a taskforce to do the groundwork on the university was appointed.<sup>164</sup>

Chomutiri further notes that the RCZ was inspired and felt challenged by the emergence of AU. The university charter was approved in 2001, paving way for classes to begin. Meanwhile as the SU was being opened in 1994 the MCZ passed a resolution at its Conference in Bulawayo and appointed a university taskforce led by a UZ lecturer, Forbes Madzongwe to champion the case for a university.<sup>165</sup> Like the

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<sup>163</sup> Cf. Nherera, "The Role of Emerging Universities," p. 49.

<sup>164</sup> Interview with E. Chomutiri.

<sup>165</sup> Methodist Church in Zimbabwe: Minutes of Conference, 22-28 August 1994. MCA, Harare.

RCZ, the MCZ was challenged by developments in other churches on higher education. The Methodists referred to their historical involvement in education as justification to build a university as claimed by one of its leaders: "We are a big church and have been involved in education for over a century. There is no way we can lag behind others in higher education."<sup>166</sup> According to the *Manica Post* dated 30 September 1994, the United Church of Christ in Zimbabwe "resolved to raise money for the construction of a university, teachers' and technical colleges and a nursing school. The church body claimed that it had machinery in place for raising funds for this purpose."<sup>167</sup> In spite of the aspirations the projects never took off the ground due to lack of funds.

In early November 1996 the Anglican Church announced its intention to build a university near the small farming town of Chivhu. The university project had the full support of Walter Makhulu, the Archbishop of Central Africa, and all the four diocesan Bishops in the country namely: J. Siyachitema, E. Masuku, T. Zhenje and Naledi. According to Patrick Bwanya, the leader of the Planning Committee, the university was expected to be running by 1998 operating from three centres.<sup>168</sup> The targeted year of starting operations, however, passed and the project remained in the pipeline indefinitely.

Later in the same month a front page article in *The Herald*<sup>169</sup> reported that President Mugabe had launched a fundraising initiative for the CUZ. A taskforce named the Friends of the Catholic University in Zimbabwe headed by Supreme Court Judge Nicholas McNally was appointed. It was hoped that the CUZ would open in 1998 with thirty students.<sup>170</sup> The university was to be established "in response to the laity's call for a university that will encourage a Christian reflection on Zimbabwe's

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<sup>166</sup> Daily Record, Methodist Church in Zimbabwe Conference, 24 August, 1994. MCA, Harare.

<sup>167</sup> Maunde, "Evolution of Higher Education in Zimbabwe," p. 51.

<sup>168</sup> "Anglican University for Chivhu," *The Herald*, 7 November 1996.

<sup>169</sup> "Mugabe Launches Catholic University Fundraising," *The Herald*, 22 November 1996.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*

business education, cultural values and identity.”<sup>171</sup> Amid pledges of support from the Vatican and international donors, the *Catholic Church News* magazine reported that “realisation of the project would depend on the availability of local donors to meet the initial target of ten million by September 1997.” Sr. Dominica Siegel OP, the Executive Secretary of Friends of the Catholic University in Zimbabwe was quoted saying: “If local people contribute generously to the funding of the project, international donors will be encouraged to donate additional funds.”<sup>172</sup>

The Catholic taskforce was rocked by internal divisions as reported in the *Financial Gazette* of 27 November 1997. There were two factions vying for the control of the project. One faction was advocating for the control of the university by locals, which included the hierarchy of the Catholic Church in Zimbabwe. The other faction wanted the university to be run by the Society of Jesus who had proved their ability to mobilise resources and run institutions elsewhere. In addition to renowned Boarding Schools, the Jesuits were running the School of Social Work, and later they built Arrupe College of Philosophy and the Humanities, both affiliated to the UZ.<sup>173</sup> According to Maunde, the indigenous group did not have experienced personnel to administer university level institutions and also lacked adequate resources.<sup>174</sup> The indigenous group, which was linked to President Mugabe, prevailed and although the Jesuits participated in the project in various ways, they took a low profile. Five years after its establishment in 1998, the Catholic University was “facing serious financial problems.”<sup>175</sup>

Five characteristics can be discerned from the terrain of the second episode universities. The first thing to note is the apparent inspiration derived from efforts of the first episode universities. The inspiration may to some extent be linked to

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<sup>171</sup> Stewart Musiiwa, “Catholic University to Jet out of Pipeline,” *Catholic Church News*, January/February 1997.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>173</sup> Maunde, “Evolution of Higher Education in Zimbabwe,” p. 191.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 199.

<sup>175</sup> Gordon L. Chavhunduka, quoted in an interview, “Zim. Universities Lose Academic Lustre,” *The Standard*, 16 November 2003.

denominational competition where each church sought to carve its own niche in the university education terrain. When the MCZ realized that overseas partners were not interested in financially supporting a university project they tried to redefine it as a locally driven grassroots project. Having further realised that the grassroots approach was still not going to work, they tried to negotiate with other denominations for an ecumenical venture but to no avail.<sup>176</sup> Responses were either that the other denominations were not interested in a university project at all or they were at a different stage of planning.

The idea of an ecumenical venture as suggested by the Monrovia and Nairobi, United Methodist consultations, which specifically mentioned the MCZ as a possible partner had not been taken further. Among the main reasons for dropping the idea were differences in structures of the two denominations. While the UMC has the General Conference as the highest decision making body, the British Methodist has no control over the autonomous Conferences in other countries. The closest churches came to having an ecumenical venture in university education, were the aborted efforts at UTC in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Courting other denominations for a joint effort proved as elusive as discussing about church unity. As a result Churches felt safer and more comfortable going it alone in spite of the formidable challenges. The mix of ruptures and failures in a few cases created tension between some churches. Notwithstanding their failure to declare an acceptable business plan for their project and to declare clearly their financial resources for the proposed project, some members of the SAMU board suspected that some Vice Chancellors of existing church universities were speaking negatively about SAMU and influencing the NCHE to continue to make new demands.<sup>177</sup>

Secondly, the delays in the opening of the second episode universities were not, as was the case with the first episode, caused by the long legislative process. The delays were rather due to lack of preparedness on the part of the churches. It appears that church conferences and synods underestimated the enormity of the task and rushed to

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<sup>176</sup> Minutes of the SAMU Board of Trustees, 15 September 2001. SAMU Files, MCA, Harare.

<sup>177</sup> Minutes of the SAMU Board of Trustees, 11 June 2001. SAMU Files, MCA, Harare.



pass resolutions even before any feasibility studies had been carried out. After initial contact with the government, the churches would appoint taskforces to draft charters, and then fundraising efforts would begin. The main cause of the delay in the process of drafting charters was the need to consult the main stakeholders: government and the various levels within church structures. The NCHE requirements, as already pointed out above, were very strict on the need for the applicant church to prove that they had adequate funds to start off the university in addition to having a viable business plan. Generally churches were found wanting on this point. The Anglican and MCZ projects remained in the pipeline for these reasons.

The third characteristic in this pattern is seeking patronage from political or government leaders. Churches in this episode were more open in their intentions to win the support of politicians and government leaders affiliated to them one way or the other. Politicians also took advantage of the situation. However, in the second episode, churches were determined to associate with political figures. On appointing the SAMU Board of Trustees, the MCZ invited three influential members of Cabinet and top ZANU (PF) officers namely, Vice President Joshua Nkomo and Nathan Shamuyarira as the patrons, and Sydney Sekeramayi as a member of the Board. The RCZ invited Vice President Simon Muzenda, another top ZANU (PF) politician, to be patron of their taskforce and later the Chancellor of GZU. Nkomo, Shamuyarira, and Sekeramayi had associations with Methodists in various ways; Nkomo as a former local preacher, Shamuyarira as the son of an evangelist as well as being former student of Methodist schools, and Sekeramayi a former Waddilove student. By inviting Muzenda, who had been baptised as a Catholic,<sup>178</sup> to be their patron the RCZ did not see denominational affiliation as an issue but were depending on his position in government as well as his influence in Masvingo province. The SDAs invited Nkomo to be patron of SU for the same reasons.<sup>179</sup> There were two motives behind the co-option of political figures. The first reason was the need to take advantage of their influence for fundraising purposes. This explains the role of Mugabe in launching the CUZ fundraising initiative. Muzenda had to travel to

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<sup>178</sup> Ngwabi Bhebe, *Simon Vengesayi Muzenda and the Struggle for and Liberation of Zimbabwe*, (Gweru: Mambo Press, 2004), pp. 20-1.

<sup>179</sup> *The Chronicle*, 5 May 1995.

several countries raising seed money for the GZU.<sup>180</sup> Secondly, the influence of the patrons was needed in the lobbying process with government officials. It was also a form of protection from possible political hostilities towards the projects.

The fourth characteristic relates to siting of the universities. The UMC and the SDA chose existing mission sites for their universities and the latter went further to use a considerable number of facilities which had formerly been used by Solusi College. Virtually all in the second group of universities approached urban councils and this in some cases created controversy. The reason for approaching urban councils for the university sites was the common belief that universities should be close to towns. In spite of the attraction towards urban centres, most of the second episode universities eventually settled in their traditional mission centres. These were the areas where they were known and commanded some considerable influence.

Since the idea of the Catholic university was a brainchild of the Kutama Old Boys Association, Kutama Mission had been identified as the site for the institution but this was later changed because of distance from Harare.<sup>181</sup> Chishawasha Mission was then considered and later dropped because of unreliable supplies of water.<sup>182</sup> When the Catholics successfully negotiated with the Harare City Council for free land to build a university there were isolated protests from within the church. While applauding the church for the bold move to build a university, Fr. Jerome R. Nyathi, based in Gwanda, described as sad the news that the university would be built in the outskirts of Harare: "*Bambazonke* has surprisingly overcome the sound reasoning of the Catholic Bishops in this regard. Harare already has a university. It will not benefit the rural poor in remote parts of the country."<sup>183</sup> Nyathi's concerns were echoed by Fr. Bernard Ndlovu, another Catholic priest, who argued that the

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<sup>180</sup> Interview with F. Dauramanzi.

<sup>181</sup> Maunde, "Evolution of Higher Education in Zimbabwe," p. 193.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>183</sup> "Letters to the Editor," *The Chronicle*, 4 July. 1994. *Bambazonke* is a characterisation of Harare as the city which grabs all. The term is employed in both positive and negative terms. Some people in the two Matabeleland provinces use it to decry the bias of the Shona dominated north with its emphasis on Harare to the disadvantage of Bulawayo.

university should be built in the Midlands.<sup>184</sup> Ironically the Catholics had turned down an offer of land by the Gweru municipality<sup>185</sup> apparently due to the embarrassment which the MCZ had experienced with the political leadership in the province.

The MCZ case was more contentious. Through the efforts of an influential member, the church was offered land by the municipality in the outskirts of Gweru town, the Midlands capital.<sup>186</sup> Initially it appeared that this development had been acceptable to the local political leadership. When the Chairperson of the SAMU Board held a press conference to announce the establishment of a 400 million dollar MCZ university project on a 400 hectare site, there were vigorous protests from the political leadership in the province.<sup>187</sup> The ZANU (PF) Provincial Secretary and a Member of Parliament in the Midlands, Enias Mabodza, reacted to Madzongwe's announcement by denying any knowledge of the project and adding: "The church is not saying it has the money and we wonder how it is going to mobilise the required financial resources without the support of the leadership in this province."<sup>188</sup> In a press statement which appeared in *The Chronicle* on 14 August 1995, the Governor of the Midlands, Herbert Mahlaba, who had been co-opted as a member of the university's Board of Trustees, dissociated himself from the project:

This Board has not consulted the structures in the province and I do not know how there can be a Board for the establishment of a university in the province when there has not been any dialogue with the leadership [...]. The province has accepted the establishment of a government sponsored university.

The Midlands politicians had formed a formidable alliance, with academics and corporate leaders, who regarded the province as their home, to lobby for a university. Hopes that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe, with a significant

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<sup>184</sup> "Letters to the Editor," *The Chronicle*, 16 July 1994.

<sup>185</sup> Maunde, "Evolution of Higher Education in Zimbabwe," pp. 148 and 194. Maunde erroneously points out that the Methodists declined the offer of land by the municipality when in actual fact they were dissuaded by political meddling.

<sup>186</sup> MCZ: Minutes of Conference, 21–27 August, 1995, Gweru. Cf. Minutes of Conference, 19–25, August, 1996, Harare; MCZ, Minutes of the Connectional Standing Committee, 22 June, 1996, MCA, Harare.

<sup>187</sup> Forbes Madzongwe, Press Statement, 23 June 1995, SAMU Files, MCA, Harare.

<sup>188</sup> "Proposed Varsity Raises Eyebrows," *The Chronicle* 28 June 1995.

historical presence in the province through its missions, would build a university had faded and attention shifted to a state university. Lutheran members associated with the province directed their efforts to the campaign for a government university. As a result, any suggestion of a Methodist university in the province became irrelevant. The MCZ shifted its attention to Marondera in Mashonaland East Province about 400 kilometres from Gweru, an area where it has significant presence. However, because of the continued delays due to the failure to have the SAMU Charter approved, Marondera Town Council announced that they were withdrawing their free offer of land for the university.<sup>189</sup> With this the church opted for their mission stations to build the university.<sup>190</sup>

The RCZ case for a site was not as contentious as that of the Methodists. In its proposal to the NCHE, the RCZ mentioned Muzero mission situated outside Masvingo town as their proposed site for the university and they were also negotiating with the municipality.<sup>191</sup> They planned to construct several “campuses on undeveloped land within the environs of the Great Zimbabwe Shrine.”<sup>192</sup> A few years after the attainment of independence the church had handed over the mission farm to the government because they had experienced problems with tenants. The problems included a dispute between two local chieftaincies, Mugabe and Nemanwa, who were claiming legitimacy to the land.<sup>193</sup> The government had then proceeded to evict all the tenants leaving the farm unoccupied. When the university project came up, the church was now asking the government to return the farm to them so that they could utilise it. Unfortunately, due to legislation prohibiting the construction of complexes close to important national monuments, the church could not get back the land and was promised an alternative site close to Lake Mutirikwe.<sup>194</sup> As an interim measure the church was allowed to use its largest mission station as a temporary site while the

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<sup>189</sup> Letter from J.O., Masuwo (Marondera Town Clerk) to Bishop C.Z. Mukandi, 8 June 2000. SAMU Files, MCA, Harare.

<sup>190</sup> Minutes of the SAMU Board Meeting, 1 July 2000. SAMU Files, MCA, Harare.

<sup>191</sup> Interview with E. Chomutiri.

<sup>192</sup> “University for Masvingo,” *The Chronicle*, 14 July 1995.

<sup>193</sup> Joost Fontein, “The Silence of the Great Zimbabwe: Contested Landscapes and the Power of Heritage,” (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2003), p. 31.

<sup>194</sup> Interview with F. Dauramanzi.



government formalised the proposed new site. In all this the church enjoyed the full support of the Provincial Governor and other politicians in the province.

The fifth and last characteristic is the role of UZ academics in the emergence of the locally driven universities. AU was more reliant on the UMC's international pool of academics and university Presidents in the US in spearheading the required groundwork for the university such that local expertise with previous or current UZ ties was overshadowed. It was the same case with SU. However, the locally driven universities benefited from UZ academics affiliated to the respective churches. The same trend is evident with respect to State universities as observed by the UZ Vice Chancellor: "The UZ has played the role of a mother and has been instrumental in the birth of the new State universities."<sup>195</sup>

## **Conclusion**

While the phenomenon of church affiliated universities was welcome as progress in nation building, it also came as a political challenge for the government. Attempts by the government to balance these two facets delayed the policy-making process and tested its adaptability to the innovativeness of churches as they broke into what could be perceived as non-traditional areas of mission. By entering university education churches made statements of mission which were responsive to the current global challenges and the centrality of knowledge. While it may not be by design that these new developments came at a time when the majority of mainline churches had attained centenaries of their presence in Zimbabwe, the coincidence is striking. It provides an interesting link between the much written about numerical growth and the creativity to break into new and challenging areas of mission. Be that as it may, credit for the innovations is jointly shared by the international links of the churches. The evolution of the vision for AU was based on reflections at various levels of the church and matured to a stage where the church was prepared both spiritually and materially. Yet most of the locally driven initiatives give the impression that decisions made were a domino effect arising from the initial successes of the first universities.

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<sup>195</sup> Levi Nyagura, "Welcome Speech," University of Zimbabwe: Launch of the Silver Jubilee Celebrations, 11 February 2005.



Regional or provincial politics and denominational affiliation is a significant factor which influenced attitudes towards some churches. Locally initiated university projects were more dependent on political and regional patronage than the first episode universities. The regionalism by and large reflected the influence of churches in their traditional areas of operation. In addition, while churches generally claim to be independent from the government they voluntarily accommodated politicians for their social and political influence which could bring with it acceptability of their projects as well as shielding them from other possible hostile political forces. Politicians themselves saw this as a means of raising their profiles by associating with mass based organisations like churches and the high profile university projects. The co-option or involvement of political figures did not always achieve the desired results as evidenced by the failure to influence the speeding up of the process to enact legislation for private universities in the case of AU; failure to get a Charter by the MCZ; and financial problems of the CUZ. The serious problems at GZU, which will be discussed in the next chapter, also lend credibility to this claim. Inclusion of politicians to have active roles, in some cases, actually compromised the independence of churches and their institutions.

## Chapter Five

### **The Dynamics of Church Relatedness, Academic Freedom and Autonomy in the Triangular Relationship of Church, University and the State.**

Higher education is too important a business to be left entirely to deans, professors, lecturers and university administrators. *Robert Mugabe.*<sup>1</sup>

#### **Introduction**

The concepts of autonomy and academic freedom are conditioned by the contexts in which the university is operating. Trends in the political, economic and social spheres have an important bearing on the operations of the university. As church related universities seek to carve their niche in the Zimbabwean academic bodywork, a dynamic relationship triangular in form is evident. On one angle is the church which sponsors the university. The government is on the other while the third angle is occupied by the university itself. As the three entities relate to each other, power or influence related tensions are at play. This dynamic relationship is also, to some extent, subject to the influences of some precedents in the national university culture and stereotypes formed by society over the years.

Government policy on university education in the 1990s was a milestone as far as liberalisation of higher education was concerned. But it was also developed with the aim of avoiding or correcting perceived past mistakes, problems or anomalies. Churches and the universities which emerged under their auspices were cognisant of the country's experiences in university education and they sought to present the new paradigm of a university arising from religious foundations. This raises the fundamental question of the extent to which the religious bodies can be involved in universities established under their auspices. Would a church university be capable of, or be entrusted with the task of carrying the denomination's ethos in line with the latter's mission ideals? Or does this require closer involvement and monitoring by

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<sup>1</sup> R. Schlette, *Towards Academic Excellence in Higher Education*, Report on the Sub-Regional Workshop in Harare, (Bonn: Education Science and Documentation Centre, 1990), p. 77.

the church to ensure its interests are safeguarded? These questions impinge on the fine line between church-relatedness and the autonomy of the institution.

While church-related universities are a new phenomenon in Zimbabwe they cannot be divorced from the public universities because there is an organic link. Church-relatedness itself is a challenge to autonomy and academic freedom. With this in mind it is necessary to examine aspects of the state university's experience in relation to academic freedom and autonomy and its implications on church-related institutions. This should be taken together with an examination of the governance structures of church universities. The notion of church-relatedness is further tested by cases of interactions between the state on the one hand, and AU and GZU, on the other; which provide significant pointers on the dynamics of the relationship between the universities, the churches and the government. In the experience of Zimbabwe, student movements have played a prominent role on issues relating to academic freedom and autonomy. This chapter will also attempt to locate them in the landscape of church-relatedness, autonomy and academic freedom. The main issue on this aspect is whether the emergence of church universities has had any impact on student activism.

### **Contested concepts**

Scholars are generally agreed that academic freedom and autonomy are essential elements in any university system. It is virtually impossible to conceptualise or define a university without these two notions. They are guarded jealously especially in the academic fraternity to the extent that they have attained the status of a doctrine. Ashby describes them as emotive expressions.<sup>2</sup> To question or attempt to eliminate them from academia is almost like uttering heresy or desecrating the university institution and all that it stands for. Yet the concepts are variously interpreted depending on contexts.

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<sup>2</sup> Ashby, *Universities: British, Indian, African*, p. 290.

Academic freedom and autonomy are in many cases used interchangeably although they do not necessarily mean the same thing. According to the Lima declaration “autonomy means the independence of institutions of higher education from the State and all other forces of society to make decisions regarding its internal government, finance, administration, and to establish its policies of education, research, extension work, and other related activities.”<sup>3</sup> The Lima declaration elaborates:

The autonomy of institutions of higher education shall be exercised by democratic means of self-government, which includes the active participation of all members of the respective academic communities. All members of the academic community shall have the right and opportunity, without discrimination of any kind, to take part in the conduct of academic and administrative affairs. All governing bodies of institutions of higher education shall be freely elected and shall comprise members of the different sectors of the academic community. The autonomy should encompass decisions regarding administration and determination of policies of education, research, extension work, allocation of resources, and other related activities.<sup>4</sup>

Karl Jaspers draws an analogy between the university and the church when he argues that autonomy and academic freedom are similar to religious freedom: “Like the church it [the university] derives its autonomy - respected even by the state - from an imperishable idea of supranational, worldwide character: academic freedom.”<sup>5</sup>

The evolution of the university in various parts of the world, for example, Europe and North America, has seen the debate on academic freedom taking various forms. While at some point the concern was for the university community to be free from interference from the founding churches there was also concern on interference by governments or influential figures and groups in society. The university sought to exist as an independent community of scholars in pursuit of knowledge through research.

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<sup>3</sup> “The Declaration on Academic Freedom and Autonomy of Institutions of Higher Education: 10 September 1988,” 68<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the World University Service, Lima, 6-10 September 1988. Section I (a), European Centre for Higher Education. [http://www.cepes.ro/information\\_services/sources/on\\_line/lima.htm](http://www.cepes.ro/information_services/sources/on_line/lima.htm) (Accessed 9 August 2005).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, Section 19.

Although the use of the concept dates as far back as the origins of the university institution, it gathered added meanings in its evolution. Loyalty to one another as well as to the institution was understood as essential features of the early university communities which were also viewed as being capable of looking after their own affairs.<sup>6</sup> The self-governing nature of the community was modelled on the monastery or guild where matters were handled by consensus internally.<sup>7</sup>

A significant aspect in the term's evolution is its association, according to Ashby<sup>8</sup> and Murray G. Ross,<sup>9</sup> with two German concepts, *Lehrfreiheit* and *Leinfreiheit*, which were formulated in state universities in an attempt to redefine the relationship between the government and its universities. *Lehrfreiheit* denoted that an academic should be free to conduct research and share or teach his findings without being constrained by especially the state. As such it "is a privilege which entails the obligation to teach truth, in defiance of anyone outside or inside the university who wishes to curtail it."<sup>10</sup> *Leinfreiheit* meant that a student was free to choose where and what to study. Ashby includes the research worker in the category of *Leinfreiheit*. These concepts are reminiscent of the organisation of medieval cathedral and monastic schools as they gradually evolved into universities. The teachers in these institutions created guilds or *universitas* which were virtual unions whose aims included the need "to protect the teachers against the chancellor, the bishop, the king or anyone else who tried to bring them under control."<sup>11</sup> In like manner, "students often organised themselves into guilds for protection against teachers, the

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<sup>5</sup> Karl Jaspers, *The Idea of the University*, trans. by H.A.T. Reiche and H.F. Vanderschmidt, (London: Peter Owen Ltd., 1960), pp. 19 and 142f.

<sup>6</sup> Murray G. Ross, *The University: The Anatomy of Academe*, (London: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1976), p. 160.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Ashby, *Universities: British, Indian, African*, p. 291.

<sup>9</sup> Ross, *Anatomy of Academe*, p. 27.

<sup>10</sup> Jaspers, *Idea of the University*, p. 19.

<sup>11</sup> R.F. Butt, *A Cultural History of Education*, (New York: McGraw Hill, 1947), p. 175.



townspeople and each other."<sup>12</sup> University academics "wanted to control their own affairs, appoint new members and issue licences to teach and confer degrees [...]. It was not unusual for the faculty to go on strike and for the students to join them; in this way the university could often make the king, the town, or the church to agree to their terms."<sup>13</sup>

Under the banner of academic freedom the universities were bidding for the freedom to research and disseminate knowledge without interference. Academics believed that if there were always threats of punishment it would be impossible to research and present results. Academics were to be allowed the freedom to do their research and be accorded opportunities to defend their theories or research results. Students were to be allowed unrestricted access to research and to benefit from the research results of the university.

With the passage of time the concept of academic freedom has mutated into contested forms which in some cases denote a perpetual challenge between academics and the state. Cases of conflict between universities and states in Africa have been well documented.<sup>14</sup> More often than not conclusions have been the despair of academics on the lack of true academic freedom. These have included brutal treatment of academics and students by governments or their agents.<sup>15</sup> The debate continues with no agreement on what academic freedom is and is not. The Lima declaration, which was made under the auspices of the World University Service defines academic freedom as follows: "*Academic freedom*" means the freedom of members of the academic community, individually or collectively, in the pursuit, development, and transmission of knowledge, through research, study, discussion,

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> A.B. Fafunwa, *New Perspectives in African Education*, (London: Macmillan, 1957), p. 112.

<sup>14</sup> See for examples; Mamadou Diouf and Mahmood Mamdani (eds), *Academic Freedom in Africa*, (Dakar: CODESRIA, 1994); and, *The State of Academic Freedom in Africa 1995*, (Dakar: CODESRIA, 1996).

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

documentation, production, creation, teaching, lecturing, and writing.”<sup>16</sup> Academic community according to this definition encompasses “all those persons teaching, studying, doing research, and working at an institution of higher education.” There is no essential difference between these definitions and the ones offered by Ashby and Ross. This definition is an attempt to strike a midpoint to rally the various perspectives on what the concept is. A universally accepted definition of the concept will always be elusive. However, although it is difficult to define academic freedom as a concept, it is less so in defending it when there has been a perceived infringement as Paul Zeleza posits:

Like most values as virtues, academic freedom is simpler to defend in its breach than to define. Defenses and definitions of academic freedom are as much conceptual as they are contextual subject to intellectual, institutional, and ideological transformations within the wider society and the academy itself.<sup>17</sup>

There have been arguments that notions of academic freedom used by academics in Africa have Western trappings and because of this there can never be common ground with states especially those which have taken on nationalistic and anti-Western stances. Essentially academic freedom encompasses freedom of speech, association and assembly. The question often asked is how far the freedom can be taken into the public arena without being considered to have gone beyond limits. This includes whether an academic can comment on matters outside his/her field of specialisation or whether a university can be preoccupied with social, political and economic issues in society without being construed as abusing the privilege of academic freedom.

In Jaspers' view academic freedom is not fundamentally the same as constitutional freedom of speech. He argues that when it comes to constitutional freedom which includes personal opinions, newspaper articles, political remarks and utterances outside their intellectual authority, university academics have no more privileges

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<sup>16</sup> Lima Declaration, Section I. (c).

<sup>17</sup> Paul T. Zeleza, “Neo-Liberalism and Academic Freedom,” in *The African University in the Twenty-first Century vol. 1*, ed. by P.T. Zeleza and A. Olukoshi, p. 42.

beyond other citizens.<sup>18</sup> When Howard S. Gilmore, a former volunteer lecturer at Africa University, was arrested by the police and later deported for filming the notorious cleanup operation there was no connection with his academic background.<sup>19</sup> However, as Jaspers argues: "it is quite conceivable that academic freedom may continue even after the constitutional freedom of expression has been abolished."<sup>20</sup> Even where an academic expresses his opinion in line with his research results there would still be an impact on the relationship between the university and the government as well as the sponsoring church. Conversely, an academic using his constitutional right to freedom of expression would lead to the same result. Freedom of expression therefore remains closely related to academic freedom. The government would expect the university or the church to reign in 'wayward' academics.

Defining academic freedom is one thing; practising it is another. As a result discourse on academic freedom is context specific.<sup>21</sup> It has to take into account perceptions from both those in the academic world and those outside as well as contextual issues such as the laws and culture of the country. In many cases the concept has assumed ideological tenor. On the one hand academics may attack government policies and practices while on the other government sees itself as having to clamp down on dissident voices. The CODESRIA publication, *The State of Academic Freedom in Africa, 1995*, contains accounts of cases in several African countries where academics and students have been persecuted at the hands of governments.

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<sup>18</sup> Jaspers, *Idea of the University*, p. 143.

<sup>19</sup> Linda Green, "Former Africa University Faculty Member Deported," *UMNS*, 8 June 2005. <http://www.archives.umc.org/interior.asp?ptid=&mid=8690> (Accessed 24 August 2005).

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Zeleza, "Neo-Liberalism and Academic Freedom," p. 43.

## The Government and public universities

On the African continent virtually all the debates on academic freedom have been concerned with the relationships in public universities between academics and students, on the one hand, and the state on the other. Perpetual areas of conflict have been when universities try to regard themselves as the conscience of the nation or the voices of the voiceless, criticising government policies and political issues. Akilagpa Sawyerr has observed that one of the functions of a university is to generate and transmit ideology as well as providing intellectual leadership. In this regard students are socialised into a university culture which even allows for social and political activity in which even lecturers may be involved in various ways ranging from publications to forums and linking

the country and the world of knowledge lying outside the country and the past. An aspect of this function that is not often appreciated is the significance of the university as an institution of civil society, providing a countervailing influence against trends towards over-concentration of power in the state and its institutions.<sup>22</sup>

Concerns of academics have been on the extent to which governments have reacted by clamping down on students and lecturers in an effort to silence them.

Reactions of states have generally taken two forms. The first is the more overt use of strong arm tactics of deploying security forces on campuses and in some cases closing the universities for long periods. The more covert approach has been to introduce more restrictive legislation or to appoint individuals who are sympathetic to government and ruling party policies and in addition, the infiltration of sections of the university by state agents. In this regard, Paul T. Zeleza points out:

The reason why the question of academic freedom and social responsibility dominates African discourses lies in the acute politicisation of African social formations, a product of long histories of struggle against the barbarities of the slave trade, colonialism and post-colonial misrule. The powerful pull of such memories and the strong organic links of academics to the cultures and communities of

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<sup>22</sup> Akilagpa Sawyerr, "Does Africa Really Need Her Universities?" CODESRIA Bulletin, N0s 3 and 4, (1998, Dakar, Senegal), p. 21. The paper was also presented as an Inaugural Lecture as Fellow of the Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences, delivered at the British Council Hall, Accra, 12 October 1995.

civil society and their class affinities to the ruling elite is what makes them see themselves either in the 'magisterial' role of a revolutionary vanguard or a 'ministerial' of facilitating progressive change.<sup>23</sup>

In the Zimbabwean context, "The struggles for institutional autonomy and academic freedom became intertwined with struggles for democracy in the wider society. Besides the bread and butter issues of subsistence, both faculty and students fought for their rights to free expression."<sup>24</sup> As a result this has seen the university forming alliances with sections of civil society and opposition political groups on certain issues. As pointed out by Norbert Tengende, from 1980 and 1990 "civil society emerged toward engaging political society on issues concerning institutionalisation of a domain free from state tutelage and control." This was inspired by "the disarray and disruption of hegemonic discourses of the ruling political class caused by the events surrounding the Willogate Scandal and heightened by state-students confrontations [which] engendered a crisis of political leadership."<sup>25</sup>

In public universities governments implicitly or explicitly interfere in university affairs through influence on the administrative structures or even some students. As the main sponsor government has both a say and an interest in what goes on within the public university. The university is regarded as a viable state apparatus and at the same time as a potential threat to political hegemony. The result is that relations between government and its universities are often coloured by the politics of the time in response to social and economic trends. This determines whether the university is considered a threat or a tool to further the ideological agenda of the state. It has already been mentioned that in the early eighties students and lecturers at the UZ were by and large supportive of the government. Tengende,<sup>26</sup> citing Louis

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<sup>23</sup> Zeleza "Neo-Liberalism and Academic Freedom," p. 46.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>25</sup> Tengende, "Workers, Students and the Struggle for Democracy," pp. 357–8. In 1990 students at the UZ made a rallying cry to sections of civil society to campaign against the establishment of the One Party State. See, "The One Party State in Zimbabwe – Students Union States its Case," *Flysheet*, UZ Students' Union, 15 May 1990, p. 1.

<sup>26</sup> Tengende, "Workers, Students and the Struggle for Democracy," p. 192.



Althusser<sup>27</sup> and Michael Burawoy<sup>28</sup> argues that “the university was a crucial ideological state apparatus” whose “solidarity function” was required to enhance the domination of the ruling party and the government in nation building and at the same time desisting from contradicting it. This explains the creation of ZANU (PF) and (PF) ZAPU branches on campus to maintain close links with the dominant political system.<sup>29</sup>

In their expression of solidarity with the government some students even went to the extent of asking for arms so that they could help the government fight dissidents in Matabeleland.<sup>30</sup> In 1982 students demonstrated in support of the then Prime Minister’s attacks on corruption and his stand against those who were breaching the Leadership Code.<sup>31</sup> When President Samora Machel of Mozambique was killed in a plane crash on 21 October 1986, Zimbabwean university students took to the streets as an expression of their grief, in solidarity with the people of Mozambique.<sup>32</sup> They vented their anger by attacking the Malawian embassy and the South African Trade Mission in Harare.<sup>33</sup> When the demonstration turned violent the police delayed intervening suggesting, as Tengende points out, that the security forces tacitly approved of the students’ action.<sup>34</sup>

As the eighties drew to a close both students and lecturers became more critical of government policies and as a result the UZ began to gradually lose its autonomy.

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<sup>27</sup> Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. by Brewster Ben, (London: NLB, 1971), pp. 123–73.

<sup>28</sup> Michael Burawoy, “Consciousness and Contradiction: A Study of Student Protests in Zambia,” *British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 27, NO. 1, (1976), pp. 85-6.

<sup>29</sup> Tengende, “Workers, Students and the Struggle for Democracy,” p. 198.

<sup>30</sup> “Give us Guns: Say Students,” *The Sunday Mail*, 1 August 1982.

<sup>31</sup> Tengende, “Workers, Students and the Struggle for Democracy,” pp. 232–3.

<sup>32</sup> Angela Cheater, “The University of Zimbabwe: University, National University, State University, or Party University?” in *African Affairs*, vol. 90, NO. 359, (April 1991), p. 194.

<sup>33</sup> Tengende, “Workers, Students and the Struggle for Democracy,” p. 246f.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 248f.

Lecturers who were critical of the government were censured. In 1982 Shadrack Gutto was exiled from his home country Kenya because of his critical views against Daniel Arap Moi's government. He settled in Zimbabwe and joined the UZ as a lecturer in the Faculty of Law. For some time, together with other lecturers and students they actively supported government policies. But as things took a new twist he became one of the voices at UZ who were critical of government policies. In April 1988 he was declared a threat to national security and given forty eight hours notice by the government to leave Zimbabwe<sup>35</sup> in spite of protests from the Association of University Teachers and criticism from the Zimbabwe Congress of Trades Unions.<sup>36</sup> Ben Hlatshwayo has observed that a group of academics who included Kempton Makamure and Gutto "fearlessly critiqued the Zimbabwe government's social transformation programme as they mobilised intellectual support [...] and helped infuse democratic ideals into the fledgling trade union movement."<sup>37</sup> The "loose grouping of leftwing intellectuals also brought together progressive intellectuals from within and outside the country." Most of the leftwing intellectuals strongly advocated Marxism.<sup>38</sup> Their activities "led to increased political awareness and activism in society in general and among students in particular culminating in the 1988 anti-corruption demonstrations."<sup>39</sup> The government had been suspicious that some lecturers had influenced the students to demonstrate as pointed out by the Minister of Home affairs: "intelligence reports showed that some lecturers and outside people had incited the recent student anti-corruption demonstrations."<sup>40</sup> The active involvement of lecturers has resonance with the activities of a multi-racial group of lecturers who fought against the Rhodesia Front government and university authorities leading to the deportation of some of them.

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<sup>35</sup> Nana K.A. Busia Jr., "Towards a Legal Framework for the Protection of Academic Freedom: Perspectives on the African Human Rights System," in *The State of Academic Freedom in Africa*, p. 40, n. 43.

<sup>36</sup> Tengende, "Workers, Students and the Struggle for Democracy," p. 318.

<sup>37</sup> B. Hlatshwayo, "Kempton Makamure: Selfless Patriot and Democrat," *The Sunday Mirror*, 16 June 2000.

<sup>38</sup> Brian Raftopoulos, "The Zimbabwean Crisis and the Challenges for the Left," Public Lecture delivered at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, 23 June 2005, p. 4.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

Angela Cheater lucidly outlines how the UZ lost its autonomy from 1982 into the 1990s.<sup>41</sup> She notes that the amendment of the University of Zimbabwe Act in 1982 introduced new provisions which gave the Minister of Higher Education more power and influence in the appointment of the university council and the Vice Chancellor and his deputies. The State President was made Chancellor of the university. The UZ Act of 1982 made the Chancellor an *ex officio* member of Council with the right "to preside over any assembly or meeting held by or under the authority of the university [...] on the recommendation of the Council and the Senate."<sup>42</sup> The Act enabled the Chancellor to confer degrees and awards as well as to withdraw or restore them in consultation with the Council and Senate. Cheater further argues that the arrangement appeared viable under a ceremonial President as Chancellor:

While the State Presidency itself remained a ceremonial office, however, these provisions posed no real threat to university governance. The first President-Chancellor lent great dignity to both offices. But when, in 1987, the State Presidency became an executive office, it was patently obvious that, in any conflict of interest between Chancellorship and Presidency, the political office would dominate [...] the deterioration in relations between university (especially students) and government began precisely in 1987.<sup>43</sup>

Correct as Cheater's assertion may seem, that the ceremonial President as Chancellor would not have been a threat to university autonomy, it should be noted that his office continued to be a threat by virtue of the interest of government and the party. The fact that the ceremonial Presidency did not have executive powers does not necessarily mean that it was not susceptible to political pressure or manipulation from the ruling party and government. This notion is supported by evidence from elsewhere as the following two examples testify: Firstly, was the intervention of President Banana in the problems within the ZCC on the grounds that they were a

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<sup>40</sup> "Mahachi Warns 'Brains' Behind Students' Demo of Subversion," *The Herald*, 14 October 1988.

<sup>41</sup> Cheater, "National University, State University, or Party University?" pp. 189–205.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 190. cf. University of Zimbabwe Act: 1982, Harare: Government Printer, 1982, sections 7 and 11 (1) (a).

<sup>43</sup> Cheater, "National University, State University, or Party University?" p. 190.

security risk, leading to the firing of the Secretary General.<sup>44</sup> Second was the removal of controversial Gweru mayor, Patrick Kombayi in the early eighties. This demonstrates the ability of the ceremonial President to act on institutions and individuals considered to be moving against the government's defined political current.

To further enhance its control over the university in the midst of instability, in 1990 the government sought to further amend the 1982 University of Zimbabwe Act. The proposed changes were meant to address the disturbances at the institution. David Karimanzira, the Minister of Higher Education tried to justify the need for the amendments: "It is admitted by everybody, it is agreed by Government, that what prompted the amendment were the disturbances at the University last year [1989]."<sup>45</sup> This was compounded by the failure of both the government and UZ administrators to make a distinction between political activism and hooliganism in the student body.<sup>46</sup> Tengende argues that as the spate of strikes spread to some sections of society and the civil service over wages and conditions of service, the University Amendment Act of 1990 was a government strategy to emasculate any possible "popular alliance between the disgruntled professionals, students and workers."<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, the use of "the institution as a centre for opposition politics"<sup>48</sup> or any "opposition party related activism on campus" had to be curbed.<sup>49</sup> The students' concerns included insufficient loans and grants, accommodation and the general deterioration of standards at the university as well as national issues of corruption.<sup>50</sup> The developments at the university had wide implications as Tengende further argues:

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<sup>44</sup> Hallencreutz, "Ecumenical Challenges in Independent Zimbabwe: ZCC 1980-1985," p. 265-75.

<sup>45</sup> Quoted in Cheater, "National University, State University, or Party University?" p. 193.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> Tengende, "Workers, Students and the Struggle for Democracy," p. 397.

<sup>48</sup> "Comment," *The Herald*, 6 October 1989.

<sup>49</sup> Tengende, "Workers, Students and the Struggle for Democracy," p. 398.

<sup>50</sup> Cheater, "National University, State University, or Party University?" p. 195.

The State was alarmed by the political activism of students and in the context of the changing economic policies it perceived the students as a threat, particularly in the light of the growing solidarity between them and the ZCTU. It was also perceived that for the Government to proceed with the chosen policies of ESAP there was a need to demobilise the student body and delegitimise it politically.<sup>51</sup>

Opposition to the Bill came from both lecturers and students. The concern of the university community was that the new Act would interfere with their academic freedom as well as reduce the institution's autonomy. The new Act gave more powers to the Vice Chancellor over students or lecturers.<sup>52</sup> The appointment of the Vice Chancellor and such key officials as the pro-Vice Chancellors, Registrar, Bursar and the Librarian was "subject to ministerial approval."<sup>53</sup> As observed by one lecturer, "the powers purportedly given to the Vice Chancellor are not really his but effectively those of the Minister of Higher Education executing Cabinet instructions."<sup>54</sup> The Minister of Higher Education could appoint twenty six members in addition to the Vice Chancellor and his two deputies. Representatives from the Workers' Committee, Administrative staff and non-Senate members of the academic staff have to be approved by the Vice Chancellor. Of the ten Senate appointed members one has to be approved by the council. Effectively the Act enabled the government to appoint or influence the appointment of over 75% of the forty-three member council.<sup>55</sup> The minister's appointees include nominees he has to pick from lists submitted by various interest groups such as labour, industry, the youth, farmers and religious groups. This means that the Ministry could influence the university council through its appointments. Similar clauses were incorporated in the Acts of the other state universities which were subsequently established. Walter Kamba, who was the Vice Chancellor at the time, reacted negatively to the Bill: "The whole Bill is

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<sup>51</sup> Tengende, "Workers, Students and the Struggle for Democracy," p. 409.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 405-6.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> K. Makamure, quoted by N. Chanakira, "Academic Freedom in Institutions of Higher Learning in Zimbabwe," in *Southern Africa Political and Economic Monthly*, vol. 4 No. 7, Harare, SAPES Trust, April 1991.

<sup>55</sup> University of Zimbabwe Act Chapter 25:16, 1990, Section 11, Harare: Government Printers.



a sure manifestation of academic and political intolerance, demise of legitimate debate and a threat to academic freedom and autonomy [...] in direct conflict with the Lima declaration.”<sup>56</sup> The Vice Chancellor later resigned as he complained of “political and unprofessional hands” interfering in the running of the university.<sup>57</sup>

In 1998 the UZ introduced the new system of Executive Deans of Faculties who would be appointed by the Council and would be answerable to the Vice Chancellor.<sup>58</sup> Under the previous system Deans were elected in the faculties. The new system was introduced on the rationale that there was a need to give more autonomy and authority to the Faculties. It was argued that “elections tended to create unhealthy alliances and unethical patronages, which may in turn create conflict of interest in the faculties.”<sup>59</sup> The argument implies that during an Executive Dean’s term of office there would be no possibility of alliances which may still cause conflict. Critics saw this new system as an erosion of democratic principles in the university which only served to tighten the grip of the government in the institution. Here was an attempt to counter the influences of civic and political opposition forces which were believed to be a negative influence and creating problems in the institution. This move was intended to neutralise the rising tide of opposition politics which seems to have gestated on the campus. For example, some lecturers and students were involved in opposition politics while others were fierce critics of government without necessarily having any political affiliation. Such influences went beyond the UZ to polytechnics. With this situation of the university as a seedbed of anti-government activism and perceived serious levels of indiscipline, police and court action would only turn them into martyrs and heroes being persecuted by the government,<sup>60</sup> hence the recourse to infiltration of the different layers of the

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<sup>56</sup> International Centre against Censorship, “Zimbabwe: Attacks on Freedom of Expression,” *Issue NO. 17*, (14 October 1992). Quoted in Tengende, “Workers, Students and the Struggle for Democracy,” p. 404.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 346.

<sup>58</sup> Hill, “The Role of Traditional Universities,” p. 33.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> Tengende, “Workers, Students and the Struggle for Democracy,” p. 409.

university corpus through means which enabled government to have a say in appointments and general policy formulation.

The government has been consistent in its interest in what goes on in the university. To suggest that the interest came about as a result of the new challenges to its hegemony would be erroneous. A year into independence, in 1981 President Mugabe stated that due to the importance of university education, it was imperative that they could not be left in the hands of academics and their institutional structures but should be closely monitored.<sup>61</sup> This statement was popularised in government circles. For example, in an apparent self critique as a former Minister of Higher Education and once a UZ lecturer, Ignatius Chombo highlighted Mugabe's statement and added that "government had been too scared to 'meddle with university internal processes that the best it has done is to amend statutes."<sup>62</sup> Although Chombo tried to relate his statement with the need for government to influence academic programmes there was a tone of the need for a pervasive influence in the university.

At the launch of the UZ golden jubilee, attended by Vice Chancellors from both private and public universities, the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Higher Education, W. Mbizvo made reference to Mugabe's statement in his speech arguing for the need for government to be closely involved with what goes on in the universities.<sup>63</sup> Although Mbizvo's reference was made in the context of professional concerns to do with standards and monitoring of universities as well as the need for more stringent measures for accreditation, it still had a bearing on academic freedom and the autonomy of institutions.

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<sup>61</sup> Schlette, *Towards Academic Excellence in Higher Education*.

<sup>62</sup> Chombo, "Higher Education and Technology in Zimbabwe," pp. 19-20.

<sup>63</sup> Washington Mbizvo, "The UZ at Fifty: Past, Present and Future Challenges," Golden Jubilee Lecture delivered at the UZ, 11 February 2005.

The government's keen interest in what goes on in the university is simpler to apply in state universities by virtue of its ownership of the institutions. What remains to be seen is the extent to which the government may involve itself in the affairs of private universities. To what extent are private universities autonomous from government?

### **Governance structures**

It is remarkable that the University of Zimbabwe Amendment Bill was introduced at the same time that the government had decided to liberalise the higher education sector by allowing non-government provision of university education through the introduction of the National Council for Higher Education Bill. The two Bills were introduced within the same period. The UZ Amendment Bill was introduced on 12 October 1990. It was rushed through all the stages in parliament within a week and by 21 December 1990 the President had signed it into an Act despite protests from the university community who had not been consulted. Likewise, the National Council for Higher Education Bill was not even gazetted but introduced to parliament on 6 December and steamrolled through the system "contrary to well established constitutional convention that persons most affected by the proposed legislation be consulted..."<sup>64</sup> The timing of the two Acts was not coincidental but a strategy to link liberalisation with the introduction of a curbed university based activism. The government was well aware that the UZ could be a centre of influence in either positive or negative ways to the new universities.

Elsewhere in the same year other forms of legislation were introduced with the aim of strengthening the hand of government. The Labour Relations Amendment Bill introduced earlier than the university Acts within the same year was also rushed through parliament without consultation.<sup>65</sup> Since the labour body was viewed by the government as a tool being used by enemies of the state<sup>66</sup> the government sought to

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<sup>64</sup> "Letter to the President Being Report of the Senate Sub-Committee on the National Council for Higher Education Act (1990)," 2 April 1991. Quoted in Tengende, "Workers, Students and the Struggle for Democracy," p. 407.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 424. Cf. "The ZCTU Appeal to the President," *The Worker*, 2 November 1992, p. 3.

<sup>66</sup> "ZCTU has Failed to Mobilise the Working Class," *The People's Voice*, 9-15 May 1993.

liberalise, and more essentially to cripple it, by doing away with the policy of one industry one union.<sup>67</sup> In 1990 the Zimbabwe National War Veterans Association was formed as a way of mobilising the former freedom fighters for government purposes as well as to prevent them from joining Edgar Tekere's Zimbabwe Unity Movement.<sup>68</sup> As a former freedom fighter and high ranking official within ZANU (PF), Tekere commanded respect from freedom fighters. Also in 1990 and in step with the ESAP, the Indigenous Business Development Centre was established with the aim of empowering and enabling black entrepreneurs to participate in the economy. While the early 1990s appeared to bear the marks of liberalisation on several fronts the main thrust of government was still to consolidate its hegemony. The new developments in the opening of this decade were therefore more of a strategy to aid within limits sectors which were willing to participate in national development and neutralise those that tended to pose a threat. It is in this context that one has to understand the regulation of the university sector.

The NCHE is responsible for "the maintenance of appropriate standards in regard to teaching, courses of instruction, examinations and academic qualifications in institutions of higher education."<sup>69</sup> It considers "applications for the establishment of private universities and university colleges,"<sup>70</sup> amendments<sup>71</sup> and revocation<sup>72</sup> of charters. The functions include ensuring of proper standards of admission and qualifications.<sup>73</sup> The NCHE Act stipulates that the council is a body corporate which is capable of suing and being sued in its own right. However, despite this statement the body does not enjoy full autonomy. The membership<sup>74</sup> of the council is made up of Vice Chancellors of both public and private universities, principals of university

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<sup>67</sup> Tengende, "Workers, Students and the Struggle for Democracy," p. 427.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 446.

<sup>69</sup> NCHEA, Clause 4 (1) (a).

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 4 (b). Public universities are established through Acts of parliament.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 4 (c).

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 5 (1).

colleges, Chairman of the Research Council of Zimbabwe, Secretaries of “not more than five ministries [...] relevant to the development of higher education...” an executive secretary and “not more than ten members appointed by the Minister.” The composition of the Council reflects dominance by government appointees. A significant number of the appointees are either civil servants or Vice Chancellors and principals of state universities and colleges respectively. The chairman of the council is appointed by the President. According to the respective Acts of the state universities, Vice Chancellors of public universities are appointed by the President who is himself the Chancellor. The same applies to principals of government colleges who are appointed by the Ministry of Higher Education. This structure enables the government, if it so wishes, to influence the deliberations and decisions of the NCHE through appointment of members sympathetic to its policies.

In addition to annual reports the council may present “such other reports as the minister may require.”<sup>75</sup> The Minister is answerable to the President and Cabinet but in cases of new applications for private universities, amendments and revocation of charters the Act specifically requires him to “submit to the President,” recommendations from the Council.<sup>76</sup> Furthermore, “the Minister after consultation with the Council may give to the Council such written directions of a general character relating to the exercise by it of its functions as appear to the Minister to be in the national interest.”<sup>77</sup> The phrase “national interest” is ambiguous enough to be applicable in a wide variety of situations. It is descriptive of wide ranging powers of intervention which the government can use when there are perceived threats to its hegemony and policies as seen in the case of Shadrack Gutto.

Any claims that church-related universities are autonomous from the government have to take into account the fact that the NCHE structure makes it possible for the government to influence its decisions. The structures of the different church university councils seem to have a stronger bias on the sponsoring churches. Government representation on the council is very small, usually two representatives.

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<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 24 (1) (a) and (2)

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 18 (4), 21 (5), 22 (2)

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.



However, this cannot be used as a yardstick to argue that the universities are autonomous from the government. The potency of the government's influence and control is not in numbers but in regulatory instruments that are in place as reflected in the NCHE Act. It is necessary at this stage to examine the structures of church university councils.

The terminology in the preambles of church universities is similar to that of the NCHE on claims of being a body corporate capable of suing and being sued. AU moves a step further to articulate its autonomy by describing itself as "self-governing and an independent institution and awarding its own degrees, diplomas and certificates."<sup>78</sup> Control of the university is vested in the University Council also known as the Board of Directors.<sup>79</sup> This is in contrast to CUZ which does not include the autonomy clause but rather sees itself as being "under the patronage of the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference to whom the University Council is ultimately responsible."<sup>80</sup> The charter of CUZ specifically mentions the *Code of Canon Law* and the *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* as authorities and bases for establishing the institution. The *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, nevertheless notes that:

Bishops have a particular responsibility to promote Catholic Universities, and to promote and assist in the preservation and strengthening of their Catholic identity, including the protection of their Catholic identity in relation to civil authorities [...]. Even when they do not enter directly into the internal governance of the university, Bishops 'should be seen nor as external agents but as participants in the life of the Catholic university.'<sup>81</sup>

In three of the four existing church universities the Chancellors are from the top echelons of the churches' structures. The Chancellor for AU is one of the African Bishops, while at CUZ it is the sitting Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Harare. GZU is the only church university with a clause enabling the appointment of a

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<sup>78</sup> A Charter to Establish Africa University of the United Methodist Church, SI 29/1992, Clause 5.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8. Cf., NCHEA.

<sup>80</sup> Charter of the Catholic University in Zimbabwe, Proclamation 49/1998, SI 268/1998, Clause 3 (3).

<sup>81</sup> *Ex corde Ecclesiae*, para 28.

Chancellor who is not necessarily within the leadership structures of the church. The clause states: "The Chancellor of the University shall be an eminent person appointed by the Synod of the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe."<sup>82</sup> Of the four only the SU Council is chaired by the Chancellor while the others elect their own Chairpersons.

However, the United Methodist Church retains some considerable influence in several ways which are: appointment of members of the Council, the faculty and providing funding. According to the AU Charter, the Council's membership should have not less than eighteen but not more than thirty voting members. The right to nominate members is allocated to various constituent groups as follows: eleven nominated by the Bishops of Central Africa Conferences; four nominated by GBHEM; two nominated by the GBGM; the General Secretary of the GBHEM; the General Secretary of the GBGM; two members nominated by the Bishops of Central Europe Conferences; two selected by the government of Zimbabwe; three selected from the Senate; two representatives selected from the business community; and the President of the Student's Union (*ex officio*). The distribution of nominating bodies shows that the church has a direct influence in the appointment of at least twenty-one positions on to the Council. As a caveat to the appointment process the AU Charter stipulates that:

All persons nominated to the Board of Directors except those selected by the government [two representatives], the Senate [three representatives] and the Students' Union [one representative] shall be elected by the Board of Directors of the General Board Higher Education and Ministry of the United Methodist Church, Incorporated, a Tennessee, United States of America, company.<sup>83</sup>

Although AU has the stipulation that there is a measure of autonomy as far as university operations are concerned the church has considerable room for influence and control through its appointees on the Council. The church may also indirectly influence the appointment of other members of the Council. Autonomy in this case

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<sup>82</sup> The Charter to Establish the Great Zimbabwe University for the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe, SI 207/2001, Clause 13 (1)

<sup>83</sup> Charter to Establish Africa University, Clause 10 (6)

would therefore be perceived by the declaration in the charter that the university is a body corporate although the arrangement still gives the church some control which by and large is indirect. It is also significant that the Chancellor of the University is one of the Bishops. One can discern here the need to ensure autonomy of the university and at the same time retaining the identity of the institution as a church university.

This places emphasis on the church-relatedness of the university and autonomy from government but means control of the institution by the church. In the thirty-three member Council of SU only nine are not directly appointed by the church although the church still can influence the process to have persons familiar with its ethos. The nine are: one representative each from the Students' Union, Zimbabwe National Chamber of Commerce, the Commercial Farmers' Union, a Government body, Secondary School Teachers' Association, President of the Alumni Association, a Senate nominee who is not employed by the university and two from government ministries. With the exception of five all the other appointees are on the Council in their official capacities.

The AU and SU Councils reflect the international dimension of the universities as they include representatives from the continental and overseas bodies of the churches. It is evident in the AU structure that power is vested in the GBHEM. The two local universities present a slightly different picture. In the CUZ Council the Chancellor, Rector and Deputy Rector are *ex-officio* members. Six members are nominated by the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference, two members are elected by the Archbishop of Harare, two members are nominated by the Conference of Major Religious Superiors in Zimbabwe, two members are nominated by the Major Superiors of Women Religious in Zimbabwe, Rector and the Dean of Studies of the Major Seminary, Rector and the Dean of Studies of Arrupe College, two members nominated by the government, one member each from industry and agriculture, six members nominated by the Senate from among its members, one member nominated by the administrative staff from among their members, one person nominated by support staff, President of the Students' Union and four members appointed by voting members of the Council. The composition of the Councils of CUZ and to a

slightly lesser extent GZU reflects a more democratic structure than the first two in that virtually all the sections on the university are represented.

It is interesting that CUZ has six Senate representatives on its Council, while AU only has three and SU has none except for the Senate nominee who should not be a university employee. Also conspicuous by their absence from the Councils of the two international universities are the non-teaching staff representatives. The GZU Council membership includes administration and support staff but it only has one each of members "elected by academic staff in permanent employ of the university" and the Senate. The Senate is also required to nominate a person who is not employed by the university.

The AU Senate comprises the Vice Chancellor as chairperson, Assistant Vice Chancellors, Deans of the Faculties, Chairpersons of departments, professors and associate professors, two students' representatives, and one academic representative from each faculty.<sup>84</sup> In addition to a list similar to that of AU, except for academic representatives from faculties, membership of the GZU Senate includes two registrars, the librarian, Director of Finance and Administration and the Director of Development and Public Relations.<sup>85</sup> The SU Senate has neither academic nor student representatives on its membership list as is the case with AU.<sup>86</sup> However, save for AU's use of the terms Board of Directors instead of Council, the listed functions of their Senates are identical. GZU's list of functions is slightly different in that it has an additional clause specifying the establishment of departments, faculties and other academic units, but the other clauses are similar to AU and SU. With no significant representation of academics in the Council and Senate, the SU structure comparatively appears less democratic. Deans at AU and SU are appointed by Council<sup>87</sup> compared to the GZU system of Deans "who shall be elected by the

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84 Charter to Establish Africa University, Clause, 16.

85 Charter to Establish the Great Zimbabwe University, Clause 23 (1)

86 A Charter to Establish Solusi University of the Seventh Day Adventist Church, SI 136/1994, Clause 20 (1)

87 Charter to Establish Africa University, Clauses 11 (1) (a) and 24 (1); Charter to Establish Solusi University, Clauses 10 (1) (a) and 31 (1).

teaching staff from among its senior lecturers and professors.”<sup>88</sup> It is significant that when the UZ was considering changing their system from elected Deans to appointed ones there was an outcry from academics charging that it was undemocratic and an infringement of academic freedom. Executive Deans, it was argued, would be under the direct control of the Vice Chancellor and the whole government machinery above him thereby stifling the institution’s autonomy, freedom and democracy.

However, it may be argued that since the AU Council which may include lay members in its ranks mainly deals with policy issues and so leaves administrative and academic matters to the professionals through the senate and other lower committees, this is evidence of an autonomous structure. The Charter’s stipulation on non-discrimination on religious grounds<sup>89</sup> may be construed as providing fertile ground for diversity of perspectives and beliefs which in itself provides a framework conducive to academic freedom and autonomy. AU seems more open than SU on the policy of religious practices by those of other faiths on campus.<sup>90</sup> There is however, not much to show for it in the practice of these religions on campus. However, they also have a preference clause in their charter. The admission policy provides the right to preference:

Students shall be selected and admitted on merit without regard to religious or cultural identity and regardless of ethnic origin, colour, race, political opinion or sex. Nothing in this subsection shall be construed as preventing the university from giving preference to qualified students from the countries constituting the Africa Central Conference of the United Methodist Church.<sup>91</sup>

There are no legislated restrictions to discourage activities by people of other faiths but there is no explicit policy to encourage such interests. As expressed by one student informant: “It would be very odd for those of other faiths to openly practice their religion. The environment just doesn’t allow it.”<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Charter to Establish the Great Zimbabwe University, Clause 33 (1).

<sup>89</sup> Charter to Establish Africa University, Clause 7.

<sup>90</sup> Murapa, “Private Universities,” p. 83. Cf., T. Tanton, “AU Seeks Ways to Reach Across Continent,” *UMNS*, 22 February 1999, Worldwide Faith News Archives. <http://www.wfn.org/1999/02/msg00208.html> (Accessed 21 July 2005).

<sup>91</sup> Charter to Establish Africa University, Clause 29.2 (1).

<sup>92</sup> Interview with Revai Marewangepo, 20 October 2004, Africa University, Mutare.



## Church-relatedness

One has to be reminded that the tone which academic freedom and autonomy take is dependent on the context in which the university is operating as well as the nature of the university itself. Church-related universities in Zimbabwe essentially use the same approach as their sponsoring denominations which shuns public utterances especially those which are likely to be against the government. Alceu Amoroso Lima identifies three types of university in this regard:<sup>93</sup> the totalitarian type which “is subordinated to the political ends of the state; the organic or religious type, where though the university is free from the state it is “subject to a church or social institution;” and the eclectic type which is not subject to influence from the state and private groups. The third type of university is rare indeed. As the Zimbabwean scenario testifies, universities as social institutions created for a purpose, thrive with organic links to organisations or groups which have particular philosophies. The university is a product of the philosophical thrust of the organisation. As a result questions of autonomy and academic freedom have to be tackled bearing in mind the nature of the sponsoring body’s philosophy or ethos. The perceptions of government that higher education is too important a business to be given complete autonomy does not spare church-related universities. Lima’s characterisations therefore do not apply to the Zimbabwean context as they are. There is a fusion of the three models in which each loses some of its traits.

Lima further argues that three aspects of autonomy are fundamental to a university set up.<sup>94</sup> Cultural autonomy in Lima’s view has to do with academic freedom which embodies the right of the institution to organise its programmes without interference from external bodies. Economic autonomy relates to funding sources and arrangements and the extent to which they are levers for external control or interests in the institution. By administrative autonomy Lima refers to issues of governance of the institution. Relating cultural autonomy to academic freedom is in this case a

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<sup>93</sup> Alceu A. Lima, “Autonomy of the University,” in *The University Today: Its Role and Place in Society*, ed. by Bernard Ducret and Refe-Uz-Zaman, (Geneva: UNESCO, 1996, pp. 148-9.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 150.

misnomer. Cultural autonomy should be treated separately as the fourth type in the discourse of church-related universities. It is the discourse of ethos and the extent to which it is infused or becomes the foundation of the institution. This may result in a triangular relationship of tensions and mutuality: how the university perceives its own identity; the state's interest in ensuring that the university conforms to expectations; and the sponsoring church's interests and how it perceives the university as part of its organs for mission fulfilment.

Church-relatedness denotes the extent to which the sponsoring denomination is involved in the affairs of the university. Put in another way it is the role or status of the university in the mission of the church. The tenor of relatedness defines the nature of autonomy of the university in relation to the church. A church organisation which has strong beliefs about the evangelistic role of its university may tend to be more interested and involved in what goes on at the university. Evangelistic activities in this context are not merely about gaining converts but enhancing the identity of the denomination and its profile of service to the world through the process of diffusion. Cardinal John Henry Newman in his classic, *The Idea of a University* graphically states:

Just as a commander wishes to have tall and well-formed and vigorous soldiers, not from any abstract devotion to the military standard of height or age, but for the purposes of war, and no one thinks it any thing but natural and praiseworthy in him to be contemplating, not abstract qualities, but his own living and breathing men; so, in like manner, when the Church founds a University, she is not cherishing talent, genius, or knowledge, for their own sake, but for the sake of her children, with a view to their spiritual welfare and their religious influence and usefulness, with the object of training them to fill their respective posts in life better, and of making them more intelligent, capable, active members of society.<sup>95</sup>

The motivations of churches in this regard apply to the theory of mission by diffusion where an elite class is created through the university so as to influence the wider world. The process of diffusion can only be effective where the religious body

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<sup>95</sup> John H. Newman, *The Idea of a University*, third edition, (London: Basil Montagu Pickering, 1873), pp. xi-xii.

maintains considerable influence, not necessarily control, over its university. The strategy of diffusion goes beyond conversion as it seeks social influence even in spheres where there is no Christian commitment.

A strong organic link between the university and the sponsoring church will be evident through a solid critical mass in the institution. In the process the autonomy of the university may be curtailed although the university administrators and other university personnel may not see it as a problem.

Church-relatedness is articulated in various ways and at the core is a solid mechanism designed to sustain the ethos. The mechanisms include mission statements which set the pace, personnel who sustain the ethos, and governance structures that form the frame of control. The legitimacy of these assertions is strengthened by the funding protocols in place. Where a church is the dominant funding body or the channel through which finances are given to the university it will automatically assume a lot of influence implicitly or explicitly. The nature of the university's affiliation to the church has impact on the university's relations with the government. Where the relationship of the church to its university is strong the two are viewed as inseparable. In such a case by dealing with the university the government cannot avoid the church as the two are sides of the same coin. Given the history of the whole question of academic freedom and autonomy in Zimbabwe the government would rather have a situation where the churches continue to have influence on their universities than allow the latter to be completely detached bodies.

Africa University is referred to in the prospectus as a church related university. This is corroborated in the Presidential proclamation declaring "the Africa University of the United Methodist Church to be established"<sup>96</sup> (Emphasis added).<sup>96</sup> This reference

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<sup>96</sup> Government of Zimbabwe: Proclamation 1/1992, SI 29/1992, Harare: Government Printers.

avoids defining the institution as a church university and is a deliberate attempt to create a distance between the church and the university. Thomas F. Trotter wrote:

It should be clear that the college is not a church [...]. Is it a *Christian* college? a *church* college? or is it a *church-related* college? To some, this progression of terms is a regression, a weakening of the specificity of the relationship. But this terminological progression may represent a maturing of the vision of learning and faith that is consistent with the best interests of the church [...]. The term *church-related* college at least suggests a relationship of mutuality and respect, an acknowledgement of a common history and a possibility of dialogue and trust.<sup>97</sup>

Murapa argues that Africa University:

is church-related in that it is not church-owned or church-controlled. In special circumstances, such as qualification for admissions or appointment in the Faculty of Theology, the Charter makes room for religious backgrounds to be considered. Other than that, the university is completely free to make its academic and non-academic decisions without reference to the church. Students admitted to the university and staff employed by the university need not be members of the church [...]. Staff members are also free to pursue teaching and research in a very free environment where the church does not, in any way influence the subject or the content of teaching and research.<sup>98</sup>

Murapa further asserts: "Where a private university is church-owned or church-controlled, there could be problems relating to the degree of academic freedom in the institution."<sup>99</sup> AU's position concerning faculty and students' rights is consistent with the denomination's liberal global position which clearly states that members of the academic staff are entitled to freedom of research and publication of their results as well as to freely teach and discuss their subject areas.<sup>100</sup> In addition, a faculty member is free to associate with social, political, or religious groupings of their choice<sup>101</sup> and to express themselves as a citizen who "shall be free from institutional

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<sup>97</sup> Trotter, *Loving God with one's Mind*, p. 135.

<sup>98</sup> Murapa, *Private Universities*, p. 83.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83.

<sup>100</sup> "Africa University Progress Report 1989 -1992, and Plan of Development 1993-1996," p. 135.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

mentorship or discipline, provided it is made clear that the faculty member is not speaking for the institution.”<sup>102</sup>

Murapa’s contention on the nature of church affiliation relates to an assertion by the 1976 National Commission of the UMC “that the colleges of the church were not auxiliaries or properties, but colleague and partner institutions.”<sup>103</sup> The church should see it as its mission “to support and not control.”<sup>104</sup> Given the difficulties of precisely delineating what church-relatedness constitutes as well as contextual factors for the different institutions, *The Book of Discipline* asserts:

To qualify for affiliation with The United Methodist Church, institutions must maintain appropriate academic accreditation. Assessment of Church relationships shall be part of the process for those institutions seeking approval of the senate for affiliation with The United Methodist Church. Inasmuch as declarations of Church relationships are expected to differ one from the other, and because of the diversity in heritage and other aspects of institutional life, declarations of church relationship will necessarily be of institutional design.<sup>105</sup>

To facilitate conversations on the subject of affiliation the denomination’s Senate, while acknowledging pluralism in the relationships, provided a checklist:

Does the mission statement of the institution define its church relationship?

How is this statement operational in the life of the college?

Does the college offer special services to the church as an institution?

Are there explicit or implicit guarantees by the annual conference or other church body for the obligations of the college?

Is there a formal statement of relationships agreed between the institution and the related church body? Is such a statement desirable?<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 136.

<sup>103</sup> Elliot et. al., *A College Related Church*. Cf., James T. Burtchaell, *The Dying of the Light: The Disengagement of College and Universities from their Christian Churches*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), p. 271.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>105</sup> *The Book of Discipline*, (Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 2004), p. 588.

<sup>106</sup> Kent M. Weeks, “Exploring the Relationship between Colleges and the Church,” *Colleague*, Summer 1980.



The checklist then identifies six areas for review namely, what the charter says concerning the relationship between the university and the Conference, what the property deeds say, the nature of the institution's by-laws, board responsibilities, endowment, and audits.

From an AU perspective as articulated by Murapa the university is not church-controlled or church-owned. In practice, however, although AU enjoys autonomy its structure of governance from the lowest level in the university to the General Conference suggests strong influence by the global church. The main reason for this is the institution's heavy dependence on the global church and its agencies for resources. Moreover, as a continental project its catchment area covers two Central Conferences and so enjoys the attention of the General Conference.

At the base of the logo and following the words "Africa University" is the small lettered phrase, "A United Methodist Related Institution." In the mission statement, "The mission of the Africa University is to provide higher education of high quality, to nurture students in Christian values..."<sup>107</sup> The bulletin of SU is entitled, "Solusi University: A Seventh-Day Adventist Christian Institution." Solusi's mission statement reads:

Solusi University exists to provide **quality holistic Christian education** (sic) at undergraduate and graduate levels primarily for the Seventh-day Adventist constituency and others in Eastern and Southern Africa who meet the educational and character standards established by the Solusi University Council. The university has a primary concern for the nurture and education of students for service in the church and community.<sup>108</sup>

According to the university's philosophy man was created in the image of God but was separated from God by sin but "through the redemptive work of God's Son, Jesus Christ, humans can be restored to a full relationship with God. In keeping with

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<sup>107</sup> *Africa University Prospectus 2003 – 2005*, Mutare: Africa University Press, 2003, p. vii.

<sup>108</sup> Solusi University Bulletin, 2004 - 2006, p. 4.

these beliefs Solusi University gives special emphasis to the development of the individual's spiritual, mental, physical and social faculties."<sup>109</sup>

While AU describes itself as church-related its mission statement, though expounding the Christian aspect of the institution, does not do so as explicitly as SU. This already draws a difference in the self understanding of the universities in terms of church-relatedness as defined by their mission statements. It follows then that church-relatedness encompasses the perceived role of the university in the service of the church as well as its self-understanding. In other words to what lengths does the university go in fulfilling the mission of the church?

The CUZ understands itself as existing "in the service of God and the Church"<sup>110</sup> and committing "itself to developing young men and women of conscience and competence, committed to the service and development of society. It reaches out to Catholics and to members of other faiths who value the distinctive ethos which the Catholic university offers."<sup>111</sup> The grounds of the role of a Catholic university are explicitly stated in the *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*. The statement is here quoted at length:

By its very nature, each Catholic University makes an important contribution to the Church's work of evangelisation. It is a living *institutional* witness to Christ and his message [...]. Moreover, all the basic academic activities of a Catholic University are connected with and in harmony with the evangelising mission of the church: research carried out in the light of the Christian message which puts new human discoveries at the service of individuals and society; education offered in a faith-context that forms men and women capable of rational and critical judgement and conscious of the transcendent dignity of the human person; professional training that incorporates ethical values and a sense of service to individuals and to society; the dialogue with culture that makes the faith better understood, and the theological research that translates the faith into contemporary language.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>110</sup> Mission Statement, Catholic University in Zimbabwe.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>112</sup> *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, Section 49.

The church's institutions have to be closely connected to it to fulfil this function: "Precisely because it is more and more conscious of its salvific mission in this world, the church wants to have these centres closely connected with it: it wants to have them present and spreading the authentic message of Christ."<sup>113</sup> In typical Newmanian<sup>114</sup> style advocating the centrality of the church tradition in its university,<sup>115</sup> the document further exhorts that in all the daily activities of the university there should be a "practical demonstration of its faith" which should include prayer and meditation and the celebrations of sacraments.<sup>116</sup>

As observed by Robert Benne, each Christian denomination tries to apply its traditions as the ethos for university. This ranges from the teaching of doctrinal standards to their practical application in the lives of students and staff. Levels of emphasis on the church's ethos in the university vary from one denomination to the other. At Solusi participation in religious activities is compulsory. A student who fails to fulfil certain religious obligations may be censured or even fail to graduate.<sup>117</sup> The philosophy of the integration of faith and learning is very strong. It is openly stated that part of the function of the university is to evangelise and make new converts.

However, as required by the government their charter states:

No test of religious or political belief, race, ethnic origin, nationality or sex shall be imposed upon or required of any person in order to entitle that person to be admitted as member of the staff or student body of the university or to hold any office or privilege, except where

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<sup>113</sup> Paul VI, Address to Presidents and Rectors of the Universities of the Society of Jesus, 6 August 1975, n.2: AAS 67, 1975, p. 533. Cf., Address to the participants of the International Congress on Catholic Universities, 25 April 1989, AAS 81, 1989, p. 1220. Quoted in, *Ex Corde Ecclesia*.

<sup>114</sup> Avery Cardinal Dulles, *John Henry Newman*, London: Continuum Press, 2002, p. 144ff. Dulles argues that Pope John Paul II derives his ideas in *Ex Corde Ecclesia* from Newman's ideas.

<sup>115</sup> Colin Barr, *Paul Cullen, John Henry Newman, and the Catholic University of Ireland, 1845-1865*, (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003), p. 88. cf. F. Mcgrath, *Newman's University: Idea and Reality*, (London: Longman and Green, 1951), p. 170.

<sup>116</sup> *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, Section 39.

<sup>117</sup> Solusi University Bulletin, pp. 14 and 65. Cf., Interview with Raymond Ncube, 5 April 2005, Bulawayo.

a specific qualification for admission or appointment is required by the University Council.<sup>118</sup>

This clause is a national boilerplate in all universities as required by the NCHEA and it is mainly concerned with admissions. It however carefully circumvents, presumably with the tacit approval of the government, the question of individual rights to allow the practices of other faiths on campus. Mbizvo has pointed out that if the church university decides for example to introduce dietary laws for its students there is nothing wrong with that as long as in the whole the university helps to redeem the moral fibre of the nation.<sup>119</sup> Universities are therefore at liberty to do as they wish as long as they are not in breach of existing laws. While SU admits students from other faiths there is no room for students to practice their faiths on the campus. They have to participate in SDA activities. In addition to that there are sometimes overt attempts to argue for the truthfulness of Adventist faith in comparison to other religious traditions. The result has led to conversions of some students from their own faiths to Adventism.<sup>120</sup>

Each of the universities' code of conduct for its members is influenced by the denomination's ethos. Students at Solusi and AU may not consume alcohol on campus. At Solusi visits to hostels of the opposite sex are prohibited while at AU they are allowed within certain conditions. At SU students have to seek permission to leave campus but at AU there are no such restrictions. The same applies to application of dietary laws and the strict observance of the Sabbath at Solusi.

The effective conveyance of a church's ethos in the university is dependent upon the presence of willing agents within the institution; what Robert Benne calls the critical

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<sup>118</sup> Charter to Establish Solusi University, Clause 6 (2)

<sup>119</sup> Interview with W. Mbizvo.

<sup>120</sup> This point was made by several students interviewed some of whom testified that before joining the institution they belonged to other denominations but when they came to Solusi they became convinced that Seventh Day Adventism was the right way. Prince Hadebe, an Anglican did not convert to Adventism but he explained that his experiences at Solusi raised a lot of questions in his mind and as a result he always engaged his priest back home in discussions. Interview with Prince. Hadebe, 5 April 2005, Bulawayo.

mass. The critical mass includes both staff and students. According to Benne there are three concentric circles in the religious institution. The first one is the inner circle which could also be called the core group. This group is made up

of intense communicants who not only identify strongly with the religious dimension of the school's mission, but have a solid understanding of the sponsoring tradition – both its vision and ethos, and how these elements should relate to the various dimensions of the school's life.<sup>121</sup>

The core group perpetuates and defends the church-relatedness of the university. Generally the core group constitutes professing members of the religious tradition but as Benne further observes, in some cases non-members of the denomination may be so committed to the ethos that it may be difficult to tell them apart.<sup>122</sup> Church universities in Zimbabwe have made it a point to ensure personnel with strong ties and strong commitment are appointed especially to key positions in the institutions. With the exception of CUZ, a strong and well funded Faculty of Theology, common in the other church universities, with its primary focus on ministerial studies is an important core group centre which sustains the religious ethos. Apart from its high numbers of religiously committed students and academic staff it is charged with the responsibility of teaching the compulsory university wide course of Christian ethics; an attempt on the moral formation of the students in the whole institution.

The second circle is made up of those who respect and support the ethos of the institution. Their understanding and commitment are not as intense as the core group but they participate in the religious activities of the institution. This group is a mixture of members and non members of the religious tradition. The third group is more distant to the core group. In this category are the two extremes of those who to some extent tolerate the university's religious ethos, on the one hand, and those who are hostile to it, on the other.<sup>123</sup> Benne argues that the strength of this category is that they may be considered professional assets to the institution. However, in this group are those whose employment is a result of flaws in recruitment.<sup>124</sup> Inasmuch as non-

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<sup>121</sup> Robert Benne, *Quality with Soul: How Six Colleges and Universities Keep Faith with their Religious Traditions*, (Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 2001), pp. 185-7.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 186.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 187.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*



communicants can be identified in the three layers, those who consider themselves church members are also present. The presence of a member of the denomination in a particular layer may define their level of commitment. For example, some members of the religious tradition in the second and third categories would in some cases be nominal Christians whose links may be historical; for example, parents or grandparents were strong church members. The core group tends to have strong ties with the church outside the university. This may include participation in policy-making arms of the church. The concept of the core group is also applicable to students. One of the religious university's major catchment areas is the sponsoring denomination itself. The core group is not confined to the university personnel and some students but even the composition of the governing councils.

### **The Government continues to respect the church and the university**

Institutionally, the relationship between government and church universities suggests the existence of an unwritten "non-aggression pact." The government has avoided interference while the universities have also desisted from antagonising the state. However, in the case of GZU political expediency bore precedence over academic freedom as will be seen in the next section. AU and GZU represent two extremes in terms of how they have exercised their autonomy and the consequences in handling political issues or dealing with political interference. This is demonstrated by the way AU, for example, handled issues posing a potential threat to the relationship of the institution with the government. Interestingly, most of the concerns were being raised from abroad concerning the impact of Zimbabwe's political crisis on AU. The stance of AU to steer away from politics and strive for a cordial relationship with government was a strategy to protect its autonomy.

In 2000 fears were raised that political unrest was going to affect Africa University. Two high ranking officials were dispatched from the United States on a fact finding mission. Roger Ireson, the General Secretary of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry and James Salley, Africa University's Vice Chancellor for Institutional Development based in the United States and responsible for fundraising activities for the university in the US, concluded that in spite of the political upheaval which included the land controversy, the university was safe. The report of the visit

by the two was published in the *United Methodist News Service*. In an apparent attempt to allay any fears by donors Salley and Ireson maintained that, "United Methodists who are nervous about conditions in Zimbabwe should understand that what is happening in the country is political."<sup>125</sup> The report added: "Africa University is a private institution of higher education." Salley was quoted in the same report stating the position of the Africa University which was also probably shared by the church: "We don't get involved in the politics of the country." Salley went on to say that the university, as a good neighbour in the country, had taken no sides to the conflict and was "confident that the property and the buildings [were] safe regardless of what the political climate is." According to Ireson, "Every precaution has been taken to assure the administration and staff of the university as well as the Board of Trustees that Africa University are safe and sound in the country of Zimbabwe (sic)." He further stated:

We continue to build for the future. This is long term, and nothing at Africa University is in jeopardy. We are building a future generation of leaders for a new Africa that hopefully will alleviate these types of confrontations in the future. It will not be immediate, but the experiences students have at Africa University will make a difference in the long run.<sup>126</sup>

Church officials had to be always on their guard to dispel any negative publicity which might impact negatively on the university.

The September 2004 issue of the *UMConnection*, a Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference newspaper carried a letter by a former US Navy captain alleging that AU had "used donations from church members to pay off Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe and his staff in exchange for operating without government interference."<sup>127</sup> In response to the letter Grace Muradzikwa, a member of the Board based in Harare, said AU was a success story in spite of problems in the country because of "staying

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<sup>125</sup> L. Green, "Africa University Safe despite Zimbabwe's Woes, Officials Say," *UMNS*, 12 April 2000, Worldwide Faith News Archives. <http://www.wfn.org/2000/04/msg00116.html> (Accessed 10 March 2004).

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>127</sup> Linda Green, "Africa University Officials Stress School's Independence," *UMNS*, 17 September 2004, <http://www.gbhem.org/asp/viewNews.asp?id=228> (Accessed 8 May 2005).

away from politics and focusing on its mission.” Responding to the same article, which generated a lot of email discussion in the United States, Jerome King Del Pino, an executive member of the GBHEM asserted: “Africa University is one of the most controlled institutions, financially, in the denomination [...]. The auditing process of the university is far more rigorous than any local church in the denomination in the United States.”<sup>128</sup> Whatever troubles the nation was experiencing, the university remained safe and this according to Muradzikwa was also attributed to “the distance between the Mutare-based school and the capital city [...]. The locale of Africa University is ideal [...]. It is remote and removed from the hustle and bustle of the capital, Harare.”<sup>129</sup>

*The Zimbabwe Independent* of 22 October 2004 reported that the government was in the process of compulsorily acquiring the Roman Catholic Church run Driefontein Mission farm on which was a hospital. Responding to fears raised by this report on the implications of such an action on other mission farms in the country, James Salley had to try to allay any fears of any possible compulsory acquisition of the land on which AU was built. Bishop Eben Nhwatiwa of the Zimbabwe Annual Conference, a former lecturer at the university, denied any knowledge of such action by government and claimed that he was in touch with other church leaders and had not heard anything of the sort. “We have no indication and have not had a hint of any kind of concern about Africa University and its property from the government of Zimbabwe.”<sup>130</sup> These concerns stand as evidence that events in Zimbabwe were viewed with a lot of sensitivity which created nervousness in some constituencies of the UMC. In efforts to allay fears or monitor the situation the university was often shielded by church officials.

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<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>130</sup> “Church Officials see no Evidence of Land Grabs in Zimbabwe,” GBHEM: Whats New, <http://www.gbhem.org/asp/viewNews.asp?id=237> (Accessed 8 May 2005). The Section 8 Land Acquisition Notice appeared in the government press although no communication had been received by the Catholic Church authorities. See also: “Church, State and Land,” *Jesuit Communications No. 15*, 28 October 2004, <http://www.jesco.co.zw/intouch/issue15.htm> (Accessed 8 May 2005); *Catholic Independent News*, 20 October 2004.

The picture which seems to emerge is that of a church and university declaring its position of non-involvement in the politics of the country and further declaring good relationships with the government. The position taken was probably meant to maintain a cordial relationship with the government. In an interview with Dean Snyder, Murapa described the nature of the relationship between his university and government as follows:

The government has a lot of respect for Africa University. President Mugabe continues to talk about being the first graduate of Africa University and we are proud of this. He received our first honorary degree. Generally we have had a lot of support from the government. Last year the Ministry of Higher Education and Technology made a grant to purchase computers for Africa University. The government continues to respect the church and the University. Africa University is a pioneer institution. So, in spite of everything else, there has been support. Students from other countries have not been negatively affected at all.<sup>131</sup>

The cordial relationship was not only with Mugabe but also “key ministers of government.”<sup>132</sup> The university was “secure because it [was] perceived as a contributor for justice.” To enhance this, “We have to concern ourselves with the continued, growth and development of the institution [...]. In the process we who are the senior managers, have to be tactful about how we manoeuvre ourselves in an atmosphere that may react or respond in an inexplorable or irrational manner.”<sup>133</sup> The university demonstrated this tact when the Ministry of Higher Education requested it to include studies in Zimbabwe’s war of liberation in its curriculum. The university’s response was that such a course would be difficult to introduce because

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<sup>131</sup> D. Snyder, “Q & A: Africa University Carries on Through Challenges,” *UMNS*, 18 January 2002, Worldwide Faith News Archives. <http://www.wfn.org/2002/01/msg00113.html> (Accessed 23 July 2005).

<sup>132</sup> Linda Green, “Land Conflict in Zimbabwe not Threatening School, Murapa Says,” *UMNS*, 9 April 2001, Worldwide Faith News Archives. <http://www.wfn.org/2001/04/msg00079.html> (Accessed 21 July 2005).

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

the institution catered for the whole continent.<sup>134</sup> The government accepted the explanation and did not pursue the matter any further.

In an effort to make rebuttals against sentiments in the US and other countries that AU was threatened, Murapa raised similar lines of arguments and further tried to neutralise the potency of the fears by drawing historical analogies: “These really are political developments like those in any other country [...]. When there are demonstrations in Chicago, they don’t affect Northwestern University. If there is a demonstration in New York, Columbia University is not impacted.”<sup>135</sup> In as much as the Columbia University did not make public statements about the conduct of the New York Police Department unless it affected students or the campus in some way: “It does not always pay for me to get on the top of the mountain and denounce.”<sup>136</sup> He added that the land conflict in Zimbabwe was similar to the American Civil Rights activism of the 1960s. To demonstrate some objectivity Murapa further added: “I am not defending the government of Zimbabwe [...]. At the political level, governments come and go and governments make mistakes during the period of their tenure and they must be criticised for that. But when citizens criticise it for issues it is not engaged in, they become unprofessional.”<sup>137</sup> It can then further be argued that the university tried to reciprocate to the government’s respectful distance by steering clear of any contentious matters. The statement by Ireson to an international audience primarily of United Methodists that “Zimbabwe is one of the most stable places in Africa for a university” and that those who were raising concerns did not have adequate knowledge of the nature of the problems which dated many years back,<sup>138</sup> lends credibility to the attempt to portray the country in a positive light, all the more for the sake of Africa university.

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<sup>134</sup> Interview with J.W.Z. Kurewa.

<sup>135</sup> L. Green, “Land Conflict in Zimbabwe not threatening School, Murapa Says.”

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>138</sup> Green, “Africa University Safe despite Zimbabwe’s Woes, Officials Say.”



The nature of the state's relationship with the international universities, for example, AU, is different from the local church-related universities. Africa University is an international institution. It draws its students from across the continent. Members of the faculty are of various nationalities. The Board of Trustees is made up of members of various nationalities within the United Methodist family and it is responsible to the church's General Conference through the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry based in the United States. The two Chancellors who have been appointed in succession are not Zimbabwean although they are from within the continent. The United Methodist Church in Zimbabwe has limited authority over the university although there is unity of purpose and supportive co-operation between the two. Most of its funding is from the US through the church structures. The government considers this a valuable investment through valuable foreign currency earnings. The foreign currency inflows into the university give it a status similar to some multinationals in the country whose value is judged, among other things, by their contribution to the economy for as long as they are not perceived to be political threats. To a large measure this spells out the church's autonomy from the government. In another way this may explain why the various levels of the university with so many foreigners may choose to take a neutral stance in local politics or public issues.

As an institution with strong ties with the United States, although not necessarily the government, and getting most of its funding from the same source, it could easily be viewed with suspicion by the government. Zimbabwean government officials and party functionaries on various occasions made adverse comments about foreign funded organisations and the possibility that they may be used as agents by Western governments. Government attitude towards the foreign funded Africa University is interesting considering the new ideological thrust which is against 'bogus universalism'<sup>139</sup> and wary of institutions which receive Western funding. However,

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<sup>139</sup> Terence O. Ranger, "Nationalist Historiography, Patriotic History and the History of the Nation: The Struggle over the Past in Zimbabwe," in *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol. 30, NO. 2, (2004), p. 223.

the government's confidence could be based on the fact that it is a church university which has not posed any threat to its hegemony.

The Zimbabwean government seems to be consistent when it comes to keeping distance from church bodies, especially those that do not pose a direct threat to its policies, ideology and their practical application. In general this strategy of keeping a distance from organisations that do not pose a threat has been the nemesis of prophetic action among religious bodies as they often reciprocated by not daring to disturb the relationship. The government has persistently pursued this agenda on civil society where those who criticise its policies are labelled enemies working for imperialist forces bent on destabilising the country.<sup>140</sup> Similar labels have also been applied to individuals. Matabeleland Catholic Archbishop Pius Ncube and the Anglican Bishop of Manicaland, Sebastian Bakare, have been labelled traitorous clerics by various arms of the state and media. Whereas those who uncritically support the policies of government and the ruling party, for example, the Anglican Bishop of Harare, Nolbert Kunonga and Obediah Musindo, the leader of Africa Destiny Network, are regarded in positive light.

### **Intervention or intrusion? The fall of a university**

Barely two years after receiving its charter on 29 June 2001 and having commenced classes in 2002, Great Zimbabwe University experienced problems which tested its institutional autonomy in relation to the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe, government and Masvingo provincial political leaders. The problems bedevilling the institution should be understood in the context of political relationships in the province of Masvingo. At the centre of the crisis was the Acting Vice Chancellor, Hilda Matarira. Matarira, a former UZ lecturer, had strong connections with the church. She was the daughter of one of the RCZ pastors and a close relative of Vice President Muzenda. She was co-opted by the church to be a member of the university taskforce under UZ professor Obert Maravanyika, charged with the task of

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<sup>140</sup> See, Dorman, "Inclusion and Exclusion."

developing the proposal and Charter for the university. When the university was established she was appointed Acting Vice Chancellor.

According to the Moderator, the church and the university council had resolved that since the institution was operating from a temporary site, enrolment should be kept at 120 students until such a time as expansion was possible.<sup>141</sup> Contradicting the decision of the Council, Matarira decided to enrol 400 students in the hope that this would bring more income but instead it strained the budget forcing the university to increase fees and creating disgruntlement among students. This signalled the beginning of a string of problems which saw bad blood developing between the church and the university administrators. With the support of the church, the University Council led by Dr Oliver Munyaradzi, a former government minister and member of the ruling Party, resolved that the contract of the Acting Vice Chancellor that had expired on 31 December 2002 would not be renewed.<sup>142</sup> In March the Moderator of the RCZ, Enos Chomutiri placed an advertisement in the press announcing that Matarira's contract had expired. The Council was apparently not happy with her performance and refusal to take instructions from the church and the university Council. Matarira was adamant and insisted that she could only leave the university at the behest of the Mumbengegwi-led Council.<sup>143</sup>

The decision of the church and council followed a demonstration involving about 200 students in November 2002 who marched through the city centre and gathered at the church headquarters. Among other things the students' major demand was that the church had failed to run the university and it should immediately hand the institution over to the government.<sup>144</sup> The students' demonstration had the tacit approval of the governor and the university officials as it applied pressure on the church to give up the institution. However, the students' actions cannot be construed as a sign of support for Matarira and those who were on her side. Although there were attempts by the stakeholders to influence them, the students generally remained

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<sup>141</sup> Interview with E. Chomutiri.

<sup>142</sup> "Church Refuses to Recognise Government Committee," *Weekend Tribune*, 22-23 March 2003.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>144</sup> "Great Zimbabwe University Troubles Continue," *Weekend Tribune* 5-6 April 2003.

independent and focused on what directly affected them. As a result some of the demonstrations on campus targeted the university administrators. The main concerns revolved around the issues of the law degree and fees which had been increased by 471% from \$450,000.<sup>145</sup> Writing in retrospect in the letters column of *The Standard*,<sup>146</sup> Joel Binguzwa a former Student Representative Council Vice President called for the setting of a commission of enquiry to investigate the causes of the university's problems. He described the events at the university as "one of the greatest scandals ever to happen in the country since independence" in which "some people saw the institution as an opportunity for them to make money." Furthermore, "Prominent politicians did not waste time in having a finger in the pie. People at the university aided the politicians in this unholy alliance to squander resources at the institution." The scandal according to Binguzwa was similar to the looting of the War Victims Pension Fund and Willogate.

The standoff between the church and university council on one side and Matarira on the other saw the entrance into the arena of a group of political leaders calling themselves stakeholders. The stakeholders claimed that they had a legitimate interest in the affairs of the university because it had a significant role in the province.<sup>147</sup> The stakeholders, all from Masvingo province, led by Hungwe and Samuel Mumbengegwi, a government minister, included Chief Fortune Charumbira, also a Deputy Minister of Local Government, Chief Mugabe, and Claudius Makova, Member of Parliament for Bikita West. In their interest on what went on at the university the stakeholders took sides and supported the defiant Matarira. They even approached the UZ to continue paying Matarira's salary for another year.<sup>148</sup> As the stakeholders argued that they had a right to intervene or be involved in the affairs of the university, RCZ leaders argued that there was no provision for such a group in the Charter.

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<sup>145</sup> "Students Boycott Classes Over Hike in Tuition Fees," *The Herald* 21 April 2004.

<sup>146</sup> Joel D. Binguzwa, "State Should Probe GZU Closure," *The Standard*, 6 March 2005.

<sup>147</sup> Interview with F. Dauramanzi.

<sup>148</sup> Interview with F. Dauramanzi.

Swithum Mombeshora, the Minister of Higher Education during that period, was sympathetic as expressed by the church's Education Secretary: "We had the full support of the Minister and his officials. According to them the university had to be run in line with the set legal statutes which in their view were adequate."<sup>149</sup> When Mombeshora indicated his intention to visit the Morgenster mission he told church leaders that he preferred avoidance of any reference to the "politics" of the issue.<sup>150</sup> As they prepared for the Minister's visit the church leadership and Matarira prepared rival programmes.<sup>151</sup> In her programme Matarira wanted the Governor to be one of the key speakers while on its part the church had resolved that they would not acknowledge Matarira as Vice Chancellor in the Moderator's welcome speech. Although they eventually came to a compromise, when Mombeshora presented a gift for the university at the ceremony it was received by the Moderator who did not hand it over to Matarira as would have been expected under normal circumstances.<sup>152</sup> Ironically, when Claudius Makova read the Governor's speech he acknowledged the partnership between church and state and the great work of the RCZ especially that of founding the university in the province.<sup>153</sup> As perceived by the church all the gains that had been made towards a resolution were reversed when Mombeshora died three weeks later on 17 March 2003.<sup>154</sup> He had pledged to work for a solution to the problem and as perceived by church officials he had shown a desire to uphold the hand of the church.

The church appeared to have reservations regarding Ignatius Chombo who took over as Acting Minister after Mombeshora's death. They suspected Chombo of being biased against them. In May 2003 a third governing body came onto the scene when Chombo announced that the government had taken over the university and had

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<sup>149</sup> Interview with E. Chomutiri.

<sup>150</sup> Interview with F. Dauramanzi.

<sup>151</sup> Interview with F. Dauramanzi.

<sup>152</sup> Interview with F. Dauramanzi.

<sup>153</sup> Interview with E. Chomutiri.

<sup>154</sup> Newswet, "Higher Education Minister Swithum Mombeshora Dies," Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation, 19 March 2003, <http://site.mweb.co.zw/zbc/news.cfm?id=91119&pubdate=2003%2D03%2D19> (Accessed 12 July 2003).



appointed a Board of Trustees which was to be chaired by Simon Muzenda.<sup>155</sup> Church representatives on the Board would come at the invitation of the government. The church, however, still maintained that the charter had been violated. Herbert Murerwa who succeeded Mombeshora as substantive Minister was also seen as being sympathetic to the church but, like his predecessor avoided openly criticising the stakeholders.

On 23 January 2003 the stakeholders had held a meeting in Harare without the knowledge of the church and appointed a new university Council.<sup>156</sup> The Harare meeting was ironically chaired by Muzenda although the church leaders attempted to downplay this aspect.<sup>157</sup> The politically appointed Council was to be the vehicle through which the stakeholders would take over control of the university. This was in breach of the GZU Charter which specified autonomy of the university and gave the church the prerogative of appointing the Council. The Council appointed by the stakeholders was led by a University of Zimbabwe lecturer in the Department of Economics, Clever Mumbengegwi. At the inception of the university Mumbengegwi's name had been submitted as a Ministry representative after some delay but he had declined.<sup>158</sup> The church continued to insist that the Oliver Munnyaradzi Board was the legitimate one. Chomutiri continued to insist that the university charter had been violated:

The Synod of the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe does not recognise a meeting held on 23 January 2003 in Harare which purportedly created a Council for the Great Zimbabwe University to run the university for us. The Synod of the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe is the responsible authority for the Great Zimbabwe University and will not be forced to recognise the outcome of a meeting done by some people without the knowledge of the responsible authority [...]. The university Charter clearly stipulates that all university governing council members have to be invited by the church and in this case no one has been invited by the church as yet [...]. We, as a church are yet to choose a governing council according to the university charter and

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<sup>155</sup> "State Takes Over University," *The Daily News*, 31 May 2003.

<sup>156</sup> "Church Refuses to Recognise Government Committee," *Weekend Tribune*, 22-23 March 2003.

<sup>157</sup> Ministry Officials, (for example, W. Mbizvo, interview) confirmed that Muzenda was present and chaired the meeting while church officials who were interviewed, for example, E. Chomutiri, and F. Dauramanzi could neither deny nor confirm Muzenda's role.

<sup>158</sup> Interview with F. Dauramanzi.

we are not moving away from that position. We just have to follow the charter and nothing else.<sup>159</sup>

The church further stressed that if the government recognised the stakeholder-appointed Council then they would have nothing to do with the university; a position they eventually took as they awaited the outcome of court proceedings which they had instituted against Matarira. At the same time Chomutiri announced that they were suspending any new enrolments because there was an ongoing restructuring exercise at the university.<sup>160</sup> As the saga continued, the Governor summoned Chomutiri to his office to explain the church's position.<sup>161</sup> The church delegation refused to go to the governor's office maintaining that Hungwe's actions were clearly in contempt of the GZU charter. Hungwe and his group gave in and went to the church offices for the meeting which however did not yield much.<sup>162</sup> This was also an effort by the government to apply pressure on the church. The situation resulted in a stalemate with the church appointed Board remaining intact but Matarira still retaining her job. It was an uneasy truce as the government's sympathy towards the university was reduced.

The void created by the power struggle between church and state was not helped by a student boycott over high fee increases. The students were arguing that the fee increases were illegal because as argued by the student leader, Promise Mkwanzani: "According to the Charter of the university, students' representatives must be involved in the revision of tuition fees but this did not happen."<sup>163</sup> The university on the other hand through its registrar argued that they had to increase fees because, "we do not receive Government grants and need funds to meet operational costs."<sup>164</sup> The students then successfully filed a legal challenge in court to have the University's tuition account frozen. The court decision was subsequently overturned in favour of the university.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> "Church Refuses to Recognise Government Committee," *Weekend Tribune*, 22-23 March 2003.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>161</sup> "Squabbles Rock Great Zimbabwe University," *The Daily News*, 3 October 2003.

<sup>162</sup> Interview with F. Dauramanzi.

<sup>163</sup> "Students Boycott Classes Over Hike in Tuition Fees," *The Herald*, 21 April 2004.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>165</sup> "University Gets Lifeline," *The Herald*, 30 May 2004.

The situation was worsened by the discovery that the law degree programme which had been introduced without adequate preparations was below standard. Some of the lecturers recruited and students enrolled were under-qualified.<sup>166</sup> The problem of low qualifications for some students and staff applied to all other programmes. Joseph James, the President of the Law Society of Zimbabwe wrote to the university advising them of the Society's position:

We have recently received complaints from our members who are being approached for employment or attachment opportunities. The position of the Law society as stated in the attached letters has not changed and is hereby reaffirmed [...]. Those who are continuing with the studies under the illegal programme are wasting their time and resources and are advised to reconsider or ensure the university authorities produce an appropriate programme that they have met the stipulated conditions [...]. By copy of this letter, our members are also being informed not to employ or consider your students for the reasons already stated.<sup>167</sup>

After some initial resistance to the position of the Law Society, Matarira issued an apology to the students and their parents:

The Great Zimbabwe University apologises to students and parents for inconveniences caused by the verdict received from the Council for Legal Education not to designate the law degree programme [...]. The verdict was not expected and any damage to property as a result of the disturbance is regretted [...]. Assistance from the University of Zimbabwe is part of our remedial action and the Executive Dean in the Faculty of law at UZ is now the GZU law degree co-ordinator and more UZ assistance has been requested in the law library linkages, lecturers, expertise and for associate status.<sup>168</sup>

Matarira's statement came after an article in the *Sunday Mail* of 23 May 2004 which reported that a Cabinet meeting had resolved that students on the programme should be transferred to the nearby Masvingo State University (MASU). The Cabinet meeting resolved that solutions to the problems besetting the university should be found. By June 2004 the university gave in and Matarira announced that they were

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<sup>166</sup> Interview with W. Mbizvo.

<sup>167</sup> The letter was quoted in the press. See, "Law Students Face Bleak Future," *The Herald*, 3 March 2004. cf. "Varsity Shelves Law Degree," *The Herald*, 16 June 2004.

<sup>168</sup> "University Apologises," *The Herald*, 24 May 2004.

shelving the Law degree and students were to be transferred to the UZ and Masvingo State University which had just been opened.

A government appointed taskforce led by the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Higher Education contradicted the university's announcement that while solutions to the problems were being sought, all programmes would run until the end of the Semester. The statement of the Taskforce read in part:

The Chairman of the Taskforce on the Great Zimbabwe University, Dr Washington Mbizvo, wishes to advise all Great Zimbabwe University students that information contained in the notice to all students from the Acting Registrar of the Great Zimbabwe University dated 17<sup>th</sup> June 2004, does not reflect the true position of both Government and the 'mandate' of the Taskforce as clearly defined by the Minister of Higher and Tertiary Education.<sup>169</sup>

Arrangements for the redeployment of students to state universities were to be made. The notice from the registrar setting preconditions for the re-registration of the students and that the programme would continue was issued on the instructions of the university's Council and it stated: "There is no automatic absorption into Masvingo State University. Students will be screened on: academic performance, disciplinary offences, outstanding fees, library books and sports equipment."<sup>170</sup>

A day before Mbizvo's statement was issued Herbert Murerwa, the Minister of Higher Education went to Masvingo to meet church officials and other stakeholders in an effort to find a solution to the problem. This meeting paved the way for Mbizvo's statement. Chomutiri was reported in the press to be happy with the meeting with the minister and in response to questions he added: "We held discussions on the future of Great Zimbabwe University and I am hopeful that in the future the church will be able to get *its charter for its own university*." (emphasis added).<sup>171</sup> This rather sarcastic statement, whose last part related to autonomy and was the central issue to the struggle, sounded the death knell and sealed the epitaph

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<sup>169</sup> Statement by Taskforce on Great University: Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, 29 June 2004. cf. *The Herald*, 30 June 2004.

<sup>170</sup> "Notice to all Students of GZU" Registrar's Office, Great Zimbabwe University, 17 June 2004.

<sup>171</sup> "University Faces Collapse," *The Herald*, 30 June 2004.

to Great Zimbabwe University. The stakeholders had pushed for revocation of the charter but Murerwa assured the church leaders that the government was not closing down the university but in an effort to safeguard the students operations had to be suspended and students were transferred to other institutions.<sup>172</sup>

The action of the stakeholders was probably an attempt to bring the church university under their control and eventually turn it into a state university. Their actions coincided with the decision by the government to upgrade Masvingo Teachers College to university status. This explains their attempts to have the name of the church university changed claiming that the name Great Zimbabwe was national.<sup>173</sup> They even cited comments made by President Mugabe when he addressed a rally and made reference to the sanctity of the shrine as representing the very core of the nation's identity, traditional and cultural values and so should not be used in vain.<sup>174</sup> Instead, as announced in 2004 by the Permanent Secretary, the new Masvingo State University was to be renamed Great Zimbabwe National University.<sup>175</sup> In August 2005 the new Minister of Higher Education Stanley Mudenge, who came from the same region announced that plans were underway to establish a mega university located near the Great Zimbabwe monument.<sup>176</sup> The university would "signify the nation's collective achievements since prehistoric times and promote African renaissance."<sup>177</sup> This development was seen as a "fulfilment of President Mugabe's wish that there be a national university named after the monuments that will have a bias towards the country's vibrant culture and peculiar history and achievements."<sup>178</sup> As for the reaction of the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe concerning the naming of the university Mudenge said:

I am pleased that the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe has already written to us offering us the name (Great Zimbabwe University) which has national connotations. That the State-run university should bear

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<sup>172</sup> Interview with F. Dauramanzi.

<sup>173</sup> Interview with E. Chomutiri.

<sup>174</sup> Interview with E. Chomutiri.

<sup>175</sup> Mbizvo, "The UZ at Fifty."

<sup>176</sup> "Plans Afoot for Mega Varsity in Masvingo," *The Herald*, 2 August 2005.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*



the name Great Zimbabwe in fulfilment of President Mugabe's wish that there be a unique university named after the monuments (Great Zimbabwe).<sup>179</sup>

Ironically, Maravanyika who had been the founding chairperson of the taskforce became the Acting Vice Chancellor of MASU. Attempts by the stakeholders to have Matarira instead of Maravanyika appointed to the Masvingo State University were not successful. When the position was advertised they encouraged Matarira to apply but when it appeared that the latter would get the post, it was frozen. Maravanyika was however, subsequently appointed.<sup>180</sup> Matarira's fortunes did not last long as she was arrested by the police for theft of property belonging to the university.<sup>181</sup> She alleged that her arrest was politically motivated and government officials including Mbizvo were behind her arrest.<sup>182</sup> Following the death of Muzenda and Hungwe's weakened political role in the province, Matarira no longer had the political protection which she had enjoyed for some time.

The case of GZU was a test case for church related university education in several ways. Firstly, from its beginnings the university enjoyed political patronage; and through political meddling it was destroyed. The causes underlying the university's problems did not emanate from the parent ministry responsible for higher education but from local politicians, although they were also part of the government in other capacities. The interest of political leaders in the region to maintain a strong influence on the university is evidence of its strategic value to intra and inter-party political power games. It nullifies the perception that private universities which enjoy political patronage are guaranteed safety from hostile interference.

The Chancellor of the university, Simon Muzenda took a low profile throughout the conflict at the university. He held three meetings with church officials and representatives of the church-appointed Council where he only encouraged dialogue.

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<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>180</sup> "Varsities Vice Chancellors Named," *The Herald*, 20 September, 2005.

<sup>181</sup> "Vice Chancellor Picked Up for Questioning," *The Herald*, 1 October 2005.

<sup>182</sup> "Arrested Vice Chancellor of Great Zimbabwe Brutalised by Police," *SW Radio Africa Zimbabwe News*, <http://www.swradioafrica.com/news121005/arrestedchancellor121005.htm> (Accessed 17 October 2001).

His silence is nevertheless, attributable to ill health as observed by Mbizvo and to the fact that the group of stakeholders belonged to his faction in the Masvingo Province political divide. Any moves against them could compromise their influence in the face of their political rivals led by Eddison Zvobgo. The church on its part failed to get Muzenda to support their stance. Yet political protection was one of the motives for requesting him to be the Chancellor. Secondly, the RCZ leadership appeared unclear about the relationship between the church and the university as they seemed keen to be closely involved in the affairs of the university but in the process provoked resistance. As a result while the Council was close to the church which appointed it, a distance was created with the university at the expense of the latter's autonomy. Thirdly, the university's financial problems also compounded the situation. Owing to poor or little sources of funding the university had to rely on fees. Dependence on the church which could have provided funding through its many contacts was lessened thereby opening the way for the university to assert its autonomy. Yet at the same time and with some measure of independence from the church, the university exposed itself to further challenges from which even the stakeholders were not able to protect it. Fourthly, while the other three church universities enjoyed considerable external support, lack of strong international ties and influence was in itself a weakness for GZU as it became an easy target of political meddling.

### **Student activism**

The emergence of church universities has to some extent had a neutralising impact on the Zimbabwe National Students' Union (ZINASU). It is significant that although they are part of the ZINASU which includes the more militant state universities, student unions of church-related universities have not taken to overt militant activism on national, public or topical issues. The general assumption is that church universities discourage demonstrations as being against Christian principles. This notion relates to President Mugabe's belief that the churches are best qualified to promote high moral standards of the nation through their various initiatives. Even parents and students generally had similar attitudes. For example, Nelly Bupe argued that she came to Africa University because she wanted do her studies without interruptions: "Its better than going to national universities where there are a lot of

strikes and demonstrations.”<sup>183</sup> Such a perception, which is also shared by the general populace, puts pressure on church institutions to perform to the expectations of their environment.

This notion, however, tends to ignore the fact that religious institutions do not necessarily prevent wayward student activism. It represents more of the nostalgia for the missionary days than the post-independence era. The numerous student strikes some of which led to the destruction of property in church boarding schools testify to this.<sup>184</sup> It is these same students together with those from government and other private schools who feed into the universities.

Evidence of this assumption is in the complaint made by students from Solusi University to a parliamentary committee that their university constitution did not allow them to demonstrate, “yet the supreme law of the country enshrined in the Zimbabwean constitution allows them the right to express their views through a demonstration.”<sup>185</sup> As a result, activism at church universities has appeared largely muffled and confined mainly on issues to do with high levels of fees,<sup>186</sup> poor quality of food in the cafeteria which was also expensive<sup>187</sup> and opposition to compulsory attendance of church services at the Seventh Day Adventist, Solusi University.<sup>188</sup>

Yet at state universities student concerns have been wider, covering social, political, and economic issues in the country. Student protests over high fees at Great

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<sup>183</sup> Andra Stevens, “First Choice: Africa University,” *Africa University Today*, (Winter, 2004), United Methodist Communications, GBGM.

<sup>184</sup> Maunde, “Evolution of Higher Education in Zimbabwe,” pp. 77-8. Maunde mentions the following Secondary Schools; Nhowe and Dadaya (Church of Christ), Kutama and St Alberts (Catholic). These are just a sample of many from virtually all denominations with mission schools.

<sup>185</sup> Departmental Committee on Service Ministries, Section 8.10.3,

<sup>186</sup> Interview with J.W.Z. Kurewa. See also, “Africa University Students Suspended,” *Pan African News Agency*, 14 April 1997.

<sup>187</sup> “Students on Hunger Strike,” *The Daily News*, 3 April 2003.

<sup>188</sup> Interview with P. Hadebe.

Zimbabwe University have involved a peaceful march on the streets in Masvingo town. On 24 April 1998, students at Africa University staged a class boycott over high fees as the Board of Directors was having a meeting. They tried to prevent members of the Board from leaving by sitting in the campus street. The boycott only ended when "police were called and the students immediately dispersed themselves."<sup>189</sup> The previous year, 250 students had been suspended after staging an eleven day boycott in protest over a hike in fees.<sup>190</sup> About fifty armed police officers came to the campus to monitor the students as they left.<sup>191</sup> The students were reinstated after obtaining a court order challenging their suspension.<sup>192</sup> The involvement of the police in an incident which university officials downplayed as a small boycott is significant given debates on issues surrounding the involvement of police during the often highly charged UZ demonstrations. The main difference is that the authorities at AU invited the police on campus while at UZ the Vice Chancellor did not always have such an option.<sup>193</sup>

After yet another class boycott over fees in 1999 which lasted a week, the Vice Chancellor of AU blamed the boycott to infiltration by members of the Zimbabwe National Students' Union. The *UMNS* reported: "The leaders in the tension were not Africa University students but representatives of the ZINASU, which has members from students' unions across the country,"<sup>194</sup> and according to the Vice Chancellor, quoted in the same article: "They came to incite students to demand stoppage of

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<sup>189</sup> Andra Stevens, "Africa University Sets Budget: Some Students Protest," *UMNS*, 6 May 1998, Worldwide Faith News. <http://www.wfn.org/1998/05/msg00072.html> (Accessed 23 July 2005). The students' plight had been compounded by delays in the disbursement of their loans. Over 200 first year Zimbabwean students had not yet paid their fees. See "Zimbabwe's Africa University in Financial Doldrums," *Pan African News Agency*, 25 January 1998. It was Zimbabwean students who were appeared to be affected most with fee increases as well as food from the cafeteria. See "Students on Hunger Strike," *The Daily News*, 3 April 2003, 3 April 2003.

<sup>190</sup> "Africa University Students Suspended," *Pan African News Agency*, 14 April 1997.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>192</sup> "Court Orders University to Reinstate Students," *Pan African News Agency*, 17 April 1997.

<sup>193</sup> Tengende, "Workers, Students and the Struggle for Democracy," p. 345f.

<sup>194</sup> Linda Green, "Zimbabwe' Economic Woes Affect Africa University's Fee System," *UMNS*, 4 May 1999. Worldwide Faith News Archives. <http://www.wfn.org/1999/05/msg00038.html> (Accessed 27 July 2005).

university functions.” The university suspended five students’ union officials, “not because of the boycott but for interrupting the smooth running of the university.” The charges included attempts to disrupt lectures and mobilising other students to take part in the boycott and “leading students to the administration building and demanding to see” the Director of Information and the Vice Chancellor for Institutional Advancement. The boycott was reported in the Mutare based *Eastern Star* on 16 April. According to the newspaper the students who had also made a petition to the government, had called for the removal of two senior university officials for ejecting students from halls of residence and making derogatory remarks against them. In the *UMNS*, Murapa dismissed the *Eastern Star* report as unfounded.

The complaint of the Vice Chancellor over the national students’ union was echoed in the Parliamentary Committee presented in the same period:

Students’ unrest were linked in all colleges with students’ national body ZINASU – Zimbabwe National Association of Students Union. Administrators across the board complained that ZINASU representatives came to their institutions to address students without authorisation from administration. It was after such visits by ZINASU that students took to the streets. The committee was made to understand that students in colleges were given directives by ZINASU to demonstrate for national issues (they claim to be citizens of Zimbabwe though they are students as well). ZINASU seemed to be fuelling most student unrest.<sup>195</sup>

Apart from ZINASU, other civic bodies and activists were also interested in interacting with students at church institutions. On 3 August 2004, Raymond Majongwe, secretary general of the Progressive Teachers’ Union of Zimbabwe and former UZ student activist, was arrested while he was addressing students at AU.<sup>196</sup> The perception that external forces were keen on infiltrating and influencing students led AU, for example, to employ strong arm tactics similar to those used at UZ in dealing with students’ dissent, as a way of pre-empting violent tendencies.

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<sup>195</sup> Departmental Committee on Service Ministries, Section 7.7.



Perhaps an exception to student activism relating to national issues in church universities is Emmanuel Samundombe who as Secretary General of Zimbabwe National Students' Union was involved in mobilising students. He was arrested by police and suspended from GZU, where he was student, on allegations of "instigating the students to engage in opposition party politics as well as political violence in the run up to the Urban Council elections" in 2003.<sup>197</sup> The fact that church universities were relatively quiet when it came to student unrest does not mean that the students were completely passive. Under the auspices of ZINASU and other groups of civil society the students participated in demonstrations.<sup>198</sup>

The neutralising impact of church-related universities is not solely a result of the influence of the Christian ethos. Tengende writes about the influence of institutional and student cultures cultivated over the years at UZ. He demonstrates that student activism on national issues at the UZ evolved over time and in some cases it was shaped by reactions of students to such external factors as the type of treatment they received from the state and its agencies. In confronting the university administration on issues to do with their welfare "a shift to national level politics became inevitable [...] the problems at the university could not be viewed in isolation which led to the linkage of these issues with national level politics and policies."<sup>199</sup> Tengende further argues:

The 'conspiracy of silence' by the government controlled media forced students to resort to violent demonstrations [...] as a way of gaining publicity for their grievances and airing their criticism of the system. Students demonstrations on various issues became linked to demands for changes at the national level originally because: (a) the

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<sup>196</sup> "Zimbabwean Academic Arrested for Addressing Students: Lawyer," *Agence France Presse*, 3 August 2004.

<sup>197</sup> Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, "Political Violence Report - September 2003," 23 October 2003. <http://216.239.59.104/search?q=cache:6nTqKSs48MJ:www.hrforumzim.com/monthly/200309.doc+Zimbabwe+human+rights+ngo+forum+report+september&hl=en> (Accessed 22 July 2005). See also "ZINASU, One Year after the Peace Prize," Studentenes og Akademikernes Internasjonale Hjelpfond, 28 September 2004, <http://www.saih.no/Detailed/1714.html> (Accessed 22 July 2005).

<sup>198</sup> "Police Shoot Two Students during Demonstrations," *The Standard*, 7 March 1999.

<sup>199</sup> Tengende, "Workers, Students and the Struggle for Democracy," p. 303.

government was the funding agency for the university: (b) but later because the centralising tendency of the one party project [...] meant domination [...]. Thus students in trying to break through the blanket of silence over their grievances were forced to demand liberalisation of the media and the respect of individual freedoms such as freedom of expression.<sup>200</sup>

This form of reaction was supported by “the sheer size of the university, and large numbers of students concentrated in a limited area [which created] a numerically significant group of dedicated and committed politicised students.”<sup>201</sup> The large numbers also created “a sense of anonymity which is conducive to various kinds of deviant behaviours and the emergence of subcultures.”<sup>202</sup> The small enrolments in church universities according to this theory mean less overt activism which does not have national impact. It is relatively easier for the university authorities to handle the smaller numbers of students than would be the case if the institution had many students. Furthermore, stereotyping religious institutions as paragons for modelling normative behaviour, which has its antecedence in missionary ideology, promotes authoritarian tendencies as the university structures may be inclined to apply codes of conduct which are deemed to be consistent with the parent religion. AU employed strong arm tactics similar to those used at the state universities, in dealing with student boycotts, thereby making them even more severe, as they deal with smaller numbers of students. The presence of foreign students at AU and SU further neutralises activism in that non-Zimbabwean students are less likely to be interested in local social and political issues and also fear breaching the conditions of their study permits.

Geographic location has some effect on the nature of interactions within and between the university and the society at large; particularly the centres of power.<sup>203</sup> AU is

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<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 312.

<sup>201</sup> Tengende, “Workers, Students and the Struggle for Democracy,” p. 212. See also S.M. Lipset, *Rebellion in the University*, (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1993), p. 36. He argues that the physical situation of the university makes it easier to mobilise the large numbers.

<sup>202</sup> Tengende, “Workers, Students and the Struggle for Democracy,” p. 212.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*

over 200 km from the capital and sixteen kilometres from Mutare town. SU is about fifty kilometres from Bulawayo city. Tengende argues:

Universities located away from the centres of power and major cities are unlikely to exert a presence in national politics as compared to those which are located otherwise [...] (because they are) located near the city centre and the seat of government the University of Zimbabwe students are able to get instant feedback on their political actions and commentaries and criticisms of governmental actions.<sup>204</sup>

It is necessary to note that distance also creates a monastic institutional atmosphere reminiscent of a boarding school. At SU movements of students from campus are monitored through requirements of passes if one has to be away from campus.<sup>205</sup> The codes of conduct at the church universities cover prohibition of alcohol on campus, smoking and hostel visits by those of the opposite sex. For example, admission at Solusi is declared a privilege and not a right. The privilege may be withdrawn on students who indulge in the following acts which are not “Christ-like”:

Engaging in improper associations [...]. Possession or use of illicit drugs, tobacco, or intoxicating drinks in any form, gambling of any kind, stealing, use of vulgar language or possession of degrading literature, defiance of authority and the incitement of others to insubordination, the use of violence in any form, including cruelty to animals, tampering with locks or the unauthorised possession of a key to any school lock, vandalism, and unauthorised entry to buildings, possession of firearms or weapons of any kind, any form of immorality.<sup>206</sup>

It is in the light of these conditions that students expressed concerns that “their college authorities failed to realise that most of their students are over the majority age of eighteen and therefore had a right to drink, smoke and to visit each other in the hostels [...] among them [are] some married students who should be allowed to behave like married people and not be treated like high school kids.”<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>205</sup> Solusi University Bulletin, p. 14. Cf., Interview with P. Hadebe.

<sup>206</sup> Solusi University Bulletin, pp. 12–13.

<sup>207</sup> Departmental Committee on Service Ministries, Section 8.10.3.

Yet “Excessive consumption of alcohol” was mentioned as one of the causes of the violent variety of student demonstrations at UZ.<sup>208</sup> A small group of self-styled “military wing,” calling itself the University Bachelors Association commonly known by the acronym UBA was notorious for leading the violent confrontations with the police. The UBA was active in the mobilisation of students for class boycotts and demonstrations<sup>209</sup> and, “To give them courage to confront the police and guarantee that the demonstrations would be violent, or to ensure that there would be ‘revolutionary confrontation [...] the SRC ensured that the so-called military wing members got beer.”<sup>210</sup> As observed by the parliamentary committee: “It is this drunkenness that leads students to be violent and act in a manner that is unbecoming.”<sup>211</sup>

The effects of the UZ Amendment Act and later, the introduction of more stringent Acts such as Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act and the Public Order and Security Act saw a degeneration of the more overt confrontational approach of the students. In addition was the emergence of new and more aggressive civic and opposition political groupings which brought to the fore demonstrations as a method of expressing themselves. When ZINASU entered into alliances with such civic groups as the National Constitutional Assembly they shed some of their prominence as the lone voice. Tengende links the disengagement of UZ students from activism with the rise of religious groups on campus which advocated for Christian leadership in the Students’ Representative Council and spawned violent methods of activism.<sup>212</sup> This development disarmed and neutralised the UBA.

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<sup>208</sup> “Final Report of the Advisory Committee on the Closure of the University of Zimbabwe,” (Submitted to the Council of the University), December 1989, p. 58, cited in Tengende, “Workers, Students and the Struggle for Democracy,” p. 402. Cf. “Indiscipline at UZ Worsening – Report,” *The Herald*, 4 April 1991.

<sup>209</sup> Tengende, “Workers, Students and the Struggle for Democracy,” p. 400.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 401.

<sup>211</sup> Departmental Committee on Service Ministries, Section 7.6.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 528–9.

The Zimbabwe National Students' Union, often accused by the government of being involved in opposition politics has also been challenged by the creation of a pro-government alternative students' union called Zimbabwe Congress of Students' Unions (ZICOSU).<sup>213</sup> Similar strategies have been used in other sectors and two examples are cited here. Firstly, the Zimbabwe Federation of Trade Unions whose vice chairman is Joseph Chinotimba, a war veteran and self-proclaimed commander of farm invasions was formed to counter the activities of militant Zimbabwe Congress of Trades Unions. Secondly, Africa Destiny Network led by Obadiah Musindo is meant to pose as an ecumenical grouping alongside, if not competing with, the ZCC and EFZ. Musindo's organisation is openly pro-ZANU (PF). During the 2005 parliamentary elections Musindo and his organisation openly campaigned for ZANU (PF), and he castigated the opposition MDC.<sup>214</sup> Civil society groups were suspect in the eyes of government. The creation or sponsorship of alternative organisations was a strategy to pre-empt effects of the third wave of democratisation which had gained currency as the 1980s closed. It saw changes on the political landscape of Africa including neighbouring Zambia where a labour backed movement defeated Kenneth Kaunda's complacent United National Independence Party in the 1991 elections.<sup>215</sup>

In the run up to the 2005 parliamentary elections the government organised a national conference for the ZICOSU, which was attended by the Minister of Higher Education and other high ranking government officials. The students who were ostensibly from several tertiary colleges and universities were invited to present their

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<sup>213</sup> Brian Raftopoulos, "The State in Crisis, Authoritarian Nationalism, Selective Citizenship and Distortion of Democracy in Zimbabwe," in *Zimbabwe's Unfinished Business: Rethinking Land, State and Nation in the Context of Crisis*, ed. by Amanda Hammar, Brian Raftopoulos and Stig. Jensen, (Harare: Weaver Press, 2003). p. 233.

<sup>214</sup> "Msindo: Christian or ZANU (PF) Apologist," *The Daily Mirror*, 8 August 2005. In the article Msindo is reported to have claimed that Robert Mugabe and his Party, ZANU (PF), are instruments for God's purposes in Zimbabwe. See also, T.J. Whande, "Politics/religion: Strange Bedfellows," *The Zimbabwe Independent* 24 September 2004. *The Zimbabwe Independent*, 17 June 2005, reported that during the election campaign Msindo's organisation used up its financial resources and had to appeal to ZANU (PF) for assistance.

<sup>215</sup> Crawford Young, "The Third Wave of Democratisation in Africa: Ambiguities and Contradictions," in *State, Conflict and Democracy in Africa*, ed. by Richard Joseph, p. 23.



grievances and concerns.<sup>216</sup> The President of ZICOSU appeared on national television praising the government for its efforts to improve the lot of students while the Minister of Higher Education expressed willingness of government to assist students. The students were then given free ZANU (PF) campaign 'T' shirts and free tickets to a musical gala held in honour of the Vice President, Joyce Mujuru. Some of the students attempted to sell the 'T' shirts and tickets and were arrested.<sup>217</sup> The government sponsored conference was used as a ZANU (PF) campaign platform to win the ever restive student constituency. However, even ZICOSU also has had no significant impact on church-related universities although it can be pointed out that the inactivity of church university based students' unions partly meets its agenda and that of the government. Could it be argued that church universities have in this respect had a neutralising impact on student activism?

The parliamentary committee which was set up to look at problems besetting private and public universities in the country noted that there was a "power struggle relating to matters of autonomy, accountability, academic freedom and leadership" in the state universities, especially UZ.<sup>218</sup> These problems according to the committee emanated from the financing protocols of state universities. The committee did not identify the same areas as problematic in private universities. The cause of this could be partly due to the minimal financial contribution made by the government to the church universities. Solusi and Africa University officials complained to a Parliamentary Committee that "government funding of private university students was not enough" and that since fees of students in private universities are computed in United States currency those studying in such institutions "should be treated like students abroad on government scholarship."<sup>219</sup> The same complaint was also raised with respect to Africa University students who go for industrial or teaching attachments and received very little allowances from the Ministry of higher

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<sup>216</sup> Interview with W. Mbizvo.

<sup>217</sup> Interview with W. Mbizvo.

<sup>218</sup> Departmental Committee on Service Ministries, Section 2.6.1.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*, Section 7.3.4.

Education. The Ministry of Education had not responded to requests from the university for a review of the allowances and private universities felt discriminated against.<sup>220</sup>

While Lloyd Sachikonye<sup>221</sup> has described the relationship between Zimbabwean public universities and the state as one of tight dependency, the pattern is different in the case of church-related universities. The relationship in the latter case may be defined as a qualified partnership. The nature of the partnership rests on mutual respect and will last as long as the private universities can finance the major portion of their needs and at the same time without posing a threat to state hegemony. It may be naïve to conclude that this relationship is a perfect example of university autonomy. The government stands to gain in political terms, in a situation where there is an independent institution, church related for that matter, with which it has a cordial relationship. It is another form of co-optation through partnership better defined as a marriage of convenience. The government will not hesitate to interfere in the university's affairs if it perceives that its political interests are in jeopardy as can be evidenced in the GZU experience. With this kind of relationship with the state AU was essentially demobilised as far as the possibility of academic expressions critical to the state are concerned. The extent to which the state gains politically is fundamental in that it also gives some international legitimacy to government policy in education as well as relations with some sectors of civil society.

The pattern which emerges at least in relation to students in church-related universities is the tendency to be active on those issues which are likely to draw public, but especially, government sympathy. When the students were up against their universities it seemed to work well for the government. One interesting case is that of the GZU Law degree which saw the students not only pitted against the university but also the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe.

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<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, Section 7.5.

## Conclusion

The liberalisation of university education in Zimbabwe in the early 1990s was conditional. This is demonstrated by the nature of legislation put in place which gave room for government involvement and intervention. The checks and balances put in place by the government were a result of its experiences with the UZ. Church-related universities enjoyed autonomy from government for as long as they were viewed to be in conformity not only with policy but also in congruence with the political environment. Precepts on autonomy and academic freedom with respect to both the church and government are not given as blank cheques. The realisation that the government is capable of intervening in university matters is in itself a sobering thought as far as churches and their universities are concerned. Religious universities have therefore adopted the same stance, as their parent denominations, of non-aggression.

From the discussions in this chapter it is clear that church-relatedness implies limitations on the institution's autonomy. Since religious universities are established for a purpose, this in itself is a limiting factor even in those cases where there may be genuine attempts to pursue institutional independence. However, academic freedom of the religious university is not curtailed so long as there is no threat to the church's doctrines and government hegemony. Autonomy in this context does not mean detachment so long as the university identifies itself with a parent body such as the church, or the government in the case of public institutions. If the church universities are to have their own impact then links with the churches which enhance their uniqueness are inevitable. The critical mass made up of committed students and staff, is therefore essential at all levels because of its role of sustaining the religious ethos of the university. Autonomy in this case, therefore, means a relationship of co-operation but non-interference.

The dynamics of the triangular relationship of church, state and university and the accompanying issues of autonomy and academic freedom should also be understood as issues of identity and relevance to context. Identity in this case goes beyond

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<sup>221</sup> Lloyd M. Sachikonye, "State and Social Movements in Zimbabwe," in *Democracy, Civil Society and the State*, ed. by Lloyd M. Sachikonye, p. 147.

church-relatedness to include yet another point of tension between Africanisation and internationalisation. In this chapter it was acknowledged that international links have a significant place in church-relatedness. The next chapter will now discuss this further.

## Chapter Six

### Africanisation and Internationalisation

Universities have been described as the curators, critics and creators of our culture. As curators, their responsibility is to preserve our culture. As critics, they should identify that which needs changing in our culture. As creators they must play an active role in the development of the nation [...]. Universities have been described as mirrors of society. As such they must automatically reflect and accommodate the changes of society as a whole. *Walter Kamba*.<sup>1</sup>

If the international character of African universities continues to be interpreted as obliging the continuation of strong ties with European and American universities, we are undermining the emergence of the idea of the university in the African environment. The essential dimension of the African academic community needs to be actively cultivated for it has the twin merit of saving national academic communities from isolation, and of providing the international dimension without perpetuating the alien character of our universities. *J.F.A. Ajayi*<sup>2</sup>

### Introduction

This chapter seeks to examine the connection between internationalisation and Africanisation as two critical elements of the tension affecting religious bodies and their institutions. It is argued that church-relatedness is an issue about identity. Any thrust towards Africanisation, which does not address the epistemological challenge of linking pragmatism with idealism, will result in the failure of the religious universities in their social engineering role. Historically, as well as in their contemporary profiles, and despite claims of autonomy and the clamour for localisation, mainline churches are international organisations in nature.<sup>3</sup> As such, according to Paul Gifford, Christian initiatives in Africa cannot be separated from international relations. University projects under the auspices of these churches have benefited from their networks though not always successfully. A lot depended on the strength of these links, the resource base of the overseas partners and the levels of their interest in the proposed projects. The strengths and weaknesses of the international linkages have had a direct influence on the effectiveness and ability of

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<sup>1</sup> Walter Kamba, "The Response of Institutions of Higher Learning to Africa's Rapidly Deteriorating Social and Economic Conditions," Institute of Southern African Studies (ISAS) *Occasional Paper No. 2*, (30 September, 1995), p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> J.F.A. Ajayi, "Towards an African Academic Community," in *Creating the African University*, ed. by T.M. Yesufu, p. 19.

<sup>3</sup> Paul Gifford, *African Christianity: its Public Role*, (London: Hurst and Company, 1998), pp. 308–12.



local churches to engage in what they consider to be emergent mission challenges in the African context.

As tools of mission, church affiliated universities in Zimbabwe have to come to terms with the challenge characterised by a tension between relevance to the African context and the weight of their international links. Modern Christianity bears on its shoulders a history of struggles and strides in its attempts to be relevant to Africa. In the same way, Church sponsored universities have to contend with these challenges. While the new universities are under-girded by church traditions, their struggle for identity goes beyond the religious concern of church-relatedness and opens up into the wider world of scholarship and research where debates have problematised the intellectual hegemony of the West over Africa.

Kwame Bediako, has forcefully argued that the global nature of Christianity and its resultant transformation into a largely non-Western religion means that even Christianity in Africa no longer is principally influenced by “events and processes at work in Western culture.”<sup>4</sup> This assertion is in reaction to Kenneth Woodward’s argument that: “Although Christianity’s future may lie outside the West, Western influence is still decisive wherever the Gospel is preached. In religion, as in other international affairs, globalisation means that superpowers remain dominant,”<sup>5</sup> and to Paul Gifford’s claim that: “Africa is not reacting to globalisation by revitalising African traditional religion” but “opting into exotic religions.”<sup>6</sup> Bediako’s position is plausible insofar as it seeks to challenge generalisations about Western dominance over Africa which present the latter as a mere consumer. He seeks to emphasise, in agreement with Gerrie ter Haar, the contribution of non-Western Christianity to globalisation through African religious activities in the diaspora. Gerrie ter Haar notes that these are international rather than African churches because they are in essence “claiming universal qualities for a religious worldview which, as it happens,

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<sup>4</sup> Kwame Bediako, “Christian Witness in the Public Sphere: Some Lessons and Residual Challenges from the Recent Political History of Ghana,” in *The Changing Face of Christianity: Africa, the West, and the World*, ed. by Lamin Sanneh and Joel A. Carpenter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 121.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 119.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, See also, Gifford, *African Christianity*, p. 321.

has important roots in Africa.”<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, Western influence over Africa is still strong and manifest in several ways.

Africanisation and internationalisation are features generally viewed as complementary and essential in a university set up for political, economic, social and academic reasons. Yet there are underlying endemic, structural and epistemological flaws. The structural weakness refers to the Western influenced international networks that wittingly or unwittingly overshadow African potential while on the other hand the epistemological order of the West continues to hold sway even in the face of numerous critiques by both African and Western scholars.<sup>8</sup>

In as much as there are attempts to present the universities under study as African initiatives the underside to the claim is that while the local leaders of the churches under which they fell had the visions, they did not have the resources. The African nature of the institutions was compromised under the guise of being called global projects, or as their initiators sought to attract funding from abroad. While the leadership of the universities is African, the influences and the models they use are foreign. Relevance for the universities has often been interpreted in developmental terms – that is, programmes that seek to improve the economic and social lives of the people. The new religious universities therefore find themselves in a context with manifold challenges relating to the quest for African identity and the strong Western influence which pervades all sectors of academia.

### **Localisation and the quest for an African identity**

The architecture at the main entrance of Africa University is modelled after the Great Zimbabwe monument. Great Zimbabwe is a national shrine of great cultural, religious and political significance. Standing at the entrance looking slightly to the south east, one cannot miss the university chapel facing the main entrance. To get to

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 120. See also, Gerrie ter Haar, *Halfway to Paradise: African Christians in Europe*, (Cardiff, Wales: Cardiff Academic Press, 1998), p. 192.

<sup>8</sup> Henk J. van Rinsum, “Knowing the African”: Edwin W. Smith and the Invention of African Traditional Religion,” in *Uniquely African? African Christian Identity from Cultural and Historical Perspectives*, ed. by James L. Cox and Gerrie ter Haar (Trenton NJ: Academic World Press, Inc., 2003), p. 60.

the university area one has to cross the 'Dream Bridge' with the inscription, "A Dream of faith." The chapel is a hexagonal structure with a design resembling that of a traditional Shona round hut, with a conical roof, commonly known as the 'kitchen.' In addition to its primary function as the place where food is prepared, the 'kitchen' is also a general purpose room where the family gathers for meals, discussions or story telling. It also has a religious function as the site of family ceremonies and rituals. Inside the "kitchen" is a *chikuya* (a raised platform used as a pot rack) which also serves as an altar. The architecture of the AU chapel is also similar to that of a traditional Shona *banya*, a large ritual hut used by some spirit mediums for religious ceremonies. *Banyas* were normally associated with regional spirits and were constructed for ritual purposes which sometimes included inter-territorial ceremonies. On the mound behind the chapel is a big image of the UMC emblem of the cross and a flame. Standing at the chapel entrance facing northwest one could draw a straight line through the university's main entrance right up to the doorstep of the Old Mutare mission chapel behind which is the towering Mt Chiremba where Bishop Hartzell had his remarkable vision.

The fusion of African and Christian symbols is not coincidental. According to John Kurewa the whole set up was deliberate and designed to convey a powerful theological statement focusing on the vision and mission of the university which combines African traditional roots and the continuation of the mission of the church. The chapel is the navel of the university. It emphasises the university's strong religious roots and at the same time attempts to reflect its African identity. Similarly, in the centre of the quadrangle at Solusi University is an image of the Great Zimbabwe monument, with the administration building, the library and the chapel directly facing it. In spite of the absence of physical structures at Great Zimbabwe University, to symbolise the institution's identification with its context, the name itself and the original plans to locate it close to the Great Zimbabwe shrine were an attempt to portray its Africanness.<sup>9</sup> Even the government sought to emphasise this Africanness by its plans to construct a big university close to the monument, "that

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<sup>9</sup> "University for Masvingo," *The Chronicle*, 14 July 1995.

will signify the nation's collective achievements since prehistoric times and promote African renaissance," and have "a bias towards the country's vibrant culture and peculiar history."<sup>10</sup> The curricular of the university would be designed to "reflect those elements that promote our culture, reinforce our dignity and self-confidence and underpin our national unity."<sup>11</sup>

As shown in chapter four, the establishment of private universities was initiated by Africans even in the case of those churches with strong international links. The UMC put a lot of emphasis on the role played by the African church leaders in the germination of the idea of the university.<sup>12</sup> AU "was a pan-African initiative"<sup>13</sup> designed to "be African in leadership and ethos."<sup>14</sup> The "university is to be for all African students, and it will be run by Africans for Africans," with a special focus "to fill the faculty with Africans,"<sup>15</sup> and where "non-Africans will be in a support posture."<sup>16</sup> The Catholics also expressed sensitivity to context: "Traditional cultures are to be defended in their identity, helping them to receive modern values without sacrificing their own heritage [...]. Universities, situated within the ambience of these cultures, will seek to harmonise local cultures with the positive contributions of modern cultures."<sup>17</sup> Indigenous Catholics were very active in the formation of the Catholic University. While the motivations for establishing the institutions have some focus on serving and developing the continent, the viability of the endeavours was dependent on where the centres of influence lay.

Underlying the attempts to emphasise the relevance of the universities through ethos as well as names and images symbolising aspects of the Zimbabwean context, is the

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<sup>10</sup> "Plans Afoot for Mega Varsity in Masvingo," *The Herald*, 2 August 2005.

<sup>11</sup> "Africa is Committed to Education," *The Herald*, 9 February 2006.

<sup>12</sup> "Daily Christian Advocate," p. F-58. See also, Scott Jr., "Nairobi Consultation Proposes Bold, Historic Plan."

<sup>13</sup> "\$20 Million University Planned for Old Mutare," *The Herald*, 21 October 1988.

<sup>14</sup> "Finance Committee: Africa University Master Plan 1989," p. 1, GCAH: Box: 2345-6-4:09.

<sup>15</sup> G. Larum, "School Seen 'for Africans by Africans,'" *United Methodist Reporter*, 4 March 1988.

<sup>16</sup> Kurewa, Reeves, Scott Jr. and Yamada, "The Africa University Master Plan."

<sup>17</sup> *Ex Corde Ecclesia*, Section 45.



long debate on whether the university institution is original to Africa. In the debate are arguments which attempt to affirm the relevance and identity of the university institution by origin. A sample of scholars, subscribing to the nationalistic trend of thought, argues that the phenomenon of the university institution in Africa preceded the colonial models. Teboho J. Lebakeng,<sup>18</sup> citing Ali A. Mazrui,<sup>19</sup> M.B. Ramose,<sup>20</sup> and S.M. Cissoko,<sup>21</sup> has argued against claims that the university is not indigenous to Africa. He cites the existence of pre-colonial educational traditions such as Djenne, Timbuctoo, Djami al-Karawiyyin in Fez and al-Azhar in Cairo to support his claim. Ibrahim A. Lughod maintains that these early universities were epitomes of Arab pride and were an intellectual base for the Islamic world, and they contributed to the development of the early European universities.<sup>22</sup> However, although Mazrui's claim made in 1984 is in agreement with Lebakeng, he admits in an earlier work that these early institutions though educational, did not resemble the later conventional sense of the university which evolved in the heyday of colonialism. Mazrui writes: "Although some of the institutions in Africa which later became universities were established in the first two decades of the twentieth century or even earlier, actual elevation to university standard mostly came after the Second World War."<sup>23</sup>

The early universities were grounded in Islamic traditions and designed to nurture Islamic intellectualism as well as being missionary arms.<sup>24</sup> There is no evidence that they had a significant impact on the continent, particularly the sub-Saharan region, as

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<sup>18</sup> Teboho J. Lebakeng, "Epistemicide, Mergers, and the Problem of History and Memory in the Transformation of South African Higher Education," South African Sociological Association, 2003, <http://www.interaction.nu.ac.za/sasa2003/Lebakeng.htm> (Accessed 15 August 2004). See also Wandira, *African University in Development*, 1977, p. 38.

<sup>19</sup> Ali A. Mazrui, "The African University as a Multinational Corporation: Problems of Penetration and Dependency," in *Education and the Colonial Encounter*, ed. by P.G. Altbach and P. K. Kelly, (London: Transaction Books, 1984), pp. 273-91.

<sup>20</sup> M.B. Ramose, "Africa between Despair and Hope," in *Philosophy and Social Action*, vol. 28, N0. 2, (2002), pp. 11-22.

<sup>21</sup> S.M. Cissoko, "The Songhay from the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> Century," in *General History of Africa: From the Twelfth to the Sixteenth Century*, vol. 4, ed. by D.T. Niane, (London: UNESCO and Heinemann, 1984), pp. 208-9.

<sup>22</sup> Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, "Palestinian Higher Education: National Identity, Liberation and Globalisation," in *Boundary 2*, vol. 27, N0. 1, *Special Issue: The University*, (Spring 2000), pp. 76-7.

<sup>23</sup> Mazrui, *Political Values and the Educated Class in Africa*, p. 288.

<sup>24</sup> Cissoko, "The Songhay from the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> Century," pp. 208-9.



far as developing an intellectual culture unique to Africa is concerned. Although the university institution may be perceived as having a long and honourable history as claimed by Wandira,<sup>25</sup> it, unfortunately, has no identity marks to serve as models for Africanisation. The nostalgic references to the old Islamic universities, by Lebakeng and his ilk, is evidence of attempts by some scholars to emphasise the nationalistic aspects of Africanisation. There is need for further studies to unplug models of university which testify to Africanisation. Lebakeng's attempt to set the argument that the concept of the university in Africa preceded the later transplanted colonial institutions, as a premise for Africanisation, is therefore flawed.

Other commentators have attempted to argue that the university or education in general has deep African roots and they try to identify elements in the African context which have resemblances to certain features of university education, for example, the village sages and their forums as well as initiation rites.<sup>26</sup> Although in some respects such features of socialisation are marshalled in an attempt to give credence to the Africanisation debate, they are still to be developed into viable models which could contribute on a global scale. The fact, however, remains that the idea of a university and its traditions remain foreign to Africa. The more pertinent question is on the extent to which this transplanted feature of education has been adapted to the African context. In the case of church-related universities, the problem is compounded by the question whether the religious motivations, which supposedly justified the creation and existence of the university, ever seriously considered adaptation an important matter. The same applies to whether the government on its part had the capacity and will to support such a quest.

### **African academics and the intellectual hegemony of the West**

Relevance means that the church university will strive to address and respond to the needs of its context while, at the same time, remaining abreast with international trends. In this quest are contained African philosophy, values and aspirations. Identity is about the history, culture, philosophy, geography of a people in relation to

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<sup>25</sup> Wandira, *African University in Development*, p. 38.

<sup>26</sup> Henk J. van Rinsum, "Wipe the Blackboard Clean": Academization and Christianization in Africa," *African Studies Review: African Universities in Crisis and the Promotion of a Democratic Culture*, (Special Issue, vol. 45, NO. 2, September 2002), p. 32-3.

others. According to Lebakeng, the success of genuine Africanisation rests on a “transformation that seeks to reverse epistemicide through reclamation of an indigenous African epistemology.”<sup>27</sup> He adds that for this to be possible “it is critical that we constantly make reference to our historical past rather than to deliberately distort or hide it. Otherwise we run the risk of transformation of higher education premised on incorrect historical understanding.”<sup>28</sup>

The emergence of colonial universities as more African nations became independent was celebrated as an added important factor in the development of the continent. This acclamation was immediately followed by the challenge and calls for the university to strive to serve its context realistically. Serving the context was more than the mere production of students who could help to develop the nations. The more formidable challenge was epistemological. It has already been noted that universities established on the continent in the colonial era were transplanted models which were in many cases irrelevant insofar as promotion of the African cultural values and traditional beliefs was concerned. Their greatest success was to consolidate, at a higher level, Western intellectual hegemony whose foundations had been laid mainly through missionary education in the primary and secondary levels. Evidence of this can be seen in a statement by Margery Perham, a member of the Asquith Commission, when she proudly commented that “what the colonial peoples needed was what we could best offer them: our own culture...” which was perceived as higher and more advanced. Ashby further comments on Perham:

Miss Perham asked her audience to accept as evidence for this view the enthusiasm which Africans show for Western learning: She spoke of boys on the Gold Coast acting Euripides with ‘tremendous satisfaction,’ and an African graduate at Fort Hare whose eyes lit up when he confessed that his research problem was the poetry of Dryden and Pope.<sup>29</sup>

Contemporary debates on Africanisation relate to the perceived role of the university. The quest to Africanise is a call to make the university relevant to the context it serves. The debates have been approached from various angles depending on the

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<sup>27</sup> Lebakeng, “Epistemicide, Mergers, and the Problem of History,” p. 3.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> Ashby, *Universities: British, Indian, African*, p. 232.

interests of those articulating the issues. In the early independence period, Africanisation was synonymous with the indigenising crusade to enable black Africans to flood the staff sections of the institutions or to dominate the strategic positions within the administrative structures. Arguments for the indigenisation of staff rest on the belief that African academics should be responsible for both the present and the future of the continent. Furthermore, they have a better understanding of their environment than outsiders.<sup>30</sup>

T.M. Yesufu argues:

...the localisation of the university staff was considered a desideratum [...] the staffing of the university by indigenes or nationals of the country in which the university is located [...] this is derived from the rationale that the African is by and large inherently the best interpreter, transmitter and teacher of Africa and its problems, to a student body that is predominantly African, and must increasingly be educated to remain African, rather than being educated out of its context and cultural milieu.<sup>31</sup>

Yesufu admitted that any moves for localisation of staff should not aim at totally excluding expatriates as this would deprive the university from a diversity of experiences. However, while the nativist notion may appear credible to some extent, it can be contested on the grounds that a sizeable number of African academics are Western trained or at least heavily influenced by models and methods which remain foreign to the African context. Moreover, the argument for Africans as torchbearers in their own continent does not locate the historic diaspora, which though it is a mixed bag, claims African identity.

Mazrui has observed that some of the expatriates who came to Africa did so because they were liberal and went through a self-selection process, while the locals, by and large, did not go through a similar process.<sup>32</sup> The common point in support of the dominance of local academics, that Africa is their birthright and so they should be responsible for its destiny, could be plausible if associated with a commitment to the

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<sup>30</sup> Yesufu (ed), *Creating the African University*, pp. 55-6.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> Mazrui, *Political Values and the Educated Class in Africa*, 1978, p. 204.

development of new epistemological paradigms. Universities such as AU and Solusi have taken advantage of their international connections by having a considerable number of non-Africans as part of their faculties. This has helped to promote valuable cross-cultural experiences but there is little evidence to suggest a strong thrust towards a reformed epistemological framework.

The challenge goes beyond the control of academic space by Africans because Western influences pervade both the intellectual social, political and religious spheres. Frantz Fanon has pointed out the contradiction of the native intellectual who on coming back to his people strives in vain to prove that he is still a part of the cultural context but in the process ends up behaving like a foreigner. In his effort to demonstrate his attachment to his roots, "the ideas that he expresses and the preoccupations that he is taken up with have no common yardstick to measure the real situation which the men and women of his country know."<sup>33</sup> As a result, Fanon continues, the "culture that the intellectual leans towards is often no more than a stock of particularisms. He wishes to attach himself to the people but he only grasps their outer garments."<sup>34</sup> In his pseudo-Africanisation, the intellectual

sets a high value on the customs, traditions, and the appearances of his people, but his inevitable painful experience only seems to be a banal search for exoticism. The sari becomes sacred, and shoes that come from Paris or Italy are left off in favour of pampooties, while the language of the ruling power is felt to burn your lips.<sup>35</sup>

This approach relates to attempts to showcase the African cause, which becomes problematic because, as argued by Kwame Appiah,<sup>36</sup> preoccupation with the thematic of alterity has led many African intellectuals to attempt to mould themselves "as the Other," thereby running the risk of exotic tendencies similar to tourist trinkets in gift shops of African cities. B. Jules-Rosette argues along the same lines when she notes the tension in the role of African art as depicting values and symbolism of the African world on the one hand and the pull of the profit motive

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<sup>33</sup> Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. by Constance Farrington, (Hammondsworth: Penguin, 1963), p. 180.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 178.

<sup>36</sup> Kwame A. Appiah, *In my Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture*, (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992) p. 72.

where the target is the external Western tourist market.<sup>37</sup> The locally produced artistic forms are modified to conform to the tastes of the consumer who is an outsider but sets criteria by virtue of preferences. In this way a standard which resides “outside the ‘power –knowledge’ field of [the] given culture”<sup>38</sup> is set.

Mahmood Mamdani points out the paradox of some academics and their failure to be relevant to their contexts:

In our single-minded pursuit to create centres of learning and research of international standing, we had nurtured researchers and educators who had little capacity to work in surrounding communities but who could move to any institution in any industrialised country, and serve any privileged community around the globe with comparative ease. In our failure to contextualise standards and excellence to the needs of our own people, to ground the very process and agenda of learning and research in our conditions, we ended up creating an intelligentsia with little stamina for the very process of development whose vanguard we claimed to be [...] none questioned the very nature of the institutions we had created and sustained.<sup>39</sup>

The main cause of this problem is the lack of adequate and viable resources to support the African institutions and elicit commitment from potential contributors.

### **Africanisation as endogenisation**

As early as 1967 the Association of African Universities (AAU) sought to lay the foundation to make universities genuinely African. Founded in 1967, the AAU expressed concern over universities which were located in, but did not belong to Africa. The preamble to the constitution expressed the new thrust:

...conscious of the role of African Universities to maintain an adherence and loyalty to world academic standards, and to evolve over the years a pattern of higher education in the service of Africa and its peoples, yet promoting a bond of kinship to the larger human

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<sup>37</sup> B. Jules-Rosette, *The Messages of Tourist Art: An African Semiotic System in Comparative Perspective*, (New York: Plenum Press, 1984), pp. 9-10, 23, 192. Cf. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa*, pp. 11-12.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>39</sup> Quoted in Peter T. Crossman, “Perceptions of ‘Africanisation’ or ‘Endogenisation’ at African Universities: Issues and Recommendations,” in *African Universities in the Twenty-first Century vol. 2*, ed. by P.T. Zeleza and A. Olukoshi. p. 321.



society: have resolved to establish a corporate body to achieve our aims and objectives in harmony with the spirit of the Organisation of African Unity.<sup>40</sup>

African politicians and academics from the middle of the twentieth century onwards always had the deep concern for the need to have universities that would be relevant to the African context and at the same time overcoming intellectual dependency.<sup>41</sup> The issue of Africanisation is central to any meaningful discussion on university education in Africa because it is tied to the question of role and relevance. The modern African university is founded with certain expectations which relate to the environment in which it operates. It should, however, be noted that the term Africanisation itself is subject to various interpretations. According to Kanganga, African academics and politicians understand Africanisation as implying “a process whereby local black Africans take over roles or positions of responsibility until a point, where confidence is gained that their interests will be seriously reflected, is reached.”<sup>42</sup> Kanganga further sees the calls for Africanisation as focusing on two basic interests: “Universities are seen to have a major role in the production of high level manpower and to be front runners in the search for solutions to pressing economic and social problems.”<sup>43</sup> This argument presupposes a shift from the purist model of knowledge for its own sake to the utilitarian model of knowledge for change.<sup>44</sup> The deficit in the argument is that the utilitarian approach remains under the grip of an exotic intellectual framework. The problem is that both models remain under the grip of external ideologies thereby emasculating the core objectives of Africanisation. In most political rhetoric, Africanisation implies a university that is controlled by Africans and which seeks to respond to the needs of its context.

Peter Crossman uses the terms Africanisation and endogenisation interchangeably arguing that they both denote “the adaptation of tertiary education to its African context both in terms of structure and curricular.”<sup>45</sup> In this case Africanisation is

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<sup>40</sup> Yesufu (ed), *Creating the African University*, p. 7.

<sup>41</sup> These challenges are discussed from a range of perspectives by African academics in various African universities under the auspices of the AAU, for example, in Yesufu, *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> Kanganga, “Universities in Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi,” p. 186.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 357

<sup>45</sup> Crossman, “Africanisation or Endogenisation,” p. 323.

more than replacing expatriates in the various levels of the universities but also having “more control over the range of conditions and resources for academic life that makes autonomous intellectual pursuit possible.”<sup>46</sup> Endogenisation means “the development of African universities and their processes of production along lines consistent with the cultural orientation and material situation of the groups of people to whom they belong or whom they save.”<sup>47</sup> Endogenisation as internal cause or origin calls for the development of new knowledge systems unique to the African context. The aspirations for AU would fit in well within this definition:

A strong need on the African continent is for an institution in which African scholars can get the best training in graduate fields of theology in Africa, being instructed in the African idiom, and in an environment which will enable Africans to explore these fields on African soils and with the best resources available.<sup>48</sup>

Crossman prefers the term endogenisation over indigenisation in the hope of avoiding “some of the historical nuances and misunderstandings that have accrued to the term ‘indigenous’ and its derivatives.”<sup>49</sup> Indigenous “portrays the subject as static” because of the “link to a geographic locality or area” while endogenous “allows for a more organic and dynamic understanding in that it evokes autonomously oriented growth.”<sup>50</sup> Crossman does not totally reject the notion of indigenisation. He exposes its failure to emphasise the question of capacity. In support of this position, Sawyerr argues that under the global trends:

...the explosive growth in the stock of global knowledge and its rapid rate of obsolescence have led to a steady shift from the importance of acquiring a particular body of knowledge to that of developing the skills for acquiring new knowledge and the capacity for using knowledge as a resource in addressing societal needs.”<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 324.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 325f.

<sup>48</sup> Scott Jr., “Nairobi Consultation Proposes Bold, Historic Plan.”

<sup>49</sup> Crossman, “Africanisation or Endogenisation,” p. 324.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.* Paulin Hountodji adds that the word indigenous “has no effectiveness outside its particular context.” Paulin J. Hountodji, “Introduction: Recentring Africa,” in *Endogenous Knowledge: Research Trails*, ed. by Paulin J. Hountodji, (Dakar: CODESRIA Book Series, 1997), p. 18

<sup>51</sup> Akilagpa Sawyerr, “Challenges Facing African Universities: Selected Issues,” *African Studies Review*, vol. 47, NO. 1., (April 2004), p. 3.

As a result, "These developments have brought [...] demands for new kinds of knowledge, new modes of knowledge production and dissemination and [...] greater possibilities for effective networking and partnership."<sup>52</sup>

Crossman identifies three reactions to the question of endogenisation namely; "acceptance within a developmental framework," "acceptance in principle yet a practical impossibility," and, the "rejection principle." Advocates for the developmentalist framework value the utilitarian function of Africanisation and its aim to contribute to socio-economic development. Private universities in Zimbabwe are mainly grounded in the developmentalist framework:

Leadership is the issue. Leadership requires educated pastors, teachers, agriculturalists, social scientists and medical practitioners. The argument for the university may be summed up in that vision. The African churches need an institution that educates leaders and teachers for the churches and schools of their continent.<sup>53</sup>

While the developmentalist thrust encompasses producing students in specialised areas such as the Institute of Peace Leadership and Governance (IPLG) at AU, which seek to address problems on the continent, there are also direct Outreach programmes to local communities. Attempts have even been made

such as in agriculture, they have undoubtedly addressed local issues and environments. Yet the exact sciences have contributed little to the redefinition of knowledge systems as such and, where applied, continue to function within a developmentalist framework, as the current debate on 'indigenous knowledge' demonstrates. This is certainly the case with the relatively recent application of the term to the fields of agriculture and ecology.<sup>54</sup>

The second reaction upholds the principle of Africanisation yet regards it as practically impossible because of inadequate resources both at institutional and individual levels as well as the dominance of the Western academic culture.

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<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> F. Thomas Trotter, "Fund for Higher Education Development Proposed," in, *Colleague: Africa Special Edition*, (Summer/Fall, 1986), p. 2. See Also, "On Board: A Message to Members from F. Thomas Trotter," September 1986, GCAH: Africa-All Africa-Institutions: Africa University (Methodist) Proposal 1986, Box: 2531-2-4:52. See also, K.L. Gilbert, "AU Producing Next Generation of African Leaders," in, *Colleague*, Winter/Spring 2000.

<sup>54</sup> Crossman, "Africanisation or Endogenisation," p. 327f.

The heavy reliance of African institutions is also attributable to the belief that “real intellectual activity” is global, therefore, Africanisation is overshadowed.<sup>55</sup> Closely aligned to this theory is what Ogbu Kalu has termed ‘globecalisation,’ which is “a discourse on how global transnational cultural forms are set on wheels, domesticated or refracted through local cultural lenses.”<sup>56</sup> This position counters the homogenisation theory of globalisation and favours relativism in which the unique identities of particular contexts remain visible.<sup>57</sup> It further suggests cross-fertilisation between Africa and the West in which activities of one context have implications on the other as argued by James Cox:

Any uniquely African identity [...] will emerge as a form of alterity to Western research initiatives. What the African says about the West, its history of colonialism and its intellectual domination will reveal far more about the African’s sense of self than it will about the Western imperialist agenda.<sup>58</sup>

This process would be more effective in a situation of the mutual reciprocity of contexts rather than where one context dominates thereby reducing others to being mere consumers. There is a difference between regarding Africanisation as desirable but impracticable, and, as desirable subject to mutual dialogue with other contexts.

Like the second, the third reaction is globalist but it completely rejects the notion of Africanisation and argues for a “necessarily culture-transcendent nature of the intellect [...] the ability or even duty of the intellect to free itself of any culturally-imposed restraints.”<sup>59</sup> However, the main pitfall is that African universities and academics may continue with the role of being importers of “packages of ‘universal’

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<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 329.

<sup>56</sup> Ogbu U. Kalu, “‘Globecalisation’ and Religion: The Pentecostal Model in Contemporary Africa,” in *Uniquely African? African Christian Identity from Cultural and Historical Perspectives*, ed. by J.L. Cox and G. ter Haar, p. 220.

<sup>57</sup> Peter Beyer, *Religion and Globalisation*, (London: Sage Publications, 1994), p. 9.

<sup>58</sup> James L. Cox, “African Identities as the Projection of Western Alterity,” in *Uniquely African? African Christian Identity from Cultural and Historical Perspectives*, ed. by J.L. Cox and G. ter Haar, p. 36.

<sup>59</sup> Crossman, “Africanisation or Endogenisation,” p. 330.

theory and, at best, export empirical data.”<sup>60</sup> Universities and academics in the north continue to have influence on their counterparts in Africa. Part of this problem is not entirely the fault of Western academics but is inherited from the colonial era. The imported traditions were, as Ranger argues, invented through the colonial mindset and internalised such that some Africans adopted them as their own thereby making them levers of subordination.<sup>61</sup> Zeleza argues: “The African academic enterprise has long suffered from a culture of imported scientific consumerism. This culture established during the colonial era spread after independence despite rhetorical protestations to the contrary and ritual obeisance to local cognitive needs.”<sup>62</sup> This “theoretical extroversion”<sup>63</sup> argues Hountodji “...is not a sign of the African academics’ confident universalism but of their insecure provincialism, reflecting a dearth of the search for intellectual legitimation from academic systems and epistemological trails that have historically dismissed and infantilised them.”<sup>64</sup>

The gap between rhetoric and practical commitment to the Africanisation cause is evidenced by the small number of those willing to embrace, develop or explicitly promote Africanisation in its epistemological form at institutional level. The minority of African scholars who have shown interest have not enjoyed significant support from their academic institutions or state structures. Following the findings of a survey, Crossman notes

that only a minority of African scholars fully accepted the notion of Africanisation, or endogenisation, in and of its own right and promoted it in any concrete way. Perhaps the most striking aspect was that there was very little evidence of institutional support, outside South Africa at least, and proponents were found to be acting largely in isolation and unsupported by the academies in question.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Paul T. Zeleza, “The Politics of Historical and Social Science Research in Africa,” in *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol. 28, No. 1, (2002), p. 21.

<sup>61</sup> Terence O. Ranger, “The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa,” in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence O. Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 212. Cf. Appiah, *In My Father’s House*, p. 61

<sup>62</sup> Zeleza, “The Politics of Historical and Social Science Research in Africa,” p. 21.

<sup>63</sup> See Hountodji, “Recentring Africa,” 1997, pp. 1-39.

<sup>64</sup> Zeleza, “The Politics of Historical and Social Science Research in Africa,” p. 21.

<sup>65</sup> Crossman, “Africanisation or Endogenisation,” p. 326.



An interesting example is the dissonance between Gordon Chavunduka's strategic position as Vice Chancellor at the UZ, and his failure to inspire a radical transformation, inclusive of the epistemological strain of Africanisation, at the institution given his numerous activities and contributions to traditional medicines and indigenous spiritual knowledge.<sup>66</sup> A similar dissonance, albeit to a lesser extent, is evident in the case of Africa University's John Kurewa.<sup>67</sup>

The zeal shown in the deconstruction of Western intellectual hegemony by such notable scholars as V.Y. Mudimbe<sup>68</sup> has not been matched by equal force towards the development of African epistemology. This observation does not ignore both inter and intra disciplinary discourse on the feasibility or desirability of African epistemology. While the debate on African epistemology is a well worn path, the missing link is that the discourse is yet to be integrated in the African university in a more fundamental way.

African systems of thought encompass the nature, origin and scope of knowledge. Developing an African epistemology does not mean insulating it from the outside world but rather makes it a contributor to the global knowledge economy. Such a process requires taking into account the peoples' systems of thought in their practical lives as well as language and its cultural dynamics.<sup>69</sup> An authentic African epistemology should go beyond the mere extraction of indigenous knowledge or descriptions of African cultural experiences. It has to be an active engagement of scholars with African knowledge systems as subjects rather than objects for a Western audience. This approach requires integration of university curricula

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<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.* This point does not overlook Chavunduka's social involvement which includes his role in the founding of Zimbabwe National Traditional Healers Association (ZINATHA).

<sup>67</sup> Most of his scholarly contributions reflect an interest in Africanisation and Indigenisation. See for examples: John. W. Z. Kurewa, "Towards an African Concept of the Church: the Self-consciousness of the United Methodist Church in Rhodesia (the emergence of an African Concept of the Church)" (Unpublished PhD thesis, Garrett Theological College), Northwestern University, 1973; *Biblical Proclamation for Africa Today*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995); *A Short History of the United Methodist Church in Zimbabwe*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997); *Preaching and Cultural Identity: Proclaiming the Gospel in Africa*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000).

<sup>68</sup> Dismao A. Masolo, *African Philosophy in Search of Identity*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994), p. 179.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 148 and 185.

sensitive to African epistemology in terms of content and methodology. Utilitarianism and idealism are not mutually exclusive concepts but rather should complement each other. The pragmatic approach cannot operate in a vacuum. African epistemology and endogenous systems should constitute an idealism which is necessary for an authentic African intellectual autonomy.

## **Relevance**

Opening up new horizons of knowledge implies new things, methods, views, strategies and understanding. Teaching, research and knowledge are expected to be tailor-made to create a strong manpower base to help improve the economy. On the other hand they are expected to be the means by which new inventions and discoveries are made which again will boost the country's economic base as well as raising its international profile. The Zimbabwe government is so often preoccupied with change for the better, the need to improve the economy and social services, and to consolidate its political agenda. A university which fits into this utilitarian frame is deemed to be relevant. Africanisation in this case, with its interest on knowledge for change, therefore has a strong link to relevance. Yet it must be noted that relevance as a term may be interpreted differently. Mazrui makes a distinction between practical and cultural relevance, but also admits that the two overlap.<sup>70</sup> Practical relevance has to do with skills while cultural relevance is about values. The government is mainly biased towards practical relevance, which is similar to Kanganga's utilitarian model, with its emphasis on social and economic development. At the government level, a university is relevant if it is able to equip its graduates to fit into society especially for employment purposes. Or it is relevant if it is able to, as discussed earlier, inculcate patriotism in the students. Relevance for the modern African university therefore, in this case relates to social, economic and political challenges. Emerging church universities in Zimbabwe embraced this approach with the addition of special religious values as their basis.

In her address on the launch of the Manicaland Province Science and Technology Taskforce at Africa University, the Minister of Science and Technology, Olivia

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<sup>70</sup> Mazrui, *Political Values and the Educated Class in Africa*, pp. 302-3.

Muchena outlined what she called the essential ingredients of the science and technology taskforce as follows:

Re-integration of science into Africa's cultural endowment, where policy decisions are influenced by scientific and technological considerations, and economic and social strategies are science led.

An emphasis on opening young minds to new ideas and images as opposed to accumulation of facts and information.

The inculcation of a sense of civic duty and social concern in the young people.

To help Africa regain its pre-colonial strengths and self confidence.

Identification of African role models in Science and Technology.<sup>71</sup>

Muchena tried to fuse practical with cultural relevance. She, however, does not elaborate her conception of pre-colonial strengths and self-confidence, thereby reducing the statement to mere preoccupation with a nostalgic past. After some reference to developmental challenges in the province, the Minister continued:

Manicaland is also known for having a high concentration of renowned traditional healers who use herbs that have great economic potential, if the active ingredients of these drugs can be identified and researched upon. We understand that some of our traditional medicines have been patented by foreign scientists without the knowledge or consent of the people concerned. It is only through well-targeted research and development that we can unlock the vast potential that lie in our local indigenous knowledge systems.<sup>72</sup>

It seems that her focus is to extract from the indigenous system and dilute it with Western science and technology, rather than consolidate it on its own terms. "Indigenous knowledge on its own is inadequate; artisans in the rural and urban areas who have developed rudimentary appropriate technology based on indigenous knowledge systems have great potential to bring economic benefits, 'if only they can be given the right packaging.'<sup>73</sup> As such it can be seen that the government's attempt to address cultural relevance falls short. The problem is that African indigenous knowledge systems are underrated in the face of Western science and technology. This relates to the old problem of stereotyping the African worldview as mythical.

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<sup>71</sup> "Africa University Chosen to Co-ordinate the Provincial Science and Technology Taskforce," *Africa University News*, [http://www.africau.edu/news\\_cal/provincial.htm](http://www.africau.edu/news_cal/provincial.htm), (Accessed 24 August 2004).

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

Temba J. Mafico, a member of the AU Planning Committee for the Faculty of Theology,<sup>74</sup> while praising the imminent opening of Africa University, wrote that the major difference between Africans and Westerners is that while Westerners regard the phenomenal world as inanimate capable of scientific enquiry and analysis, for Africans it is full of life. Mafico continues:

Another important difference between Westerners and Africans lies in their approach to enquiry. To Westerners, an object can always be scientifically related to other objects and appear as part of a series or a group [...]. To Africans, however, objects are unique because they, like human beings have an unpredictable character [...]. It is correct to sum up this by saying that Africans are mythical in their view of the universe. This means that Africans uncritically accept certain beliefs whose truth or reality cannot be scientifically verified.<sup>75</sup>

Mafico, writing in 1989 appears to be subscribing to Leopold S. Senghor's position which describes the European as empiric and the African as mystic. This trend of thought reminiscent of Levy Bruhl's ideas on primitive mentality is defective and inadmissible as an Africanisation thesis. Senghor, writing in 1964 argues that, "European reasoning is analytical, discursive by utilisation; Negro-African reasoning is intuitive by participation."<sup>76</sup> Serequeberhan aptly criticises Senghor as portraying "racist Eurocentric descriptions as positive manifestation of the African's Being-in-the-world."<sup>77</sup>

Mafico argues that the role of Africa University, especially the Faculty of Theology, will be important in guiding the nation towards new frontiers: "Research done at the African University will provide answers to many enigmatic questions, for example: How can the Christian church rid itself of the wrappings of Western civilisation in

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<sup>74</sup> Minutes of the Planning Committee for the College of Theology, Africa University, Harare, October, 20 1988, GCAH: Africa-All Africa-Institutions: African University (Methodist) Proposal 1988, Box: 2532-3-4:13.

<sup>75</sup> Temba J. Mafico, "Tradition, Faith and the Africa University," in *Quarterly Review*, (Summer, 1989), p. 37.

<sup>76</sup> Leopold S. Senghor, *On African Socialism*, trans. by Mercer Cook, (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1964), p. 74.

<sup>77</sup> Serequeberhan, *Hermeneutics of African Philosophy*, p. 47.

order to truly minister to the African people in the traditional milieu.”<sup>78</sup> On the other hand he asks: “How should the church respond to the fact that, after a century of intensive education, the Africans, in spite of high achievement in the arts, science, and technology and theological education, still hold tenaciously to belief in, or fear of witchcraft and sorcery?”<sup>79</sup> The weakness seems to be in the predisposition by some scholarship circles, of advocating for the Africanisation of Christianity, dwelling on such things as liturgy and music which are in themselves “peripheral religious beliefs that do not speak to the core of what it means to be a Christian.”<sup>80</sup> In the same way Matthew Schoffeleers notes the tendency by African theologians, of avoiding tackling such matters as spirits and witches in their discourses.<sup>81</sup> If anything, church-related universities can be viable resources for the development of endogenous Christian perspectives in a more fundamental way.

The discussion on Africanisation does not negate efforts made by the church-related universities to relate some aspects of their curricula to the Zimbabwean or African context. Policy statements at different levels, namely, the institution as a whole, the faculty, and the departments testify to the self-consciousness of the university to engage its context. For example, one of the stated objectives of the Faculty of Theology at SU is: “To impart theological and religious knowledge that is culturally and contextually grounded, and relevant to the realities of Africa.”<sup>82</sup> Yet in the curriculum structure courses such as ATRs and Contextual Theology are not covered at undergraduate level. At AU the curriculum structure for the Faculty of Theology includes several varieties of contextual studies.<sup>83</sup> However, while engagement with context is consistently made reference to, it is those courses whose syllabi focus on traditional topics, which dominate the curriculum. This point in no way implies that traditional subjects such as Christian Theology are irrelevant. What is important is

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<sup>78</sup> Mafico, “Tradition, Faith and the Africa University,” p. 36.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> T.M. Vanden Berg, “Culture, Christianity, and Witchcraft in a West African Context,” in *The Changing Face of Christianity: Africa, the West, and the World*, ed. by L. Sanneh and J.A. Carpenter, p. 47.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 47-8.

<sup>82</sup> Solusi University Bulletin, 2004 – 2006, p. 279.

<sup>83</sup> *Africa University Prospectus 2003 – 2005*.



whether they are guided or inspired by an African religious and philosophical framework that enables creative engagement conducive for the development of authentic indigenous knowledge systems.

### **Modernisation**

According to the Africa University prospectus, "the chapel is a beautiful edifice whose architecture harmoniously combines modernity and African traditions." Just before his retirement, John Kurewa the first Vice Chancellor commented on the past and present of the university: "I look at this modern campus and the vibrant, international community we have now and remember that I used to look after cattle in these fields when I was at school at Old Mutare mission [...] it's been great work."<sup>84</sup> These two statements raise a fundamental question relating to the role and of the university in an African context as a symbol and agent of modernisation. The first statement interprets the university chapel as a combination of the modern and the traditional. The second one contrasts the modern campus with a traditional past of cattle herding on the same space.

Modernisation and traditional in this context are a dichotomous pair, sometimes viewed as mutually exclusive terms in the sense that traditional points to the past while modern relates to the present. In its ordinary sense modernisation is taken as that which is current. Paradoxically, although tradition may be viewed as being in the present and pointing to the past, it is regarded as modern because it is judged to have a certain standard which is usually internationally adjudicated. It is internationally adjudicated but dictated by the West. Sam C. Nolutshungu poses the question: "How do we reconcile the idea of a university, which is always to some degree universal, with the particular demands of African life?"<sup>85</sup> Marcello de Cecco argues that the dominance of the international gold standard is evident: "...when gold is the

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<sup>84</sup> "Africa University Vice Chancellor to Retire in December 1997," *UMNS*, 13 November 1996. Worldwide Faith News Archives, <http://www.wfn.org/1996/11/msg00035.html> (Accessed 9 December 2005).

<sup>85</sup> Sam C. Nolutshungu, "Beyond the Gold Standard? The Idea of a (post-Apartheid) University," *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, vol. 37, NO. 3, (1999), p. 376.

effective numeraire in most countries and/or when the other means of payment used as monetary numeraire in those countries are readily redeemable in gold at their bearer's request."<sup>86</sup>

Nolutshungu goes on to critique the idea of the gold standard by way of analogy: "Just like the gold standard [...] was always a sterling standard, the academic gold standard was a merely British imperial measure."<sup>87</sup> Just as European countries were the custodians and provided the framework for the recognition of qualifications for the early African universities, the notion of standards continues to be a lever of patronage in a significant number of cases. 'Modern' as a concept relates to the 1960s modernisation theories in political science which viewed "efficiency and scientific logic" as superseding "traditional values and belief systems."<sup>88</sup> In attendance to scientific rationality are capitalism, technology and the notion of nation-state.<sup>89</sup>

Ali Mazrui links modernisation to development. He understands development as a process of modernisation. He adds that both concepts have to be freed from the trappings of their colonial or Western connotations:

The tempo of change which should increasingly improve living standards, reduce infant mortality, curtail ignorance and disease, and enhance knowledge of man and his environment, is a tempo which imperialism helped to foster, and which deserves to survive under new conditions. But those aspects of modernisation which reduce local autonomy erode local self-confidence, undermine the capacity of the non-western world to contribute effectively to a genuinely shared world culture should progressively be eliminated. In time the concept

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<sup>86</sup> Marcello de Cecco, *Money and Empire: The International Gold Standard, 1890-1914*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1974), p. 1.

<sup>87</sup> Nolutshungu, "Beyond the Gold Standard," pp. 376-7. See also Dennis Austin, "Universities and the Academic Gold Standard in Nigeria," *Minerva*, vol. 18, NO. 2, (1980), pp. 201-42.

<sup>88</sup> Chazan, et. al., *Politics and Society in Contemporary Africa*, p. 15.

<sup>89</sup> Beyer, *Religion and Globalisation*, p. 8.

of modernisation should become increasingly distinct from the concept of Westernisation.<sup>90</sup>

The effect of Mazrui's argument for a form of modernisation which is distinct from Westernisation depends on how modernisation is defined in the African context. Modernisation implies comparison, which in turn denotes the existence of an external standard that has to be measured against. What would African modernisation be measured against? Can there be African forms of modernisation which are free from Western influence?

Modernisation has strong ideological connotations and it implies internationalisation or universalisation riding on Western hegemony. In many cases even advocates of localisation find themselves trapped in the ambiguities and contradictions surrounding the need to Africanise. An encounter which Ian Michael the first Vice Chancellor of the University of Malawi had with the government officials highlights this ambiguity:

In discussing with Malawian ministers what might be the location and style of an eventual residential university campus, I asked whether it would be a good idea for the layout of the campus to reflect its social structure in much the same way as did the layout of a traditional village. I further compounded my folly by saying that as the country was poor, and as the university would be dependent on external financial aid for all its capital development, we could achieve several desirable ends by putting up our first buildings in an enhanced form of traditional structure and materials: we would thereby proclaim not only that the university was rooted in the culture of Malawi but that we also knew how to live simply, that the university was not just a means of raising the prestige of the country but stood in an ancient tradition of scholarly simplicity and plain living. Our realism would be rewarded by having a distinctively African university, endowed by donors disillusioned with tropical imitations of monastic quadrangles as they existed in temperate climates.

My suggestion was received with indignation. Did I think that a bush college was all that the country needed—that wattle and daub were good enough for Malawi?<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Mazrui, *Political Values and the Educated Class in Africa*, p. 302.

<sup>91</sup> Ian Michael, "Academic Autonomy and Governmental Demands: The Case of Malawi," *Minerva* vol. 16, NO. 4, (1978), pp. 470-1.

Michael and the government were apparently coming from opposite directions. To government officials his suggestion was a mockery of their idea of a university. A university whose structures resembled African traditional structures was not good enough for the country because it would be a backward bush college. In Michael's mind a university which identified with the African environment at least in structure would drive home the point for relevance but at the same time cut costs. But his statement was open to misinterpretation because it could be seen as a patronising attempt to instil a sense of inferiority.

### **Counter-penetration**

International links are essential to the university in as much as they are to religious organisations. These links are manifest in various ways according to the nature and history of the institution or organisation. In the history of universities, and notwithstanding the question of Western intellectual hegemony, international links ensured the provision of resources and maintenance of universally acceptable standards. The African university operated as a multinational institution in which the stakeholders abroad had the leeway to exert influence or control at their will. This position has not changed much across Africa.

Mazrui proposes that the African universities should be transformed from the typology of multinational corporations to multicultural institutions. The transition implies embracing a universalism emanating from the African universities in which Africanisation is a model to be embraced by the world. In Mazrui's argument the new scenario is achievable through a counter-penetration strategy which recruits allies from the Black diaspora and the Arab/Islamic world with its strong anti-West stance.<sup>92</sup> He argues that since African Islam is different from the Arab type in that it has some aspects of African indigenous culture it could be useful in this strategy. This point, however, overlooks the fact that it is still under the influence of the Arab world. In spite of the 'diplomatic' interactions, fundamental co-operation between Christian groups and Islam in Africa is yet to be fully tested in Central and Southern Africa and would have fundamental religious implications. Moreover, many Christian groups have strong historical connections with the West and are happy to

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<sup>92</sup> Mazrui, *Political Values and the Educated Class in Africa*, p. 303.

maintain the links. While agreeing with Mazrui on the need to take advantage of the Black diaspora, Zeleza suggests the need to turn the negative of the brain drain of African academics into a positive where they become potential allies in addition to interest groups or institutions with an African focus as well as the Historically Black Colleges.<sup>93</sup> A bifurcation of the African diaspora is in order here. The historic diaspora is made up of Africans of the blood whose links to Africa go back to the slavery era, as opposed to the contemporary diaspora comprising Africans both of the blood and the soil.<sup>94</sup> The two realities are not homogenous as much as each is a mixed bag of people with different interests and attitudes in their conceptions of Africa in its relations with the rest of the world. Their value lies in their self-understanding as Africans and potential to promote the interests of the continent, albeit with varying ideological inclinations.

Mazrui's argument for the engagement of Arab/Islamic 'allies' as a counter-penetration strategy is untenable in the light of the relationship between Christianity and Islam, mainly characterised, as Gifford points out, by tension and competition sometimes emanating from their global links.<sup>95</sup> Notwithstanding the fact that the Arab and Islamic world has presence in Africa, it has a different agenda and would gladly assert hegemony on Africa by replacing the West as an external influence with little or no genuine interest on the promotion of sub-Saharan knowledge systems.

Beverly Thaver's argument for counter penetration is more plausible. She argues that as one of the functions of the religious university is theological training, a new breed of graduates will emerge from the cultural heritage of the religious group. To this end: "the inculcation of religious values at the higher education level could be one way of challenging secular and Westernised epistemologies that dominate the

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<sup>93</sup> Zeleza, "The Politics of Historical and Social Science Research in Africa," pp. 22-3.

<sup>94</sup> Ali A. Mazrui, "Brain Drain between Counter-terrorism and Globalisation," in *African Issues: The African Brain Drain to the North: Pitfalls and Possibilities*, vol. 30, NO. 1, (2002, African Studies Association), pp. 86-9. Cassandra R. Veney, in the same edition, argues that for a long time the historic diaspora has maintained links with Africa ranging from educational, political, economic and cultural assistance and interactions. She acknowledges that in some cases African Americans reinforced Western imperial culture and values. See C.R. Veney, "Ties that Bind: The Historic African Diaspora and Africa," pp. 3-7.

<sup>95</sup> Gifford, *African Christianity*, pp. 322-3.



production of knowledge.”<sup>96</sup> The effectiveness of religion is dependent on how deeply rooted it is in the African soil and how authentic its endogenous epistemological framework is. The hybridisation characteristic of African Instituted Churches (AIC’s) could provide a useful model of churches trying to come to terms with their context without reference to the West.<sup>97</sup> The deficit in this model has been the lack of an attendant intellectual base to enthuse it. The strength of Christianity in Africa today would in this case be an advantage, but a lot will depend on whether the churches, particularly mainline, can separate their economic dependence to the West from their quest to generate theological paradigms to support the religious values in institutions. While the epistemological debate remains central, the continued dependence on the West for resources weakens the case for the development of autonomous knowledge systems. All the new church universities in Zimbabwe expected to get assistance from donors abroad, and their institutions were also modelled on Western ones.<sup>98</sup>

### **International links**

There is a clear difference between international networks and dependency on external bodies. The patterns of the networks cannot be generalised as they differ from country to country on the continent. While in Nigeria, for example, there are universities owned by wealthy indigenous Pentecostal churches which do not depend on external aid,<sup>99</sup> in Zimbabwe the international links in the case of religious universities are characterised by financial dependency. Although this dependence is multilateral, it is dominated by some benefactors over others. The founding principles of the university and perceptions at the different levels have an impact on the nature of the institution and its role in the epistemological debate. Africa University is a classic example of external dependence and so warrants elaboration.

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<sup>96</sup> Thaver, “Private Higher Education in Africa,” p. 71.

<sup>97</sup> Rinsum, “Wipe the Blackboard Clean,” p. 41.

<sup>98</sup> Isaac M.T. Mwase, “Shall they Till with their Own Hoes?: Baptists in Zimbabwe and New Patterns of Interdependence, 1950 – 2000,” in *The Changing Face of Christianity: Africa, the West, and the World*, ed. by L. Sanneh and J.A. Carpenter, pp. 63–79. Mwase argues that there should always be mutual reliance where churches in the developed world financially support institutions in developing countries.

<sup>99</sup> Isaac N. Obasi, “New Private Universities in Nigeria,” [http://www.bc.edu/bc\\_org/avp/soe/cihe/newsletter/number45/p45\\_Obasi.htm](http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/avp/soe/cihe/newsletter/number45/p45_Obasi.htm) (Accessed 16 November 2006).

The idea of the university came from Africans who had the vision and initiative, as Julius S. Scott rightly argues: “This was not an American initiative for Africa; the urgency and the proposal came from African Bishops.”<sup>100</sup> However, when the project was adopted by the denomination as a whole it became inter-continental. Ireson states: “The Africa University is a global commitment [...]. We have consistently maintained that Africa University is not a US project but rather a commitment of the United Methodist Church - a global church.”<sup>101</sup> Nevertheless, the heavy reliance on the US and its solid resource base emasculated African influence as centres of decision making shifted to the north, where the funding was coming from, on the grounds that the UMC is a global church.

Dow Kirkpatrick, served for over 25 years as a UMC missionary to Latin America. In a letter addressed to James Waits of Emory University, and copied to the GBGM, he expresses several concerns hinging on “how difficult it is for an honest exchange between two cultures to take place – at profound levels.”<sup>102</sup> He poses some searching questions:

Does the US leadership of the Board of Higher Education know the difference between the historic missionary philosophy of education and the present? Of course, that Board has vast experience in the oversight of education in the US. Does it know the difference in educational philosophy in the US and in Methodist institutions outside the US?<sup>103</sup>

The fundamental issue according to Kirkpatrick was that: “Persons from the US (blacks as much as whites) are limited by the fact that our postulates work for us. Persons from other cultures are also limited by the inevitable fact that the resources essential to the project are in our hands and not theirs.”<sup>104</sup> As a solution he proposes the inclusion of Methodist academics from Latin America who could play “a creative

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<sup>100</sup> Scott Jr., “Nairobi Consultation Proposes Bold, Historic Plan.”

<sup>101</sup> Roger W. Ireson, “Called to go beyond Jerusalem,” State of the Board Address to the Annual Meeting of the BHEM, 5 October 1989, GBHEM, Records of Higher Education Division, 1953-1993.

<sup>102</sup> Correspondence: Dow Kirkpatrick to J. Waite, 19 May 1988. GCAH: Africa-All Africa-Institutions: African University (Methodist) Proposal, 1988, Box: 2532-3-13

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

role in the process” as a third force.<sup>105</sup> In spite of these insights, the UMC did not pretend to offer a radically different and new model of university that would be unique to Africa. Rather it adopted the traditional British model tinged with American qualities. According to Kent Weeks, counsel for AU, their charter closely followed that of the UZ, and membership of the Board of Trustees paralleled that of the Tennessee Corporation.<sup>106</sup> The UZ charter, although it was amended in 1990, still had characteristics of the colonial British system. Although there was involvement of African academics in the planning process for AU the active roles played by Presidents and chief administrators of nine American universities related to the UMC, in addition to GBGM and GBHEM staff, is significant.<sup>107</sup>

The Williams Commission identified the international nature of the universities proposed by the UMC and SDA as a cause for concern to the government and noted that:

...they have a more explicit international dimension in terms of their management, control and financing, of their objectives, and of their student and staff recruitment. In these cases the institutions would be based in Zimbabwe but would serve Zimbabwe, as part of a wider constituency of African countries to whom they would also have responsibilities. They would therefore, inevitably be a less closely integrated part of the Zimbabwe education system [...]. Any agreement with them needs to touch on matters involving their international relationships and transactions, so as to balance Zimbabwe’s requirements and interests with the wider remit of the college or university.<sup>108</sup>

This line of thinking is similar to President Mugabe’s sentiments when he addressed the gathering at the official opening of Africa University in 1994. Such opinions were not shared by the Commission and government alone but even other non-government organisations and individuals felt strongly that international universities might not serve the best interests of Zimbabwe let alone fears on the possibility of foreign influences.<sup>109</sup> Even Roger Ireson, the General Secretary of the GBHEM

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<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> Minutes of the Executive Committee, Board of Higher Education and Ministry, UMC, 4 October 1990, Nashville. GCAH: GBHEM, Records of Higher Education Division, 1953 -1993.

<sup>107</sup> Scott Jr., “Nairobi Consultation Proposes Bold, Historic Plan,” p. 9.

<sup>108</sup> Williams Commission, p. 56.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

acknowledged the government's fears: "They wanted to know the nature of our church-related institutions [...] and in terms of US foreign policy."<sup>110</sup> The fears basically had to do with the nature of the involvement of churches and whether there were any suspicious foreign political links. It was common knowledge that churches still had strong ties with their external partners and that some of them continued to receive funding for various projects from abroad.

The international nature of mainline churches means that the links they have with their external partners are important channels of resources.<sup>111</sup> The UMC is a case in point. The national or continental structures constitute a cog in a vast global network. While in terms of its organisation it has an Annual Conference in Zimbabwe, above it is the Central Conference covering East, Central and Southern Africa. Above the Central Conferences is the General Conference which is the supreme policy making level in the entire denomination. There are policy implementing global bodies which focus on various areas of expertise, for example, the GBGM, and the GBHEM.

Aubrey K. Lucas, the treasurer of the AU Board of Directors and a member of the Development Committee based in the US, aptly describes what he calls the complicated and sometimes cumbersome structural relationship:

Africa University must operate within complicated structural relationships. Our teaching faculty, the students, and most of the administrative staff are located on the continent of Africa; however, part of the administration, many of its board of directors, and most of its financial resources come from other continents. The General Conference with delegates from all over the world, to a large extent determines the well being of Africa University.<sup>112</sup>

He further notes: "Not only must we live within the laws of Zimbabwe, but also those of the United States." Within the strong administrative and ecclesiastical web is the network of other UMC universities among which are the previously disadvantaged eleven historically black colleges<sup>113</sup> which, through their Council of

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<sup>110</sup> Ireson, "On Casting Your Net."

<sup>111</sup> Gifford, *African Christianity*, pp. 308–12.

<sup>112</sup> Aubrey T. Lucas, "Why United Methodists are Committed to Africa University," <http://www.gbhem.org/asp/viewNews.asp?id=196> (Accessed 8 May 2005).

<sup>113</sup> Cook, "Black Colleges," pp. 246–63.

Presidents have established links of collaboration with AU.<sup>114</sup> Reference has already been made to the role played by the international UMC community in the origin and development of the institution. One can notice some tension between the strong international dimension and the national dynamics of ownership and association identified by the Zimbabwe government as a critical area needing special attention. The significance of this whole scenario is that the government perceived the international dimension as potentially problematic especially in political terms. Yet the UMC community in Africa viewed it as a blessing because it provided access to resources.

At the Official opening of the university, in addition to representatives of the general agencies of the church, thirty-two UMC bishops, representing the Council of Bishops, were present.<sup>115</sup> President Clinton was represented by Catherine W. LaBlanc of the US Department of Education,<sup>116</sup> which suggests US government interest in the university and its potential influence on the continent. This point becomes more significant when one considers the funding relationship which the American government has with AU. Addressing the gathering at the dedication of the health sciences building on 1 December 2004, Christopher Dell, the US Ambassador to Zimbabwe, expressed his country's interest: "There is another spirit at work here too and it's the people of the United States who not out of interest in anything for

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<sup>114</sup> Andra Stevens, "Black Colleges Seek Stronger Partnership with African Education," *UMNS*, 3 October 2002. Worldwide Faith News Archives, <http://www.wfn.org/2002/10/msg00047.html> (Accessed 10 July 2005). See also, D. Ewers, "Council of Presidents Meets at Africa University," *Colleague*, Winter/Spring, 2003; *The Book of Resolutions*, Resolution 304, p. 762. The eleven Presidents of the black colleges met for the first time at AU for a one day symposium on 15 November which coincided with the tenth anniversary celebrations of the university held on 13 – 17 November 2002.

<sup>115</sup> Skeete, "Welcome Address." Address and Orations.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.* On the other hand, it was claimed that the First Lady, Hillary Rodham Clinton was as a United Methodist. See, Jean Caffey Lyles, "United Methodist in the White House," *New World Outlook*, March-April 1993. In 1996 she was invited to address the General Conference. See Linda Bloom, "Hillary Clinton Asks Fellow United Methodists to Continue Social Witness for Children," *UNMS*, 24 April 1996. <http://www.gbgm-umc.org/mission/news/hillary2.html> (Accessed 15 November 2005).



themselves except doing good, that have made possible this education and who are sharing with you this dream about the future, a better future for Africa.”<sup>117</sup>

When Dell’s predecessor Joseph Sullivan officiated at the ground breaking ceremony of the university’s Institute of Peace, Leadership and Governance on 19 November 2003, he informed his audience that the US government through its American Schools and Hospitals Abroad (ASHA) office under USAID had provided a total of about eight million US dollars to AU since the university’s opening in 1992.<sup>118</sup> He further remarked:

The financial and moral support provided by the United States government towards this Institute will go a long way towards achieving the vision to contribute a building of a peaceful prosperous Africa by providing a forum for debate, training and research which actively promotes peace, good governance and responsive leadership to meet the challenges being faced on the continent.<sup>119</sup>

The first ASHA grant of US\$1.6 million towards construction of the university was approved in 1990;<sup>120</sup> significantly, well before the approval of the university’s charter. The substantial amounts of donations saw the US government being the second largest donor after the UMC. With reference to George Bush, Lucas pontificated:

Let’s tell the United Methodist Church, as it plans for the General Conference, that it should be proud of what our connection has been able to develop at Old Mutare, Zimbabwe. Let’s tell them that Africa needs Africa University now more than when it was founded. Let’s remind them that the very safety and security of these United States demands, as President Bush has acknowledged, that this country cannot ignore Africa and let it become a part of that world force that sees the United States as an enemy and not a friend.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> “Africa University dedicates Health Sciences Building,” *UMNS*, 6 December 2004. See also “AU This Month,” Information Office, Africa University; <http://www.gbhem.org/asp/viewNews.asp?id=241> (Accessed 8 May 2005).

<sup>118</sup> “American Ambassador Breaks Ground at Africa University,” Africa University News, Africa University Information Office, November 2003. See also [http://www.africau.edu/news\\_cal/Dec2htm](http://www.africau.edu/news_cal/Dec2htm) (Accessed 10 March 2004).

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>120</sup> “ASHA Approves Grant for Africa University,” *Africa University Journal*, December 1990.

<sup>121</sup> Lucas, “Why United Methodists are Committed to Africa University.”

This position portrays a political dimension where the US government regards AU as a strategic institution for its policy on Africa and is reminiscent of similar views in the 1960s with regards to the use of higher education as a means of influence in Africa.

Whether the Zimbabwean government saw this as problematic was not openly stated, although there had been general concerns of external political involvement. As long as the AU project did not negatively impact on government's political agenda and as long as the US position was not viewed as interference with Zimbabwe's internal affairs, there would be no problem. In any case AU would be considered in Zimbabwe as a worthwhile investment given the large amounts of money involved, which includes foreign currency. Moreover, the pan-African nature of Africa University and its global networks would be important in boosting Zimbabwe's international profile and influence on the continent.<sup>122</sup> The pan-African nature was also a strategic aspect on the part of the US.

It was, therefore, no mere coincidence that Dell chose a ceremony at AU as a platform to deliver a stinging criticism of the Zimbabwe government's self-destructive political and economic policies.<sup>123</sup> In the same speech he acknowledged the close relationship between AU and the US Embassy since 1992 and noted that support for the IPLG was meant to promote peace and democracy in Africa. It is evident that the choice of occasion and place was deliberate: "As a leading institution of higher education in Zimbabwe and Africa, it is only fitting that straight talk about the Zimbabwean economy begins here."<sup>124</sup> The speech created a diplomatic row which even sucked in President Mugabe. The State media accused the Ambassador

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<sup>122</sup> The Mugabe regime's quest for international influence is evidenced by its keenness to assert itself as a regional powerhouse both politically and militarily especially through the SADC. This saw it being involved in the war in the Democratic Republic of Congo which involved five countries. See Campbell, *Reclaiming Zimbabwe*.

<sup>123</sup> Christopher Dell, "Plain Talk about the Zimbabwean Economy," Speech delivered at Africa University in Mutare on 2 November 2005. Reproduced by, [www.newzimbabwe.com/pages/powell36.13426.html](http://www.newzimbabwe.com/pages/powell36.13426.html) (Accessed 9 November 2005).

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.* See also, "US Ambassador Dell Risks Expulsion," *The Herald*, 7 November 2005, "Dell can go to Hell, says President," *The Herald*, 9 November 2005, "Zimbabwe Warns US Ambassador Risks Expulsion," *The Zimbabwe Independent*, 4 November 2005.

of trying to influence AU students “in a rather subtle but distinct way, to overthrow the government of Zimbabwe.”<sup>125</sup> The outbursts from State officials and media created the impression that the government took great exception to the US Ambassador’s remarks. Yet the university, which had invited Dell, and provided the platform for his remarks, was not censured, at least openly, for its role.

The UMC provides support to AU through General Conference apportionments and World Service Special gifts. Gifts also come from special efforts of congregations, districts, or Conferences. Individuals contribute in various forms which include planned giving and bequests. Most of the gifts target infrastructural development and scholarship endowments. As examples, the Faculty of Theology was built with funds donated by the South Carolina Annual Conference, funds for two dormitories from the South Indiana Annual Conference and the Kwang Lim chapel was constructed with funds from the South Korean Methodist church.<sup>126</sup> Between 1986 and 1991 the total amount received towards the World Service Special Fund for the endowment was over two million dollars received from over 13,000 contributors which included conferences, districts, congregations and individuals.<sup>127</sup> The majority of these donors were from the US. Only thirty three contributors from non-American sources representing \$6,765,42 were recorded for the same period.<sup>128</sup> The rate of giving continued to rise as the university project became a reality. On the other hand, apportionments, as approved by the General Conference, from the global fund, constituted 85% of the ten million designated for the period 1989 to 1992.<sup>129</sup> This situation emphasises the role of the Americans in the financing of the university.

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<sup>125</sup> “US Diplomat Dell has a Short Memory,” *The Herald*, 6 November 2005. A few months before Dell had been arrested for trespassing when he strayed into a restricted area near State House as he strolled in the Botanical gardens in Harare. The arrest created some embarrassment for the Zimbabwe government and officials claimed that the security men who had arrested him had not been aware that he is an Ambassador.

<sup>126</sup> *Africa University Prospectus 2003 – 2005*, p. 19f. See also “Korean Gift to Africa University.” Plenary Proceedings.

<sup>127</sup> *Africa University Progress Report and Plan of Development, 1992*, pp. 65–70.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.

Nevertheless, the institution also received donations from local sources. Student fees constituted 25% of the income budget for recurrent expenditure.<sup>130</sup>

The levels of awareness achieved through the publicity and fundraising campaigns in the US surpassed similar efforts in Africa. The main advantage in America was the availability of information and communication technology even in remote places. Furthermore, the church appointed an American professional fundraising firm to work at national level alongside the church's own fundraising structures.<sup>131</sup> The author had the opportunity to visit and interact with members at two small rural churches under the New York Annual Conference. There was evidence of awareness about AU among the members as was the case in the much bigger urban churches. Some local church and Conference magazines had articles about AU, including fundraising adverts. By way of contrast, in Zimbabwe for example, some church members, even those in urban areas, lacked substantive knowledge about the university project. However, one should not lose sight of the fact that even with full information African contributions would still be low because of the lack of resources.

Other forms of support are from the Kellogg and Rockefeller Foundations as well as the United Nations Development Program.<sup>132</sup> The funds are controlled by the GBHEM and the GCFA on the basis of General Conference resolutions:

The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry shall be authorised to disburse funds for the development and operation of the Africa University and to release such funds to the Africa University Board of Directors or such other structural units as may be created for that purpose, *provided that* the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry shall be accountable for such funds to the General Council on Finance and Administration, and *provided further that* no such funds shall be released to any structural unit whose charter, by laws or other governing documents have not been approved by the

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<sup>130</sup> D.A. Ewers, "Africa University is Alive, Well and needed," *Colleague*, (Summer/Fall 2003).

<sup>131</sup> Minutes of the Executive Committee, Board of Higher Education and Ministry, The United Methodist Church, Nashville, 5 October 1989. GCAH: GBHEM, Records of Higher Education Division, 1953 -1993.

<sup>132</sup> "Africa University Dedicates Health Sciences Building," *UMNS*, 6 December 2004.

General Council on Finance and Administration as required by action of previous General Conferences.<sup>133</sup>

What is important to note here is that since most of the funding comes from the church in America this gives them more power and influence over the institution.

The make up of the inaugural Board of Directors and the various subcommittees clearly shows a high degree of external involvement. The Vice Chairperson and Treasurer of the Board, as well as the Associate Vice Chancellor for Institutional Development, are based in the US. This arrangement is meant to influence fundraising for the university. The Zimbabwean UMC has no significant authority over the institution as acknowledged by Bishop Christopher Jokomo that "Africa University is outside the direct jurisdiction of the Zimbabwe Annual Conference."<sup>134</sup> Nevertheless, as the local Conference it has the important supporting role in relations with the government.

In the University's operations there is a strong pan-African dimension. Although the Vice Chancellor is Zimbabwean, the first Chancellor was from Angola and his successor is from the Democratic Republic of Congo. The university is pan-African in its approach and this is consistent with the objectives of its founding:

As a Pan-African institution Africa University draws its students from all over Africa and, according to its agreement with the government of Zimbabwe, sixty per cent of the students must come from outside Zimbabwe. In the 1999/2001 academic year, enrolled students came from eighteen African countries and the staff came from thirteen countries of which ten were African.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> "Africa University Fund," Calendar item 1052-NonDis, Petition NO. 21114-FA-NonDis-O. Financial Administration Committee Report to the Plenary Session of the United Methodist General Conference, 26 April 1996. The Plenary session accepted the committee's recommendation with a vote of eight hundred and eighty one in favour and nineteen against. See also <http://www.gcah.org/GC96/PETS/CAL/INFO/c1052i.html> (Accessed 8 May 2005).

<sup>134</sup> Letter from Bishop Christopher Jokomo to Doreen Tilghman, 30 August 1994. GCAH: Africa-All Africa-Institutions: African University, Box: 2550-6-5:01. See also Bishop C. Jokomo to D. Tilghman, 30 November 1992, GCAH: All Africa-African University-Institutions, Box: 2530-2-1:06.

<sup>135</sup> "Message from the Vice Chancellor," *Africa University Prospectus 2000 – 2002*, (Mutare: Africa University Press, 2000), p. iii.



In reality, the university has not been able to meet the 60% quota. According to demographics for the 2003/2004 academic year, non-Zimbabwean students only constituted twenty two percent of the total enrolment.<sup>136</sup> Yet, the university had done better on another front with a female enrolment of 609 to 673 males. This is in contrast to gender balance factor which in some institutions is a contentious issue.<sup>137</sup> Nevertheless, the continental nature is evident in the number of African countries represented on the student body. There were only two students from outside Africa one each from Brazil and Portugal. While some African countries were represented by not more than ten students, four were represented by significant numbers: The Democratic Republic of Congo had the highest number of eighty four, followed by Angola with fifty six, then Mozambique with fifty three. Burundi and Malawi both had fourteen while Malawi had eleven. The two countries with the highest numbers happened to be where the first Chancellor of the University and his successor respectively, came from. Emilio der Carvalho was succeeded by Ntanda Nkulu Ntambo of the DRC in 2004.<sup>138</sup> The influence of the two in their respective countries might have stimulated student interest in AU.

Murapa attributes the failure to attract enough students to meet the 60% target to two factors, namely affordability and marketing.<sup>139</sup> Firstly, the university has to compete for students with government institutions which charge lower fees thus making them affordable to generally poor students.<sup>140</sup> Secondly, in some African countries there are serious limitations in communication such as poor or no effective postal systems and internet facilities which would be important tools through which the university would market itself. A third factor which Murapa does not mention is that universities have to earn their reputations over time. In the early stages there may be uncertainty on whether a graduate of the university would be marketable for

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<sup>136</sup> AU at a Glance, June 2004, Information Office Fact Sheet, Africa University, June 2004.

<sup>137</sup> Tsumani M. Nyajeka, "African Women and Education: Vision, Myth and Reality," in *The Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Center*, vol. 28, (Atlanta, 2001), pp. 79-101; Campbell, *Reclaiming Zimbabwe*, p. 61, notes the small but significant detail, with gender implications, that the first set of hostels, including the ones in the ladies' section, were designed for males. The architects only realised this after construction.

<sup>138</sup> "History," n.d., Information Office, Africa University, p. 2.

<sup>139</sup> Murapa, "Private Universities," pp. 85-6.

<sup>140</sup> Interview with D.K. Yemba.

employment. In this regard, "a university is best judged by the performance of its graduates and its intellectual contribution in the knowledge society. As the number of former students increases so will the goodwill."<sup>141</sup> Limitations on the number of foreign students who can be enrolled by the University are also caused by Zimbabwean immigration regulations. However, one of the University's marketing drives apart from also using diplomatic missions has been the use of Annual Conferences to reach prospective students.<sup>142</sup> Solusi also has claims to a continent catchment area. Most of its foreign students are from Botswana and South Africa.

It would be erroneous to suggest that churches with strong international ties are sleeping partners in the relationship. Such links stimulate creativity in the hearts and minds of African Christians. With reference to Jean-François Bayart,<sup>143</sup> Gifford notes that since "creativity is of the essence of extraversion [...]. Africans consciously turn links to their own ends and purposes."<sup>144</sup> J.D.Y. Peel refers to the transforming implications of this active engagement with external forces on African culture.<sup>145</sup> Gifford further argues that these links facilitate the flow of "ideas, status, power, structures and resources."<sup>146</sup> Nevertheless, Gifford's argument tends to generalise ignoring situations where there is counter-influence by some African churches on their external links. The combination of ideas and resources with their attendant structures imply the construction of centres of influence and power which may contest state hegemony. The forms which the links may take vary but for the purpose of this study two typologies can be identified. The first type is the strong link whereby the university will almost be operating like a multinational corporation.<sup>147</sup> AU perfectly fits into this category. Though situated in Zimbabwe and subject to the

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<sup>141</sup> Interview with J.W.Z. Kurewa.

<sup>142</sup> Murapa, "Private Universities," p. 86.

<sup>143</sup> Bayart, *The State in Africa*, pp. 74-5, 20-32, 196-201. Bayart discusses linkages of extraversion with resource mobilisation as a widespread political strategy by ruling elites in sub-Saharan Africa.

<sup>144</sup> Gifford, *African Christianity*, p. 321.

<sup>145</sup> J.D.Y. Peel, "Poverty and Sacrifice in Nineteenth Century Yorubaland: A Critique of Iliffe's Thesis," *Journal of African History*, vol. 31, No. 3, (1990), pp. 482-3.

<sup>146</sup> Gifford, *African Christianity*, p. 308.

<sup>147</sup> See, Mazrui, *Political Values and the Educated Class in Africa*, pp. 285-319.

laws of the land and other contextual forces at play, the Zimbabwe Annual Conference has no significant influence on major issues on the university.

The second is the faint link type whereby the local university came into being as a result of efforts of the local church. Local churches in this category are viewed as enjoying ecclesiastical autonomy, running their own affairs without necessary reference to the former "mother" churches, although they maintain contacts. The GZU and the SAMU fit into the faint link category. Both were described as grassroots initiatives. The CUZ fits into both categories. While the church has strong international ecclesiastical connections, the project was mooted as a Zimbabwean Catholic initiative, although still subject, to some extent, to papal encyclicals or policy documents such as the *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*. The Western counterparts are viewed as partners whose contributions can be called for in projects and programmes. In spite of their autonomous character, churches in the faint link category still rely on their Western partners for resources, especially financial, and they tend to guard jealously this relationship. However, evidence suggests that university projects in the faint link category were less success stories than the solid link ones.

With the foregoing in mind, church-related universities in Zimbabwe, whether locally driven or international, were initiatives undertaken with substantial funding from the West in mind. Reference has already been made to the strategy of co-opting high profile political figures to use their influence and connections in fundraising locally and abroad, in addition to other roles. The Catholics appeared to have been an exception as they did not appear to regard America as a particular source for funding. They received funding from the Italian Bishops' Conference who further pledged further support for three years.<sup>148</sup> Of interest is the fact that even those churches which did not have traditional relations with America tried to open new horizons. For example, when the MCZ failed to get a favourable response from their traditional British partners, they unsuccessfully tried to turn to America.<sup>149</sup> In 1996, the

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<sup>148</sup> Maunde, "Evolution of Higher Education in Zimbabwe," p. 200.

<sup>149</sup> Minutes of the Select SAMU Fundraising Committee, 8 July 1999, SAMU Files, MCA, Harare.

Reformed Church's Moderator, Chomutiri addressed a group of donors who had shown interest in the university project, but there was little response.<sup>150</sup> Sometimes efforts to tap the American sources created misunderstanding, as was the case with Kenya Methodist Church which was accused of confusing potential donors meant for AU.<sup>151</sup> Kenya Methodist was a traditional partner of the British Methodist Church but they entered into a covenant relationship with GBGM. Through the goodwill of their Presiding Bishop, Lawi Imathiu, they were able to take advantage of contacts in the US for fundraising purposes.

Churches in Zimbabwe took their strategic partnerships with overseas counterparts so seriously that they guarded these relationships jealously. When Dumiso Dabengwa as the Minister of Home Affairs announced through *The Chronicle* of 25 July 1994, that there would be changes in immigration regulations which would restrict the issuing of work permits to "missionaries who are a valuable asset to the country," there was an outcry, mainly from churches. An editorial in the same newspaper the following day charged that the minister's statement represented a "seriously defective view" of the contribution of missionaries and that the government would be "biting the hand that feeds it."<sup>152</sup> The editorial continued: "Right now missionaries are again at the forefront of providing higher education [...]. The money for building all these universities will come mostly from the respective churches' overseas headquarters through their representatives in the country, the missionaries." In their reaction, the Catholics argued that they were an international church.<sup>153</sup> The President of the SDA, Pastor R. Ndlovu, added that their new university would need foreign assistance in personnel and other forms.

## Conclusion

Thandeka Mkandawire points out that, useful approaches to Africanisation would be those which shun the extremes of globalisation on the one hand and nativism, on the

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<sup>150</sup> Interview with Chomutiri.

<sup>151</sup> D. Ewers, "Africa University Infrastructure Affected by Zimbabwe's Economic Strife," *UMNS*, 27 November 2002. Worldwide Faith News Archives, <http://www.wfn.org/2002/11/msg00252.html> (Accessed 11 November 2005).

<sup>152</sup> "Editorial," *The Chronicle*, 26 July 1994.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 27 July 1994.

other.<sup>154</sup> Africanisation of the university is not exclusion but an attempt to make the African voice heard and its potential taken seriously. The study of Africa has had some impact across the whole spectrum of disciplines in many parts of the world.<sup>155</sup> This impact is significant but Africa has been valued more as an object of study than for its potential to develop new paradigms of knowledge. Divisions already exist in the world of scholarship across disciplines on the concept of Africanisation and whether it should be embraced at all in the face of globalisation. Three major extremes can be identified: Firstly, the triumphalism of globalisation which celebrates itself as the latest stage in the history of human progress; secondly, the protective nationalist stance which regards globalisation as yet another and more intense form of encroachment by the dominant West on African communities; and thirdly, the middle position, which is not necessarily neutral, but sees positive elements in both.

While with reference to Zimbabwe it may be argued that externality is a common aspect of African Christianity, especially in initiatives for growth, it should be acknowledged that this is not the general trend on the continent. Without the phenomenon of healthy international links there would be no story to tell concerning the evolution of religious universities in Zimbabwe. On the other hand, in the discourse on Africanisation there is a recognition of structural flaws in the African churches' linkages with the external world. It is recognised that the healthy links which enabled the churches to promote or undertake religious-value-laden projects and programmes have come at a cost which in fact is a legacy of colonialism. That cost is the dominance of the West in ideas and ways of life as well as the increased general dependence of African churches.

Despite the faults of international networks, in terms of Western dominance on the African nature of the churches and their institutions, they also provided capacity for the same churches to transform themselves into means of growth. The links are so

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<sup>154</sup> Zeleza, "The Politics of Historical and Social Science Research in Africa," p. 23

<sup>155</sup> Robert H. Bates, V.Y. Mudimbe, and Jean O'Barr, *Africa and the Disciplines: The Contributions of Research in Africa to the Social Sciences and Humanities*, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago, 1993).



essential as to be inseparable from African Christianity's mission endeavours. The challenge lies in the ability of the churches in Africa to turn Western resource mobilisation and ideas into tools that would enable them to be more independent and creative. The church university is best suited for this task. It would be naïve to assume that efforts to Africanise were always futile. There is still need for a more sustained grounding of the African ethos. The strong international links, though an advantage, need to be balanced by a strong African ethos which goes beyond rhetoric. Churches and their institutions do not operate in a vacuum. The challenges facing other groups concerning Africanisation also impinge on them. This includes the struggles of African academics in the face of the pervasive dominance of the West. International linkages have been useful in the provision of resources but they have had a negative impact on church-related universities. The fact that Africans played important roles in the establishment of these institutions is not overlooked; neither is the failure of their visions to capture the root cause of the continent's persistent paradox of phenomenal Christian growth on one hand, with underdevelopment and dependency on the other.

## **Conclusion**

The introductory chapter identified motivations and agendas in the origins and development of church-related universities as the main focus of this thesis. The central research question demanded an interrogation of whether the emergence of church-related universities is a continuation or a shift from the traditional missionary strategies and how the contextual framework, with its religio-political dynamics, has contributed to this. With reference to the hypothesis, this study concludes that while there are traces of continuity with some missionary strategies, the emergence of church-related universities present a new paradigm of mission influenced by several factors that include different historical settings and their attendant theological, social and political dynamics.

The study set out to establish that the emergence of church-related universities brought to the fore a new dimension and locus of collaboration between churches and the government. The very consideration on whether or not churches could break into a new area and the extent to which the state could put in place regulatory mechanisms raises fundamental questions on attitudes and the nature of the relationship. The agendas of churches though multi-dimensional, form two core complementary elements, namely, the quest for both institutional and social visibility as a religious strategy and diversity as an innovation. While the establishment of church-related universities was significant, it raises further questions revolving around the nature of their contributions.

### **Visibility**

Mission as concern with human need is also about active involvement in public life. Churches as social institutions are responsive to new trends, demands or pressures in both their immediate or wider environment. The potent missionary legacy of mainline churches and increasing perceptions of churches as sources and promoters of social capital, have been catalysts in their compulsion for involvement in society, and innovativeness in identifying new vistas of mission. The social capital image of religion is based on principles that shape, reshape or inspire individuals and the society. Religions do not just provide services. Even when they are not seeking to

make converts their strategies are value-laden. Opting for universities rather than sticking to the traditional areas of primary and secondary education exposes an adjustment in emphasis from education for evangelism to education for influence, through the process of diffusion. The notion of university education as an alternative evangelistic mission strategy while not explicit in some cases, for example, Africa University cannot therefore be entirely ruled out.

Expectations derived from the reputation of churches as partners in development with the government served as both a form of pressure and a catalyst. It emboldened the religious bodies to enter new areas of social involvement. The increase in the public role of the churches through university projects strengthened their positions in relation to the government. Religion is important to the agenda of the state because of its perceived capacity to influence society and its links with international networks. Where the state may fail to access international resources in the face of shifting political alliances and international relations, churches may still obtain them. The competition by the different denominations betrayed this quest for visibility and even went beyond the scramble for social space to geopolitics where regionalism was enhanced.

While proponents of the neutralist theory may argue that the imposition of religious codes of conduct on campus is an infringement of academic freedom thereby implying that universities are not necessarily places of evangelism by their founding churches, the reality from this study is that where there is no explicit evangelistic thrust the institutions are still regarded as centres for Christian influence. What seems to matter for the churches is the influence they can wield in society through such institutions. Education has been an effective instrument to consolidate religious strategies. The major thrust of education as a strategy during the missionary era was mass evangelisation and as such universities were given low priority. In the post-independence era the role of primary and secondary education as strategies for mass evangelism was watered down. Mission schools became less dependent on their denominational authorities for resources and were required by the government to comply with non-discrimination regulations. The post-independence context, while

still placing a high premium on evangelisation, began to put more emphasis on visibility in the public sphere to promote social values. Education was no longer being used primarily to gain more converts but became associated with the battle for the minds. By entering university education churches were not fundamentally shifting from their traditional areas of mission but extending their agenda by including higher education to influence society with Christian values.

### **Diversity**

Churches presented their universities as alternatives to state universities which were officially secular and pluralistic, although in practice they were more amenable to Christian influences. The dominance of Christianity in Zimbabwe has always been taken for granted. Religious bodies have always had some interest in extending their influence to the university. While secular universities are in principle neutral and free of a particular religious ideology, in practice they do not necessarily promote or enable diverse religious activities on campus. Public space is not neutral even in the secular universities. This explains why in its fifty years of existence UZ has never had a non-Christian full time chaplain and its chapel is designed more as a church than as a neutral venue for all religions. Even public occasions such as graduation ceremonies are started with Christian prayers.

Church-related universities, although officially pluralistic, were dominated by their religious traditions and philosophies. Diversity of the different religious traditions not only complemented efforts of the government in higher education but also offered wider choices. A critical factor in the self-understanding of the churches was the assumption that they could have a positive moral impact on society through the universities. The church-related institutions were seen by their sponsors as established to address relevant needs of the continent through leadership development and cultivating responsible citizens. This was not an aspiration exclusive to the religious bodies but was shared by both the Zimbabwean and US governments as well as other international sponsors, albeit with different motives. Influence implies power, authority and control. In the context of religion it implies a transformation of the human condition that ultimately changes society. The influence of the religious institution is fostered through both implicit and explicit terms. The

focus on educating new leaders for nation and continent suggests a new dimension to development where graduates from church-affiliated universities use not only the knowledge but the Christian values gained in their education. The church-related university as a tool of development is not value-free as it seeks to spread its influence.

Important to the religious aspirations was the role of gatekeepers to sacredness and its attendant moral influence in society. The potential to fill a moral vacuum in society was an attractive proposition to the government, most of whose officials were educated at church schools and espoused moral principles imparted by missionaries and greatly influenced by Western traditions. Although there were initial reservations on the role of religion in university education those in government still believed that it could have a positive moral influence to reverse social decadence. The university was, therefore, a very strategic place to locate this moral crusade given the growing culture of student activism which was generally perceived negatively in ruling circles. The government's perceptions of morality or *hunhu/ubuntu* (integrity) went beyond behaviour deemed to be good and consistent with societal norms, and included maintenance of social order and non-aggression towards it. This was important for the government given the rise in the tide of anti-government sentiments. While religious universities appeared to present a stabilising image in negative student culture through their campus codes of conduct, they did not effectively neutralise student activism.

### **Social and political impact**

The engagement of religion with politics is at two levels namely, the government as a collective body and individuals or clusters of politicians. In this regard the relationship between religion and the state is not one of distinct separation as is the case in many Western contexts. Models of the separation of church and state in Africa, whose formulation can be traced back to colonial and missionary constructions, were superficial as they were derived from a Western framework. The two levels of government as a collective body on the one hand, and individual or clusters of politicians on the other presented hurdles or bottlenecks to churches aspiring to establish university projects. The somewhat bifurcated approach of



political figures had the interests of government on the one hand and their own personal or regional agendas, on the other. In the interest of their personal and regional agendas politicians regarded themselves as insiders to churches even when they were no longer active members. Religious groups on their part sought to exploit this phenomenon and voluntarily tolerated political patronage.

Religious universities by their affinity to churches offered a renewal of the philosophy of responsible citizenship. Their social impact, particularly on students, was, however, mild because of their small enrolments and in the case of AU, its international student mix. The economic contribution is evident in the participation of churches by complementing the efforts of government. Politically, the emergence of the church universities was a challenge to government hegemony. Of importance was the relationship between churches and political figures. These relationships strengthened alliances between churches and politicians along regional and denominational lines. The role of politicians was seen as critical in the church projects. Projects that were not supported by political figures failed while those with weak international links were vulnerable as they were open to political interference. Politicians were keen to support initiatives for universities as strategies to raise their personal profiles and as champions of development. They also became willing instruments in the denominational competition for space in higher education.

The liberalisation of the university sector in Zimbabwe brought with it diversification and was complementary to government efforts. At the same time, it meant that the government indirectly assented to the role of international networks under-girding religious aspirations in nation building. Even with state regulatory instruments in place, the notion of privatisation as an ingredient of globalisation undermines the state's hegemony. In almost the same way, internationally supported churches and universities under their auspices are subject to external influences which affect their autonomy. The agenda of the university as an institution of higher learning is a shared one among diverse parties with entrenched interests in the institution as an arm of the church.

The central role of the modern university in the knowledge economy and the market ideology has been popularised, but it has been understood or interpreted too narrowly. Through the commodification of knowledge and treating the university as a market place the function of the university in knowledge generation has been affected as business interests and decisions concerned with sustainability take precedence over intellectual pursuits which may be deemed non-profitable in monetary terms. The weakening government economies, not only in Zimbabwe but on the continent as a whole, present the challenge of sustainability in the long run. The relationship between churches and their universities can only remain strong so long as the former maintains its role of facilitating or influencing funding decisions. This position is not guaranteed. The church's influence may as a result eventually be weakened. Since the church-related universities were not created for the purpose of directly enthusing those under their care with Christian teachings, this will create a void. The religious thrust manifesting itself in the critical mass will lead to dilution by the secular language of progress. The church will eventually be a stranger in its own institution. Such a development may be compounded by dependence on Western resources and knowledge systems now appearing as important ingredients of globalisation and its language.

While this scenario is applicable to the Zimbabwean and other contexts, the situation such as in Nigeria where some indigenous Pentecostal churches are exclusively funded and run locally, presents a different dimension with serious implications on sources of influence and centres of power. This model of detachment from the West provides fertile ground for the development of endogenous knowledge systems which have the potential to serve as a countervailing influence in Africa's epistemological links with the rest of the world.

### **An African epistemology?**

The proposition that the emergence of church-related universities brought about diversity is not without a caveat. Apart from the identity of being private and religious, their models are fundamentally similar to the public ones. As such they do not pretend to offer a radically new paradigm in knowledge production which

seriously takes into account African knowledge systems or the uniqueness of the African context. Efforts made in curriculum formulation are yet to go deeper in epistemological engagement.

The shift in Christianity's centre of gravity to the south has not been matched by a sustained reconstructive discourse promoting authentic African Christian epistemologies. One of the most valuable lessons in the phenomenal growth of Christianity on the African continent has been the development of unique religious expressions which have engaged the African context as evidenced by the African Initiated Churches. The theological assumptions which were influential in the evolution of the religious universities were not contextually derived to interrogate the implications of such institutions on the African continent or even to offer a new model unique to the continent. This created a flaw where preoccupation with development aspects overshadowed concern with the nature of intellectual engagement. During the colonial period, forms of education, especially those under religious institutions, were an effective instrument in the introduction and consolidation of Western systems of thought and lifestyles. Can the modern religious university spearhead engagement in this discourse?

There is congruence involving the government, religious bodies and the church-related universities on the role of the university in social and economic development. Yet their preoccupation with pragmatic approaches to address development issues has created a vacuum in that the ideological or theoretical base of this form of pragmatism has a strong Western bias. There is a clear disjuncture between the forms of knowledge and the structure of the universities. The disjuncture lies in that while the prevailing knowledge systems resonate with existing organisational structures there is no evidence to suggest a consistent interest in African modes of idealism as the basis of their pragmatism. The failure to address these epistemological issues means that church-related universities, save for their religious connections, are yet to offer new paradigms of knowledge and therefore only serve as agents or mere cogs in the wheel of globalisation rather than important players. Idealism developed within an African endogenous framework would give the process of diffusion a new

impetus and dimension. The intellectual role of religious universities would be enhanced as they become important facilitators in the quest of mainline churches to address core theological challenges within their context and to intensify further the development of endogenous knowledge systems at the theoretical level.

It is beyond the scope of this study to examine what an African epistemology in the universities would constitute or whether the notion is a feasible one at all. While there has been some debate on the deconstruction of Western epistemologies, further study on the discourse of reconstruction and the role of the emerging religious universities in the African context is needed. Such a study would require an in-depth analysis of curriculum structure and attendant varieties of philosophical foundations.

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