TOWARDS A THEOLOGICAL SYNTHESIS OF CHRISTIAN AND SHONA VIEWS OF DEATH AND THE DEAD: IMPLICATIONS FOR PASTORAL CARE IN THE ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF HARARE, ZIMBABWE.

by

WILSON T. SITSHEBO

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Arts
of the University of Birmingham
for the degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Theology
Faculty of Arts
The University of Birmingham
August 2000

UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

University of Birmingham Research Archive

e-theses repository

This unpublished thesis/dissertation is copyright of the author and/or third parties. The intellectual property rights of the author or third parties in respect of this work are as defined by The Copyright Designs and Patents Act 1988 or as modified by any successor legislation.

Any use made of information contained in this thesis/dissertation must be in accordance with that legislation and must be properly acknowledged. Further distribution or reproduction in any format is prohibited without the permission of the copyright holder.

ABSTRACT

In this contextual study I investigate why and how the traditional approach to mission, engaged by Anglican missionaries, gave rise to a dual observance of ritual among Shona Anglican Christians. I begin by establishing the significance and essence of Shona views of death and the dead, then investigate the missionaries' historical background. I highlight that Christian arrogance, in the guise of racial superiority, underlies the confrontational and condemnatory approach. Traditional views were considered evil, in their place, Shona converts were forced to adopt western Christian views as the only acceptable and valid way of coping with this eschatological reality. These views did not usually fit the Shona worldviews and religious outlook, hence the adoption of dual observance. For some, life continues to be classified as either Christian or traditional and never both. However, some present Shona Anglican practices reflect a desire to integrate the two. Unless there is this integration, the Church remains other and irrelevant to the Shona people.

The ultimate aim of this thesis is to advocate for a theological synthesis of Christian and Shona traditional views. I argue that such a synthesis, patterned on the interactive dialogical model, could lead to the cessation of confrontation and condemnation and its attendant dual observance, and enhance the development of a Shona Christian theology of death and the dead which provides for relevant and sensitive pastoral care.

DEDICATION

To Chipo Siphiwe, my comrade, friend and wife

And

Our children, Simbarashe, Phillip and Nonceba

Ivy and the whole extended family.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study would not have been possible if it were not for the support and encouragement of colleagues, family and friends. In my vernacular Ndebele, I say to you all, '*ngiyabonga lakusasa lingadinwa,*' (Thank you very much, when I approach you again tomorrow, do not turn me down).

On the financial front, I am grateful to the St. Augustine's Foundation for their generous contribution towards my fees. I also thank USPG my employers, and TZABA along with all who contributed financially towards this study.

I thank Amanda Davies for the technical support that she gave me. She was always available to advise me when I had difficulties with my computer and actually typed one of the chapters. My wife, Chipo Siphiwe, also spent long hours on the computer typing this dissertation. I am indebted to Lynn Jacob for helping me with proof reading, and to all those who assisted me in any other way.

I also acknowledge with gratitude all my informants who volunteered information and insights which helped to shape this study. I apologise to those informants who felt uncomfortable with the interviews and also confess that there were times when I felt as if I was milking a stone for information.

Many thanks go to Prof. John K. Parratt, my supervisor, for the way he challenged and

guided me through this study. He inspired me through his constructive criticism, and his knowledge of African Theology helped me to keep my enthusiasm.

Finally, I express sincere gratitude to my wife and children for the support they have given me and for the space to go to my office in early mornings, evenings, weekends and vacations to work on this thesis. This enabled me to fit the research into my busy schedule, as Acting Principal of the United College of the Ascension, with relative ease.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dedication		i
Acknowledgements		ii
Glossary		x
Map of Anglican dioceses		xii
INTRODUCTION		1
1.	**Preamble**	1
2.	**Statement of problem**	1
3.	**Purpose of the investigation**	5
4.	**The Shona people**	8
5.	**Research methodology**	8
6.	**The structure of the thesis**	14
CHAPTER ONE	**SHONA TRADITIONAL RELIGIOUS VIEWS**	16
1.1	**Introduction**	16
1.2	**Shona (African) world views**	19
	1.2.1 The Shona people	19
	1.2.2 The world-view	22
	1.2.3 Relationships of the inhabitants	24
1.3	**Understanding humanity**	25
1.4	**Views of death**	29
	1.4.1 Death as a phenomenon	30
	1.4.2 The burial	35
	1.4.3 Ceremonies immediately after burial	47
	1.4.4 The tool cleansing rite	50
1.5	**Views on the dead**	53
	1.5.2 Kurova guva	55
	1.5.2a Relationship between the living and the dead	65

1.5.2b Significance of the relationship between the living and the dead 66

1.5.3 Family membership of the dead 68

1.6 Conclusion 70

CHAPTER TWO THE MISSIONARY ERA 73

2.1 Introduction 73

2.2 Historical setting 74

2.3 Missionary approaches 78

2.3.1 The village visits 85

2.3.2 Mission stations 88

2.4 Missionary teaching 94

2.4.1 Burial practices 98

2.4.2 Church literature on burial 102

2.5 Winding up the missionary era 105

2.6 Conclusion 107

CHAPTER THREE SHONA RESPONSES TO CHRISTIANITY 110

3.1 Introduction 110

3.2 Anthropological responses 111

3.2.1 Demand for labour 112

3.2.2 The hut tax 115

3.2.3 Religion and world views 118

3.2.4 Response options 122

3.3 Responses to Christianity 125

3.3.1 Early responses 129

3.3.2 Adaptive responses 132

3.3.2.1 The economic factor 132

3.3.2.2 Education 135

3.3.2.3 The Bible 138
3.3.2.4 Denominationalism 141
3.3.2.5 Jesus Christ 143
3.3.3 Christianity and its Shona context 146
3.3.4 African Initiated Churches 150
3.4 Conclusion 154

CHAPTER FOUR CHRISTIANITY AND SHONA TRADITIONAL RELIGION IN DIALOGUE 156
4.1 Introduction 156
4.2 Present practices 158
4.2.1 Urban setting 159
4.2.2 Rural setting 166
4.2.3 The wake-keeping 168
4.2.4 The day of interment 173
4.2.5 Interment and its observances 175
4.2.6 Variations in observances 178
4.3 Textual analysis 183
4.3.1 Hymns 184
4.3.1.1 God 185
4.3.1.2 Jesus Christ 189
4.3.1.3 The Holy Spirit 191
4.3.1.4 Death 192
4.3.1.5 The dead 194
4.3.2 Choruses 196
4.3.3 Prayers 198
4.3.5 Bible readings 203
4.4 The Dialogue 204
4.5 Kurova guva 209

4.6 Conclusion 210

CHAPTER FIVE TOWARDS A THEOLOGICAL SYNTHESIS 212
5.1 Introduction 212
5.2 Methodological considerations 214
5.2.1 Missionary approaches 214
5.2.2 Missionary and colonial collaboration 218
5.2.3 African Theology 222
5.3 Contextual considerations 225
5.3.1 Social changes 232
5.3.2 Culture and theology 234
5.3.3 A theological understanding of culture 239
5.4 The bible and its translation 242
5.4.1 Biblical hermeneutic 243
5.4.2 A theological hermeneutic 247
5.5 Towards a theological synthesis 251
5.6 The need for a theological model 254
5.6.1 The interactive dialogical model 258
5.6.2 Assumptions of the interactive dialogical model 262
5.6.3 A critique of the interactive dialogical model 267

CHAPTER SIX IMPLICATIONS OF ENGAGING THE INTERACTIVE DIALOGICAL MODEL 276
6.1 Introduction 276
6.2 The Zimbabwe social setting 277
6.3 Theological insights 279
6.4 Application of the model 286
6.5 Present patterns of Anglican theology 288
6.5.1 Missionary or Official Anglicanism 289

	6.5.2 Folk Anglicanism	290
	6.5.3 The Sceptics	293
6.6	**Analysis of the Church's official approach**	297
6.7	**Towards an official contextual practice**	299
6.8	**Gospel and culture in relation to Shona traditions**	302
6.9	**Conclusion**	308
CHAPTER SEVEN	**IMPLICATIONS FOR PASTORAL CARE**	309
7.1	**Introduction**	309
7.2	**The relevance of the church**	312
7.3	**The bible and Shona traditions of death and the dead**	317
	7.3.1 Contextual reading of the bible	320
	7.3.2 Contextual relevance of the bible	324
	7.3.3 Understanding pastoral care	328
7.4	**Shona views of death and pastoral care**	333
7.5	**Shona views on the dead and pastoral care**	335
7.6	**The quest for relevant pastoral care**	340
	7.61 Varying positions	341
	7.6.2 Symbolism and rituals	346
	7.6.3 Dealing with dual observance	349
7.7	**Implications for pastoral care**	351
7.8	**Conclusion**	356
CHAPTER EIGHT	**CONCLUSION**	358
8.1	**The communal nature of Shona life**	358
8.2	**Confrontation and condemnation**	360
8.3	**Christian and Shona traditional views**	363
8.4	**Towards a synthesis**	367

8.5 The way forward 372

APPENDICES 378

BIBLIOGRAPHY 448

GLOSSARY OF SHONA WORDS

baba : father

chiKaranga : speech, customs, manner of life of the vaKaranga people

chimutsamapfihwa : substitute wife given to widower to replace wife who has died

chirikadzi : widow

chirongo : earthenware pot for carrying and storing drinking water

dariro : circle of people (especially in dance). Playground

deuka : spill

doro remvura : beer for the ceremonial washing of the tools used at burial

enda : go

famba zvakanaka : travel very well

fuko : garment for dead person

gadzira : repair or tame

gara nhaka : inherit a widow

gonye : maggot

hari : general name for earthenware pot

hatikude : we do not like you

kanganwa : forget

kubata maoko : offering sympathy in bereavement

kudarika uta : ritual to test widow's fidelity, done at kurova guva

kudzora munhu : with reference to death, it is to control the dying person's posture

kurova guva : ceremony of calling home the spirit of the deceased

kurwa : to fight

kusuka nhumbi : washing the tools; see doro remvura, above

kusuma : represent, report to higher authority. Make preliminary remarks

mabasa : works

matambudziko : affliction, suffering, tribulation

mbudzi : goat

mhandu : hostile person

mhondoro : guardian spirits

mombe yenheedzo : beast slaughtered to accompany the deceased

mubatanidzwa : Inter-denominational fellowship

mudzimu : ancestor

mukombe : ladle

mumvuri : shade of dead person who dies grieved; Shadow

munhu : person; someone who observes traditions

mupfuti : *brachystegia boehmii tree*

musha mutema : literally, the home is black; people are still in mourning

mutupo : clan name

muvengi : one who hates

muviri : body

muzeze : small tree: *peltophorum Africanum*

muzukuru : grandchild, nephew, niece

mweya : soul or spirit

n'anga : traditional healer

nema : abuse jokingly

ngozi : revenge afflicted by an aggrieved spirit

nhamo : bereavement

nhanzva : shrub: *pouzolzia hypoleuca*.

nhoroondo : narration

nhorwa : strangers

nyama : meat or flesh

nzira : path or way

ora : rot

pera : come to an end

rara : sleep

riga mazembe : knock down the wall of silence and disclose the cause of death

sadza : stiff porridge

sahwira : ritual friend

shaya : die

shavi : spirit (patronal, as opposed to family or tribal), that takes possession of its human host

shungu : emotional upset

shura : bad omen

tiva : immerse body in water

tsika : Custom or good manners

vana : children

vapenyu : the living

varikumhepo : those in the winds

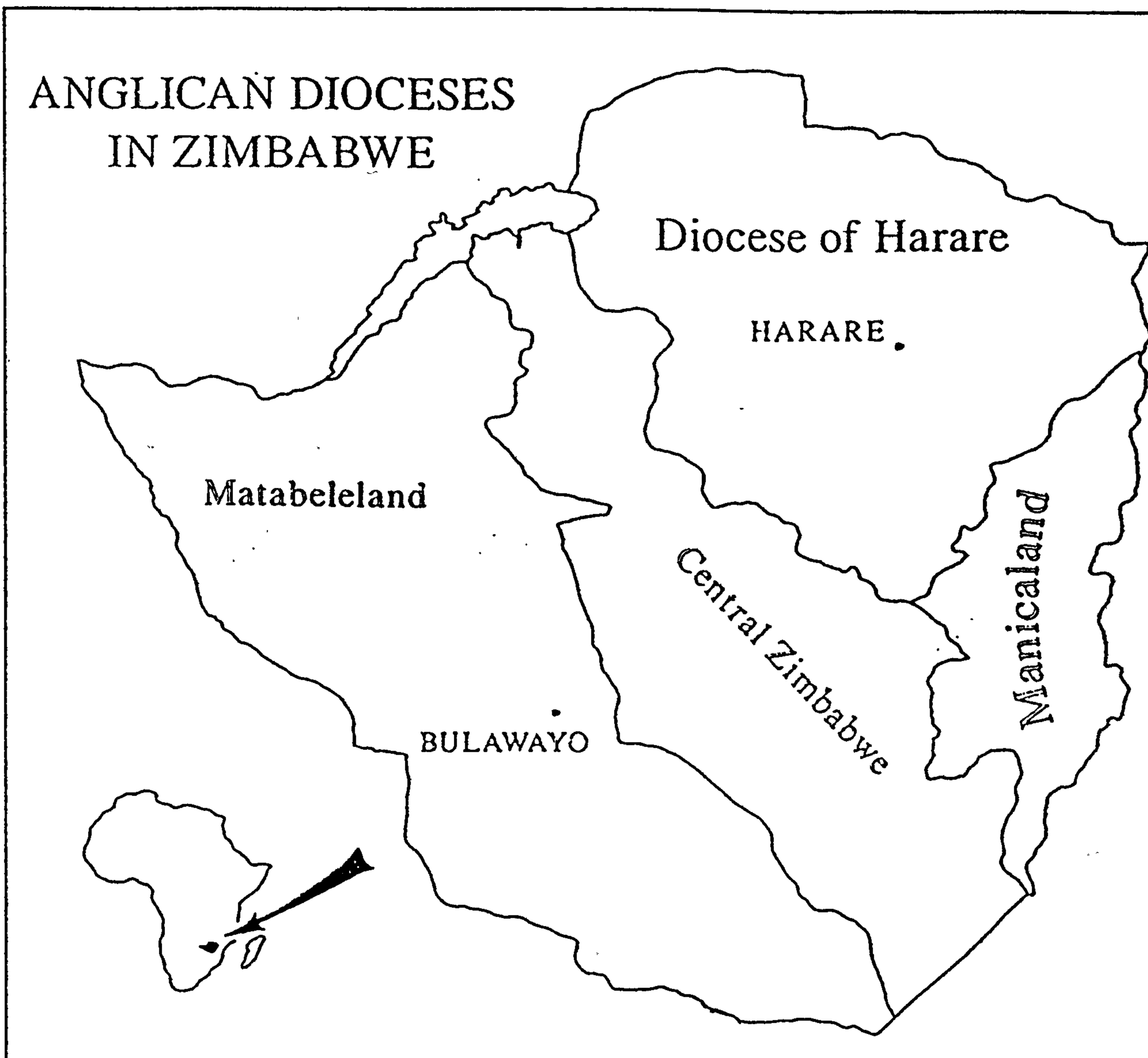
varipasi : the dead; this word is also used to intimately refer to the ancestors, illustrating their link with the land.

viga : bury person

zorora murugare : rest in peace

zumbani : *lippia javanica*, plant

THE ANGLICAN DIOCESES OF ZIMBABWE



INTRODUCTION

1 PREAMBLE

In this introduction a synopsis of the problem underlying this research project will be presented. After this, a justification for the study will be offered. Since this is a contextual, theological study which deals with a particular tribal group, the Shona people, we shall account for why they have been chosen. Following that, we shall outline the methodology adopted for the research. To conclude this introduction, I set out the structure of the thesis.

2 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Christian missionaries to sub-Saharan Africa tended to despise the indigenous cultures of their host communities. They often regarded them as barbaric and uncivilized.[1] The traditional approach to mission usually involved complete rejection and negation of traditional cultures and religious beliefs and practices.[2] As a result, the form of Christianity that was established

---

[1] William Peaden, a Methodist missionary in Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia) acknowledges the failure of missionaries to respond to Shona culture. He says, "the missionaries working in Rhodesia were children of their time. They lived in a period before the scientific study of anthropology had revealed the significance and logical coherence of the Shona culture. There is a tendency to despise what is unknown or not understood." W. R. Peaden, Missionary Attitudes to Shona Culture, Salisbury: The Central African Historical Association, 1970, p.41.

[2] Baeta, writing from a Tropical African perspective, echoes this by noting that, "these problems arose from the points of sharpest conflict between Christianity as it has been preached and the traditional way of life: polygyny, ancestor worship or veneration, religious therapy, forms of worship involving

in sub-Saharan Africa was basically Western in cultural outlook.

Anglican missionaries who came to Mashonaland[3] in 1891 were not different. It is necessary to note that in this study we are dealing only with the Shona among the peoples of present day Zimbabwe. With determination and zeal, the Anglican missionaries sought to destroy Shona culture and replace it with their own. Because they did not understand Shona culture, they were not prepared to grant it any credit, but they saw it as a live demonstration of the enslaving presence of the devil.[4] They condemned and confronted it without compromise. This became the official attitude of the Church towards Shona culture, an attitude which persists in spite of the fact that we now have indigenous Shona Christian leadership.

This negative approach to Shona cultures, coupled with the historical realities which surround the establishment of the Anglican Church in Zimbabwe, are the basic sources of the problems behind this study. Historically, the Anglican Church (hereafter referred to as the Church) came into Zimbabwe as part of the settler, Pioneer Column.[5] Three of its clergy were chaplains to this settler group; one of them was in fact the senior

---

drumming and dancing and other activities emphasizing physical self-expression." C.G.Baeta, Christianity in Tropical Africa, London: OUP, 1968, p.141.

[3] See map of Zimbabwe, Appendix 20, p.446.

[4] In 1891 Canon Francis Balfour saw the country as "steeped in witchcraft and the grossest forms of paganism." St J.T. Evans, The Church in Southern Rhodesia, London: SPCK, 1945, p.12.

[5] E.A.Walker, A History of Southern Africa, London, New York, Toronto: Longmans, Green and Co., 1957, p.420. He discloses that after the Pioneers found Salisbury they were disbanded.

chaplain.[6] The arrival and settlement of the Pioneer Column had a great impact on the lives of the Shona people. They lost their land and their freedom. The settler community displaced them from their ancestral land on the pretext that the British South Africa Company had granted them the right.[7]

Through false pretences the settler community evicted the Shona people from their own land, and forced them to be labourers to the various settlers. As if that was not enough, they were also forced to pay a hut tax. Shona people resolved to confront this concerted effort by the settlers, including the church, to strip them of their identity and personhood.[8] Their general resistence to this trend of events culminated in the uprisings of 1896/7, which Terrence Ranger dubs a war between two religious systems.[9]

On the religious front, the condemnation of Shona religious beliefs as evil and superstitious continued. The major area of conflict was that of death and the dead. With determination and resolve the Shona people held on to their views throughout the

---

[6] C.J.M. Zvobgo, A History of Christian Missions in Zimbabwe 1890-1939, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1996, p.3. Kendall sees this as a missionary weakness. He says, "the first weakness was that the European missionaries were palpably in association with the overseas administrators, and were part of the whole European invasion of Africa. Often the chaplains at the forts or at the governor's administrative centre were the agents of mission." E. Kendall, The End of an Era: Africa and the Missionary, London: SPCK, 1978, p.53.

[7] E.W.Smith, The Way of the White Fields in Rhodesia, London: World Dominion Press, 1928, p.38. He notes that "...all this, in spite of the fact that Lobengula had granted no land rights, nor any power to make laws in any part of his territory and dependencies."

[8] See Chapter three under 'Anthropological Responses', p.111, below.

[9] T.O.Ranger, The African Voice in Southern Rhodesia 1898-1930, Nairobi. London. Ibadan: East Africa Publishing House, 1972, p.2. A full discussion is given under the title, 'Responses to Christianity' in Chapter three, p.125, below.

turbulent times. In the process dual observance[10] was being firmly entrenched in African Shona Christianity. Some of the writer's informants demonstrate how deep-seated this dual observance has become; they do not see any chance for Christianity and Shona traditional views to be openly integrated.[11]

With the advent of local indigenous Christian leadership, it might have been anticipated that missionary Christianity would give way to Shona Christianity, that is, condemnation and confrontation of Shona views should have ceased, and better, more sensitive methods adopted. Unfortunately, this did not happen. Dual observance prevails, and most Shona people continue to see life simultaneously on both Christian and Shona traditional lines. Usually Christianity is adopted as the religion of respectability, practised when all is well, but when confronted by the harsh realities of life, people turn to Shona Traditional Religion.[12] At the same time there are some people for whom Christianity is the sole religious belief, just as there are some for whom Shona Traditional Religion is the religion. The problem is where the two religious belief systems co-exist in a duality; that is, when they are practised alternately. That results from the effects of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century condemnatory and confrontational missionary and colonial mentality of the church which has persisted after independence. It reveals a lack of mutual dialogue between Christianity and

---

[10] Dual observance is the term I am giving to the problem of holding Christianity and Shona Traditional Religion as separate but meaningful religions, caused by the missionary approach.

[11] See interviews with Mr T. Mukwishu, p.407 and Mrs V. Mutandwa, p.414.

[12] See Preliminary Report of the Commission of Enquiry, p.429.

Shona Traditional Religion. This has implications for pastoral care in that it shows the Church as having failed to penetrate the Shona traditional views and thus not caring about the people who retain traditional views. Such a situation begs the question, 'what is the relevance of the Church in the Shona context?'

As an Anglican clergyman, I have been a participant observer at a number of funeral gatherings where people have freely integrated Christian and Shona views. At these gatherings, a wholesome theological understanding is displayed at grassroots Christian level. God is understood as the God of all, so prayers are said alongside traditional practices. But when one looks at such grassroots Christianity in the light of official clerical Christianity within the Anglican Diocese of Harare, there are variations in approach. It is these methods of approach which are the problem.

3 PURPOSE OF THE INVESTIGATION

This kind of research is necessary for the Church because traditional religion has a strong influence on both the attitudes and practices of its adherents. It is significant particularly in the light of the fact that "what people do ... is profoundly affected by what they think. What is happening in our heads determines our whole behaviour - morally, practically and politically."[13] Field work helps to enhance the understanding of peculiar Shona beliefs and practices which relate to death and the dead. In the Zimbabwean

---

[13] M. Cassidy, The Passing Summer, Ventura, California: Regal Books, 1990, p.460. See also chapter one p.16 where the same citation is used with slight modification.

context, this is particularly important because African Traditional Religion and Christianity co-exist as essential religions, with essential roles in the lives of their respective followers.

The Diocese of Harare, at its 1993 Synod aptly articulated this observation, when it agreed that:

> when one observes the daily lives and activities of some of our people and takes account of the rites or ceremonies connected with the various stages of their lives, one soon realises that a great deal of the normal communal activities lie outside their Christian activities and that for all their influences; the Christian Church is still an alien institution, intruding upon, but not integrated with the cultural institutions.[14]

But the manner in which it dealt with the stated problem does not seem to have been satisfactory, hence this study.

Both African Traditional Religion and Christianity, in their own right, offer communities and individuals symbolic structures for the understanding of life changes. The subject of death and the dead challenges every religion; it also exposes divergences between the official teaching of a religion and the beliefs and practices of individuals. This is well demonstrated by pluralists;[15] *those who at once hold to their old way of life and embrace the new faith, as opposed to the popular use wherein a pluralist would be someone who holds that all religions are valid.* The justification for this investigation lies in the

---

[14] See p.428

[15] We use this word in the sense in which Professor Bhebe uses it. N. Bhebe, Christianity and African Traditional Religion in Western Zimbabwe 1859-1923, London: Longman Group Ltd., 1979, p.115.

observation that, in spite of the fact that a number of main-line Christian denominations in Zimbabwe celebrated their centenaries this last decade, African Traditional Religion is still a force to reckon with even among church members, particularly in the area of death and the dead.

If African Traditional Religion was all superstition, as was suggested by early Christian missionaries, the hundred years of Christianity would have rendered it ineffective. To the contrary, the fact that people are prepared to hold simultaneously two different religious world views is an indication that somehow African Traditional Religion has something to offer, which the Christian faith and rituals seem not adequately to provide. It is partly because of these observations and partly because of a quest for an African theological identity, that an investigation by the wider African scholarly world becomes necessary.

The conviction of the church is that Christianity has something special to contribute to the religious outlook of the Shona people, a special revelation - Jesus Christ. So, the desire to root firmly Jesus into Shona culture, and the need to make him part of the people's lives is essential. This becomes an urgent need especially if we look at the official position of the Church in the light of present practices within popular Christianity.[16]

---

[16] In Chapter four we discuss the present practices in the light of popular (the common people's) and official (clerical) Christianity. Popular Christianity is the people's Christianity which freely integrates Christian and Shona traditional views of death and the dead in a practical way, while official Christianity is the Christianity that the Anglican Church, through its clergy and teaching, upholds as orthodox.

The Diocese of Harare has tried to address the problem without success, and there is need to investigate the reasons why this is so. I shall examine why the diocese saw dual observance as a problem, and seek to establish why, despite three attempts it failed to come up with an adequate solution. It is my submission that some of their theological methods need to be examined and modified for contextual relevance. The process of contextualization demands that the theological methods engaged should speak to their context.

4 THE SHONA PEOPLE

The Shona people are part of the Bantu[17] tribes, and have a lot in common with their fellow Bantu. They share similar belief systems and the supporting world views. The reason why I chose the Shona people is that they were the first tribe in Zimbabwe among whom the Anglican Church was established. Of the two tribal groups of Zimbabwe, that is, Ndebele and Shona, they were the more settled and established group, with a distinct civilization.[18]

4 · RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

---

[17] According to The Chambers Dictionary (new edition), 1998, Bantu is a "name given to a large group of African languages and the peoples speaking them in Southern and Central Africa."

[18] The whole of Chapter One is devoted to the Shona people. The Zimbabwe Central Statistical Office puts the present Shona and Ndebele groupings respectively at 71% and 16% of the population of twelve million people, 1995 Census.

I shall examine Christianity and Shona traditional religious views of death and the dead and seek to demonstrate how African theology can participate and help, not only in the conflict between Christianity and Shona Traditional Religion, but also in reconciling the conflict between the practice of the individual believers and the religious teaching of the church. This means that I seek to address the issue theologically, not only to help, but to let theology be the engine by which I seek a solution. I shall adopt the interactive dialogical model[19] for my theologising process in the belief that it helps to uphold the wholistic nature of life.

With that theological objective, the research methodology adopted for this study consists of two categories of research; one referring to approaches (or viewpoints), the other to tools to be used. The research itself is based on a twofold approach, an anthropological and a theological approach.

(1) The anthropological approach facilitates a full analysis of Shona views and beliefs regarding death and the dead, and their impact on individuals, families and society. (2) These findings will provide the material which will be evaluated from an African contextual theological standpoint. By introducing the concept "contextual" theology here I express the conviction that each theology is conditioned by the context in which it is developed or developing, that is, by the culture and world views and the socio-political setting of the people doing such theology. This conviction applies to European

---

[19] See Chapter five, p.258, for a description of this model.

(Western), as well as African theology. However, though all valid theology is contextual, not all theologians are conscious of their context.[20] As a consequence we have to admit that there is no ready-made theology which can be used as a fixed model for evaluating whether a certain praxis or understanding deserves the epithet "Christian". It is probably this observation which led MacQuarrie to state that, "there is no final theology".The basic source for Christian theology is the Biblical tradition, but culture and context form sources for developing a contextual theology. All this is said in the light of the fact that context shapes both comprehension and the interpretation of the Bible and theology.[21]

To achieve that theological goal, we engage two basic tools, namely, interviews and literature. I carried out two categories of interviews, formal and informal. I began to conduct some of these interviews in 1983 following the death of a close clergy friend,[22] and a considerable number were done during the Summer of 1999, when I was in Zimbabwe. In addition to the interviews, I also collected information through observation of, and direct participation in rituals. I was involved in numerous discussions on the subject of death and the dead with friends and acquaintances from whom I gained useful insights. It was not always easy to get information; at times it felt like milking a stone, so the question and answer format was used. This exercise made me realise how

---

[20] See what we said in the Preamble, p.1, for what this study is.

[21] F.J.Verstraelen, "The Christian Bible and African cultural religious realties", in I. Mukonyora (et al) Rewriting the Bible: the real issues, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1993, p.240.

[22] See the full account in Chapter four, under "The Wake-keeping", p.168.

reluctant some people are to talk about death.

Although no scholars have handled this subject in exactly the same way as this work is intended to, there is a good deal of literature on this area of study. This literature tends to treat the views of Shona (African) Traditional Religion and Christianity rather as irreconcilable. Perhaps it is because of this approach that the two religions have continued to develop separately, thus creating pluralists. There are a number of factors which could have contributed to this state of affairs, among them the cultural differences between the Christian missionary and the Shona (African) convert. These fundamental differences have shaped the understanding of death and the dead in a peculiar way. For example, in the eyes of the missionary, the convert tended to over-emphasize the role and significance of death and the dead, while to the convert the missionary under-emphasized the significance of this vital area of life. This is because the western understanding of death and the dead is different from that of the Shona (African).

Scholars have not sufficiently addressed this dual observance. Instead of allowing Shona views to be a formative factor of their theological formulation, the missionaries brought detached, worked out solutions. This undermined the total commitment of the African (Shona) convert to Christ. According to Professor Imasogie, this lack of commitment to Christianity could be problematic. It highlights both the methodological weaknesses and the lack of attention to divergences between Christian theology and

(Shona) African life,[23] which make them seem incompatible. Theology, however, should be linked to experience, though not limited to that experience. Dialogue is necessary. My basic contention is that Shona views are part of the context, and as such should be brought centre stage, so as to give content to the death rituals of Shona Christians.

Death itself is interpreted in different ways, and so are 'the dead'. In Christian theology there are diverse views of death, some positive and some negative. If we understand Christianity as the religion which regards the death of a certain man, Jesus Christ, as the most fundamental event in the history of salvation and the world, death is positive (cf. Rom. 6:4 and Col.1:22). It is seen as providing for new life. On the negative side death is seen as the wages of sin (Rom 5:12) and the enemy (1 Cor15: 26). This, however, contradicts the simple fact that nature dies.[24] Christianity also holds that death does not annihilate life, it is a part of the progression to the final goal. This suggests that the dead continue to exist somehow; this echoes 1Thessalonians 4:13 which implies that they are "asleep". Or, as Schwarz says, "God continues his relationship with us beyond biological death."[25] This tells us something about death and the dead from a Christian perspective, which is, that death is the irreversible cessation of active participation in our environment and yet somehow the dead continue to exist. It is this paradoxical understanding of death which we will investigate, with a view to

---

[23] O.Imasogie, Guidelines for Christian Theology in Africa, Worthing: African Christian Press, 1983, p.13.

[24] H.Schwarz, On the Way to the Future, Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing house, 1972, p.167.

[25] Ibid., p.176. See also Mk.12:27, "He is not the God of the dead, but of the living."

bringing it into a theological dialogue with Shona (African) Traditional Religion, in search of a possible theological synthesis.

Shona (African) Traditional Religion also presents death as paradoxical. It is considered unnatural, because "no one should die. Man should live for ever. Death is not natural. Even a very old person should never die and life is only removed by an offended *mudzimu*"[26] (ancestral spirit). A further paradox is that when an old man dies 'naturally', this will be seen as a fulfilment of life. On the other hand, the death of a young person cannot be seen as natural, but as there is no way of reversing death, this too has to be viewed as part of the rhythm of life, and thus natural.[27]

African traditional religion has some significant ideas on the celebration of death, which go a long way towards demonstrating how death and the dead are understood. K. A. Dickson in his book, Theology in Africa, accurately lists six such ideas; 1. that death is caused by evil, 2. that death does not end life, 3. that death does not sever the bond between the living and the dead, 4. that death is an occasion for seeking more life, 5. that death does not negate natural self-expression, and 6. that death affects the whole community.[28] As can be seen from the above, African Traditional Religion also believes

---

[26] J.J.Seymour, The Changing Trends of the Shona Family in Zimbabwe: How the Church can help, Harare: Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, 1990, p.19.

[27] J.S.Mbiti, New Testament Eschatology in an African Background, Oxford: OUP, 1971, p.29.

[28] K.A.Dickson, Theology in Africa, London: Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd, 1984, pp.192-5.

that "death means not annihilation but a departure to the spirit world."[29] There, the dead assume a different role which has some connection with the living, hence they become what Banana calls the 'living-timeless'.[30]

It is against such a background that we think a synthesis is possible. It should however be noted that such a synthesis is only possible if there is open interaction between both Shona (African) traditional religious and Christian understandings. The views and beliefs of both religions have to be adequately listened to. It may not be easy, but the effective communication of the gospel to Shona (African), or any other people, requires that the essentials of Christianity become an integral part of their culture and lives. In simple terms, this means that such people should be given room to wrestle freely with an understanding of Jesus Christ's death and resurrection. This could inform pastoral care and the formulation of relevant contextual theology, in dialogue with official Anglican Christianity.

6 THE STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

The thesis has seven chapters; the first six chapters deal with specific topics. Chapter one deals with the Shona people, analyses the essence of Shona (African) Traditional

---

[29] J.S.Mbiti, New Testament Eschatology in an African Background, Oxford: OUP, 1971, p.129. See also what Banana says about the death of a very old and senile person, C.S.Banana, Come and Share: An Introduction to Christian Theology, Uppsala: Swedish Institute of Missionary Research, 1991, p.81.

[30] C.S.Banana, Come and Share, p.81.

Religion and establishes the significance of their views of death and the dead. In chapter two I examine the background of the missionaries, and survey the changing attitudes and developments relating to death and the dead in the West which contributed to shaping their views. Most importantly, I examine their approach to the Shona people, and their teaching on death, and the effect this had on the emerging Church. Chapter three explores the Shona people's responses to both missionaries and settlers, and then concentrates on Shona responses to Christianity as a rival religion. These three chapters together discuss the historical and theological developments relating to the establishment of the Anglican Church among the Shona people.

In chapter four I examine the present practices of the Shona people in the light of official Anglican Church teaching with reference to death and the dead. I also analyse how Christian texts are making an impact on the Shona people. Among the texts that I look at are the Bible, songs and prayers. I also give attention to the way in which the Church has attempted to handle the problem of dual observance. In chapter five I offer insights that point towards a possible synthesis of Christian and Shona traditional views of death and the dead. I suggest the interactive dialogical model as a solution to the problem of dual observance. In chapter six I highlight some of the practical problems that my proposed model might encounter, at the same time offering a way forward. I discuss how this theological model addresses the problem of dual observance and provides for sensitive pastoral care. In chapter seven I bring the thesis to an end by offering wide ranging, concluding reflections.

CHAPTER ONE

SHONA TRADITIONAL RELIGIOUS VIEWS

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter we explore the views of Shona (Bantu) Traditional Religion under four headings, (1) World views (2) Understanding of humanity (3) Views of death and (4) Views on the dead. (1) and (2) provide the context for understanding the next two. We undertake this task fully understanding that Shona Traditional Religion, like any other religion, has a strong influence on both the attitudes and practices of its adherents, including some who have become Christians. As the Roman Catholic cleric Aylward Shorter observes, "traditional values and outlook continue to live on and exercise an influence among all sections of the population."[1] It should however be noted that not all people are affected by traditional values in exactly the same way, or to the same degree.

This is an obvious fact, particularly if we realize that "what people do ... is profoundly affected by what they think. What is happening in our heads determines our whole behaviour - morally, practically and politically *and even religiously.*"[2] Since Shona

---

[1] A. Shorter, African Christian Theology: Adaptation or Incarnation, London: Macmillan Publishers, 1975, p.2.

[2] M. Cassidy, The Passing Summer, Ventura, California: Regal Books, 1990, p.460. Italics are mine, to highlight the fact that in Shona anthropology, "understanding of community does not divide

(African) Traditional Religion is a living, organic religion, it is always with the people, at every moment of life, great or small. It permeates the whole social life of a traditional Shona (African); " it is the total traditional world view with all the values and beliefs."[3]

African Traditional Religion is ontological in both its nature and outlook. It permeates traditional being in its wholeness "vis-a-vis environment, attitude towards life, values and self awareness."[4] No wonder its influence goes beyond the grave. This is of significance because the Bantu believe that the community consists of the unborn, the living and the dead. Death is seen as a mere change of state and not an end. Placide Tempels rightly identifies this fact when he notes that "in the minds of the Bantu, the dead also live; but theirs is a diminished life, with reduced vital energy."[5] This applies to those for whom rituals have not yet been done, but when appropriate rituals have been done, the dead have enhanced powers to bless and curse.

I describe Shona religion as traditional because it (a) is passed on, (b) has shaped, and

---

reality into "secular" and "religious"; it is all one community. Everything revolves around it; and outside the community is mere emptiness. God is the source of life, and the community draws its existence from God." S. Bakare, The Drumbeat of Life, Geneva: WCC Publication, 1997, p.14. Mbiti states the same thought thus, "Africans are notoriously religious." J.S. Mbiti, Introduction to African Religion, Oxford, 1975, p.30; also African Religions and Philosophy, Oxford: Heinemann, 1990, p.1.

[3] R.J. Gehman, African Traditional Religion, Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers Ltd, 1989, p.18.

[4] Judith M. Bahemuka," The hidden Christ in African Traditional Religion," in J.N.K. Mugambi & Laurenti Magesa, (eds) Jesus in African Christianity: Experimentation and diversity in African Christology, Nairobi: Initiatives Publishers, 1986, p.2.

[5] P.Tempels, Bantu Philosophy, Paris: Presence Africaine, 1959, p.43.

been shaped by society down the ages and (c) is communally owned.[6] This makes it the indigenous or aboriginal foundational religion of the Shona people which is practised as the religion of the forebears; used and practised by the people of today.[7] As we have already noted, the Shona (African) people understand community as drawing its life from God. So being born into a Shona community means that, as with most other African communities:

> a child grows into adulthood not only physically but also socially and religiously. Therefore rites and ceremonies are performed to mark the passage of a child from one stage of growth to another.[8]

As a practical religion, it is best understood in concrete terms, as lived out and practised by the people themselves. People's practical participation in life gives their religion its content. It is people-centred, hence Mbiti aptly describes African religion as "anthropocentric."[9] What this means is that traditional Shona (African) religious conceptions have a human-centred character, rather than being centred on the Creator.[10] This conception of God is the common thread which runs through the religion(s) of the sub-continent, uniting them into a structured or distinctive religion.

---

[6] See interviews with Mrs V. Mutandwa p.414 and Mr.T. Mukwishu p.407 in response to the question, 'How did you learn the Shona traditions?' They both highlight this communal ownership.

[7] See interviews with Mr. Munhikwi, p.411, Mr. R. Chenzira p.378 and the Rev'd G.Dete p.387.

[8] R.J. Gehman, African Traditional Religion, Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers Ltd, p.52.

[9] J.S. Mbiti, African Religions and Philosophy, Oxford: Heinemann, 1990, p.90.

[10] C.G. Baeta, Christianity in Tropical Africa, London: O.U.P., 1969, p.229. Baeta adds "the spirits and the ancestors, the energies inherent in nature, whether beneficent or malevolent, and even God Himself, are thought of in terms of whether they can do good or harm to human beings." p.229.

This frees us to draw on the work of scholars of African Traditional Religion anywhere in the sub-continent.[11] Clearly, Shona Traditional Religion provides beliefs and concepts which help people to cope with life changes as well as make sense of the world. Let us now consider how it does so by looking at selected topics, starting with world views.

1.2 SHONA (AFRICAN) WORLD VIEWS

Zimbabwe is roughly divided into two major language groupings, Shona and Ndebele. These groupings account for seventy-one and sixteen per cent of the Zimbabwean population of about twelve million, respectively.[12] The Ndebele occupy part of the Southern half of Zimbabwe, called Matabeleland, while the Shona occupy the remainder. The Shona grouping is substantially larger than the Ndebele one. The Anglican Diocese of Harare, on which we shall concentrate, is predominantly Shona.

1.2.1 The Shona people

The Shona are part of the Bantu tribes of Southern Africa. Of the two Zimbabwean tribal groups, they were the more settled people, who practised agriculture and pastoralism.[13]

---

[11] E.B.Idowu, African Traditional Religion, London: SCM Press Ltd, 1973, p.103.

[12] Zimbabwe Central Statistics, 1995 Census, see p.8 above.

[13] S.I.G.Mudenge, A Political history of Munhumutapa c1400-1902, Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House; London: James Currey Publishers & New Jersey, USA: Heinemann Educational Books, 1988, p.8.

Historians agree that they entered present day Zimbabwe during the Iron Age (post AD 1000).[14]

According to Samkange:

> it is this group which, they assure us, definitely spoke a Bantu language and arrived in successive waves from the north. Today it is credited with having built throughout this area various stone structures of which those known as the Great Zimbabwe are only the largest and the most famous. It is this group which today is believed to have established the great empire of Mwene Mutapa.[15]

It is perhaps important to note that this group of people were so established that up to three of their dynasties can be traced in history.[16] Even with such a history, they did not seem to have a group name. D.N. Beach sheds light on this when he states that:

> Until the twentieth century, Shona-speakers had had no common name for themselves. Most of them used terms like 'Shawasha', 'Hera', 'Duma' for their local groups, and found them perfectly adequate in local politics. In the eighteenth century, more general terms like 'Zezuru' or 'Ndau' were beginning to come into use, but they were by no means generally accepted by 1900. The spread and acceptance of those terms came as a result of missionary influence.... the word 'Shona' was first used by the Ndebele in the 1830's, to refer to the Rozvi, and was gradually applied by Europeans in the nineteenth century to Shona-speakers as a whole.[17]

---

[14] M.F.C.Bourdillon, The Shona Peoples: An ethnography of the contemporary Shona, with special reference to their Religion, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1976, pp.19-20. See also S.I.G. Mudenge, op. cit. p.22.

[15] S.Samkange, Origins of Rhodesia, London: Heinemann, 1973, p.2. Stan Mudenge in his A Political History of Munhumutapa c1400-1902, gives a more detailed account of this empire which he calls 'Munhumutapa.'

[16] M.F.C. Bourdillon, The Shona Peoples, pp.24-26, Bourdillon gives a fuller treatment of the (a) Mutapa in the middle of the 15th century, (b) the Changamire Mambos in the middle of the 17th century and (c) the Rozvi Changamires who ruled the South West until they were defeated by the invading Ndebele people in the 19th century.

[17] D.N.Beach, War and Politics in Zimbabwe 1840-1900, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1986, p.14.

Whatever the origin of their name, suffice it to say that this Bantu group has a proud past. They are a people with long deep roots; a people with a distinct civilisation.[18] They also engaged in economic production including mining, hunting, trading, manufacturing, fishing and gathering. Natural, social and technological factors often influenced the type of economic activity practised at a particular time and place.[19]

Stan Mudenge, a Zimbabwean historian, is probably right to suggest that '*Karanga*' was the historic name for most of the people known today as the Shona of Zimbabwe.[20] Their use of the word "*chiKaranga*" with reference to customary rituals adds weight to the suggestion. Nevertheless, the term 'Shona' is now the accepted one. It takes care of six dialect groups, namely, Kalanga, Karanga, Korekore, Manyika, Ndau and Zezuru.[21] These are the bearers of the (Shona) culture which once flourished between the Zambezi and Limpopo rivers, stretching eastwards as far as the sea.[22] These groups have very similar views of death and the dead, though there is no uniformity of practice and observance among them.

---

[18] S.Samkange, Origins of Rhodesia, p.6.

[19] D.N. Beach, War and Politics in Zimbabwe 1840-1900, p.8.

[20] S.I.G.Mudenge, A Political History of Munhumutapa 1400-1902, p.21.

[21] H.Kuper, (et.al.) The Shona and Ndebele of Southern Rhodesia, London: International African Institute, 1954, pp.10-11, corroborates the ethnic distribution of Shona groups. G.L. Chavunduka, Traditional Healers and the Shona patient, Gwelo: Mambo Press, 1978, p.6, states that, "The Shona are divided into six dialect groups: Zezuru, Karanga, Korekore, Manyika, Ndau and Kalanga." See map on p.447.

[22] S.Samkange, Origins of Rhodesia, p. 3.

1.2.2 The world-view

The Shona people believed and still believe in a divinity referred to by Westerners as a 'high god'.[23] Mudenge confirms this belief in a divinity, for he writes, "broadly speaking, all communities have a concept of a High God known at different places by different names but today generally referred to as *Mwari* in Zimbabwe."[24] D.N.Beach, echoes the observation and also sums up the debate by pointing out that, "Shona traditional religionists today believe in a single, supreme creator-God, *Mwari*."[25] There is a lot of debate around this topic, but a full debate on the matter is beyond the scope of the present study. However it is important to note that an understanding of *Mwari* had, and still has a bearing on the understanding of life. *Mwari*, as the creator, is believed to have power over the ancestors, the dead (that is, those for whom the appropriate rituals have not yet been done) and the living.

Ancestors are usually referred to as *varikumhepo* (those who are in the air), while those awaiting rituals are referred to as *varipasi* (those who are below) literally referring to the fact that they are still buried. At times ancestors and those awaiting rituals are

---

[23] D.N. Beach, War and Politics in Zimbabwe 1840-1900, pp.120-122. See also Mudenge, A Political History of Munhumutapa 1400-1902, p.28. This term was meant to show that there was a difference between God as understood and worshipped by the Shona and God as understood and preached to them by the missionaries. Even a renowned scholar like Michael Bourdillon calls 'Mwari' "a remote high god." M F C Bourdillon, The Shona Peoples, op.cit. p.320.

[24] Mudenge, op.cit. p.28.

[25] D.N. Beach, op. cit. p.100. Both Mudenge and Beach agree that the Shona people were monotheists. Mudenge states, "In addition to being monotheists, the Shona venerate their ancestors and believe in spirit possession." p.28.

collectively referred to as *varipasi*.[26] This demonstrates that there is a very thin line that separates them, since they have both entered the spiritual domain.

These 'worlds' are not geographical locations, but they are portrayed as residences, the spirit world (*varikumhepo*), the land of the living (the earth) and the land of the departed, the underworld (*varipasi*) respectively. Patron spirits (*mhondoro)* are believed to live on the earth. Together, spirits and beings make up the Shona world, which is understood in terms of community.

The 'three worlds' and their respective inhabitants make the real Shona world of life whole. It is the duty of the living to maintain a relationship with those in the spirit world. This is because they "believe in life as a spirit after death, during which a dead person can continue to bear influence on the community he/she has left."[27] What Ezeanya observes of a different community also describes the Shona people. He notes that "the world of the African is characterised by its unity and coherence ... and a correct understanding [of African life] can only be obtained by surveying life as a whole."[28]

There is a sense in which one can refer to only two worlds, that is, the physical and the

---

[26] These spirits are classified either as mudzimu (sing.) midzimu (pl) (family spirits) or mhondoro (regional or tribal spirits). See Bourdillon, The Shona Peoples, p.232 for midzimu and p.293 for mhondoro. See also G. Chavunduka, The traditional Healers, p. 99. See Interviews with T.Mukwishu, p. 406 and V. Mutandwa, p.414 for an understanding of the world.

[27] M.F.C. Bourdillon, op.cit. p.263.

[28] S.N. Ezeanya, "God, Spirits and the Spirit world: with specific reference to Igbo speaking people of Southern Nigeria," in K. Dickson & P. Ellingworth, (eds) Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs, London: Lutterworth Press, 1972, p.36.

spiritual worlds. This is because when we look at how the world is ordered and how things are done, the spirit world is perceived as a photocopy of the physical. This also means that the activities of the dead and the spirits are understood in the light of those of the living. The essence of this distinction is in the understanding that those who are in the spiritual world have attained superior powers, including the ability to deal with other spirits on behalf of their living kinsfolk.[29]

1.2.3 Relationships of the inhabitants

To understand clearly the relationships of the inhabitants of these three intertwined spheres of the world we need to start with the living. The Shona people organise their society hierarchically, with the most senior person, usually the chief, at the top. He is usually not addressed directly but through a mediator. It is only in emergencies that he can be addressed directly. If one seeks to present a request to this senior person, it has to go through a process known as *kusuma (*presenting a request). The most junior member in attendance is the one who is told what the request is all about. At an opportune moment he invites all present to note the request (*kusuma*).[30] He then presents the request to the next senior person who in turn passes it on till it reaches the

---

[29] M.F.C.Bourdillon, op. cit. p.263. See also Chavunduka, Traditional Healers, p.12, where he echoes the same observations. He says, "many Shona people believe that deceased kinsmen (and women) continue to take an interest in the affairs of their descendants. It is believed that they protect their descendants at all times. They have power to prevent evil and they also help the living in solving daily problems."

[30] "Kusuma is the ceremonial handing over or presentation of person or object: the passive is 'ku-sumwa'... kusumwa is a very important aspect of Shona life; it is a dominant feature of the Shona way of life." See J.Kumbirai, "Kurova Guva and Christianity," in M.F.C. Bourdillon, Christianity South of the Zambezi Vol. 2, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1977, p.124.

most senior person present. All this is passed on in the most appropriate language, accompanied by clapping of hands.[31]

According to oral tradition, this hierarchy is believed to obtain in the spirit world as well. The youngest member, one who has just joined the ranks, be it in the spirit world or the land of the departed,[32] is assumed responsible for receiving the requests and presenting them. He/she has to use acceptable language which he/she should have learnt soon after joining the ranks. So requests in the spiritual world follow these channels till they reach God. And, as in the land of the living, in emergencies God, the Supreme Being, may be addressed directly. The dead become a vital link with the spirit world. *Midzimu* are believed to have a role in death; either they prevent it or they cause it.[33] If they are neglected they are believed to stop extending their protection. Such withdrawal could result in death. They are also responsible for receiving the dead into the land of the departed and admitting them into ancestorship when appropriate rituals have been carried out to their satisfaction.

1.3 UNDERSTANDING HUMANITY

---

[31] See interviews with Rev'd G. Dete p.387 and Mr Munhikwi p.411.

[32] See p.22 above, for the difference between these two.

[33] Chavunduka, Traditional Healers, p. 12. Chavunduka explains that "if, for example, a man commits incest, or fails to perform the necessary ritual for a dead kinsman, the ancestors may punish him with illness and, in extreme cases, with death. The ancestor spirits can do this by withdrawing their vital protection and so permitting evil influences such as witchcraft to harm the individual."

The Shona people share with most Bantu peoples a common view of humanity. In Bantu Traditional Religion the human being is portrayed as essentially "dichotomous in nature."[34] This is because humanity is seen as a combination of two interwoven but distinct elements; the body and the spirit. These, together, constitute the individual person. The Shona, along with other tribes, hold that humanity was created by God with capabilities to relate to both the physical and the spiritual worlds simultaneously. Sidhom's observation, in a different context, can also be applied to the Shona people. He says:

> The origin of man (humanity) exhibits, according to African Tradition one common factor: man was created by God and that he has his origin in Him. The African, like a good pragmatic, produced no theological systems to frame his beliefs. He regards God with great awe as the origin of all good and evil, and as the remote, uncomprehended Being to whom ... to conjure, pray and adore rather than ...to ask or beg should be directed in worship. God is: hence man is - that is the core of African belief. Details might differ with the different tribes.[35]

The vernacular Shona words for body, *muviri* or *nyama*,[36] describe the physical nature of the human being, which enables one to be seen and be identified. It is perhaps necessary to point out that this physicality may either be lifeless or live. Lifeless physicalness denotes death, so one can still be identified even when dead. Live physicalness on the other hand confers the ability to relate. It enables the individual "to

---

[34] R.J. Gehman, African Traditional Religion, Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers Ltd, 1989, p.56. The word is not used to imply opposition, but to emphasise the two different natures.

[35] S.Sidhom, "The Theological Estimate of Man," in K. Dickson & P. Ellingworth, (eds) Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs, London: Lutterworth Press, 1972, p.100.

[36] See M. Hannan, Standard Shona Dictionary, Harare, Bulawayo: College Press, (reprinted) 1987. See interviews with Mr. T. Mukwishu p.406 and Mrs V. Mutandwa p.414. See also what Canaan Banana says, "the spirit is immortal: *chinoora inyama mweya hauori*. This Shona statement means that what perishes is the flesh but the sprit is immortal. This belief is evident in death and burial rituals." C.S. Banana, Come and Share, op.cit., p.81.

maintain a vital relationship with nature, God, the deities, ancestors, tribe, the clan, the extended family and self."[37] The spirit, *mweya,* animates the body to show life and this emphasizes that "the spirit is the life-principle and its existence is manifest through breathing."[38]

Through its anatomy, female or male, the body determines in tradition the operational relationship with the spirit. A female is treated differently from a male and the rites and rituals that honour them are also different. The spirit of life in each is supposed to know its appropriate rites.[39] This conception of the spirit, *mweya,* highlights that it is immortal. Shona people believe that "the *mweya*, although it develops in a temporal milieu as the individual grows, is in itself immortal. It is the 'life-principle' of man, incarnate in him and developing its personal and unique characteristics while he is alive, but surviving the death of the body."[40]

The nature of humanity in a traditional setting is such that while the person is still alive, the spirit, *mweya*, already has some relationship with the ancestors. They are intimately referred to as *varipasi*, those beneath the earth. It is essential to maintain this relationship because it has significance for the spirit's transformation "into a *mudzimu*

---

[37] S. Sidhom, in , K.. Dickson & P. Ellingworth, (eds) Biblical Revelation, op.cit. p.102.

[38] R.J. Gehman, African Traditional Religion, Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers Ltd, 1989, p.56.

[39] See interviews with Rev'd G. Dete p.387 and Mr Munhikwi p.411.

[40] M.W. Murphree, Christianity and the Shona, London: The Athlone Press, 1969, p.32.

whereby it takes its place in the spiritual hierarchy of the ancestors."[41]

The dichotomous nature of humanity is further confirmed in the belief that though one is an individual, with a personal name, one is also more than an individual body and spirit. In any one individual, as we noted, there is the collective reality of family, clan and tribe. This one individual is also community, that is, the individual is also the spiritual personification of a community. This sums up the African way of life, as Swailem Sidhom notes, "existence-in-relationship sums up the pattern of the African way of life."[42] Community spirit and existence-in-relationship permeate the whole of traditional life. It is the basic principle of life, which Mbiti articulately spells out thus, "I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am. In traditional life, the individual does not and cannot exist alone except corporately ... He is simply a part of the whole."[43] The significance of community for the individual cannot be overemphasized. Ndeti, a Kenyan exponent of African Traditional Religion aptly echoes this complex solidarity as he states that:

> this community ... extends beyond the living members of the clan and tribe. It incorporates those who have died and those who are yet unborn. (The individual) is a physical representative of the dead, living and unborn. Thus (the individual) is a community incorporating three principles - life, spirit and immortality.[44]

---

[41] Ibid. p. 32

[42] R.J. Gehman, African Traditional Religion, Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers Ltd, 1989, p.52.

[43] J.S. Mbiti, African Religions and Philosophy, Oxford: Heinemann, 190, p.106.

[44] K. Ndeti, Elements of Akamba Life, Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1972, p.114.

A third aspect of the dichotomy relates to double existence; according to tradition, humanity is both mortal and immortal. The human person has a mortal body, *muviri* or *nyama,* and an immortal spirit, *mweya.* At death the body remains to be buried, while the spirit sets off on its journey towards ancestorship. This understanding of human nature helps us to apprehend the intricacies of the rituals that surround death and the dead. It also helps us appreciate the importance of maintaining community relationships with the dead.

1.4 VIEWS OF DEATH

Death is the separation of the two elements of humanity. When it occurs the body becomes lifeless and is considered dead, a corpse, *mutumbi*[45] or *chitunha*. The spirit, which is believed to be immortal, makes its journey to the land of the departed. Those who witness the death weep and wail as a way of notifying others that something has happened. This is a peculiar weeping and wailing. It marks the beginning of mourning, as Mandaza attests:

> Mourning begins and all the people from the neighbouring villages converge on this home. Upon entering the village, one is deeply moved not only by the weeping crowds, but by the sight of the blood relatives of the deceased wailing in grief, dashing themselves against the walls. Short drums are played and traditional songs are sung for the dead.[46]

In addition to notifying others that something has occurred it is also a plea for mercy to

---

[45] S.Hannan, Standard Shona Dictionary, p.421.

[46] D.M.Mandaza, "Traditional Ceremonies which Persist," in Clive & Peggy Kilef (eds) Shona Customs, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1970, p.54.

the spirits. Since "death affects the whole community,"[47] those who hear this cry leave whatever they are doing and head in its direction.[48] When they reach the village, they will then be advised of who died, how he or she died, and what he or she said, if anything, before he or she died. These new arrivals then salute the other people present with the words *nenhamo/nematambudziko* (you witnessed the hardship), or any other appropriate form.[49] In some regions they shake everyone's hands as well; this is known as *kubata maoko,* holding hands.[50] This procedure is repeated by subsequent arrivals. The corpse is then wrapped up in a blanket and laid on a mat. From this time on it is to be treated with respect since it is the physical, but lifeless, presence of the individual person whose spirit is on its way to the land of the departed.

1.4.1 Death as a phenomenon

Death is believed to be both a natural and an unnatural phenomenon which is always regarded as being caused by some external force. It is therefore important to establish

---

[47] K.A. Dickson, Theology in Africa, London: Darton Longman & Todd Ltd, 1984, p.192.

[48] E.B.Magava, "African Customs connected with the burial of the dead in Rhodesia," in J.A. Dachs, Christianity South of the Zambezi, Vol.1, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1973, p.152. Magava says, "according to custom, women bring to the kraal mealie meal in baskets and if possible vegetables as well. This food is to be used to provide hospitality for mourners. Similarly men may bring some money for the same purpose of assisting the bereaved." Rev'd G.Dete and M. Munhikwi, while agreeing with E.B. Magava, add that it is the responsibility of men to fetch big blocks of firewood for the purpose of cooking for, and warming mourners.

[49] E.B. Magava, Ibid., p.152. Magava says, "it is well to note the employment of the term *matambudziko* or *inkathazo* (caused suffering) when referring to any death that has taken place."

[50] These acts are done for a variety of reasons. From a community perspective, they are an expression of solidarity and sympathy. From a religious point of view they are believed to enhance community spirit, and to appease the spirits. If that is achieved, the *mweya* of the deceased is somehow assured of a good journey.

its cause, so that the appropriate propitiatory rituals can accompany the burial. Seymour captures some of the feelings of the Shona people perfectly when he notes that for them, at one level, "no one should die. Man should live forever. Death is not natural. Even a very old person should never die and life is only removed by an offended *mudzimu*"[51] (ancestral spirit). It is interesting to note that though an African community is only complete when it incorporates the dead, death is not regarded as natural. We are therefore presented with a picture of death which makes it ambiguous and paradoxical in nature.[52] What probably makes it unnatural is the way in which it affects relationships, depriving people of each other's physical companionship by separating the living from their loved ones. Obviously it is a "disrupting, suspicious phenomenon, unnatural, shocking and dreaded,"[53] normally unacceptable.

Existence-in-relationship is radically changed and the natural way of life disturbed. A dual fear accompanies the observance of death, namely, (a) the prospect of facing the future without the loved one, and (b) not knowing what the ancestral involvement in it was. Eli Magava's words, though referring to the Ndebele people, also apply to the Shona, "like all humans, the Ndebele people, fear a lot of things. Among the things that we fear is the natural phenomenon - death, which many of us believe that it is caused

---

[51] J.J. Seymour, The Changing Trends of the Shona Family in Zimbabwe-How the Church can Help, SLSA, Doctoral Thesis, Harare Zimbabwe, 1990, p.19.

[52] While death is both natural and unnatural, it is also a fulfilment of life, especially if one dies in old age. Canaan Banana notes that, "on the other hand, there is a paradox in the acknowledgement of a 'timely death'. After a serious and long illness or senile age (kana munhu wodzurwa nendove kumusana), it is at this time when people talk of a timely death. C.S.Banana, Come and Share, p.81.

[53] C.S. Banana, Come and Share, p.81.

by angry ancestral spirits."[54] These words express the paradoxical nature of death, and at the same time reflect a fundamental belief, that it is caused, in this case by angry spirits.

Death, as we noted, is received with mixed feelings, but it is important that death be spoken of with respect, for fear of offending the ancestral spirits further, should they be involved in causing it. One would surely not want to aggravate the situation further. An attempt to respect death is found in the words that are used to describe it. They still, however, express the sense of loss and bereavement. Here are a few such euphemisms,[55] which could be parallelled in most cultures:

Waenda : has gone

Wapera : is finished

Washaya : has vanished

Watisiya : has left us

Wazorora : has rested.

Most of these expressions of death implicitly convey the idea of moving from one place to another. This indicates that the dead person continues to be a member of the family, because moving from one place to another does not sever bonds of relationship. Death is believed to be the gateway into the other world and the beginning of the journey to

---

[54] E.B. Magava, Ndebele people with their Ancestral Spirits BUT no table of the Lord with the table of Demons, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1986, p.19.

[55] C.S.Banana, Come and Share, p.79. Banana observes that among the Shona, "death is rarely expressed sharply as death. Some blunt euphemistic words or phrases are used to refer to death."

the spiritual world of the departed. Mbiti captures this vividly when he says, "death transposes the music of life from one key to another, switching it from the rhythm of the physical to the spiritual world."[56] So whatever happens, the deceased continues to be a member of the family. The observation that, "death means not annihilation but departure to the spirit world,"[57] finds full expression in this understanding of death.

If we take our cue from the view point that death is not annihilation, we are faced with the question, 'How should we understand death?' Addressing this question, in a different context, Mulago offers the folowing insights:

> This life is not destroyed by death, although death may subject it to a change of condition. It does not move in a straight line: it is better to compare it with the circumference of a circle. In other words there is no break between life and death, but continuity between the two.[58]

This understanding of death accommodates the other aspects of traditional life and community in full. It presents a way of looking at life as a whole, including the death aspect referred to as a musical key transposing the rhythm of life. When we look at life as a whole, the traditional landmarks should be acknowledged. Mbiti notes the wholeness of traditional life:

---

[56] J.S. Mbiti, New Testament Eschatology in an African Background, Oxford: OUP, 1971, p.131.

[57] Ibid. p.129.

[58] V.Mulago, "Vital Participation," in K. Dickson & P. Ellingworth, (eds) Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs, London: Lutterworth Press, 1972, p.138. See also Banana, who notes that among the Shona "death is not death; it is a vehicle from the ontology of visible beings to the ontology of the invisible beings. Death is part of life, it is a gateway to eternity, it is a gateway to life in the here-after. LIFE - DEATH - LIFE." C.S.Banana, Come and Share, p.79.

> Human life follows also another rhythm which knows neither end nor radical alteration, this is the rhythm of birth, initiation, marriage, procreation, old age, death and entry into the company of the departed.[59]

We should note that though death is part of the rhythm of life its acceptability remains problematic. The other elements of the rhythm including old age, are acceptable, but when it comes to death the picture changes.[60] However there are times when death has to be accepted, as Banana observed.[61] In traditional thinking, death seems natural only for the elderly, particularly those who have had children.

Oral tradition has it that news of the death of an individual should be passed on to all relatives as a matter of urgency. If this is not done, some of the relatives may be adversely affected by it. They may experience mishaps, known in Shona as *mashura* (bad omens). On the other hand, the death of the dying person might be painfully dragged out because one wishes a particular relative to be present. Or at times, the dying person expresses a desire to die in familiar surroundings; this may also prolong the dying process, it is believed. When the awaited relative comes, the dying person might peacefully pass away, or say something to him or her or even just hold the hand of the relative till death occurs.[62] Likewise, restoring the dying person to familiar

---

[59] J.S. Mbiti, New Testament Eschatology in an African Background, Oxford: OUP, 1971, p.13.

[60] The popular view of tradition has it that death is discontinuity because it puts an end to personal relationships. On the other hand it is continuity because the dead are believed to live on, and are present with their living, protecting them from a spiritual vantage point.

[61] C.S. Banana, Come and Share, p. 81. See footnote 52, above.

[62] Perhaps it is important to note that oral tradition holds that death away from home may have an effect on the rest of the spirit, partly because what we have described does not happen. Maybe it could be because the deceased was not buried in accordance with his or her customs, or because none

surroundings can lead to the release of a peaceful death. While this has significance in later rituals and ceremonies, it also lends weight to the observation that "death binds up relationships in the society, revitalizing the living and underscoring their sense of community."[63]

1.4.2 The burial.

Burial is the act of disposing of the corpse, the physical part of the human being. It is the last rite done for and with the deceased. At burial "a lot of complicated things take place."[64] The rite is important to the deceased, since it is a commendation, and important too for the remaining living relatives, as a farewell. High emotions and great solemnity characterize it. We should note that burial rites and practices vary from place to place even among the Shona people. All the same we shall explore the general pattern of burial and the beliefs that go with it.

The grave is the pivotal point in the burial process. Some people, long before their death, indicate where they want to be buried. This personal choice, though unwritten, has to be honoured. Some families or clans have special burial places, in which case

---

of his relatives marked the grave. Being buried away from one's home also means that the person does not have a chance to say what he or she would really want to say if he or she was among relatives, in other words they are deprived of giving the dying testament. This could affect the 'rest'.See 'The Burial'.

[63] K.G. Molyneux, African Christian Theology: The Quest for Selfhood, USA: Mullen Research University Press, 1993, p.69.

[64] M. Gelfand, Growing up in Shona Society, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1979, p.58. See page 39 for details of some of the complications that might present themselves.

the deceased's grave will be in that burial place.[65] If the deceased has not chosen a grave site, or there is no family burial place, then the family representative will choose where the deceased will be buried. What makes the grave so important is the fact that it is looked upon as the house, or final resting place of the deceased.

In a traditional Shona setting, when a member of the family wants to build a house, the family elder or representative marks the spot by thrusting a pick into the ground. The reasoning behind this is that the place is thereby officially recognized as part of the grounds to be visited and protected by the ancestors. In the same way, the grave is part of the community, because it is the visible link with the land of the departed. So the way in which it is dug, and the way in which the dead is laid to rest in it, should be in keeping with traditional customs, so that the ancestors do not take offence. Because of this awareness of the presence of the ancestors "the body must be buried with every sign of respect and regard and heed must be paid to the grave."[66]

Early in the morning , on the day of the burial, the family representative or elder leads a group of people to where the deceased is to be laid to rest. When he or she gets to the spot, he or she crouches and commends this place to the ancestors. After this he or she marks the grave with a pick, or other digging instrument. The elder then thrusts

---

[65] See Chapter four, p.173 below, for an example.

[66] M. Gelfand, Shona Religion, Cape Town: Juta & Co Ltd, 1962, p.120.

the digging instrument once into the ground within the outline of the grave;[67] this indicates where the head should lie. This is a symbolic act, depicting the reality of traditional Shona life, that no one builds his/her own house without the family elder or representative's blessing. So this is both an approval and an acceptance of the grave as being of significance to the family. After this, those who had come with him or her do the digging.[68]

The family representative returns to the homestead, this time to lead a group of elderly men to the cattle kraal, where they are to slaughter a beast, if one has not been slaughtered by then, to (a) provide people with food and (b) equip the deceased with a burial blanket, the skin. The beast is known as *mombe ye nheedzo*, the beast to accompany the deceased.[69] Back in the village, the women are busy preparing the food which will feed all the people who come for the funeral. Some of this food will have been provided by the mourners themselves. Each family brings an amount of mealie meal, and whatever else they can afford, to help the bereaved neighbours.

While the digging of the grave and the preparation of the food are going on, close

---

[67] E.B.Magava, in J.A.Dachs, Christianity South of the Zambezi, Vol. 1, p.152. Magava clarifies the situation by stating that, "the person who digs the first sods must be a near relative of the deceased person, regardless of the sex of that person." Banana emphasizes the ritual element of practices relating to death, so he points out that, "grave-digging is done ritually." C.S.Banana, Come and Share, p. 82.

[68] See interviews with Munhikwi p.411 and Mrs Kiyase Shumba p.419.

[69] J.S.Mbiti, African Religions and Philosophy, Oxford: Heinemann, 1990, p.146. See also interviews with Gideon Dete p.387 and Mrs. M. Chikonamombe p.381.

relatives, led by the same family elder, prepare the corpse for burial.[70] In some regions this task is undertaken by the *sahwira* (ritual or joking friend), usually the deceased's best friend. Inside the hut or room, they clap their hands in unison commending the deceased to the care of the ancestral spirits. They also ask each other if there were any signs which could be interpreted as discontent on the part of the deceased.

The way in which these observations are received and interpreted is reflective of the depth and wealth of oral tradition, illustrating the belief that death is not annihilation. It is believed that if the deceased died as a result of someone else's machinations, he or she will react if that person attends the funeral. On the other hand, if the deceased was angry at death because certain things were not done according to his or her instructions and wishes, his or her spirit in silhouette *(mumvuri)*, will be seen in shadow form near the corpse. Some people make a distinction between the shadows, since they hold that a person has two shadows; a black one representing the flesh (*nyama)* and another white one, representing the spirit (*mweya)*.

Depending on the region, oral tradition holds that the shadow of a dissatisfied male is seen in a standing position, while that of a woman is seen in a lying position. Others further interpret the position of the shadow as an indication of the sex of the person

---

[70] The preparation might include the washing of the corpse. Magava states that "the custom of washing the corpse before burial obtains throughout Rhodesia, although in some cases only the face is washed; in other cases the whole body is washed." E.B.Magava, in J.A. Dachs, Christianity South of the Zambezi, Vol.1, p.152. For Banana this preparation is part of the ritual, so he says "the body of the deceased is ritually washed, it is ritually smeared with oils and is ritually wrapped in a blanket or an animal skin in certain traditional practices." C.S.Banana, Come and Share, pp.81-82.

who caused the deceased the annoyance. For our purposes, suffice it to say that there are signs which traditional practitioners can interpret. The absence of such signs is indicative of normalcy. Those responsible then prepare "the body for burial by wrapping it with pieces of cloth (which replace the traditional skin) bought by the deceased's sons (if they are old enough to do this)."[71] It is also believed that the dead father can refuse the cloth from his son, if the relationship between them was strained. It is believed that, "if a shadow from the dead body appears while the body is being wrapped, it means the father or mother has refused the cloth of the son because of wrongs committed against him or her. The son has to put things right immediately or face future trouble."[72] If this shadow, *mumvuri,* was ever noticed prior to this stage, the elders would want to know why before the burial, so that the burial rite might accommodate this displeasure. Taking no cognisance of the hard feelings thus indicated could create problems for those engaged in the burial or even the whole family.[73]

Among the many things that might possibly take place are, (a) that the coffin could become so heavy that even the strongest of people present fail to lift it, or (b) the coffin might not go through the doorway because it will have become wider, (c) the corpse might start bulging to the extent that the coffin will begin to crack, or (d) the corpse

---

[71] D.M. Mandaza, "Traditional Ceremonies which Persist," in Clive & Peggy Kilef (eds) Shona Customs, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1970, p.54.

[72] Ibid. pp. 54-55.

[73] It is very difficult to ascertain who is supposed to see the shadow since there are variations. However, indications are that it is the main burial party, and not everyone present, who see the shadow.

might produce an offensive smell which makes the hut uncomfortable to live in, or (e) the grave diggers might strike rock before they have dug deep enough.[74] The family elder should lead the close relatives in acknowledging to the deceased that his or her anger has been noted. The elder addresses the deceased, letting him or her know that the gathered relatives want to lay him or her to rest and that all the other problems will be dealt with fully afterwards. The corpse is addressed as if it were alive, from a crouching position, with clapping of hands. We should note that all this is done in the understanding that whatever is done to the corpse affects the spirit. Mbiti aptly comments that, "it is the general feeling that if the dead are not properly buried they may take revenge upon the living or remain unpeaceful in the land of the departed."[75]

Traditionally, there are set times for burying the dead, early in the morning and late afternoon. Under normal circumstances no one would be buried at mid-day or at night. Midday is far too hot and night is considered to be the time for witches. With this knowledge at the back of their minds, all the people engaged in burial tasks make sure that they are not responsible for causing any delays. The people digging the grave are the ones who normally dictate the pace for all the others. When they have finished digging they send word to the family representative so that the grave can be inspected

---

[74] See interviews with M.Shoko p.411and K.Shumba p.419. Eli Magava also writes "As the digging continues, great care is taken to see that no rock obstructs it. If some obstruction prevents the digging of the grave or makes continuation difficult, this is interpreted as an objection to the spot by the deceased and, in deference to him, a fresh spot must therefore be sought. This can happen several times before burial takes place." Magava in J.A.Dachs, Christianity South of the Zambezi, Vol.1, p.152.

[75] J.S. Mbiti, Concepts of God in Africa, London: SPCK, 1970, p.257. See also interviews with V. Mutandwa p.414 and Munikwi Shoko p.411.

and certified ready. Once this has been done , the elders and the close relatives go into the hut or room where the corpse is for a rite within a rite, that is, a rite for close blood relatives only.

The leader of the team addresses the corpse, telling it that they are taking it to its final resting place. Depending on how the place has been chosen, appropriate words will be said; such as, 'we are taking you to where your grand father lies' or 'to the place you chose for yourself.' They also ask for the assistance of the ancestral spirits so that this task can be properly carried out. Clapping accompanies these formalities as usual.[76] After this the coffin or corpse is ready to be taken outside. In some places the corpse is conveniently placed so that all present, particularly those who wish, may view the face of the deceased. After this the corpse is then carried to the grave. To indicate that this is a journey, the procession is punctuated by halts, meant to give the deceased some rest. While the body is being carried to the grave some people sweep the room or hut where the corpse has lain. This is done for two reasons: the main reason being to remove the smell from the hut, and secondly to drive away the infection and the magic powers that have caused the death.[77] The fear of death and suffering come into people's minds and consequently this rite is a very important one. The dirt is taken to the grave, so that it is also interred with the corpse.[78]

---

[76] See interviews with G.Dete p.387 and M.Shoko p.411.

[77] W.Bozongwana, Ndebele Religion and Customs, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1983, p.28.

[78] It is important to note that this process also takes care of any pollution that might have occurred following from the illness. John Kurewa, when he was Vice Chancellor of the All Africa University once read a paper at the Zimbabwe Christian Council in which he elaborately explained how

At the grave , there are selected people who should lay the corpse to rest; one such person is the *sahwira.* He is assisted by other relatives, but not very close ones. There is an expression which goes '*munhu haazvivigi*', meaning 'a person does not bury him or herself.' This is said with reference to close relatives of the dead, that they should not do the burying, though they should remain in attendance to advise on procedure. Their involvement is only that required by ritual, including the fact that they are the last to leave the grave. This has to be observed because the "*vadzimu* (ancestral spirits) may be angered if a person is not accorded proper burial, as, for instance, not putting the body in a proper position when burying it."[79]

Those who receive the coffin in the grave to lay the deceased to rest, do so according to local custom, under the guidance of the elders.[80] When this has been satisfactorily done, those in the grave come out. This is to enable the family elder to lead the procession of relatives in bidding farewell to the deceased. He or she does this by throwing a handful of soil into the grave onto the coffin, uttering some words. The words that accompany this action vary from place to place, and from person to person. The most familiar phrases are *zororai murugare* (rest in peace), or *mufambe zvakanaka, (*go well), or some other heartfelt expressions. In some places, local custom dictates that all relatives of the deceased should be in attendance at the funeral to bid the deceased

---

traditional Shona burial rites were hygienic. He emphasized that sweeping the hut and smearing it with fresh cow-dung as soon as the corpse is taken out is comparable to using a modern disinfectant.

[79] J.J. Seymour, The Changing Trends of the Shona Family in Zimbabwe-How the Church can Help, SLSA, Doctoral Thesis, Harare Zimbabwe, 1990, p.20.

[80] Since it varies from place to place, in some places it is the *Sahwira* and any other person, in others it is strictly elderly close relatives of the deceased.

farewell. When this is not possible, those who are present throw handfuls of soil on behalf of absent family members. The normal procedure is that women represent female absentees while men represent their male counterparts. After this, other people may also join the queue to bid the deceased farewell.

This completed, according to Munhikwi,[81] the *sahwira* jumps into the grave to receive shovels full of soil, with which he gently covers the coffin. He does this till the coffin is completely covered with soil , and the grave about one third full, then jumps out. This is to prevent heavy lumps of soil hitting the coffin directly, which could be misconstrued as lack of respect for the dead. Filling the grave continues, till it is half full or thereabouts. At this point the dirt that was swept from the hut or room, and the other items used on the corpse, are put into the grave. Selected clothes of the deceased are also thrown into the grave at this point, once it has been ascertained that they do not have buttons and zips on them. This indicates accommodation of western dress into traditional views.

Metal objects are only included when the deceased is believed to have been murdered. The words spoken over them are very explicit, *munhu anozvirwira* (a person fights for him or herself). It is believed that the spirit of the deceased knows the circumstances surrounding the murder, including whether he or she was guilty or innocent of some wrongdoing. At the burial, assuming that the deceased was innocent, or even believing

---

[81] See interview with Munhikwi p.411.

that he or she deserved a chance to be heard, his or her spirit is encouraged to settle the score. Such a burial is not marked by much ritual, but is characterized by words inciting revenge, such as *usarara ukakanganwa (*don't sleep and forget), or some such words. Knobkerries, spears and the like are thrown into the grave as a way of equipping the deceased for the battle. The deceased's spirit is expected to find its way to the home of the person who murdered him or her and wreak havoc in it. It will kill the murderer's children and/or livestock. This is known as *ngozi (*avenging spirit*).* The only way out for the murderer is to go to the home of the victim and openly confess his or her crime. A settlement is called for, which, if honoured to the satisfaction of the victim's relatives, marks the end of the battle. At times the services of a *n'anga* have to be sought because the *ngozi* spirit has to be exorcised, in which case an experienced *n'anga* "endeavours to transfer the troublesome spirit from the person to a black fowl or black goat. The *n'anga,* surrounded by the people of the village, says to the evil spirit, 'Go away! We don't want you' (*Chienda zvako hatikude).*[82]

There is also a noticeable difference at the burial of a social misfit of any kind, including witches and wizards. No one is particularly concerned about how the body should be laid to rest, as long as it is buried. This burial is more a matter of duty than anything else. It is as if the people present, usually not very many, and the relatives, are saying "good riddance". Everything done at such a burial reflects the social standing of the

---

[82] D.M. Mandaza, "Traditional Ceremonies which Persist," in Clive & Peggy Kilef, (eds) Shona Customs, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1970, pp. 59-60. Note that the spirit of one who has died a violent death wanders about. The reason being that there was no respect shown to the body. See above under 'The burial', p.35.

deceased, and not many people would want to talk about the burial. Words such as *enda namabasa ako (*go with your works), are said by the family representative, who speaks on behalf of all present. The burial is the official cut-off point for all ties with the deceased. He or she is not included on the ancestor's roll because his or her spirit is left to wander indefinitely. The belief that "at all ceremonies of any importance, at birth, marriage, death, burial and investiture, it is the ancestors who preside and their will is subordinate only to that of the Creator,"[83] shapes and influences rituals.

We mentioned earlier that one's sex determines appropriate rituals; at burial one's maturity and social status are important factors too. For instance, the burial rituals for the father of the family are slightly different from those for the mother, and so are those for unmarried adult children from those for infants. Let us briefly look at these differences and their implications.

In some places the father of the family is buried near his home or his cattle kraal and there is usually very little argument about this. As a married person something of his wife is buried with him, be it a dress or a tuft of hair. When it is the mother, there should be proper agreement between her maiden family and her marital family as to where she will be buried. The way she is to be buried is also a matter for discussion. When she is buried, a symbol of her marital status is interred with her; this could be any item.

---

[83] V.Mulago, "Vital Participation," in K. Dickson & P. Ellingworth, (eds) Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs, London: Lutterworth Press, 1972, p.139.

A grown up, but unmarried person, is buried with either a rat or an expended mealie cob tied round the waist.[84] This is to show that he or she was not married, and further, that it was not the wish of the remaining members that he or she should have died single, so the deceased should not be angry with anyone of them. He or she should be content with the provisions and rest in peace. Infants are buried in river beds, or any other wet place. If this is not possible, some water weeds are planted on their graves or interred with them.[85] This is probably because infants are considered to be fluid, like water, as demonstrated in the language describing the death of an infant: it is said *yadeuka* (it has spilled). In a traditional setting, there is no weeping and wailing for an infant, and people are not supposed to gather. Men are not part of the burial party of an infant. An infant is closely associated with the womb, so people who identify with the womb are the ones who should take care of it. The womb is a wet place, so burying the infant in a wet place is giving it its natural environment. In turn this will not adversely affect the mother's womb. It is held in some places that if an infant is buried in a dry place with no water symbolism, the mother's womb will be affected and she might not be able to have any more children, her womb will be dry.[86]

After the burial everyone present is expected to make their way to the home through designated points where dishes of water, mixed with herbs, are strategically placed for

---

[84] See interviews with T.Mukwishu p.407, E. Chinyeke p.384 and M. Shoko p.411.

[85] E.B.Magava in J.A.Dachs, Christianity South of the Zambezi, Vol.1, p.152. See V. Sachikonye p.432 below, and interviews with M. Chikonamombe p.381 and E. Chinyeke p.384.

[86] E.B.Magava, in J.A.Dachs, Christianity South of the Zambezi, Vol.1, p.155.

them to wash at least their hands. The herb is called *zumbani*, a smelly plant with small bright green leaves.[87] It is used as a disinfectant. As people wash their hands the grits of soil stuck in their fingernails drop into the water, and any contaminants are taken care of by the *zumbani.* This is done to ensure that no one transports this death to their own homes. As people enter the home they are asked to sit down so that they can be fed. In keeping with tradition, this feeding process marks the conclusion of the funeral. On leaving people just make their way without necessarily telling anyone that they are leaving. This is because it is believed that if you bid anyone farewell at a funeral you are actually inviting death. At an opportune time "the *sahwira* sprinkles some medicine in the house of the dead man to make it habitable for the living."[88] In all circumstances the *sahwira* should be respected and given what is due to him for his duties. Even after this he continues to play a vital role in receiving those who come to express their condolences to the blood relatives, and shows them the grave.

1.4.3. Ceremonies immediately after burial

After the burial, close relatives of the deceased remain behind tidying up the surroundings of the grave. In some places they actually sweep the place so that they will be able to detect if the place has been tampered with by witches in the night.

---

[87] Eli Magava, in J.A. Dachs, Christianity South of the Zambezi, op.cit.,p.155, says *zumbani*, "is usually used as a strong smelling shrub that may remove the smell of death." Once again the idea of avoiding pollution can be traced in this practice.

[88] D.M. Mandaza, "Traditional Ceremonies which Persist," in Clive & Peggy Kilef, (eds) Shona Customs, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1970, p.56.

Because of this concern, the elderly relatives are the last to leave the site. They also commend the deceased to the ancestors as Mandaza vividly describes:

> When burial is complete, everybody goes away while the old men of the clan gather round the grave and hand over by prayer the spirit of the dead to the ancestors. They all clap and the head of the family says, 'Here is your person whom you have taken from us. We now hand him to you, welcome him in the spirit world and also look after us who are left outside.'[89]

As they come back home they are not to wash their hands in the water that everybody else has used. The reason for this is simply that for them death has already struck; it is in their home. What they need is strength to cope with it. In traditional thinking they also need protection, for themselves and the home, that death does not strike again. They gather together in the hut or room where the deceased was, and there they undergo a kind of purification rite usually led by a herbalist, before they mix freely with the rest of the people.[90] Meanwhile the people are being fed and those who have been fed are leaving .

In the evening of the day of the burial, family members come together for consultation and delegation of duties. There are people who are given the duty of checking on the state of the grave . Some are assigned to go to a *n'anga* to find out what caused the death and whether the deceased has any grievances. Some people send this delegation secretly before burial, in which case this would be their reporting back time. Other people are appointed to take care of the black cloths, the pieces of cloth that all

---

[89] Ibid., p.56.

[90] This small ceremony is meant to prevent further deaths in the family. See interviews with G.Dete p.387 and G. Mashura p.400.

close relatives pin to their shirt or dress sleeve. These can even start working on their materials that evening, if they have not already done so. This consultation can be viewed as the summing up of the death formalities and the beginning of the acknowledgement of the dead.[91]

Early the next day, all the relatives go to their various assigned duties. Those assigned to check on the grave are the ones everybody most wants to hear from. If anything is the matter, the concern will be passed on to those who go to consult a *n'anga*. The *n'anga* will then help them to know who tampered with the grave. If all is well with the grave, the grave inspectors simply come back home and join the rest of the family in waiting for the time of other ceremonies. When that time comes, all members are gathered together, their heads are shaven, as a sign of (a) the bareness that has befallen them, (b)solidarity, (c) symbolically acknowledging that death defaces.[92]

Depending on the region and local customs, this is also the time when they are given pieces of black cloth to stick onto their shirt or jacket sleeves, as a sign of their bereavement. The widow or widows, are given black dresses and black head gear.[93] This is a modification of traditional usage under European influence, as Magava notes, "before the Europeans came to Rhodesia an African who was bereaved had a customary way of showing this ... and in Mashonaland it was the wearing of *mupfuti*

---

[91] See interviews with Munhikwi Shoko p.411 and R.Chenzira p.378.

[92] This explanation was given to the writer while he was a participant observer, Harare, 2.8.99.

[93] E.Magava, in J.A.Dachs, Christianity South of the Zambezi, op. cit. p.152.

fibre round the neck."[94] Elderly women help to dress the widow(s). These clothes are to be worn at all times till the big ceremony of *kurova guva,* calling home the dead, is completed. This dress should not be sewn, or patched up should it start wearing out, as it is believed that sewing or patching it will have adverse effects on the wearer. She will be a perpetual victim of death. Where the family cannot afford a new black dress, the widow(s), will continue to wear their usual dresses, but turned inside out. Both the black dress and the wearing of dresses inside out symbolize that the sprits have treated the widow(s) unfavourably.

A widower puts on a black arm band, which should go round the whole arm. This symbolizes that he has lost his other hand. Society in general is considerate towards these people because it understands the symbolism. The mourning period up to *kurova guva*, varies from six months to a year, depending on circumstances and local customs. During this whole period no joyous occasions such as marriages and anniversaries are celebrated in this home. It is black, *musha mutema*, literally meaning that the home is black, a traditional way of referring to bereavement. The bereaved may however go to joyous occasions celebrated in the community.

1.4.4. The tool cleansing rite

Traditionally, about one or two weeks after the burial the rite of the cleansing of the

---

[94] Ibid., p.152.

tools takes place in the home of the deceased. We should note that on the day of the burial no special care was taken of the digging tools. This is probably because the diggers were tired and hungry as they were absorbed into the group of mourners, for the interment. They did not have time to clean the tools they were using. Traditionally, tool cleansing is important enough to need a separate rite, so these tools are stored in the home of the dead for sometime until the rite is performed. At this ceremony the diggers take stock of all the tools they used, which are then cleansed and handed back to their owners.

The purpose of this ceremony is twofold: (a) to cleanse the tools and those who were involved with the grave, and (b) to console the bereaved. Its Shona name actually explains it clearly; *kusuka nhumbi,* meaning cleansing the implements or *doro retsvina*, (the beer of dirt). As the alternative name suggests, there is beer drunk at this ceremony. This beer "is brewed by the *sahwira's* wife or wives at the deceased man's home. This is a very simple ceremony and beer drinking and tribal dancing are the important features."[95] The most important guests at this ceremony are those who dug the grave and those who carried stones to put onto the grave. They drink this beer and also use it to cleanse themselves and the tools they used, and they share it with other people present. Because this beer is for a special purpose it is dedicated to the spirits, and in some places it is treated by a *n'anga.* This is done so that 'contamination is removed from the implements.' Chabudapasi explains the procedure for us:

> The beer is put in clay pots. The washing starts with the first person who dug

---

[95] Ibid.p.57.

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM LIBRARY

> the grave. These people are washed so that they are free from any misfortunes which might come from burying the dead person. The person who first dug the grave takes beer with a cup (*mukombe*) in his hand. He pours beer on his legs. The others wash their hands in the beer and the main guests come in turns to be washed. The process of washing is called *kutiva* (swimming) and the pot is called *hari yamativo* (the pot for swimming).[96]

As the beer is drunk and the tools washed the bereaved are encouraged to think positively about the death, and accept their plight, since death does not end life. They are actually teased about it. Should anyone be overcome by emotion and burst into tears or even break down, he/she is not frowned on. Instead this is considered a healthy way of dealing with the reality of death. Traditionally people are not supposed to bottle up emotions relating to death . So if anyone is overcome by emotion in the process, the ceremony is hailed as a success. The cause of death is then revealed to the people. "If the deceased was murdered, the spirit may be told here not to be angry with its family members, but to punish the offender(s) or murderer(s)."[97] This is known as *kuriga mazembe*. "Then the rest of the beer is given to the people and they drink while beating drums and singing traditional songs in honour of the ancestors."[98]

Those who had lent their tools: shovels, picks, crowbars, hoes and whatever else, are free to collect them. They no longer have the dirt and contamination of death on them.[99]

---

[96] T. Chabudapasi, "Three Ceremonies for the Dead," in Clive & Peggy Kilef, (eds) Shona Customs, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1970, pp. 64-65.

[97] C.S.Banana, Come and Share, p.83.

[98] T.Chabudapasi, in Clive & Peggy Kilef, (eds) Shona Customs, p.65.

[99] W.Bozongwana, Ndebele Religion and Customs, p.29.

It should be noted that 'the dedication of the beer to the spirits is the only conscious invocation of the spirits.' This means that there is no set way of concluding the ritual.[100]

1.5 VIEWS ON THE DEAD

In Shona Traditional Religion, immortality is part of the espoused beliefs about God and humanity. For the Shona it is an inherent God-given quality rooted in human nature.[101] The body, by its nature, must die, but the spirit cannot. There is therefore little doubt that immortality is an integral element of the African understanding of humanity. Not only does it give content to what is done with the dead at death; it also shapes the rituals thereof. For this reason the African will want to engage with the rituals of death and the dead in a traditionally responsible manner. Ezeanya explains why, when he observes that the African's:

> most important reason for believing what he believes and doing what he does is that it was handed down to him: his father and his grandfather believed and practised those things , and any deviations would be calling for trouble from the invisible world.[102]

Given that "without exception, African peoples believe that death does not annihilate life and that the departed continue to exist in the hereafter,"[103] this is a fitting

---

[100] See p.52, above.

[101] C. S. Banana, Come and Share, p.78-9. In his research Banana found that "they (the Shona) maintain that after the physical death of the body the soul continues to live. The immortal soul 'resurrects' and comes to live again in its community or family."

[102] S.N.Ezeanya, "God, Spirits and the Spirit world," in K. Dickson & P. Ellingworth, (eds) Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs, London: Lutterworth Press, 1972, p.35.

[103] J.S. Mbiti, Concepts of God in Africa, London: SPCK, 1970, p.264.

observation. Death and the dead have to be taken seriously, if the living are to enjoy the wholeness of community. For example, the occurrence of death is regarded as a message from the spirit world. It could be communicating that (a) the living have offended their ancestors or (b) that the ancestors have lost their protective powers. Both interpretations of death call for a consultation of some kind, so that the death's real cause can be established. In the light of this understanding of death, the dead cease to be considered as detached from the lives of their living relatives. They become 'the living-dead' proper, simply meaning that though they are physically dead they are spiritually alive. This adequately qualifies the Shona people's immortality beliefs; that the dead are in the family all the time.

The dead are believed to be part of the family. This is born witness to by the fact that what the deceased said before his or her death is highly respected, especially if the deceased lived a traditionally exemplary life. Such a deceased's wishes are happily fulfilled, provided they are known, that is, they are a kind of 'last will and testament.' These mostly deal with the issue of inheritance of the property and/or the wife or wives. At times the deceased handles the distribution of his or her own estate before he or she dies. In this case he or she gives family members what he or she wants each of them to have. This is highly honoured, when it occurs.[104]

The living-dead, *varipasi* (the departed), are generally believed to be endowed with

---

[104] See interviews with G.Mashura, p.400 and K. Shumba p.419.

supernatural powers. They are traditionally expected to use these powers to protect their living family members from any possible harm. This understanding presupposes a form of communication between the two. Rituals and sacrifices are the means through which this relationship is maintained. If the living neglect these rituals, the living- dead are believed to demand them in diverse ways, including allowing or causing sickness to strike, or even death. Under normal circumstances, it is the living who voluntarily offer the living-dead something. The language used at such an offering is intimate and free of formalities; in this the Shona people are similar to the Akamba, of whom Mbiti says:

> Words are uttered not in the form of prayers but to the effect that, "may you (living-dead) receive this beer or piece of meat!" Another formula is, "We give you, the community of our grandfathers, this little amount of beer so that you may drink it with us."[105]

On account of this belief in immortality the living-dead are held in great intimacy. These friendly insinuations are to ensure that they continue to be benign towards members of their living family. This belief is anchored in the conception that "man does not depart from his physicalness even if he dies, but becomes a living-dead, and finally a spirit."[106]

1.5.1 Kurova guva

Kurova guva, literally "beating the grave", or *kudzora* (to bring back), or *kugadzira* (to repair or to tame), are terms used variably to describe the ceremony of officially inviting

---

[105] J.S. Mbiti, New Testament Eschatology in an African Background, Oxford: OUP, 1971, pp. 91-92.

[106] Ibid. p.63. See also interviews with M.Chikonamombe p.381 and N. Manatsa p.393.

home the spirit of the deceased.[107] This ceremony has significance for both the dead and the living, for it breaks the barrier between them. The dead person's spirit is brought back home as an act of repairing the relationship which was broken by death. Giving the spirit of the deceased a place in the home through ritual observance, is synonymous with giving it a place in the spirit world. Perhaps it is correct to state that the dead technically become the effective ancestors after this ceremony.

The ceremony is usually held any time from six months after the burial. In some regions it is held as close as possible to a year after the burial depending on when the *gonye* is noticed. The *gonye* is the worm that signals the deceased's readiness to be brought back home. When it appears it means that the body has decayed. The ceremony is "intended only for adults; (usually those with progeny)."[108] It is usually held in their honour. This is because adults are expected to use their parenting experience more effectively from their place in the the spirit world. When they are invited back home, they are to fulfill their parental role effectively by advising and guiding proceedings. In these beliefs we are actually reminded of some of the significant ideas on death and the dead, namely, that (a) "the occurrence of death is not considered to mark the cessation of life....." and (b) "death does not sever the bond between the living and the dead."[109] These conceptions of death and the dead give the *kurova guva*

---

[107] This is one ceremony on which there is much written material. That partly demonstrates its importance in (a) Shona understanding of death and the dead and (b) establishing the continuity of relationships between the living and the dead.

[108] I. Daneel, Quest for Belonging, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1987, p.237.

[109] K.A. Dickson, Theology in Africa, London: Darton Longman & Todd Ltd, 1984, p.193.

ceremony its force. Bourdillon, from a sociological viewpoint, recaptures these beliefs and their implications convincingly by looking at the whole process from death to *kurova guva* as ontological stages. He argues that the dead have to go through these stages before being reintegrated into society, stating that:

> typically they are divided into three main stages: a rite of disassociation in which the person departs from the community and from his/her old status, sometimes symbolised as death: a rite of separation, in which the person is cut off from the community for a while and learns his/her new role: and a rite of reintegration, in which the person is accepted back into community in his/her new status.[110]

This is probably why *kurova guva* is considered as "the most important ceremony after burial at which the deceased is given a passport to other ancestral spirits."[111] Since this rite is meant to bring together the living and their dead, all the procedures relating to it must be ritually acceptable. This involves the proper invocation of the spirit being called back home. Our concern is to look at how this ceremony helps us to understand death and the dead.

Those assigned the task of preparing the grain and the beer for the ceremony should be of acceptable moral standards. Sexual abstention is required before one may offer sacrifice or engage in ritual. The time of the year in which the ceremony is to be held is also of very great concern. Tradition has it that thunder frightens and disorients the ancestral spirits, so the ceremony is not to be held during the rainy season. Therefore, if the efficacy of the ceremony is to be guaranteed, the months from June to September

---

[110] M.F.C. Bourdillon, Religion and Society, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1990, p. 21. See also the classic, A.van Gennep, The Rites of Passage, London: Routledge & Kegen Paul, 1960.

[111] M. Gelfand, Growing up in a Shona Society, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1979, p.58.

are the most appropriate. It is also after harvest, when food is readily available.

The grain, with which to prepare the beer for consumption during the ceremony, must be handled by old women who have passed child-bearing age. They are assisted by young girls who have not yet reached puberty. Usually these are close relatives of the deceased. This is because "it is believed that such people, who do not menstruate, are undefiled and are the right ones ... because menstrual blood is believed to be dangerous to the spirits."[112] It defiles.

There are four possible methods of soaking the grain. (a) Grain is measured and put into a jute bag, which is tied and soaked in a drum, where it should be fully submerged in water. It stays in the water for anything between twelve and twenty-four hours. (b) In some places the grain is poured directly into the drum of water for an appropriate period. When it is taken out of the drum it is then put into a jute bag.(c) Where there is plenty of water the grain might even be soaked in a stream. (d) Where there is a shortage of water, the grain is put into a bag which is then sprinkled with warm water. After the initial steps of soaking the grain are over it is put in a safe place, usually the hut of the old lady. It is kept there till it sprouts. When most of the grain has shoots about half an inch long, it is taken out of the bag for sun drying. The young girls look after it, so that the chickens and the birds do not eat it up. When it is completely dry, it is once again stored in a jute bag in the hut of the old lady.

---

[112] C.S. Banana, Come and Share, p.84.

This grain is prepared and processed manually; it should not be ground at the grinding mill, lest it take on the smell of diesel. Once it has this smell, it becomes unsuitable for the ceremony because spirits are believed to take offence at it. An old lady or ladies, and their assistants, the young girls, continue to be key players. The home brewed beer takes anything up to seven days to prepare. So a week before the day of the ceremony, those charged with the responsibility of brewing the beer start work. Notification and invitation of relatives to the ceremony should have been done long before then, as should all the other logistical preparations. Relatives who are free come and witness the dedication of the grain, and the whole beer-making process, to the ancestors.[113] From then onwards, belief in the involvement of the ancestors consciously influences the rest of the proceedings. On the actual day relatives, friends and neighbours gather at the homestead of the deceased for the ritual. The atmosphere is very relaxed. Large quantities of food, including some beer, are usually available.

I shall not here explore all the details of the ceremony, but only look at how it enhances our understanding of death and the dead. Though the ceremony begins in the evening, people start gathering during the day. As evening approaches the feasting intensifies, followed by singing and dancing which continues right through the night. At the crack of dawn, close relatives go to the grave with some beer in a calabash. They also have something which they will use symbolically in the bringing home of the spirit; this is

---

[113] See X. Marimazhira, p.440.

either a tree branch or some fibre, and some people sacrifice a goat.[114] The beer is shared at the grave and some of it is poured on the grave, usually on the headstone, (the stone which indicates where the head was placed).

The family elder calls the deceased by name and tells him or her that they have come to take him or her home. Words to this effect are said, "Father or Mother , we have brought you some food and we ask you therefore to come back home and guard your family."[115] The climax at the grave site is the act of ritually taking the spirit of the deceased home, *kutora mudzimu*. Some dancing takes place at and around the grave. Symbolically the family representative pulls the branch or fibre, or whatever symbol, around the grave once. He drags this symbol over the beer just poured out, and pulls it round the grave again till he or she comes to this starting point. It is from this point that he pulls the symbolic branch or fibre, leading the procession back into the home. A lot of singing and dancing accompanies this triumphant moment.

The dragging of the fibre or branch into the homestead is symbolic of the act of bringing home the spirit of the deceased. It marks the fact that the spirit has been tamed (*kugadzira*), for hitherto this spirit was believed to be dangerous and homeless. The ceremony means that its wandering period is over, it is now expected to be

---

[114] It is important to note that "when the party first approaches the grave, they take care not to disturb the spirit with excessive noise. When the beast is sacrificed, people try to prevent it from bleating and disturbing the spirit. When a branch is cut from the ceremonial tree, the man who performs this rite must take care to cut the branch with one clean stroke of his axe lest the sleeping spirit be awakened and escape." M.F.C. Bourdillon, The Shona people, p.247.

[115] T. Chabudapasi, in Clive & Peggy Kilef, (eds) Shona Customs, p.65.

responsible. Those in the homestead join in the singing, as a welcome to the spirit being brought home. They actually behave as people who are welcoming a real person into the home and lead the one pulling the fibre or branch into the kitchen. Inside the kitchen the symbolic item is placed either on a mat, if the spirit being brought home is of a female, or on a stool, if a male. This is giving the spirit its rightful place in the home. Chabudapasi clearly paints the picture in the home when he says, "there is singing and eating and beating of drums. It is a day of rejoicing. The old people drink to the health of the deceased's family. The cousins are allowed to steal as much meat as they like; thus they are called hyenas."[116]

To conclude the process of bringing the spirit of the deceased home, an additional goat is killed and the meat, in some places, eaten without salt. This goat has different names depending on the region. Some of the names are *mbudzi yeshungu* (goat of vengeance), or *mbudzi yenhorwa* (goat of strangers).[117] It is not to be eaten by the close relatives of the deceased. The goat plays a vital conciliatory role, so its bones are not to be broken, but disposed of through burning. This symbolizes that, if the deceased had a grievance with anyone, it should not break the relationship but simply dissolve, as the bones are consumed by fire.

After this, most of the relatives will leave the kitchen, but the wife of the deceased and her escorts remain behind. The deceased man's knobkerries, spears or whatever male

---

[116] Ibid. p.65.

[117] Gathered through informal interviews and being participant observer.

symbols, are brought to the doorway. They are laid across it so that the wife of the deceased jumps over them as she leaves the kitchen. Though the escorts are not part of the process, they respect the ritual by not jumping over the items. This is known as *kudarika uta.*[118] It is believed that if the wife of the deceased had been engaging in sexual relationships since the death of her husband, jumping over these items breaks her back. So if she engaged in sexual relationships she will refuse to jump over them, in which case they are removed. On the other hand, if she maintained her purity she will comfortably jump over them.

Male relatives of the deceased, including his children, are made to sit on a mat. The eldest son is then ritually named after the deceased. This means that he has taken over his father's responsibilities, as head of the family. At a particular time, the wife of the deceased is given a dish of water which she should give to the male relative of her choice, *kugarwa nhaka,* indicating willingness to be inherited as wife, by that relative. We should note that she is not forced into being inherited, for she can hand the dish to her own son. This means she wants to stay in her home and look after her children. It is believed that the spirit of her deceased husband continues to assist her in this responsibility, especially if he had indicated to her that she should not be inherited.

The mourning clothes and pieces of black cloth are taken off and burnt in the fire that consumed the bones from the goat of reconciliation. Mourning is over, the black cloud has been lifted, the home is clear and everything has returned to normal for the family.

---

[118] Corroborated by G.Mashura, p.400.

The deceased, now a living-dead, will have joined the communion of ancestral spirits. 'A beast of the ancestors,' usually a bull, is chosen. This beast hosts the spirit of the deceased person for whom *kurova guva* has been done. The heir, the one who was given the father's name, usually cares for it. In the traditional understanding the beast is "the continuing presence of the living-dead in the family and among his people."[119] If such a beast is slaughtered during the heir's illness, this is believed to anger the spirits, and hasten the death. However, the beast may be slaughtered after the death of the family head, to provide food for the mourners, and a blanket for the deceased, as already noted.[120]

There is a ritual ceremony for the choosing of the beast of the ancestors. In some areas the beast must be black, but even in areas where it is not strictly to be black, the beast must have one colour. When the time comes to choose it, close relatives of the deceased lead the heir to the cattle kraal. This is usually done in the morning before the animals go for pasturage. The heir must pour water or beer on the beast's spine. It is believed that if the beast shakes itself immediately after the pouring of this water or beer, the ancestors have accepted it as a suitable host for the deceased. This beast is from henceforth exempted from the yoke. Whenever there is a problem in the family the beast is approached, as described by Bozongwana:

> When there is illness in the home, the head of the kraal will go to the ox (which symbolizes the deceased) very early in the morning and will talk vehemently to

---

[119] J.S. Mbiti, African Religions and Philosophy, Oxford: Heinemann,1990, p.148. See also interview with G. Mashura, p.400.

[120] See p.37. In which case this beast could then serve as the *mombe yenheedzo*.

> the spirits as he kneels beside the animal. In strong language the spirits are told to stop molesting and causing illness to the family. "If you don't protect your children, what is your work then?"[121]

If it was the spirit of the mother of the family being brought home, all other ceremonies would have been the same except for:

> (a) Giving of her name to someone; it is believed that she chooses the person to inherit her name at her own time and through her own means. (b) *Kudarika uta;* there is no equivalent ritual for a man. (c) *Kugarwa nhaka;* instead the man might be given a woman by his in-laws, usually one who was liked by the deceased. This is known as *chimutsa mapfihwa (*reviving the hearth). After the ceremony the man is also free to remarry. (d) The beast of the ancestors for a female person would not be an ox but a cow.[122]

There is provision for doing away with the beast of the ancestors should it be considered troublesome, or too old. Sango elaborates as follows:

> Beer is prepared and on the day of the ceremony, the bull is slaughtered. Then the guests and closest relatives drink its blood. They eat half the liver and other parts raw. They sing songs of praise and drink beer throughout the night. At daybreak a leader says a prayer.[123]

Though the *kurova guva* ceremony is not conducted uniformly in the different regions,

---

[121] W. Bozongwana, Ndebele Religion and Customs, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1983, p.31.

[122] D.M. Mandaza, in Clive & Peggy Kilef, (eds) Shona Customs, p. 59.

[123] P. Sango, "Some Important Shona Customs and Ceremonies", in Clive & Peggy Kilef, (eds) Shona Customs, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1970, p.74. Note should be taken of the fact that it is only the beast that has been taken away, the ceremonies are done to ensure that the ancestor who relates to the beast is still present and active in the home.

one thing is the same, the belief that the dead are present with the living. The way in which this presence is understood plays a major role in directing and shaping the proceedings. What is clear is that the ceremony is believed to be a point of communion between the living and the dead. Bozongwana helps us recapture the essence of this ceremony, when he says:

> The readmission of the recent dead man into the home in another form and capacity underlines the importance of their belief in immortality and the appeasement of the spirits. The sharing of the sacrificial meal secures permanent acceptance for belief in communion between the dead and the living.[124]

1.5.2a Relationship between the living and the dead.

The relationship between the living and the dead is not physical but spiritual. This spiritual relationship is modelled on the physical because "as a whole life beyond death is a copy of what it is in this world."[125] Locating the world of the departed is problematic; the Shona believe that, "it is around the homes of the human beings."[126] For this reason, the dead are believed to be part of their living families. They dwell here because they are still interested in the welfare of their living family members. Their relationship and interest, though spiritual, is intelligible to the living. Mbiti's observation, though specific to the Akamba, also applies to the Shona people. He writes:

> Information about the African societies seems to show that even where the dead

---

[124] W. Bozongwana, Ndebele Religion and Customs, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1983, p.30.

[125] J.S. Mbiti, New Testament Eschatology in an African Background, Oxford: OUP, 1971, p.157.

[126] J.S. Mbiti, Concepts of God in Africa, London: SPCK, 1970, p.257. This is specific to the Shona people.

> are buried with some of their possessions, the goods of this life are not transferable into the next. Without any clear explanation, however, many societies believe that if a person is rich in his human life he will continue to be rich in the next life, just as the poor, or thief, or kind hearted person, etc, continues to be as he was.[127]

Following this lead, there is a " physicalisation of the spirit world which, as we have noted above, is generally a carbon copy of the human world."[128] This also influences how relationships between the living and the dead are comprehended. For both the Ndebele and Shona people, the relationship between the living and their dead has significance after the *kurova guva* ceremony. The ceremony "is partly a symbolic way of reviving, summoning back, inviting back the departed, and thus renewing the contact with him in the next world; and partly declaring a formal resumption of life."[129] The deceased takes his or her rightful place within the family, and assumes spiritual responsibilities. Understanding the dead as " the living-timeless,"[130] probably sums up the relationship between them and their living relatives.

1.5.2b Significance of the relationship between the living and the dead.

The living-dead or the living-timeless, as we have noted, are believed to be endowed with supernatural powers. With these they provide protection to their living family

---

[127] J.S. Mbiti, New Testament Eschatology in an African Background, Oxford: OUP, 1971, p.72.

[128] Ibid. p.72. See the Shona people's *Kusuma* process, p.24.

[129] J.S. Mbiti, African Religions and Philosophy, Oxford: Heinemann, 1990, p.147.

[130] C.S. Banana, Come and Share, p.81.

members . A form of interrelating is assumed if this relationship is to prevail. Sacrifices from the living are acknowledgements of the communion which exists between the two groups. The intimacy of the language used at such ceremonies demonstrates the significance of the relationship. On the other hand, the place of the dead in mediating in the prayers of the living is also important. As Gelfand notes;

> The Shona also point out that the ancestral spirits are intermediary to god since it is never permitted for anyone to approach direct an important family figure, such as one's father, with whom contact can only be made on an important issue by an intermediary, such as the father's sister or younger brother *(baba mudiki)*. It is quite contrary to Shona practice for a son to deal with his father directly on an important issue. The same applies to *Mwari*.[131]

Another factor which makes the relationship significant is that the departed appear to the living. They do this in diverse ways, and for different reasons at different times. From his general study of Africa, Mbiti notes that:

> The departed appear generally to the older members of their surviving families, for a friendly visit, to enquire about family affairs, to warn of impending danger, or demand sacrifice or offering, or the observation of a particular request or command.[132]

One significant way in which the departed appear to their living is through dreams. To a great extent, for the Shona, dreams are a very strong medium of communication with the living-dead. At times solemn dreams are believed to precede spirit possession. Generally, it is believed that " dreams signify that a strong link exists between the

---

[131] M.Gelfand, The Genuine Shona, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1976, p.111. It should be noted that the *Kusuma* procedure guides and directs the interaction.

[132] J.S. Mbiti, Concepts of God in Africa, London: SPCK, 1970, p.266. Bozongwana from the Zimbabwean context writes, "dreams signify that a strong link exists between the dreamer and the ancestors who visit people in their sleep." W. Bozongwana, Ndebele Religion and Customs, p.16.

dreamer and the ancestors who visit people in their sleep."[133] If they maintain good relationships with their living-dead, their welfare is assured. The living neglect this relationship at their own peril.

1.5.3 Family membership of the dead

Family membership of the dead is dual, that is, they are family members in both the spiritual world and in the land of the living. This makes them special to the living. The dead are part of the family, hence the terms, living-dead or living-timeless. Their membership is spiritual, placing them nearer to God than the living. They have better insights on matters of the other world, so they are looked up to for guidance. It is believed that God sometimes makes them His messengers.

It is probably because of this that their family membership is considered crucial. Since they are interested in the welfare of their family members, they always plead for favourable conditions on their behalf. The day to day activities of the living depend on God, who is constantly addressed by these living-dead. We should not be surprised therefore that "when they go hunting they appeal jointly to God and the spirits."[134] The living-dead are called upon in recognition of their place as intermediaries between God and the living. Perhaps this is why they are sometimes referred to as 'the eyes and ears

---

[133] W.Bozongwana, Ndebele Religion and Customs, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1983, p.16.

[134] J. S. Mbiti, Concepts of God in Africa, London: SPCK, 1970, p.269.

of God.'

Family membership of the dead in the land of the departed is such that the recently dead is the one who is responsible for passing on requests from the living. He or she understands the languages of both worlds and knows the predicaments of the living, since he or she is nearest to them. We should however note that membership of the family of the living fades with generations, and so does influence. For this reason "when one prays, one prays to the recently dead father spirit and mentions the ancestors last because custom only allows this kind of approach - from the known to the unknown."[135]

As noted above, not every deceased person is accorded this family membership. It is only those who lived responsible and exemplary lives. What this means is that one has to earn the honour of being an ancestor. Shorter is very precise when he says, "in many situations the dead earn their good repute and the religious offerings of their posterity by leading a good life."[136] They are to be people who inspire others, a role model and a specimen of a real parent. These are the people who are accorded all the honours, from the time of their death through to ancestor veneration. Having said this, it is important to note Shorter's words which, though written out of a different context, also reflect Shona people's beliefs. He observes that "there are large numbers of

---

[135] W. Bozongwana, Ndebele Religion and Customs, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1983, p.17.

[136] A. Shorter, African Christian Theology: Adaptation or Incarnation, London: Macmillan Publishers, 1975, p.124.

deceased who never become ancestors, children, barren women or sterile men, cripples and social dropouts, people who die far away from their homeland, outcasts and those who in any way incur social censure or disapproval."[137]

Some of these become ghosts and/or evil spirits that possess people, *mashavi*. *Mashavi* can be either good or bad spirits, so they can be benign or malevolent; some may be family spirits, while some are wandering spirits. Wandering spirits lead their hosts astray, because they were probably wayward themselves during their lifetime. In spite of all this , even the spirits of misfits live on.

On the other hand, if the deceased had some skills like hunting, or carving or any expertise, his or her spirit is greatly valued. Most people will do everything in their power to attract it to themselves, so that they can be possessed by it. In a sense people offer themselves to be its host. The deceased is believed to be the tutor and instructor of the person he or she finally chooses. Not only does the spirit live on, but also the skills of the deceased. This makes his or her family membership more valuable and desirable.

1.6 CONCLUSION

African Traditional Religion embraces life in a practical and responsible manner. It is

---

[137] Ibid. p.126.

a religion and a way of life rooted in the day to day challenges of existence. The Shona people, in common with its other adherents, derive a sense of belonging and identity from it. Within it there is also provision for coping with life and its changes, which include death and the dead.

Its understanding of God enables its followers to make sense of the universe, the community and themselves.

Humanity is comprehended in a way which espouses its dichotomous nature. This gives rise to a spirituality which recognises humanity as having two aspects, namely, a physical, dying nature and a spiritual, immortal one. Ceremonies and rituals which surround death and the dead, in Shona perception, have content because of these beliefs. Naturally therefore, death is seen not as annihilation, but as a separation of the natures. The immortal soul continues to be part of the family, guarding and guiding the living. Though the relationship between the living and the dead is spiritual, physicalisation of the spirit world makes it meaningful. The dead are indeed in communion with the living, hence they are rightly called 'the living-dead' or 'the living-timeless.' They are endowed with supernatural powers with which to protect their living from spiritually harmful forces. So, maintaining good relationships with them is beneficial. In addition to this, the deceased's lifetime behaviour inspires responsible living in his or her living family members. This is because they want to be honoured when they also die and so be on the ancestral roll. That way, they continue to be part of the community.

As we have noted, in Shona tradition, to deal fully with death, bereavement and the dead there should be provision for (a) wailing and weeping (b) drums, dancing and beer (c) ceremonies, rituals and some specific practices and (d) ancestral involvement. These became areas of deep conflict with Christianity, from the missionary era to the present. This will be the subject of the following chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

THE MISSIONARY ERA

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The period we designate as the missionary era in this study stretches from 1891 to 1981 when the leadership of the diocese became indigenous. Obviously 1891 marks the beginning of the history of the establishment of the Diocese of Mashonaland, now Harare. This was characterised by the arrival of missionaries in the company of the Pioneer Column. Zvobgo clearly captures this historical reality as he writes:

> When the Pioneer Column - the spearhead of the white settlers - set off to Mashonaland in 1890, the Jesuit missionary, Fr. Andrew Hartman, accompanied it as Chaplain. Canon Balfour of the Anglican Diocese of Bloemfontein also accompanied the Pioneer Column as Chaplain. Cecil John Rhodes on behalf of the B.S.A. Company, gave the Anglicans £600 towards the expenses of Anglican Missions in Mashonaland.[1]

In fact Canon Francis Richard Townley Balfour was the Senior Chaplain,[2] accompanied by fellow Anglican Chaplains namely, Rev Frank Harold Surridge and Wilson Trusted. Mashonaland, vaguely described as being 'to the north and east of the Matabele,"[3] formally became a diocese in 1891. The facts surrounding its formation are that:

---

[1] C.J.M. Zvobgo, A History of Christian Missions in Zimbabwe 1890-1939, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1996, p.3.

[2] H.St. John T.Evans, The Church in Southern Rhodesia, London: S.P.C.K., 1945, p.11.

[3] H.St. John T. Evans, The Church in Southern Rhodesia, p.10.

> At the South African Provincial Synod held in January and February,1891 Mashonaland was formed into a Diocese and G.W.H. Knight-Bruce who had been Anglican Bishop of Bloemfontein since 1885, and who, after his first visit to Matabeleland and Mashonaland in 1888, had advocated the establishment of an English protectorate over the Shona in order to protect them from the 'inhuman cruelties' of the Ndebele, was appointed to take charge of it.[4]

With the Diocese thus established the missionaries had to get to work. In the process of carrying out their duties we notice traces of the influence of their home background, which we need to understand. It is essential for our investigation of their approach to the Shona people and their traditional views on death and the dead. Finally we need to assess their teaching on death and the dead; in chapter three we will review the responses of the Shona people to the missionary approach.

1981 saw an indigenous, missionary-trained Shona cleric become the Diocesan Bishop of Mashonaland. Arnold, a journalist, tells us:

> On 12th May, 1981, the Rt Rev Peter Hatendi, Suffragan Bishop of Mashonaland, was elected the eighth Bishop of Mashonaland and the first African Bishop to hold the See. He was enthroned on 28th June at another of the great services which have been typical of the Cathedral of St Mary and All Saints over the years.[5]

2.2 HISTORICAL SETTING

Most of the clergy who came to Mashonaland as missionaries were from Great Britain. Some were entering their second phase of ministry in Africa, having spent the first

---

[4] C.J.M.Zvobgo op.cit., p.3.

[5] W.E. Arnold, Here to Stay: The Story of the Anglican Church in Zimbabwe, Sussex: The Book Guild Ltd, 1985, p.154.

phase in South Africa. We are, however, not going to concern ourselves with how the Anglican Church in South Africa dealt with the local traditional cultures, though a few lessons can be learnt from that phase. In Mashonaland as in the South African mission field, 'Mission stations' were established as the centre of influence, and several missionary families lived there together. This meant that missionaries could reconstruct a "home away from home" atmosphere, where they continued to promote familiar traditions. One such custom was the mission tea party. This was a social gathering for all mission residents, which in many ways resembled "that typical English institution, 'the parish tea' and explains its underlying social and evangelical purpose."[6] It provided the missionaries with an opportunity to meet and mix with the Shona people in a relaxed atmosphere, hence the evangelical aspect.

At the official level, the Anglican Church in South Africa was sharply divided on how to approach local African cultures. The Rt. Reverend William Colenso, Bishop of Natal, Suffragan to Bishop Robert Gray of Cape Town, caused considerable controversy. He believed that African cultures should be accorded recognition and approached with respect. This comes through in his famous statement on justification. He wrote, "justfication extends to all, to those who have never heard the name of Christ, and who cannot have exercised a living faith in Christ, as well as Christians."[7] Bishop Gray seems not to have shared these sentiments. This disagreement between Colenso and

---

[6] J.C.Farrant, Mashonaland Martyr: Bernard Mizeki and the Pioneer Church, Cape Town, O.U.P., 1966, p.32.

[7] A.M.G.Stephenson, The First Lambeth Conference 1867, London: S.P.C.K., 1967, p. 29.

Gray eventually led to the calling of the first of the now historical Lambeth Conferences. It is against such a background that we see the Anglican missionaries coming into Mashonaland.

We have already noted that many Anglican missionaries to Mashonaland had served in the mission field in South Africa, and would have been influenced by their experience there. However, to understand the intricacies of the situation fully, we need to go further and examine the home background of the missionaries. It is important to note that (a) the early European world view had some similarities with the traditional African one and (b) that some of these early ideas are still important.

In the Britain of the 18th and 19th centuries, the Church constantly found itself being challenged by its own context. Developments in the intellectual and scientific spheres led to the questioning of some of its teaching. Not only did the church have to adjust to its context, it also had to respond to the questions that were being raised. More than anything, it is its responses which are of significance to our study. It is clear from Roebuck's observation that the Church's responses varied. He notes that:

> Intellectual developments either contradicted the teaching of the church, as did Darwin's work, discounted it, as in the case of Marx, or simply ignored it, as did the work of the increasingly influential body of scientists. Some churches reacted by condemning all scientists and thinkers and thus alienated large segments of the educated population. Others seemed caught in a paralysis of indecision.[8]

---

[8] J. Roebuck, The Making of Modern English Society from 1850, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973, p.61-62.

This change is evident in thinking about death and the dead, which also went through a process of evolution. Attitudes were adopted, nursed, and reshaped, at times under the influence of social change. Some of the new variations were branded Christian, even though their observance was sometimes prescribed by Acts of Parliament.[9] This state of affairs was perpetuated by the fact that Anglican clergy were assumed to hold society together, they were arms of the state. Gilbert states it succinctly when he observes and classifies the rites of the Church of England, especially noting their effects on the people's lives. He notes that its:

> non-recurrent rites - baptism, confirmation, marriages, and funerals - contributed to the maintenance of communal solidarity at times of individual and social crisis; and annual rituals or festivals which it sponsored or legitimated helped bind a local society together in the natural cycles of rural existence; and its recurrent rites and services were seen, in true Durkheimian terms, as means by which the social group reaffirms itself periodically.[10]

All this confirmed the status of the Anglican Clergy both in statutory and ecclesiastical terms. What did ordination into Anglican orders mean? Gilbert helps us to both understand the position and answer the question, as he observes that:

> Ordination as an Anglican clergyman obliged a man to be more than just a minister of the Gospel. Indeed, the suggestion that a person was committed more to 'secular' responsibilities of his office than to his spiritual and priestly functions would not necessarily have been regarded as a criticism in the eighteenth - and early nineteenth - century Establishment.[11]

This is a very significant point, because it helps us see the missionary clergy in

---

[9] R.P. Flindall, The Church of England 1815-1948, London: S.P.C.K., 1972, p.239.

[10] A.D. Gilbert, Religion and Society in Industrial England: Church, Chapel and Social Change 1740-1914, London: Longman Group Ltd, 1976, p.75.

[11] Ibid., p.74.

perspective. In our endeavour to understand the missionaries in terms of their historical setting, we should be conscious of the fact that "many of the things that people regularly do and believe have been taught to them by parents, teachers, peers and institutions."[12] Our missionary clergy are not an exception.

2.3 MISSIONARY APPROACHES

Anglican missionary work in Mashonaland had certain characteristics, most of them related to the fact that the Church had settler origins. Its mission and pastoral care programmes were originally designed for the settlers rather than the local indigenous people. We can appreciate this position if we understand that when the Pioneer Column arrived at Fort Salisbury on the 12th September 1890 it still had most of its original 130 men. They needed to be ministered to if they were to give their best under strange and difficult conditions. In the early days of Mashonaland, we see a colony in which the "history of Church and State has been closely interwoven from the beginning, a colony which owes an incalculable debt to its pioneers, settlers and missionaries, who were inspired by a noble ambition - to make a country."[13] The senior Chaplain and missionary, Canon Francis Balfour, in a brief description of the events of the 13th September 1890 clearly demonstrates this partnership. He says:

> there was a full-dress parade, when the flag was hoisted. Both forces were drawn up before the flag-post. The Colonel (Lt. Col E G Pennefather), Staff

---

[12] D.W. Moller, Confronting Death: Values, Institutions and Human mortality, Oxford: O.U.P., 1996, p.4.

[13] Evans op.cit., in the preface.

> officer Gallop and myself - in cassock - stood at the post. The flag was run up. I addressed the force in two or three words; said 'Prevent us, O Lord;' twenty-one guns were fired; all saluted the flag and shouted three cheers for the Queen.[14]

This simple description of events marks the official occupation of Mashonaland by both settlers and missionaries. It was also the beginning of a history of relationships between the missionaries and the Shona people.

Though the missionaries were eager to engage in missionary work, that is, in evangelism and Church planting, they did minimal work among the local people. A number of factors come into play here, the prominent one being the language. The missionaries did not know the local language. Having a hierarchical structure did not help the situation either, especially because the leaders had to do everything. So Canon Francis Balfour had to be both the Chaplain to the Pioneer Community and the missionary to the local people. Obviously this was too demanding a task, as Evans illustrates:

> Poor Canon Balfour had an uphill task. Besides being singlehanded, he was torn between the duty imposed upon him by the mission of Christianizing the natives and that of ministering to the spiritual needs of the Pioneers with whom he arrived and among whom he had to make friends. I think that his inclinations were towards the latter, but he bravely made several expeditions on foot to the native districts. As a missionary to the heathen he was set a hopeless task. What possible impression could one man make upon hundreds of thousands of savages scattered over an area the size of France, and steeped in witchcraft and the grossest forms of paganism?[15]

---

[14] Ibid., p.12.

[15] Ibid., p.12. See also Arnold, Here to stay, p. 13. Both these authors quote Hugh Marshall Hole, a historian who wrote Old Rhodesian Days.

There is something of 'better the devil I know' in Canon Balfour's approach. The pressure of the Church's settler origins is also traceable in the ministry of Bishop George Knight-Bruce's early days of ministry in this missionary diocese. Most of his time was spent in travelling in search of land for the establishment of 'mission stations'.[16] There was no pattern of pastoral care for the natives even in the Bishop's approach. The nearest he got to it was the strategic stationing in selected villages of the catechists he had brought with him from South Africa.[17] It was up to the catechists how they approached the local people and what pastoral care system they put in place. We should however note that the catechists themselves needed pastoral care, but hardly got it. Perhaps it was assumed that, since they were stationed among fellow natives, that was pastoral care enough for them. Evans helps us to understand the Bishop's engagements as he notes:

> On June 1st he reached Umtali (Mutare), where he had already planned to establish a mission station. He spent the next six months travelling almost incessantly between Umtali and Salisbury (Harare), selecting suitable places for the native Catechists whom he had brought up from South Africa, and dealing with all the manifold business, spiritual and material, of the growing work. One of his most important tasks at this time was to come to an agreement with Dr Jameson about the acquisition of land for the mission in various parts of the country.[18]

The pioneer Bishop, just like other members of the Pioneer Column, joined the race for

---

[16] We discuss these later on under 'Mission Stations,' p.88.

[17] Evans, p.13.

[18] Evans op.cit., p. 13.

land allocation by the British South Africa Company on behalf of the settler church.[19]

There were fundamentally two distinctive features in the Anglican missionary approach to the Shona people. Both of them were not unrelated to the settler origins of the Church. They were (a) prejudice and (b) a sense of superiority.[20] Backgrounds and personalities contributed to the consolidation of these attitudes. Missionaries felt that they were better than the Shona people because they could read and write, and above all, they were Christians. Unfortunately this led to discrimination against, and despising of, the indigenous black people of the country which is traceable to the present.

These prejudices were against black people in general, hence the missionaries could judge their character and find fault with them at will.[21] In a report to SPG, Etheridge, an Anglican missionary, refers to the populace as "undisciplined people."[22] Settlers who had previous contact with both the Shona and Ndebele contributed to the

---

[19] Pascoe reports that, "much time was now devoted to arranging details of the native land question. All over the country the Bishop, with the assistance of Dr. Rundle and Mr. Pelly (the Church alone seeing to this question), secured blocks of land to serve as native reserves in the event of the Mashona being crowded out by the white man. Later on other arrangements were deemed advisable by the authorities. C.F.Pascoe, Two Hundred Years of S.P.G. 1701-1900, p.366b.

[20] This is not surprising given the fact that these missionaries did not trust their own parishioners back home. See above under 'Church of England Parish System', p.92.

[21] Bishop George Knight-Bruce reveals some of his own prejudices when he speaks of one of his catechists who stayed among the Shona people. He also judges the characters of the Zulu and Ndebele people using the Shona people. He writes, "Frank (a native Zulu) had since I left him (Easter 1892) worked a very good garden and mission corn field being well liked by the Native Mashona, a most valuable contrast to his raiding and destroying brothers the Matabele." E48, USPG Archives, 1893.

[22] E 58b, USPG Archives, 1893.

misconceptions. For them "the black people living in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) at the end of the nineteenth century were divided into two groups ... A man was either a Matabele or a Mushona."[23] Missionaries shared these misconceptions and even wrote official documents wherein they endorsed them. Bishop George Knight-Bruce used these prejudices against the Mashona and the Matabele as reason for engaging in mission. He wrote to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG):

> One of the oldest inhabitants (presumably Mushona) said to me: 'The Matabele are taught from their childhood to murder, lie and steal' Describing the despised *(by whom? my comment)* and downtrodden Mashona the Bishop continued: It is easy to see how these wretched creatures - wretched only in character - fall a prey to the Matabele, though they might meet a Matabele *impi* with ten to one they have not the slightest idea of uniting: no one seems to have any authority, for no one seems to inspire respect among a people who have too little self-respect themselves to reverence others .... However, it must not be forgotten that they are a nation of slaves, taken when they were wanted apparently, and that they have inherited, possibly, the usual characteristics of slaves. Yet, with all their faults, they are a pleasanter people to deal with than the Matabele. In general character they are, I think superior.' The two nations; he concluded, 'are the greatest argument for missions I know'.[24]

Bishop George Knight-Bruce wrote this report after his 1888 visit to Mashonaland. His knowledge of the Matabele was partly that given to him by settlers and that which he got while passing through their territory. Limited as his knowledge was, he was in a position to advocate the establishment of an English Protectorate over the Shona in

---

[23] Farrant op.cit., p. 90.

[24] Evans op.cit. p.11. In Pascoe he is recorded as having said, "to have seen these people, and to have had dealings with them - to have seen fallen humanity untouched by the regenerating influences of Christianity - is an argument for the necessity of Missions such as nothing else could provide, should the command to Christianise all nations not carry sufficient force." C.F.Pascoe, Two Hundred Years of S.P.G. 1701-1900, p.364.

order to protect them from the "inhuman cruelties of the Ndebele."[25] The report that he sent was sympathetically received, partly because his prejudices were shared by many people back home, particularly the reference to slavery. Evans notes that:

> the Standing Committee Book of the S.P.G. shows that in view of the hopes held out by Bishop Knight-Bruce's report the Society agreed in May 1890, to provide £7,000 to be spent at the rate of £1,000 a year, for the establishment of missions between Bechuanaland and the Zambezi.[26]

SPG agreed to sponsor this missionary enterprise because they saw it as an extension of their influence and mission. It is true that "the newly arrived missionaries of 1890 had a very different background, of course, from that of the Shona people who shared the general characteristics of the Bantu tribes of Africa."[27] The missionaries were aware of this but, because of their sense of superiority, did not regard the Shona as an established people. As already indicated in Bishop Knight-Bruce's report, they were to give the Shona people the security of the Crown, administered by 'civilised white people'. Through such historical misconceptions missionaries saw in the Shona people something of 'Africa the dark Continent,' where there was little to be known, which was inhabited by people with no history, where "the Africans themselves were virtually unchanged since prehistoric times. From this assumption it was but a short step to an

---

[25] C.J.M.Zvobgo, A History of Christian Missions in Zimbabwe 1890-1923, p.3. See also T.O. Ranger, Revolt in Southern Rhodesia 1896-7, p.87.

[26] Ibid., p.11.

[27] W.R. Peaden, Missionary Attitudes to Shona Culture, Salisbury: The Central Africa Historical Association, 1970, p.1.

imaginary 'Darkest Africa' sunk in barbarism."[28] It was only natural that they share that air of superiority. Kendall sheds more light on the origins of this sense of superiority in missionaries by noting that:

> the basic racial sense of superiority of the Anglo-Saxons developed during the middle years of the nineteenth century, formed out of the Industrial Revolution and influenced by Charles Darwin and his Origin of Species, the Indian mutiny of 1857 and the exaggerated myth of the earlier Black Hole of Calcutta; over all was the evolving experience of growing imperial grandeur.[29]

These historical facts, that the white people had gone through the Enlightenment period, had witnessed the Industrial Revolution and above all had acquired knowledge of other parts of the world, consolidated their superiority. These developments also indicate that the encounter between the European missionaries and the Shona people did not take place on equal terms, even in church. The European missionary was "superior," he had an obligation because Mashonaland was "seemingly inhabited by culturally, if not racially, inferior peoples, devoted to superstitions and pagan rites. At best they were children who needed a firm hand and the Bible to teach them the benefits of civilization and Christianity."[30] The picture we have is of the missionaries, with their prejudices and sense of superiority, approaching the Shona people with the intention of rescuing them from damnation by sharing the Christian faith with them. Broadly speaking, they adopted two approaches, namely, the village visits and the mission stations.

---

[28] J. Lowe, Rivalry and Accord: International Relations 1870-1914, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1988, p.51.

[29] E. Kendall, The end of an era: Africa and the missionary, London: S.P.C.K., 1979, p.58.

[30] Lowe op.cit., p.52.

2.3.1. The Village Visits

The village visits were inevitable if the missionaries were to achieve anything among the Shona people. They were the ones bringing the so-called 'good tidings,' so they had to take the news to the people who were supposed to hear it. In the earlier days this was a very difficult task. One difficulty was the remoteness of the villages; a second difficulty was the problem of communication. Added to this was the cloud of mistrust which overshadowed both parties. Canon Francis Balfour, in a letter to a friend, recounts some of the hardships. He writes:

> I paid one of my visits to a native village. I took no presents. I know there was a village seven miles from the road because we had outspanned there and spent the night on our way up. I had some coffee before starting, put a hard sea biscuit in my pocket, took a prayer book, and left about 5.30am. About 7 o'clock I saw a nice tempting rock near the road, so I stopped and said Matins. At 9 o'clock I got to the place and the first fellow I saw was a youth wearing a straw hat with a variegated handkerchief flapping about his body. I went up to him and in my best Seshona said I wanted to see the Chief. I didn't say it very well, but I made him understand, and he got up, looking rather amused, and took me straight to where the Headman, an *induna*, was sitting with one or two others. I opened the conversation by trying to say I had come from the wagons, meaning our camp. Then, mustering all I knew, I said that my Chief was in the sky and that he had sent me .... etc, until one fellow thought he had got why I had come.[31]

This was his first impression of the villagers, particularly the Headman, and of himself and the news he was bringing, to the villagers. He was explicitly not recognizing the authority of the Headman, nor respecting this group for who they were.

A layman, Mr Frank Edwards, who became Canon Francis Balfour's assistant is

---

[31] Arnold op.cit., p.14.

described as an enthusiastic preacher of the Gospel. His enthusiasm is born witness to by the fact that when he found no room in the waggons of the Pioneer Column he walked almost the whole way from Cape Town to Salisbury, the best part of 2,000 miles.[32] Visiting the villages was one of his delights. He is described as one who preached the Gospel there 'in season and out of season;' and in every place he visited he set up a rough wooden cross as a sign that the word of God had been preached to the people.[33] Note, it was places he visited, irrespective of whether he preached or not.

On the other hand, when Bishop George Knight-Bruce visited the villages he interviewed Chiefs and Headmen on their feelings about Christianity and how they would react if he were to bring them a teacher, "who would teach about God."[34] He used the visits as occasions to observe the people as well as assess the suitability of the place for a Christian presence.

Obviously, these village visits had some advantages. They gave the European missionaries an opportunity to meet the Shona people in their own dwellings. This implies that they could also witness some traditional ceremonies and observe certain rituals. No doubt they also witnessed deaths and observed how the dead were treated, including the rituals held in their honour. They learnt that a Mushona would not leave

---

[32] Evans p.15.

[33] Evans op.cit., p.15.

[34] Peaden op.cit., p.8. See also Evans op.cit., p.11.

a body unburied.[35] An extract from Bishop George Knight-Bruce's account of the Shona highlights the significance of the village visits. He writes;

> The Mashonas were a happy-natured, feckless people, who loved to dance and sing. They would dance when they were happy and dance when they were sad, and they had songs for all occasions. They made and used a variety of primitive musical instruments - flutes, pipes, banjos and 'pianos' - and the smallest child learnt to move in time to music as soon as it could stand .... Elderly men and women were great takers of snuff, and the men smoked 'dagga' or wild hemp. Although there was a considerable amount of drunkenness and this led inevitably to violence and depravity, the Mashonas were not an immoral people, they had their codes, their customs, their rules of etiquette, and, according to their lights, their ethics, their taboos, and their good manners.[36]

Though the village visits gave the missionaries valuable insights into Shona life, they still had their disadvantages. Instead of having the missionary as the focal point, he was made dependent on the goodwill of the Chief, the Headman and the people. Unlike his counterpart in an English parish, the activities of the village were not his, he did not control its affairs. His knowledge and education were not important. Above all, he did not fully understand what was going on, as Canon Balfour discloses in his letter:

> I fear there maybe some disappointment caused by not being able to do 'missionary' work at once. It is very difficult to make a beginning, and in my circumstances I don't believe it to be possible to begin for some time. I have no ear for catching a new language and no means of hearing very much of it talked ... There will be any quantity of Europeans all over the country next year and the household of faith must be attended to first.[37]

It is probably because of such frustrations that village visits were left to the Native

---

[35] Farrant op.cit., p.99.

[36] Farrant op.cit., p.97.

[37] Arnold op.cit., p.14.

Catechists, who were usually lonely, and without any form of pastoral care.[38] They looked forward to occasional visits by European missionaries from mission stations . The mission station became, for the European missionaries, home away from home. Let us now examine their contribution, which reflects that rituals belong to community and the missionaries were initially not part of this community, until they formed one around themselves.[39]

2.3.2. Mission Stations

What the village visits took away from the European missionaries the mission stations restored in earnest. In this setting they were in their assumed usual positions of power and authority. The responsibility for organising and coordinating mission station activities was theirs. Emotionally and psychologically this restored in them the historical glory of Anglican clergymen as they had known it back home, in Britain.[40] Civil and ecclesiastical authority was in their hands, so they were once again the focal point. People on the mission stations were the missionary's subjects, who had to abide by the

---

[38] Farrant op.cit., p.122.

[39] R. Horton, Patterns of Thought in Africa and the West: Essays on magic, religion and science, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,1993. He sheds light on this by stating that, "in trying to make intellectualist analyses of various traditional African religious theories, however, I came up against the fact that they were above all theories of society and of the individual's place in it." p.62.

[40] Gann's comment on the Anglican Church's expansion in Mashonaland is enlightening, he says, "work expanded greatly, new stations opened their doors, and the Anglican Church, though never the established Church as in England, became a powerful community, wielding considerable influence in government, and probably enjoying a higher social status than any other mission bodies in the country." L.H. Gann, A History of Southern Rhodesia: Early Days to 1934, London: Chatto & Windus, 1965, p. 198.

rules and regulations of their particular mission station.

According to Anglican records, by 1907 "the church had 12 mission farms and more than 50 town plots."[41] Though mission farms, on which mission stations were established, were generally the same, individual administration and exercise of authority on each differed greatly. On most of them "each tenant was allotted a portion of ground on which to grow his food crops, and was allowed to graze a fixed number of cattle on the farm. In return he paid a small rent and took part in communal labour once or twice a year."[42] All this involved careful organisation and constant supervision. Those who did not comply with the regulations were either subjected to disciplinary measures or expelled from the farm, by force of law if necessary. This practice helped to confirm in the minds of the local people the relationship between the missionaries and the settlers. Settlers had on occasions displaced local people in exactly the same way.

Much of the work on the farms was done by hired people who were assisted, where there was a school, by school children. These were usually boys. However, the behaviour of some missionaries on the farms left a lot to be desired. By way of observation, Farrant writes, "did they not pick quarrels just before pay-day in order to cheat the Mashona labourers of their wages? Did they not resort sometimes to

---

[41] Arnold op.cit., p.45.

[42] Evans, op.cit., p.49.

merciless floggings and brutality?"[43] On the other hand there were some who did not approve of such behaviour, but rather saw it as counter-productive. Extracts from a letter by Rev'd Douglas Pelly to his father testify to this. He noted that: "the brutality of some of the white men seems very great. It hinders the spread of the Gospel and the work of the missions .... It seems to me more necessary to convert the white men who come to this country from England and S. Africa than it is to convert the heathen blacks."[44]

Mission stations were supposed to be beacons of light in the midst of darkness.[45] Everything done on them, especially by the Africans, was to be "Christian", so that the distinction between them and the villages was clearly apparent. In a bid to uphold this difference, "missionaries" regarded many African customs as evil and forbade them on mission stations. "Innocent tribal dances, the use of instruments like drums, and time honoured marriage and funeral customs were banned."[46] The Roman Catholic Church historian, Adrian Hastings, puts it sharply by saying, 'African customs from cradle to

---

[43] Cited in Farrant, op.cit., p.192.

[44] Ibid., p. 197.

[45] J.Herbert, an Anglican missionary writing on mission stations said, "our objective has been to try and gather around the Mission Station those who evince some desire to become Christians, and who by their lives might serve as light to that kraal and neighbourhood, rather than, in the existing state of things, itinerate far and wide." J.Herbert in Mission Field XLV, 1900.

[46] Kendall op.cit., p.54. A report attributed to Canon Balfour sheds some light on the subject; it says, "they have 'a custom of dancing and singing in honour of the spirits of the departed, at whose graves they leave offerings of meat and beer, in the belief that those who have left them will keep them supplied with all good things.' Beyond this Canon Balfour 'does not think they have any practices that could be called religious.'" C.F.Pascoe, Two Hundred Years of the S.P.G.: An Historical Account of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, 1701-1900, London: Society's Office, 1901, p.365.

grave were banned.' Missionaries usually over-reacted to African village life and values because (a) they had failed to penetrate and understand them, and (b) some held the misconception that "British civilization and Christianity were almost identical. They thought of African culture as heathen, the work of the devil, to be rooted out as soon as possible."[47]

In their zeal to combat the forces of evil inherent in Shona culture , the missionaries resorted to discipline, which even involved the paying of church dues. In this the church was doing exactly what the settler government was doing, levying taxes on the people under a different name. Everything had to be regulated, including the way one thought. Kendall elucidates this point when he says:

> This was done in a number of subtle and not so subtle ways. In the first place, the Church made it plain that everything African was heathen and superstitious barbarism. Conversion to Christianity meant rejecting traditional forms of dress, authority and social organisation, culture, marriage, medicine etc. The black people were made to believe not that salvation is in Christ alone, but that salvation is in accepting the new white way of living. The effect of this was to internalize in the black people a sense of inferiority which inhered in them as Africans.[48]

Intentionally or unintentionally, the missionaries systematically brainwashed the Shona people into believing that 'white' is both superior and godly. They managed to instill a self-hatred in the minds of their converts. The requirement to adopt a 'Christian name',

---

[47] Ibid., p.54.

[48] Ibid., p.54. See also A.M. Chambati, "Africans and the struggle for their Rights in Rhodesia, 1923-1972," in S.E. Wilmer (et al) Zimbabwe Now, London: Rex Collings, 1972, p.41.

which, ironically, was an English name, is a good example. African names were considered heathen and thus not befitting of one who has converted to Christianity.[49] Such 'Christian names' had no relevance for the Africans, they only helped the missionaries to make converts in their own image.[50] Kapuya, one of Bernard Mizeki's early converts, who admired his master's singing skills, demonstrates this brainwashing when he says, "I thought if I learn to sing, I shall be able to hear God's voice, as Europeans do. It is because I have not learnt to sing, as they do, that I cannot hear His voice. That must be the way to God."[51] He did not think that Bernard, whom he heard sing, could hear God's voice; it had to be a European!

"At the moment of baptism they (*the Shona converts*) were required publicly both to accept their new faith and to renounce much of their culture. In the case of Catholics and Anglicans the form of words used was to 'renounce the devil and all his works.'"[52] Perhaps this was the only way in which the missionaries could witness the process of change. The practice literally demonstrated to the missionaries, in a dramatic way, the convert's turning from darkness to light!

---

[49] Shonhiwa Kapuya, one of Bernard Mizeki's pupils, could not be baptised into Christianity under the name 'Shonhiwa'. This is how he was baptised, "then Shonhiwa stepped into the swiftly flowing water suggestive of the Holy Spirit which would flow into his heart: and being dipped in the stream, renamed and baptised in the name of the Blessed Trinity, John returned to the bank and with face towards the brightening East was received into the congregation of Christ's flock." E 51, USPG Archives, 1896.

[50] Kendall op.cit., p. 54.

[51] Farrant op.cit., p.136.

[52] W.R.Peaden, op.cit., p. 6. A dramatic description of Sakanya's baptism by Pelly sheds more light. He says, "Sakanya's answer to the first question was 'I renounce Satan and everything to do with him.' The boy stepped into the river and was made a Christian receiving Raymond as his baptismal name." E 52, USPG Archives, 1897.

Adversely, this approach created a gulf between the missionaries, representing the church; and the Shona people, as the object of European church discipline. The Shona started classifying activities, resulting in dual observance which has since characterised their association with the church.[53] Missionaries seemed to be condemning and destroying the Shona traditional community only to replace it with one built around themselves at the Mission Station. This did not go down well with the Shona people, who understood community in terms of its wider clan setting. Even when one joins the mission station community, as Lucas notes:

> Custom will demand his participation with his relatives and kindred in much of which he may feel a real distrust, and yet, if he refuses to be associated with his tribesmen in what are regarded as essential acts of citizenship and duties of community, he begins to be in danger of cutting himself off completely, and at the end becoming an outcast. If his own tribe into which he was born no longer recognizes him, it is impossible for him to become a real member of any other tribe or people.[54]

Given the Shona communal understanding of life, no-one would choose to ostracise him or herself from his or her own consanguinity. The mission station concept did not seem to accommodate this affinity. This situation needed a proper system of pastoral care, which was unfortunately not fully provided. Shona people wanted to be themselves, in a way that would make Christianity part of their lives. Apparently Christianity was not presented as a live religion to them; that is, it was not part of their

---

[53] The conduct of some so-called Christians left a lot to be desired, leading one man of vast colonial experience to say to one of the missionaries, "the natives will never be converted till the folk at home have first provided for the conversion of the whites, and also sent converted settlers." C.F.Pascoe, Two Hundred Yeras of S.P.G. 1701-1900, p.366b.

[54] W.V. Lucas, Christianity and Native Rites, London: Central Africa House Press, 1950, p. 4.

lives, so they had to go to the mission station for it. This explains in part why the Shona adopted Christianity as a public religion, while maintaining traditional religion as a private but real religion.[55] With this at the back of our minds, let us explore the missionaries' teaching.

2.4 MISSIONARY TEACHING

Teaching was an integral part of early missionary work in Mashonaland. There is justification in the claim that missionaries were pioneers in the field of education in this newly occupied colony. But both the method and content of their teaching assumed the superiority of the European teacher. From the point of view of the missionaries, the Shona people were seen as not "educated," (in the western sense of course!) Missionaries thus saw them as lacking in knowledge, including knowledge of life. Whatever form of education the Shona people had was despised, if at all recognised as such.[56] In this context the missionaries saw teaching as a God-given opportunity to combat paganism and give the natives both western knowledge and western civilization. The misconception that "when you educate the native you weaken tribal custom" seemed to inform and fuel this approach.[57]

---

[55] Peaden, a Methodist minister, observes that, "the methods of the early missionaries in Mashonaland, however, were to lead to rejection, dependency, or, worst of all, an attempt to hold two cultures in parallel, separate, compartments. W.R.Peaden, Missionary Attitudes, p.41.

[56] Shona education was, and still is to some extent, that "the Shona child was brought up to be able to adapt himself *or herself* to and live a peaceful life in the social and physical environment in which he *or she* found himself *or herself* - the purpose for which all education is intended." Parents teach their children. M.Gelfand, Growing up in Shona Society, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1985, p.217(Italics mine).

[57] Peaden op.cit., p.10.

We shall review missionary teaching in three stages, namely, the early stage 1891 to 1925; the second stage, 1926 to 1975; and the third stage, 1976 to 1981. In the first stage of missionary teaching, the missionaries were the key players; they did all the leading and teaching. It comes as no surprise therefore to hear that most of the teaching was in English, including the taking of prayers in church, and the services for the burial of the dead. The Shona people were read to, and the scriptures were interpreted for them in the light of the prevailing historical reality. Most of the damage to Shona self-esteem, traditional religion and culture was done during this stage. The idea of making the Shona people passengers at the burial of their relatives was not welcome.[58] As we have already noted, it widened the gap between them and the 'church'.

In other spheres of life missionaries seem to have succeeded because the Shona people were sometimes convinced that they were second best. They felt inferior to the white people in general, and lived with a sense of self-hatred. Once Shona Traditional Religion and culture had been condemned, the Shona people were seen, in most cases, as *tabula rasa*, that is, blank slates "on which a wholly new religious psychology was somehow to be printed."[59] This new religious psychology was to be imprinted

---

[58] From a missionary perspective, the Anglican clergy were doing the right thing, that is, conducting the burial according to the Book of Common Prayer's rites. As Colin Buchanan notes, this is because "Anglican Missionaries were themselves usually very loyal to the Book, were themselves convinced that it was better than any other worship book available in Christendom, had themselves promised always to use the Book, and saw it as being crucial to being Anglican." Colin Buchanan, "Issues of Liturgical Inculturation," in D.Gitari (ed) Anglican Liturgical Inculturation in Africa: The Kanamai Statement 'African Culture and Anglican Liturgy, Nottingham: Grove Books Ltd, 1994, pp.13-4.

[59] K. Bediako, Theology and Identity: the impact of culture upon Christian thought in the second century and modern Africa, Oxford: Oxford Regnum Books, 1992, p.225.

through missionary teaching, which was usually confrontational. Those who considered embracing the new faith were gathered into a catechumenate for up to three years of instruction. During this period they were expected to forsake many of their old customs and to show that they could maintain the behaviour requirements of the new faith.[60] The catechumens were made in the image of the missionaries.

At first the teaching was mainly religious, but the facts on the ground, led to the intensification of the mission policy of displacement of Shona Traditional Religion by Christianity. There was a realisation among the missionaries that "unless we are careful to instill religion into the minds, as well as educating him we are taking away something without putting anything in its place."[61] In other words, as Chambati says, "it was found that in order to stabilize the faith of the converts and to assist in character development it was necessary that the natives should be able to read the scriptures or other books of religious instruction translated by the mission."[62] The mind of the convert was to be fully occupied by Christian teaching.

Education, or the assumption that all education was Christian education, became complementary to the spread of Christianity, hence those who were catechists and preachers were also teachers, like Bernard Mizeki. There seems to have been an assumption that those who knew God in the missionary way could be trusted to teach.

---

[60] Peaden op.cit., p.6. See also Evans, The Church in Southern Rhodesia, op.cit., p.29.

[61] Peaden op.cit., p.10.

[62] Chambati, in Wilmer, Zimbabwe Now, op. cit., pp.21-22.

This is alluded to in Bishop George Knight-Bruce's report on a journey to a chief whom he asked to "accept a teacher who would teach about God."[63] Bishop Knight-Bruce placed catechists in responsive villages as a strategy for both education and evangelism. Evans actually confirms this when he comments on the situation as of 1896. He says, "from the point of view of the evangelization of the heathen a start had been made by making contact with a large number of chiefs, and in several villages catechists were now at work, though as yet there was no convert."[64] These catechists were to educate and evangelize.

The missionaries took great pride in the schools situated at mission stations; these schools were an important part of the missionary strategy. What the mission station was in the religious realm, the mission school was in the field of education. Village schools fed pupils into it. One such mission school, St Augustine in Penhalonga was also a renowned boarding school.[65] Boarding schools provided the environment in which the missionary philosophy could be maintained and more easily instilled in pupils. For this reason it was deemed wise to remove pupils from their home environment, so that they could be shut in with God, as it were.[66]

---

[63] Peaden op.cit., p.8. See also Evans, op.cit., p.11.

[64] Evans op.cit., p.19.

[65] "St.Augustine's near Penhalonga was the first mission in Zimbabwe to provide African children with secondary education." K.Sayce, Tabex Encyclopedia Zimbabwe, Harare: Quest Publishers Pvt Ltd., 1989, p.322.

[66] Peaden op.cit., p.8. For a comprehensive picture of this subject "Christian Missions and Western Education" see Zvobgo, A History of Christian Missions in Zimbabwe, op.cit Chapter 5, pp.149-201.

2. 4.1 Burial Practices

Beliefs and practices surrounding death and the dead were not spared. Each established mission station had a cemetery, which was considered "consecrated ground" for the burial of "Christians" away from their traditional homes.[67] When a Christian died, the death was not announced by drums, but by the ringing of the church bell. Instead of weeping and wailing, prayers were said. Weeping and wailing were discouraged as exhibiting a lack of faith and hope. This was the Church's approach from the very beginning.

When a Christian was to be prepared for burial, this was usually carried out by fellow Christians, or by hospital staff, if available. This was in order to avoid Shona rituals being performed on the Christian corpse. The corpse was laid in a coffin on its back and covered with 'white' cloth, for purity, hope and life, as opposed to death, black. There was no distinction between a male and a female corpse, because all were equal before God. Hands were either put at the sides, or crossed on the chest, the latter being more popular.[68] This is confirmed in the conversation of Douglas Pelly and Bernard Mizeki overheard by John Kapuya. Kapuya reports that Bernard was relating the story of an old woman who had approached them (Bernard and John) and Bishop Knight-Bruce, making gestures of how she wanted to be buried. Bernard's interpretation

---

[67] O. Chadwick, The Victorian Church (Part two) 1860-1901, London: SCM, 1970.p.205. This is an English practice which was being introduced to the Shona people as 'Christian'.

[68] This is a practice from the medieval period. See P.Aries, Western Attitudes towards Death from the Middle Ages to the Present, The Hopkins University Press, 1974, pp.8-9.

of the old woman's gestures to Douglas illustrates the popular practice. He said, "she might have been asking to be made a Christian, for Christians are buried lying on their backs, with their hands folded on their breasts, while heathen African people are buried lying on their right sides or their left sides, with heads on their hands held palm to palm."[69] The western practice of using flowers at burial was also adopted.

Christian graves were dug by fellow Christians, or by those employed by the mission. They were dug anywhere within the cemetery in such a way that the head would point west when the corpse was buried. This was the posture of one with resurrection hope. Missionary clergy played a leading role in all this. It is fascinating to note that even in this regard missionaries felt superior. Leading the burial services was also a way of enabling the Shona to learn, since they were supposed to learn by observation. Bishop William Gaul etched this indelibly on the minds of the missionary clergy when he said "natives are wonderfully imitative, have no abstract ideas and depend on example to a very great degree."[70] So whatever the missionaries wanted the Shona people to do, they naively believed they had to demonstrate to them.

Not only did this new religious practice deprive the Shona people of participation in the burial of their loved ones, it also deprived them of an opportunity to wrestle with their bereavement in a realistic manner within the church structures. It ignored the pastoral

---

[69] Farrant op.cit., p.136. The practice of burying people lying on their backs with hands crossed on their breasts had already been established in Mashonaland as a Christian burial posture.

[70] Arnold op.cit., p.40.

and emotional values of tradition. As we have seen, weeping and wailing were not permitted in the new religion. So they had to deal with their emotions outside that faith, within their homes. There, friends and relatives provided the necessary support and care. Without realising it, the Anglican Church in Mashonaland was in effect sending the message that the Shona people were welcome, as long as they adopted missionary mourning styles. When their emotions were high and the realities of life were heavy, the church was not their place. What this meant in practical terms was that, when all was well, the Shona people could come to church and continue to pay their dues, but that the Church was not the place for deep feeling.

Not surprisingly, they found a clandestine way of dealing with death and the dead, which ran parallel to missionary teaching, a pattern which continues to exist in the Anglican Diocese of Harare to this day. This dichotomy is a result of missionary insensitivity to traditional values. An opportunity to have Christianity and Shona Traditional Religion engage in dialogue was lost. The pastoral care system which the Shona people were to participate in was not relevant to them, especially in connection with death and the dead, hence they felt dissatisfied with the church's observances and rituals for their dead. However, when Shona people carried out their traditional death rituals they derived a sense of community, which they had been deprived of by the Church.

In spite of these problems, and the difficult relationships between the missionaries and the local people, in 1919 Samuel Muhlanga became the first native Rhodesian to be

ordained deacon.[71] Further ordinations of black indigenous people into the diaconate were witnessed in 1923. Four new names were added to the roll of clergy, namely, Stephen Hatendi,[72] Leonard Sagonda,[73] Peter Sekgoma,[74] and Gibson Nyabako.[75] Their ordination to the priesthood offered the hope that a pattern of pastoral care might emerge which respected the African (Shona) approach to death.

It is against such a background that we enter into the second stage of missionary teaching, 1926 to 1975. Having locals as clergy was a development which needed careful handling. Meanwhile some of the white missionary clergy, like Arthur Shearly Cripps, had not only learnt the language, but had also acquired a great love and respect for the Shona people.[76] Even those missionary clergy who despised Shona priests and their language, had to put up with them. As in other walks of life, the black clergy were considered inferior, and could not be rectors, neither could they be in charge of a congregation. Evans paints a clear picture of the working pattern of the time. "The

---

[71] Evans op.cit., p.37. See also a fuller description of his life in Zvobgo, A History of Christian Missions in Zimbabwe 1890-1939, op.cit., 132-3.

[72] Evans op.cit., p.73. See also Zvobgo, A History of Christian Missions in Zimbabwe 1890-1939, op.cit., p.337.

[73] Evans op.cit., p.73. See also Zvobgo, A History of Christian Missions in Zimbabwe 1890-1939, op.cit., p.133.

[74] Evans op.cit., p.73.

[75] Evans op.cit., p.73. See also Zvobgo, A History of Christian Missions in Zimbabwe 1890-1939, op.cit., p.337.

[76] Cripps' dedication to the Shona cause is spelt out by Steere as follows, "it was not a commonplace, even in a pioneer country ...to have this highly gifted Anglican priest-poet-missionary who was willing actually to identify his life with that of the Mashona people, to be the African's fearless advocate both in Rhodesia and in Britain, and to be utterly expendable in their service." D.V.Steere, God's Irregular: Arthur Shearly Cripps, A Rhodesian Epic, London: SPCK, 1973, p.lx.

Rector will probably have several smaller European churches under his care in the neighbouring townships, and he is usually responsible for the native work in the district, assisted in most cases by an African priest."[77] African clergy could not serve in white congregations, but had to be under white supervision, even in African congregations. They were not paid the same stipend as their white counterparts, and the African Christians, rather than the diocesan offices were mainly responsible for their maintenance.[78]

2. 4. 2 Church Literature on Burial

1926-75 was also the period in which most of the religious literature was translated into the vernacular language. The Shona language had become acceptable as a medium of communicating the gospel. Substantial numbers of the Shona people had acquired basic literacy skills. Among the many books that were translated were the Book of Common Prayer, and the booklet,'The Way of a Christian' (in Shona, *Rwendo rwomuKristu)*. These books contain the teaching of the church concerning death and the dead. The Book of Common Prayer does so through the rubrics, while the latter gives a step by step guide to what should be done, and when. They both set out which prayers to say, and what biblical passages to read. For the translation of these books the church owes much to Mrs Margaret Elaine Lloyd, wife of the Rev'd Edgar White

---

[77] Evans op.cit., p.46.

[78] Ibid., p.52. Evans records it thus, "the catechists and most African clergy are maintained by the African Christians."

Lloyd of Rusape. She "was largely responsible for both the B.C.P. with its large selection of hymns and for the *Rwendo rwomuKristu*, the book of public and private devotion which is still widely used by African Christians of Mashonaland."[79] The words about the *Rwendo rwomuKristu* are still true today.

In that booklet there is a section dedicated to the burying of the dead (*kuviga vakafa*) which starts by telling the reader what Christians must 'think' when one of their number dies. There are four such guiding thoughts:

> (1) Christians must remember that the corpse was once the temple of the Holy Spirit, so it must be stored and buried with respect. (2) Christians should pray for the dead, and the priest must celebrate the eucharist in their honour. The relatives of the deceased should make an effort to attend such a eucharist. (3) Christians should not weep and wail as those with no hope. (4) Christian hope should make it unnecessary for Christians to worry about heathen practices. For that reason Christians should not consult traditional healers following the death of their relative, neither should they venerate their ancestors. Finally, they should not stop coming to church because they are mourning; if they do, they will be like the heathens.[80]

Burials should be carried out in the prescribed manner. Christians should be buried in the cemetery, which is consecrated ground, usually not very far from the church

---

[79] Ibid., p.35. See also Arnold, Here to stay, op.cit., p.56.

[80] *Rwendo rwomuKristu*, (revised edition) Printed in Shona, London: SPCK, 1969, pp.97-8.

building. It is a requirement that the corpse be brought into the church and prayers be said. The book to use at burial is the B.C.P., and appropriate page numbers are given. When the grave is covered up it must be marked with a cross with the inscriptions R.I.P. (*Requiescat in Pace), Zorora murugare,* for Rest in Peace.[81]

Children also were to be buried with care. The church's desire was that every child should be baptised before they died. To facilitate this all Christians were authorised to baptise in the face of death. Even midwives were to know how to carry out this emergency baptism. When a catechumen died there should be no eucharist, but the burial should be conducted according to a set of given instructions.[82]

As we have seen, the presence of African clergy and the translation of the service books did not help to change already entrenched positions. In fact they helped to tighten the missionary grip on the situation. Both the local people and the church maintained their parallel ways. In the eyes of the local people the Anglican church was seen as the white man's institution, hence the African clergy behaved like the white missionaries.

Towards the end of this phase came another important development. A local Archdeacon, Patrick Murindagomo, was appointed Suffragan Bishop. Arnold says:

---

[81] Ibid., p.98.

[82] Ibid., pp.98-9.

> At the end of October 1972 an historic appointment was announced, namely that of Archdeacon Patrick Murindagomo to be Suffragan Bishop of Mashonaland. He was consecrated bishop on 25 January 1973 thus becoming the first African to be an Anglican bishop in what was then Rhodesia. He was also the first Anglican bishop in Rhodesia to be born in the country.[83]

So we close this stage too with the people's hopes for the accommodation of Shona traditional practices being revived by this appointment. The new Suffragan Bishop, as a leader in the Church, would be in a position to influence policy. It was hoped that, as a local person, Bishop Patrick would speak for the Shona people, since he understood the significance of *'chivanhu'*.[84]

2. 5 Winding up the missionary era

We enter the third stage (1976-1981) of missionary teaching at a time when expectations for the indigenisation of the teaching of the Anglican church were high. Historically, it was a period which marked the tailing off of missionary dominance, while the struggle for political liberation was intensifying.[85] Many African people had offered themselves for the priesthood. On the other hand some white clergy withdrew from sensitive areas to safer, usually urban, areas. The belief that Shona traditional religion had a place in the lives of the African people was revived by this *chimurenga*, war of

---

[83] Arnold op. cit., p.137.

[84] This word is actually very difficult to translate; it embraces all that makes, in this case the Shona people, who they are. This incorporates world views, cultural practices and behavioural norms.

[85] The guerilla war was waged against the Smith regime from 1966 to 1979, and saw the birth of liberated Zimbabwe.

liberation.[86] A revival of traditional beliefs was vigorously mounted by the freedom fighters, who happened to be concentrated in the rural areas. The Diocese of Harare read the signs of the times, and revisited its teaching on death and the dead. It published "Pastoral Regulations: issued by the Bishops for the guidance of the clergy, 1978."

These Regulations address most of the issues we have considered, and go on to make notable concessions. Christians could be buried in their villages as long as the grave was blessed. They could also take part in the funeral of non-Christians, whom the Regulations unfortunately call 'heathens'. In the Regulations there is mention of new forms of services being prepared "to suit the particular needs of Shona culture."[87] Under the heading, HEATHEN FUNERAL RITES, there are five points which indicate a rethinking of the relationship between Christians and non-Christians. Briefly the points are:

(i) Christians are allowed to attend the funerals of their heathen relatives and friends, and to assist in the interment of the body. (ii) Christians are forbidden to partake of meats and drinks offered to the spirits. (iii)They should not take part

---

[86] Archdeacon Alban Makoni recalls that, "at this stage of the war (1976) the comrades were very hosile to Christianity. 'We don't want to hear about Jesus. Jesus can do nothing.' In the crisis of the war they put their emphasis on the spirits." T.O.Ranger, Peasant Consciousness and Guerrilla war in Zimbabwe, pp.209-210. See also Lan who records from extensive research on the war of liberation that, "the youth of Zimbabwe have certainly grown up in 'an atmosphere of shot and fire' and many have spent a good number of years with 'gun in hand ... face to face with ... the forces of colonialism'. And yet far from pouring scorn on these 'outlandish phantoms', their ancestors, they seem to believe in them as strongly as their fathers and their fathers before them." D. Lan, Guns and Rain: Guerillas and Spirit Mediums in Zimbabwe, London: James Currey Ltd, 1985, pp. xiv-xvii.

[87] Diocese of Mashonaland, Pastoral Regulations: issued by the Bishops for the guidance of the clergy, 1978, p.15.

in any worship offered to the spirits nor in any funeral dancing. (iv) They should not weep and wail, but rather pray for the dead. The last three points allow Christians to be part of the funeral, so long as they do not engage in activities which are regarded as inconsistent with their own Christian profession.[88]

When Suffragan Bishop Peter Hatendi was made Bishop of the Diocese on June the 28th, 1981,[89] expectations were that the indigenous leadership would take over and perfect the work introduced by the missionaries. Unfortunately this was not to be the case. Up to, and beyond Bishop Hatendi's retirement in 1995, the condemnatory and confrontational approach which was established by the missionaries has continued to characterise the relationship between Christian and Shona traditional views of death and the dead. What this implies is that, despite the Diocese of Harare having indigenous leadership, it still reflects its settler origins when it comes to dealing with death and the dead. There is a sense in which the training of clergy contributes to this. There is little encouragement for students to think creatively about their own Zimbabwean cultural context, because the bishops, who approve the syllabi, have been unwilling to accept African Traditional Religion as a subject at the local theological college.

2. 6 CONCLUSION

---

[88] Ibid., pp.15-6. We shall look at this further when we deal with the present practices among Shona Anglicans in Chapter four. That will help us to see how much of the regulations were observed.

[89] Arnold op.cit., p.154.

Though the missionary era seems to have been typified by prejudice and a sense of superiority on the part of the missionaries, the seeds of the Gospel were sown. However, the tendency to condemn Shona practice curtailed chances for genuine dialogue. Mistrust and suspicion clouded a relationship based on discipline, not trust. The arbitrary administration of disciplinary measures meant that the missionaries were no different from their settler colleagues; only to be expected, as they were all *varungu*, that is, white people. In attempting to think for the Shona people, and by prohibiting most of their cultural and ritual practices, missionaries facilitated the dual observance witnessed in bereavement beliefs and practices.[90] This gave the Shona people an opportunity to please the missionaries while remaining the communal people they were. Community, in the traditional setting, was not complete without the dead, but the missionaries thought and taught otherwise.

In fact the missionaries overlooked the fact that some of the attitudes they themselves held towards death and the dead had developed over many centuries. During the course of their development, as we have seen, some were influenced and shaped by circumstances which had nothing to do with Christ. Perhaps the mission station model blinded the missionaries from recognizing that there was potential for pastoral care in the traditional practices in dealing with death and the dead. An effective pastoral care system could have helped to address the yawning gap between western style and

---

[90] Evidence that aspects of traditional burial continued to be practised by Shona Christians alongside Christian burials is the fact that the Diocese of Harare set up a Commission of Enquiry on this specific matter. Once again we shall deal with this question in Chapter four, where we look at 'Present practices'.

traditional bereavement rituals, so bridging the gap between the Church, and the Shona people in community.

In order to appreciate how the present situation developed, it is important to investigate how the Shona people responded to Christianity generally.

CHAPTER THREE

SHONA RESPONSES TO CHRISTIANITY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter we dealt with the missionary era, explored the Anglican missionary background, noting how this influenced their approaches and teaching. We also observed the close association of missionaries with the settlers, making them the same *varungu*[1] in Shona people's(*Mashona*) eyes. After these *varungu* had settled among the *Mashona,* they made contact, but the pattern of relationship between them was that of master-servant or superior-inferior. A few *varungu*, both missionary and settler, did not subscribe to this pattern of interaction. Rather, they saw the *Mashona* as equally human and worthy of dignity and respect. Initially this philosophy caused some problems for the *Mashona*, particularly because a determination to relate to the Shona people with respect sometimes meant ostracisation of the *murungu* in question, by fellow *varungu.*

Our task in this chapter is to examine this anthropological impasse and how it influenced *Mashona* responses to Christianity. We shall do this by first establishing how they responded to existential questions. This involves probing issues such as (a) the

---

[1] The word *varungu* is the plural of *murungu.* These words were and still are used for Europeans, or those who have a 'white' skin *(vachena).*

demand for labour, (b) the hut tax, (c) religion and world views and (d) response options. These facilitate our understanding of *Mashona* responses to Christianity. Under the heading 'responses to Christianity,' we shall also investigate how missionary Christianity related with its Shona context. As a response to Christianity we shall analyse the approach and doctrine of one African Initiated Church with reference to death and the dead. But first, the anthropological responses.

3.2 ANTHROPOLOGICAL RESPONSES

If the Shona people's responses are to make sense, we need to understand their background fully. So, we shall split history into three sections, namely, the pre-uprising era (1890-1895), the uprising era 1896-1897 and the post-uprising era (1898 onwards).

The pre-uprising era was the period of initial contacts between the *Mashona* and the *varungu* and accounts of fear[2] and curiosity on the part of the *Mashona* are told. Mashona curiosity is well described by two citation from Mason. The first, written in retrospect in 1958, captures the initial contact. It reads:

> Whatever the tribesmen had heard, the first glimpse of the Europeans must have come with a shock of surprise. Peering from cover at the ox-drawn wagons wondering at the hairy faces and the lumpy outlines of these strange beings, they were aware, no doubt, of something more than curiosity, of some slight apprehension of coming change in a life that was at least familiar. But not one can have begun to picture the shattering effect

---

[2] Livingstone helps us to understand this when he says, "there must be something in the appearance of white men frightfully repulsive to the unsophisticated natives of Africa; on entering villages previously unvisited by Europeans, if we met a child coming quietly and unsuspectingly towards us, the moment he raised his eyes and saw the men in 'bags,'he would take to his heels in agony of terror, such as we might feel if we met a live Egyptian mummy at the door of the British Museum." cited in P. Mason, The Birth of a Dilemma, London: Oxford University Press, 1958, p.23.

> this coming was to have, not only on their food, houses, weapons, tools and clothing, but on their inmost thoughts, their faith in the protection of their ancestors, their songs and dances, even their feelings for their wives and children.[3]

The second excerpt is attributed to Francois Coillard, who wrote in 1897 as one who had been part of a pioneer group. He recounts;

> That very day in this forest, which has been hitherto solitary, we caught sight of black figures hiding behind trees, who cast furtive glances at us and disappeared like shadows. Others, growing bolder, approached us little by little, and before evening they brought us flour, peas, groundnuts, rice etc. From this moment our wagons were besieged by natives from far and near, who escorted us day by day and bivouacked beside us at night, to satisfy their curiosity.[4]

The *Mashona* were so genuinely curious to know what these strangers were like, hence they were so hospitable. Little did they know that these *varungu* were going to cause them untold hardships. The first indication of hardships to come was the demand for labour.

3.2.1 Demand for labour

As we already know, the pioneers had each been promised fifteen gold claims and a 3,000 acre farm by Cecil John Rhodes, owner of the B.S.A. Company, which henceforth governed the country.[5] The Anglican Church also benefited from this arrangement. As

---

[3] Mason op. cit., p. 20.

[4] Mason op. cit., p. 21.

[5] Mason op. cit., pp. 142-3.

Bishop Knight-Bruce wrote, "by an agreement with them (BSA Co) we have a right to a piece of ground, where we have a mission; and though, of course we have not that number of mission stations, we have about 28 pieces of ground, each about 2,500 acres."[6] When the Company had given to each what was promised, that is, the church its land, the farmer his farmland, the miner his prospecting rights, the big question remained: 'who will provide the labour?'

The expectation was that the *Mashona* would of right, avail themselves as a measure of appreciation of European protection against the *Matabele*. The *varungu* had indeed ended *Matabele* raids against the *Mashona*, so, with their families secure, it was presumed the *Mashona* would be available. This was not to be, the *Mashona* "were economically self-sufficient and wished to be left alone."[7] They "were willing to be protected from the *Matabele* but saw little to recommend working for wages on a white man's farm, still less going down a mine. They did not want to work for someone else; yet the settlers thought of them as a potential labour force."[8]

In a bid to get *Mashona* labour, the Company stopped *Mashona* trade with Tete on the pretext that "it was a drain of the gold from the country."[9] Indirectly, this was meant to deprive them of an independent source of income so that they would offer themselves

---

[6] CLR 142, USPG Archives, Feb 10, 1893.

[7] Mason, op.cit., p. 152.

[8] Mason, op. cit., p.152 .

[9] Ranger, Revolt in Southern Rhodesia 1896-7, op.cit., p.56.

for labourers. As Ranger observes:

> Rhodes had no intention of establishing a trade with the central and eastern Shona in alluvial gold; his interest was exclusively in the opening up of mining by white prospectors, which he thought would bring prospects of employment to the Shona that would more than make up for the loss of their trade with the Portuguese.[10]

The *Mashona* did not want to be labourers as one of their number declared, "now the white men want to make us work in their mines and fields. But no - we do not want their money, we have done without it in the past - why should we work unless we wish to?"[11] Indeed, why did they have to work if they did not want the money?

It was not, then, a question of the Mashona wanting to work, but of the Company wanting them to work. As previously indicated, the Company had assumed jurisdiction over the *Mashona* behind Lobengula's back, and on false pretences. The 'Order in Council' of 9th May 1891, through which the Crown took responsibility for the territory, provided for "the good government of all persons within the limits of this order."[12] In theory this order empowered the Company to enforce law, but only if a native African Chief had delegated it. No such delegation was ever made, and with no apparent opposition to the Company's control of Mashonaland, the Company was obliged to provide the labour. It introduced a hut tax.

---

[10] Ranger, op. cit., p.56.

[11] Ranger op.cit., p.322.

[12] Mason op.cit p.152-3.

3.2.2 The Hut Tax

The purpose of the hut tax was twofold, (a) to help with the administration of the territory, especially the payment of the controversial native police. (b) to act as an incentive for labour. An extract from a Company letter of July 1890 to the Colonial office justifying the introduction of this hut tax clearly explains its purposes. It reads:

> The Mashona's are now relieved of the constant liability to raids by the *impis* of ...Lo Bengula, and are able to gather in their crops with reasonable safety; in fact the administration of the British South Africa Company gives them security for life and property. It would seem to be prima facie just that they should contribute to the support of this administration. One of the principal difficulties in dealing with African races is of teaching them habits of settled industry and ... in a country ... with a considerable demand for native labour, the necessity of paying this small tax will ... furnish an incentive for labour ...[13]

Still determined to get Mashona labour force, the Company forcibly made chiefs responsible for providing labour; failure to do so meant loss of livestock on their part. *Varungu* could supervise the confiscation of the livestock, at times brutally attacking innocent women and children, so that they would encourage their adult male family members to be labourers. Zvobgo adds some insights on the Native Police, "the Mashonaland Native Police not only actively oppressed the people but also raped women. The reputation of these representatives of official justice had become so evil that their arrival at a kraal was the occasion of the worst alarms."[14]

---

[13] Mason op.cit., 153. This is corroborated in L. Vambe, An Ill-fated People: Zimbabwe Before & after Rhodes, London: Heinemann, 1972, p.105.

[14] Zvobgo, op. cit., p. 24.

It was "more like the levy of a tribute than the collection of a civil tax."[15] The *Mashona* becoming aliens in their own territory. The Imperial Secretary in Cape Town echoed *Mashona* sentiments by pointing out that "the natives are probably in law and equity the real owners of the land they occupy and it would be difficult to charge them hut tax for the occupation of their lands."[16] The *Mashona* did not understand why they had to pay taxes and be ill-treated.

Police were important because, "the settlers had been accustomed to the protection of law backed by police."[17] They imposed this notion of law on the *Mashona*, who had only known and abided by tribal law. Chiefs, in tribal law, were arbiters over disputes and misunderstandings. In the new set up, Native Commissioners were the judges. By imposing this legal system the *varungu* were making all *Mashona* tribes the same. The *Mashona* did not approve of this, but found themselves abiding by it. This became an area of sharp legal conflict. Because, as Zvobgo notes, "there was widespread use by Company officials of punitive police expeditions against the Shona in settling disputes between white farmers, prospectors and traders on the one hand and the Shona on the other."[18]

---

[15] Ranger, op.cit., p. 177.

[16] Mason, op.cit., p. 154.

[17] Ibid., p. 152.

[18] Zvobgo, op. cit., p. 24. Ranger cites specific incidents of this bias, see Revolt in Southern Rhodesia 1896-7, pp. 64-5.

The appointment of Native Commissioners in 1890 by Rhodes helped to expose the weaknesses of the Company's administration. Ranger sheds some light on this by establishing that:

> Native Commissioners in the normal sense of Officers appointed to regulate and protect the Shona peoples were not appointed until the end of 1894, and even then only because some machinery was needed for the collection of the hut tax.[19]

Some *Mashona* were evicted from their land without any compensation or consideration for their welfare, and some Native Commissioners turned a blind eye to this injustice.[20]

The list of grievances against the *varungu* grew, and a series of natural disasters added to the woes of the *Mashona*. First came the locusts, which destroyed their crops. Then came drought, and then, as a final blow, the rinderpest, which killed many of the remaining cattle. To control the disease the *varungu* shot the surviving cattle.[21] The *Mashona* did not understand why. Mason makes a perceptive observation of the *Mashona* situation. He says:

> On top of all this came natural disasters. Locusts and drought had come when the Pioneers entered Mashonaland and never gone; next came rinderpest and the cattle died. Those the rinderpest did not kill the Company's veterinary officers shot to prevent its spread. Cattle were the life-blood of the country, providing transport as well as milk and meat; it is not surprising that the Mlimo, the Makalanga godling of the Matopo Hills, began to prophesy that nothing would go right so long as the white men

---

[19] Ranger, op.cit., p.51.

[20] Ibid., p. 83.

[21] T. O. Ranger, Revolt in Southern Rhodesia 1896-7, p.87.

were in the country.[22]

These developments were interpreted religiously, so we turn to religion and worldviews.

3.2.3 Religion and world views

As noted in chapter one, Shona worldviews are communal, human beings and spirits remain in communion. If anything goes wrong in the world of the living, both worlds have to be consulted to learn the cause of the problem. This is effectively done with the assistance of either a *n'anga* (traditional healer) or a *svikiro* (host of a regional or tribal spirit). In this instance the chronicle of hardships they were facing were the result of Europeans' outright disregard for sacred customs and traditions.

Sometimes, in the forcible collection of cattle for the hut tax, the *mombe yomusha* (beast of the ancestors) was taken.[23] The beast symbolically represents the spirit elder, or the ancestor. Without the *mombe yomusha*, the home became defenceless. This was anathema; (a) it annoyed the ancestors, and (b) it placed the home out of communion, thus making it vulnerable. Whatever happened to the *mombe yomusha* was also happening symbolically to the ancestors. Most of it would be considered disrespectful.

---

[22] Mason, op.cit., p.194-5. For the discontent of Shona people with European oppression see also Zvobgo,A History of Christian Missions in Zimbabwe 1890-1939,p.25 and Ranger, Revolt in Southern Rhodesia 1896-7, pp.81-87.

[23] M.F.C. Bourdillon, The Shona Peoples, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1976, p. 269.

As the cattle were collected, they sometimes ran over graves, an act of disrespect for the dead. In addition, arbitrary evictions, by settlers, meant that some *Mashona* were moved away from the land where their ancestors were buried.[24] This was tantamount to forcing them to abandon a significant part of their communities and identity.

For the *Mashona*, continuously harassing and ill-treating other people is unacceptable to the spirits. Since this was the order of the day, the question for them was no longer, "what is the matter?" but "what must we do?" Beating and shamefully treating chiefs before their subjects was the last straw, an insult to the *mhondoro* (regional spirits) and to God.[25]

Shona people would not let a corpse lie unburied for fear of the reactions of the spirit world.[26] They found themselves letting corpses lie unburied against their consciences.[27]

Territorial spirits were also believed to be disappointed by the fact that the *varungu* just

---

[24] According to Terrence Ranger, "Company rule had meant for those Shona who lived in areas affected by white economic activity not only an infringement of the authority of the chiefs but a great disruption of their own lives. It had meant the loss of stock and sometimes of land; it had meant forced labour." T.O. Ranger, Revolt in Southern Rhodesia 1896-7, p.87.

[25] See Ranger, Revolt in Southern Rhodesia 1896-7, pp. 206-26. See also M.F.C. Bourdillon, The Shona Peoples, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1976, pp.293-4.

[26] Farrant op.cit., p. 99.

[27] Evidence of the fact that some bodies remained unburied is found in Native Commissioner Scotts' reports. One of his reports reads, "we discovered the body of Mashiangombi today at 2.30. He had marks of dynamite on his body. He was also shot at daybreak this morning in trying to escape from one of the caves. He was lying about 15 yards in front of it...." Cited in T.O. Ranger, Revolt in Southern Rhodesia 1896-7, p.297. See comment on Shona people and burying the dead in Chapter two, p.105.

slew cattle and left their flesh to rot.[28]

This was desecration of the Shona people's religion; their very life and dignity.[29] Their beliefs in both Mwari (as the liberator), designated as the Mwari cult by Ranger, and the hierarchy of ancestors and spirit mediums, were revived. They also questioned the genuineness of Christianity. Chief Mangwende on behalf of his subjects asked Frank Edwards, an Anglican missionary, "if God sent the white man to teach him and his people why did God send the white men to kill and outrage the native peoples?"[30] As a result, in the period leading up to the uprisings the *Mashona* no longer wanted to have much contact with the *varungu* in spite of their initial curiosity.

The uprising era (1896-1897) was the culmination of dissatisfaction with white governance. It was triggered by a message, allegedly from *Murenga* - the Great Spirit saying, "if you want to get rid of all your troubles, kill all the white men."[31] Since the Shona were daily witnessing the extinction of their way of life, it seemed that *Murenga* was right. "For these reasons, and because of the specific grievances of white administration, it can be little surprise to us that the Shona rose in arms in 1896."[32] To appreciate how well received the call was:

---

[28] See Bourdillon, The Shona Peoples, pp. 295-301.

[29] T.O.Ranger, Revolt in Southern Rhodesia, London: Heinnemann, 1967, pp.46-88.

[30] Ranger, op.cit., p. 83.

[31] Ibid., p.223.

[32] Ibid., p.196.

> We have to look once again to the traditional religious authorities of the Shona to understand the co-ordination of the rising above the paramountcy level - and also to understand the commitment of the people to the rising at the paramountcy level. A commitment so complete and even fanatical that it cannot be explained simply in terms of loyalty to the paramount chief.[33]

The uprising corroborates the observation that people respond to dehumanization in stages.[34] First, the dehumanized people seek a way out, if they fail, they adopt the second stage, feigning loyalty. At this stage they give the 'dehumaniser' a false sense of victory. Thirdly, they resign themselves and resort to fighting back. This is what the *Mashona* did to the greatest surprise of the *varungu*. Ranger aptly articulates the varungu view point, when he says:

> whites believed that the Shona peoples would not rebel because they believed that the Shona had no roots, no sense of history, no sense of religion, the feeblest of political institutions - in short, no way of life worth fighting for.[35]

This was a miscalculation on their part, the *Mashona* had roots, a history, religion and a way of life worth dying for. This move helped the *varungu* to realise that the *Mashona* were human, because "left to their own devices, the whites by stagesestablished a society designed to preserve their own power and privilege."[36]

---

[33] Ibid., p. 200.

[34] This is most probably an adaptation of Fanon's analysis of colonised people, based a study of the Algerian Revolution. The stages he lists are, first, an attempt to resist, mimmicking the oppressor and thirdly, resorting to violence, see F. Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth, Gt. Britain: Macgibbon & Kee, 1965.

[35] T.O Ranger, Revolt in Southern Rhodesia, op.cit., p.2.

[36] M.Meredith, The Past Is Another Country, Rhodesia 1890-1979, London: 1979, p.19.

Vambe sums up this *Mashona* response, and notes the implications of their taking up arms. He notes that:

> The facts indicate that the people of Mashonaland took up arms in a genuine desire to recover the freedom which they had always enjoyed until 1890. This was the sole reason for undertaking a task which they knew, even before they began fighting, would entail colossal sacrifices in men, sweat and blood.[37]

So the Shona people resigned themselves to this protracted, bloody, nasty, guerilla war in search of freedom. However, their logistics fell short of the *varungu,* the little ammunition they had got through trading with Tete ran out, and so did the food supplies which they had hidden in the caves from which they were fighting. The settler army ended up using dynamite, either to force the warriors out of the caves, or to destroy them inside. Ranger gives a detailed account of the progress of the war in his Revolt in Southern Rhodesia 1896-7.

In the post-rebellion phase most *Mashona* saw the uprisings as a failure. Taking his cue from this observation, Ranger notes that:

> Armed resistance seemed to have been disastrous. The new chiefs did not promise effective secular leadership. The religious authorities, spirit mediums and Mwari priests alike, seemed to have been crushingly defeated in what had increasingly come to seem like a war between two religious systems.[38]

3.2.4 Response options

---

[37] Vambe, op.cit., p.114.

[38] T.O. Ranger, The African Voice in Rhodesia, Heinemann, London, Ibadan: East Africa Publishing House, Nairobi, 1970, p.2.

With their religion thus defeated the Shona people had three options. First, they could continue to fight. This could be done till thorough defeat or till some other force rescued them. Continued open rebellion was impossible because food stocks were depleted. However, pockets of resistance continued.[39]

Secondly, they could simply turn in on themselves and organize themselves better. So, instead of open rebellion they would adopt passive resistance. As Ranger says:

> In fact 'passive resistance' was more important as a Shona response to colonialism than were the rumours, dreams and plans of a rising. This passive resistance took the form of a general refusal to become involved in the new colonial labour and wage system. The Shona, as an administrative officer wrote, are 'essentially agriculturalists'. They are of the earth, earthy. Agriculture to the Native is not an occupation or a trade. It is a mode of life.[40]

The Shona people still preferred to work on their own land. They succeeded and even sold their surplus produce, thus contributing to the economic development of the country and, maintaining their dignity and traditions. The availability of a market for their produce made this possible. For a while they had a monopoly over the markets.[41]

In a sense Shona traditional life was an economic success, which more than made up for the military defeat. It was not until the early 1920s that this started changing.[42] The

---

[39] Ibid., pp. 3-13.

[40] Ibid., p.13.

[41] Ibid., p. 14.

[42] See Chapter three below under 'The Economic Factor', p.132.

Europeans had realised that a sound agricultural economy enabled the *Mashona* to resist entering the labour market, so they worked hard to supplant the *Mashona* in supplying agricultural produce. The *Mashona* faced hardships "when European agriculture was supplying the bulk of the needs of the modern economy...[43]" This deliberate effort by Europeans to cripple Shona economic prosperity succeeded.[44]

The third option was "to accept that defeat in the risings was not merely one additional episode in the long history of Shona clashes with whites but that it marked a turning point."[45] They had to stop thinking that "the white man is only a temporary visitor."[46] The *Mashona* had to accept that the whites had come to stay. This opened the floodgates for Christianity. Chiefs who had originally refused missionaries permission to establish themselves became receptive and were themselves converted.[47]

The three options described were not implemented in any particular sequence, but as and when deemed convenient. Different areas opted for different options at different times. When the fact that the *varungu* had come to stay dawned, most Shona attitudes changed. Let us now explore Shona responses to Christianity.

---

[43] T.O.Ranger, The African Voice, op. cit., p.15.

[44] According to Ranger, European agriculture displaced Shona agriculture "when prices for African cattle and crops had fallen; and when the pressures of tax and rent and dipping fees had to be faced without the support of a relatively prosperous African agriculture." Ibid., p.15.

[45] Ibid., p. 3.

[46] E. 53, USPG Archives, 1898.

[47] Zvobgo, op. cit., p. 116.

3.3 RESPONSES TO CHRISTIANITY

In the pre-rising era, responses to Christianity were mostly negative and significantly small.[48] Missionaries taught that ancestor veneration (which they in fact pejoratively called ancestor worship) was evil. But in their eucharistic celebrations, because they had not taught the Shona people adequately, they seemed to be engaging in ancestor worship and witchcraft.[49] They ate the flesh and drank the blood of their ancestor. For the Shona people, someone who eats human flesh and drinks human blood is a witch or a wizard, and does so privately. The missionaries ate the flesh and drink the blood of Jesus, publicly. To complicate the situation further, they invited those present to join them in this supposedly weird activity. *Mashona* were curious, and "in the early days many missions claimed large congregations. People attended for a variety of reasons including that of curiosity to find out what the strange new teaching was all about."[50] This echoes the problems encountered by the early church from which the missionaries seemed to have learnt nothing,[51] as 'educated and civilised' as they were.

Bishop George Knight-Bruce, in his enthusiasm, seems not to have realised that there were these underlying conceptual difficulties. He wrote:

---

[48] See also what we said in Chapter two on 'Village Visits,' p. 85.

[49] In traditional Shona thinking witches are believed to eat human flesh and drink human blood. They however do this during the night. This is why when there is a death there is a wake. It is meant to deter witches from coming to eat the corpse of the dead person. See Chapter four p.169.

[50] Peaden, op.cit., p.6.

[51] See J.W.C. Wand, A History of the Early Church to AD 500, London: Methuen & Co, pp.136ff, and many others who deal with 'The Apologists.'

> Sanguine as I was as to the position the church could occupy in Mashonaland, ... I never anticipated so universal an acceptance of our teaching as has taken place. With all the difficulties and failures - and they are neither few nor small - there is nothing at present apparent to prevent this mission under God, becoming one of the Church's largest fields of work.[52]

Added to these conceptual objections were the practical issues, such as the Church's participation in the search for labour market and the levying of taxes. Missionaries themselves sometimes behaved like the settlers, picking quarrels with workers so that they could refuse payment of their wages.[53] So, the *Mashona* withdrew their labour from mission stations as well. This resulted in a shortage of labour, which Pelly wrote about. "We are very greatly in need of more workers in this part of the diocese, at the present moment there are three mission farms which are altogether without workers."[54]

According to USPG records, the Church set up "a system of assessment to be paid by all adult Christians and catechumens, 5/- a year for males and 2/- for females."[55] This becomes even more pertinent when Bishop George Knight-Bruce is quoted as welcoming the government's hut tax system as a way of enforcing Church doctrine. He said, "I want the government to attack polygamy by flank movement of accumulating

---

[52] Arnold, op.cit. p. 19.

[53] See Chapter two p.89-100.

[54] E-53 USPG Archives, 1893.

[55] E-67 USPG Archives, 1912. The amounts to be paid were five shillings for male members and two shillings for females.

taxation of huts (each hut representing a wife) by doubling taxes after the first wife."[56] The church and the settler government were indeed allies.

Bernard Mizeki's life helps to clarify a religious question with reference to the understanding of God. He was one of the catechists brought from South Africa by Bishop Knight-Bruce.[57] He stayed with the people of Mangwende for five years and even married one of the Mangwende daughters, but remained a religious outsider. The Mangwende people did not introduce him (*kusuma*) to their ancestral spirits. Traditionally, even a stranger was incorporated into the family and introduced to the spirits who then also became his guardians, more so if he or she became a son or daughter-in-law. After this ritual the family members would literally protect him or her for fear of their ancestors. Bernard did not enjoy any of these privileges, and was killed by blood relatives of his wife. People of Mangwende did not see him as part of their community, they were not obliged to protect him; instead he was a religious stumbling block. As Baur notes:

> The 1896 rising gave them the opportunity to have him murdered with impunity. Though at that moment anti-colonial feeling was poisoning the whole atmosphere the point to be made here is that the five-year long highly-dedicated ministry of a socially fully accepted African apostle left little

---

[56] Cited in Mission Field, Vol. XLIV, 1899, p.357.

[57] Bernard Mizeki "had been born in about 1861 near the Bay of Inhambane in Mozambique. His tribe was known as the Gwambe, a minor branch of the Ngwanati. At the age of thirteen or so, he went to Cape Town and obtained employment. Eight years later, he began to attend a Night School run by St Philip's Anglican Church, Zonnebloem, and this led to his conversion and baptism. He received a thorough education and Christian training, much of it from the Cowley Fathers (the Society of St John the Evangelist)." J.Weller and J.Linden, Mainstream Christianity to 1980 in Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1984, p.67.

religious impact on Shona society.[58]

They failed to understand why he could not appreciate their way of life, after they had accepted him socially, as a native African. His ministry was considered tangential and thus of very little relevance. Being a Christian was the problem.

In Shona setting religion acts as a unifying factor, it is like the soul that keeps the whole body healthy.[59] There were no temples, or artefacts of their religion. This is why Robert Moffat failed completely to understand that African religion existed, and regarded most signs of African culture and ritual as evil.[60] The *Mashona* did however have national shrines, like the Matojeni in the Matopos, and Great Zimbabwe in Masvingo, where they went for more serious concerns, but not for issues of day to day living.[61]

The Shona people dearly revered communal life. In that setting each person lived "as a member of a clan, sharing its life and possessions, obeying its customs, holding its beliefs and seldom learning to stand alone. The loss of kith and kin was counted worse

---

[58] J. Baur, 2000 Years of Christianity in Africa: An African History 62-1992, Nairobi, Kenya: Pauline Publications Africa, 1994, p.204.

[59] Baeta, op.cit., p.289.

[60] Kendall, op.cit., p.55. Robert Moffat is quoted as having said, "a missionary seeks in vain to find a temple, an altar, or single emblem of heathen worship. No fragments remain of former days, as mementoes to the present generation, that their ancestors ever loved, served, or reverenced a being greater than man." Ibid. p.182.

[61] E.W. Smith, Robert Moffat, SCM Press, 1912, Chapters 12-3. See also D.Berens, et.al. A Concise Encyclopedia of Zimbabwe, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1988, p. 278. Daneel, "Mwari the Liberator: Oracular Interventions in Zimbabwe's Quest for the 'Lost Lands,'" in J.L.Cox, Rites of Passage in Contemporary Africa, Cardiff: Cardiff Academic Press,1998, pp.94-125.

almost than death."[62] Christianity seemed to be tampering with this understanding by emphasizing individualism in its approach.

3.3.1 Early responses

Immediately after the risings, about 1898 onwards, there were gut responses to the Christianity. On the other hand the Church was not very sure of itself.[63] We will however look at the responses in the light of the understanding that the defeat shook the Shona people's socio-religious base, thus creating diffidence. The tactics that the settlers used to bring the risings to an end were so cruel that the Shona people would not contemplate going through them again. Vambe alleges that the intensity of their fear was such that "even in the 1950s prominent white Rhodesian politicians could boast that since the rebellion the Europeans had never fired a bullet at the African in anger."[64]

Developments gave missionaries a second chance which they used positively. In their schools they taught academic and industrial courses. This meant that the students had something to offer their villages when they went back or left school. Some students

---

[62] Farrant, op.cit., p.117.

[63] Roxburgh, an Anglican cleric hinted at that when he said of the Church then,"here the Anglican Church is following little bands of pioneers, prospectors and settlers who are struggling against terrible odds to make a home for themselves and a new land for England." E-53, USPG Archives, 1898. See also what we said in Chapter two on 'Mission Stations,' p. 88.

[64] Vambe, op.cit., p.141. For the effects of the defeat see also Ranger, The African Voice in Rhodesia, p.3.

spearheaded the improvement of farming methods in their villages and caused relative agricultural advancement. This led to the conclusion, in the minds of many *Mashona*, that Christianity was a model of prosperity. If one wanted to be progressive, one had to attend Christian schools. This link between Christianity and education and progress prompted yet more acceptance of the missionary teaching. Considerable numbers of children were sent to missionary institutions. Ranger aptly sums up this line of thinking by noting that:

> This development linked up with the spread of the influence of Christian teaching and the Christian way of life. Some of the early African teachers and preachers, drawn largely from South Africa, became themselves individual landowners or leasers and demonstrated the connection in their own minds between Christianity, economic progress and progressive farming.[65]

Missionaries had "unlimited scope to do good and atone for the wrongs that had been committed by their fellow white men."[66] They had to make sure that what they taught and what they did, as far as possible, complimented each other. In their teaching they emphasized that all human beings were equal before God; they tried to show this by empathizing with the Shona people. Some did so at great risk, like the renowned A.S.Cripps.[67] Since the *Mashona* had lost most of their tools and grain seeds, the missionaries helped where possible.

> They gave clothes, seeds and hoes. They solved family and neighbourly problems. They offered advice on all kinds of human difficulties and, most important of all, they could now teach with greater conviction and effect that

---

[65] Ranger, The African Voice in Southern Rhodesia, op.cit., p.15.

[66] Vambe, op.cit., p.143.

[67] See Chapter two, p.101.

> all men (human beings) were the children of God and that the lowly would gain richer rewards in the Kingdom of Heaven.[68]

Teaching that all human beings were children of God worthy of respect and dignity, to an extent, removed anxiety and restored the confidence of the Shona people. It gave them the desire to be like the missionaries and so they became Christians.[69] Wearing western clothes, speaking in the missionaries' language and behaving like a white person became desired targets. These made the Shona people identify with the missionary, desiring to be acceptable to the missionary God.[70] Of course there is warped thinking in this understanding, but because it brought the Shona people to Christianity, the missionaries did not see it for what it was. The twisted thinking, on the part of some missionaries, was that western civilisation was synonymous with Christianity, hence they did not make any effort to become equal with the Shona people.

At the death and burial of those who were Christians, this teaching on equality rang true. All were treated the same, from preparation of the corpse, to prayer services and place of interment. They were wrapped in white cloth (a shroud), and placed in a coffin lying on their back. This was for all Christians, adults, children, female and male. Black

---

[68] Ibid., p.143. See also Sithole, African Nationalism, on the teaching on equality before God.

[69] See also what Ndabaningi Sithole says about the strength of this teaching with reference to nationalism. p.152-3, above.

[70] Desmond Tutu bluntly says, "these poor native pagans had to be clothed in western clothes so that they could speak to the white man's God, the only God, who was obviously unable to recognize them unless they were decently clad." D.M.Tutu," Whiter African Theology," in E. Fashole-Luke (et.al) Christianity in Independent Africa, p.365.

and white Christians were buried in the same cemetery. The desire to be buried with and like a white person could have played a role in some Shona people's responses to Christianity, just as the genuine desire to know and relate with God could have.

Though the Shona may have embraced eagerly the idea of equality between races, they would have been much less eager to apply the principle of equality among themselves. For example, burying a Shona man and a Shona woman in the same manner was not ritually acceptable, let alone burying a child like an adult. Christianity and Shona tradition held divergent beliefs and observances.[71]

3.3.2 Adaptive responses

For the *Mashona*, who do not have sacred and secular, adapting to Christianity was a long and gradual process. There are five factors which played a role in this process, they are:

> (i) the socio-economic factor (ii) the education factor (iii) the Bible (iv) Denominationalism and (v) Jesus Christ. Let us now explore how these matters played a role in the accommodation of Christianity by the Shona people following the period of initial impulsive responses.

3.3.2.1 The economic factor

---

[71] See above pp.27 and 45.

The booming rural economy which formed the background to the initial responses was giving the Shona people "a new sense of optimism ... and a new degree of independence was experienced."[72] After the First World War things had changed. As Ranger has observed:

> The rural economy ceased to produce and to market successfully a sizeable agricultural surplus; Shona men were compelled to enter the labour market in ever-increasing numbers and at a time when wages were low; prices for African produce and stock declined.[73]

This undermined the independence of the Shona people, so men had to look for work in the towns, in the mines or on European farms, in order to survive. This was the impact of the "great depression" sweeping across Mashonaland.[74]

Migrant labour affected community and led to a change in some of the traditional funerary practices.[75] For example, the number of days that one spent in the house before all the blood relatives were gathered increased. In some cases symbolism became the only way of making sure that all relatives were protected as the news of death took their rounds.

The *Mashona* had attributed the economic boom to the potency of Christianity over

---

[72] C.M. Dillon-Malone, The Korsten Basketmakers, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1978, p.6.

[73] T.O.Ranger, The African Voice in Southern Rhodesia, op.cit., p. 194.

[74] T.O. Ranger, Peasant Consciousness and Guerrilla War in Zimbabwe, London: James Currey Ltd, 1985, pp. 54-94.

[75] We discuss this further in Chapter four when we look at 'Present Practices.'

Shona Traditional Religion. Its decline was also seen as an indication of the fading potency of Christianity. Inevitably this also shook some of the confidence which was building up around Christianity. In a way "the instrumental efficacy of Christianity had come to be doubted."[76]

For that reason, any teaching that revived the upholding of traditions was well received. Perhaps that is why "very many Shona had come to share the views expressed at that time by a *Manyika* migrant to South Africa, John Chavafambira."[77] He was basically calling for a revival of traditional Shona religion. In his view Christianity had failed, so for the *midzimu* (ancestral spirits) to be benign towards them, they had to observe the traditional customs including those relating to death and the dead.

Mashona contact with Christianity enabled a different understanding of God, the world and self. Shona Traditional Religion and Christianity co-existed as essential religions, with essential roles in the lives of their respective followers. Most *Mashona* saw the religions as alternate, with traditional religion as basic. One could be an adherent of both, but the two religions remained closed to each other. This situation led to the formation of a group of people whom Prof. Bhebe calls "pluralists", that is, those who

---

[76] Ranger, The African Voice in Southern Rhodesia, op.cit., p.199. This makes sense especially if we remember that the uprisings were seen in the same religious terms. The defeat of the Shona people was the defeat of their religion. In the same way the boom symbolised the potency of Christianity, and the economic decline was therefore a decline of the potency of Christianity.

[77] Ibid., p.199.

at once hold to their old way of life (STR) and embrace the new faith (Christianity).[78]

3.3.2.2 Education

Western education had begun to make a deep impression on the lives of the Shona people, an obvious result of the missionary approach. In their wisdom, "the missionaries had realised that literacy would lighten the burden of evangelism, and began translating the scriptures into vernacular languages, thus laying the foundation for African schooling."[79] Some Shona people had not only become able to read and write, but were able to think abstractly, like the westerner. Roxburgh's previous observation that, "altho' they are quite grown up and have children of their own, they have never been to school and have never been taught as you have to think about anything that is serious,"[80] was no longer true.

As a tool of civilising and enlightening the Mashona, the schools had to be taken to the people. As Pelly states:

> These small mission outstations are of the greatest value in the beginnings of work, as many natives who will not go far from their homes to attend school are ready enough to do so when the schools are close at their doors.[81]

---

[78] Bhebe, op.cit., p. 115, see also p.6, above.

[79] Berens (et al) op.cit., p. 154.

[80] E.53, USPG Archives, 1898.

[81] E. 53, USPG Archives, 1898.

Unfortunately, schools were established and presented as Christianity. The fallacy of this combination, that is, presenting western education and schools as integral parts of Christianity, was quickly identified. Schools and western education were separable from Christianity hence some *Mashona* were happy to send their children to school, and to Church but not so willing to go themselves, as Etheridge recognised, "it would not be true in most cases to say that they are in any way thirsting for the gospel. What they wish most is to be let alone, 'to dig my gardens and have my wives' as a chief once expressed it to me."[82]

The ability to read and write revolutionized Shona people's lives, enabling them to break into the white man's world. They discovered that one could 'capture' other people's words, and keep them or that one could send one's own words to other people with no human messenger. This had its advantages and disadvantages. One of the greatest advantages was that it became possible to capture the words of a dying elder as they were being delivered, and preserve them. Chances of offending the ancestral realm would be lessened if this were faithfully done. However this affected the sacredness of oral tradition by taking away the personal contact. The dying person would not hold or feel the person he or she loved before death. Above all, the tone of voice could not be captured through written transmission.

One thing for certain is that the words of the dying person would not change. This

---

[82] E-61, USPG Archives, 1906.

would be a great benefit for the other relatives who were absent at the time of death. The difficulty would be that at times the words would lack respect. They would take away the narrator or storyteller's freedom. Accounts are given of both extremes, that is, benefits and difficulties of recorded last testaments or speeches.[83]

There is no doubt that western education brought empowerment and enlightenment to the Shona people, it also gave them a platform from which to challenge the missionaries and the settlers.[84] They were no longer the natives of whom Pelly once wrote, "the native is rude and wholly untutored, at first he receives what you tell him with laughter and incredulity."[85] Now they were tutored and capable of comprehending abstract concepts, asking informed questions and challenging the *varungu*.

By 1925 western education was wide spread in Zimbabwe, and all in the hands of missions. In total there were 1,203 schools and twenty-six training institutions run by fifteen missionary denominations. The Anglican church had 243 schools of its own and

---

[83] Two stories were related to the writer by Solomon Muringani a retired Catechist who worked in the Banket Parish after having retired from teaching. He also has very vivid memories of Arthur Shearly Cripps, since he comes from the Chivhu area. The stories he tells are first, one of an irresponsible grandson who was disinherited by his grandfather, in preference of a granddaughter. This was through a letter which had been written at the dictation of the dying old man. Second, that of a son who forged and made himself the sole beneficiary of his late father's estate. The point about these stories is that they indicate that western education changed the dynamics of oral tradition with reference to Last Wills and Testaments, and the role of the narrator.

[84] According to Ndabaningi Sithole, western education gave birth to Nationalism. N. Sithole, African Nationalism, op.cit., p. 85.

[85] E.48, USPG Archives, 1893-4.

twelve training institutions.[86]

Perhaps the rapid expansion of western education contributed to the problem of the acceptability of the missionaries by the Shona people. With education some Shona people were able to observe and assess the consistency of what the missionaries said and did. They noted some discrepancies, which led to mistrust. These Africans expected to be treated as real equals, but often they were not. Meanwhile, they were looked to for leadership, by their fellow Shona people. Some missionaries were not yet prepared for this. Etheridge, a missionary himself, wrote with insight on this matter, concluding that the unacceptableness of the missionaries was attributable -

> partly to misconceptions as to the methods of missionary work, partly to mistakes that have been made by ourselves and partly to the feeling of self interest which makes white men fear any advance which will bring the native population near or on equality with themselves.[87]

This development frustrated some Africans who had broken into the missionaries' domain, at the same time making some missionaries uncomfortable because their leadership was threatened. The Shona people were challenged to seek their identity even more, equipped by western education.

3.3.2.3 The Bible

---

[86] E.W.Smith, The Way of the White Fields in Rhodesia, London: World Dominion Press,1928, the statistics quoted are a summary of Appendix iv. John Weller reports that "by the time of the 1912 Synod, there were 5,160 pupils in Anglican Schools, most of which were in Manicaland and Eastern Mashonaland." J.Weller and J.Linden, Mainstream Christianity, p.71.

[87] E.62, USPG Archives, 1907.

The efforts of the missionaries paid a big dividend when the Bible was readily available to the Shona people. In the process some missionaries displayed great talent in learning the Shona language, mastering it to the extent that they committed it to writing, with the help of Shona speakers. By 1896 an attempt at "translating a first Catechism for the Children of the Church, a publication of the Education Union", had been made.[88] Along with the Catechism, six chapters of the Gospel of Mark were also translated.

Most of the literature was biblical, so the translations were an evangelistic method.

Etheridge sheds some light on this as he enthusiastically writes about printing work:

> During the last year we have had locally printed a small reader in *Chiswina* for the use of elementary classes, and a hymn book containing about 50 hymns. The Epistles and the Revelation have now been finished and are almost ready to be sent home to be printed.[89]

The missionaries made sure that what was readily available helped the Christian cause. In so doing the Shona people read the Bible to each other at their own pace, but under the direction of the missionaries, since they chose what was to be printed. The Bible greatly shaped their thought patterns.[90]

However, deep down in the minds of most *Mashona*, the idea that a printed book could

---

[88] E-51, USPG Archives, 1896.

[89] E.62, USPG Archives, 1907. The word *Chiswina* is a derogatory term, with unclear origins, for the Shona language.

[90] N.Sithole, African Nationalism, London: Oxford University Press, 1959, p.85. Sithole says,"we need not elaborate that the Bible has most powerful ideas for the heart and mind. No man can be brought upon the Bible and remain uninfluenced by it."

contain divinity was intensely problematic. The immediate question was, 'how can a divinity contained in a book help someone?' This question was asked in the light of the fact that the Shona people usually went about with small axes (*makano*), which they could use for defence. Yvonne Vera dramatises the scene well as she quotes Kaguvi talking to a missionary:

> My *gano* will help me in battle. How does this thing (a bible) help you? My god lives up above. He is a pool of water in the sky. My god is a rain-giver. I approach my god through my ancestors and my *mudzimu.* I brew beer for my God to praise him, and I dance. My *mudzimu* is always with me, and I pay tribute to my protective spirit.[91]

The point to note here is that Kaguvi represents an oral culture and does not understand the print culture. It was the excitement of wanting to understand this divinity, which greatly commended the Bible. It made its own indelible impression on those who read it.[92]

In the immediate past it had been read for and to the Shona people. When they read it for themselves, they discovered that it spoke a language they understood. It shared a similar world view, and spoke about death and the dead with the same passion. The burying of people at specific places, particularly in the Old Testament, had resonances with their cultural understanding, and so did some of the expressions relating to death.

---

[91] Y. Vera, Nehenda, Harare: Baobab Books, 1993, p.105.

[92] N. Sithole, African Nationalism, op.cit., p.86. To emphasize the influence of the Bible, Sithole cites two South Africans in dialogue. It is the response of the second one which is of interest. He said, "When Europeans took our country we fought them with our spears, but they defeated us because they had better weapons and so colonial power was set up much against our wishes. But lo! The missionary came in time and laid explosives under colonialism. The Bible is now doing what we could not do with our spears."

This meant that they read the Bible, made sense of its contents, and through it continued to see traditional beliefs as upholding life. Most missionaries did not seem to realize this, so they continued to demand a display of the ability to read the Bible. Broderick is a good example. He wrote "I am trying slowly to extend the catechumenate, with few exceptions no one is admitted a catechumen until they can read the New Testament in vernacular."[93] Perhaps this is why the Bible became an inspiration to the revival and upholding of tradition. The Bible was a great inspiration to this search for traditional identity. It inspired other activities such as Nationalism in the same way. Positively, "it has most powerful ideas for the heart and mind."[94] Though it was the white man's book, it equally inspired the *Mashona.* At funerals the Bible was, and still is read because it speaks to the heart and mind, while traditional practices are observed because they satisfy the emotions.

3.3.2.4 Denominationalism

Death and funerary rituals were carried out within the denominational settings. Responses to Christianity were denominational, that is, one became a Christian through the efforts of a particular denomination. With time this became a factor in strengthening the dual observance which characterises Zimbabwean Christianity in the area of death and the dead. The missionaries came from different countries, as representatives of

---

[93] E.67, USPG Archives, 1911.

[94] Sithole, op.cit., p.85. It raised the Shona people's consciousness and inspired them to uphold their own identity.

different denominations. Some came from the same country but from different denominations. This meant that, in many cases, different versions of Christianity were presented to the Shona, although one thing the missionaries did agree on was the condemnation of most African rites, which they labelled diabolic and pre-rational.[95] Part of the problem was that back home, and historically, some denominations were hostile to each other.

Sithole highlights the missionary influence and identifies the areas of contact between the missionaries and the Shona as he notes that:

> These Christian denominations influenced the African population through their various and much-needed programmes of evangelization, education, medical services, industrial training, dissemination of literature in the vernaculars as well as in the English language.[96]

There is no doubt that the missionary activities made a great impressions on the minds of the Shona people, and denominationalism was confusing to people who had always valued community. As they went about the task of evangelizing the *Mashona,* the missionaries also passed on their denominational hatred as part of the baggage. This was a serious matter, considering the influence the denominations had. Though their concern was the same, that is, to share the love of God with fellow human beings, the message was often ambiguous and confusing. There were times when they seemed to contradict each other, as Sithole notes:

---

[95] C.Kolie, "Jesus the Healer," in R.Schreiter (ed) Faces of Jesus in Africa, London: SCM Press, 1992, p.143.

[96] N. Sithole, Obed Mutezo: the Mudzimu Christian Nationalist, Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1970, p. 96.

But of course it does not mean that all these Christian denominations worked in perfect harmony. The Protestants and the Catholics were still at one another's throats for what had happened in the sixteenth century which became known as the Reformation. They even taught their African converts to take sides in the unchristian historical bitterness. The Seventh Day Adventists insisted that Saturday was to be the day that God was to be worshipped, and thus what the Seventh Day Adventists held sacred the other Christian denominations desecrated, and what the latter held sacred the former desecrated! Some Christian denominations forbade smoking while others allowed it. Some forbade drinking, but others allowed it. Some did not allow their members to dance, but others did just the opposite.[97]

The Shona people recognized the missionaries and their denominations as different tribes vying for their support. Since the Shona understood "tribes" as marks of identity, they saw very little sense in relinquishing their own views of death and the dead in response to the judgement of those who could not agree among themselves. They held on to their tribal identity in the face of European denominational pressures, seeing these many different European missionaries as other tribes; and foreign tribes at that.[98] But though the Shona people held on to their traditional cultural practices, they also adopted some missionary practices. They were happy to learn from the Christian tribes of Europe, but they were not prepared to lose their own tribal identity in the process, especially with reference to death and the dead.

3.3.2.5. Jesus Christ

The story of Jesus Christ struck the Shona people as peculiar. The more they heard

---

[97] Ibid., p.97. For the confusion caused by denominationalism see also M. McGrath and N.Gregoire, Africa: Our Way as God's People, London: Mission Book Service, 1981, p.206.

[98] Sithole, Obed Mutezo, op.cit., p. 97.

it, the more they found points of familiarity. These were basically Shona perceptions in response to missionary teaching, since the Shona people were not clean slates or blank sheets "on which the missionaries, the evangelists, the preachers and the Christian teachers wrote their Christian beliefs and practices."[99] They perceived Jesus Christ as a Great Spirit.[100] Such an attribute was not acceptable to the missionaries.

Believing Jesus Christ to be a Great Spirit, reduced him to 'spirit worship' which, according to the missionary understanding, was wrong, as it associated Jesus with the evils of spirit worship. This was a serious matter, as demonstrated by the comments of Buck, an Anglican missionary. He notes with disapproval, that "spirit worship is practically the only form of religion among the heathen *Mashona*."[101] So the attempts of Shona people to integrate their understanding of death and the dead with their understanding of Jesus were frustrated; both their perception of Jesus, and their sense of worship were misunderstood, thus providing for dual observance of rituals.

If the Shona Anglicans had developed an understanding of Jesus Christ as the Great

---

[99] Ibid., p.104.

[100] We make this deduction from the understanding that "in pre-colonial Africa, it was religion which explained life. Each person was conscious of living in a world filled by invisible beings, and everyone had the obligation to keep up good relations with these spirit beings, because every event might be traced to their influence." J.Weller and J. Linden, Mainstream Christianity to 1980 in Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1984, p.7. In Shona perception therefore, Jesus Christ must have been a 'Great Spirit' if he caused all the missionaries who were in their midst to leave their homes to tell others about him.

[101] E.61, USPG Archives, 1905.

Spirit, they would have identified with him more.[102] They were denied this chance by missionaries' insistence on the western definition of Jesus. As Moyo observes, "as *Mudzimu Mukuru* (the great ancestral spirit) He becomes incarnated within African culture and in that way people can understand His role and participation in all aspects of life, rather than being confined to ecclesiastical or to spiritual matters."[103] By not allowing the Shona people an opportunity to understand and define Jesus for themselves, especially with reference to death and the dead, the Church confined him to its ecclesiastical and spiritual realms, that is, he was mediator only in Church worship, with no role in village life.

In spite of being thus confined, Jesus Christ still had much to commend him to the Shona people.[104] The Gospels attach great significance to His death, burial and resurrection. His burial was according to local Jewish custom. After resurrection he was no longer subject to the limits of nature. He could enter locked doors, as John 20:19 points out.[105] Some post resurrection appearances had echoes in Shona Traditional Religion, for example, ancestors visiting their progeny. This is further linked to the understanding that this is only possible when proper rituals have been carried out at

---

[102] Sithole, Obed Mutezo, op.cit., p.103.

[103] A. Moyo, "Religion and Political Thought in Independent Zimbabwe", in C. Hallencreutz and A. Moyo, Church and State in Zimbabwe, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1988, p.202.

[104] Sithole, Obed Mutezo, op.cit., p.104 with special reference to Jesus' words, "No man cometh unto the Father but by me."

[105] This resonates with the understanding that ancestors visit their progeny in diverse ways.

death and at burial, to the satisfaction of the spiritual world.[106]

The Creeds also upheld the significance of Jesus' death, burial and efficaciousness. On this fact, missionary denominational teaching seemed to be unanimous. Sithole has remarked "all the Christian denominations without exception believed in the Universal Fatherhood of God, the Universal Saviourhood of Jesus Christ, and the universal brotherhood of man."[107] The problem was that it had to be on missionary terms only, hence Christianity was seen as not adequate in itself for the Shona people.

3.3.3. Christianity and its Shona context.

The missionary approach reinforced the dual observance by condemning Shona Traditional Religion off hand.[108] Dual observance is a product of conflict between the Anglican Church's approach and the Shona people's comprehension of the gospel particularly in the area of death and the dead.[109] As we noted earlier "the traditional Christian approach to mission involved a complete rejection of traditional cultures and religious beliefs and practices,"[110] an approach which denied the Shona people a

---

[106] See Chapter one p.66 for a discussion on the significance of the relationship between the living and the dead.

[107] Sithole, Obed Mutezo, op.cit., p.97.

[108] In Chapter Four we look at the 'Present Practices.' We see there the development of popular and official Anglicanism.

[109] See Chapter two under 'Mission Stations,' p. 88, and 'Church Literature on burial,' p.102

[110] A. Moyo, The Risk of Incarnation, op.cit., p.16. See also p.1 above.

religious identity. Regrettably, this is still the approach of the Anglican Diocese of Harare, in spite of the indigenous Shona leadership of the Church. As a result, dual observance prevails in funerary practices and observances. The use of excommunication as a form of discipline further strengthens this. This leads to two problems, namely, hypocrisy, where people pretend not to have anything to do with Shona Traditional Religion, yet continue to practice and believe in it. They do this discreetly, so as to avoid detection. Secondly it leads to pharisaism, where one group looks down on another, because it does not do the forbidden things. They see themselves as those who are not tempted like the rest.[111]

It would be misleading to conclude that all Shona Anglicans in the Diocese of Harare are dualistic, that is, perpetuate dual observance. Moyo makes a general perceptive observation on Zimbabwean Christians which highlights this position. He writes:

> Many have been able to dissociate themselves from their traditional religious beliefs and so have nothing to do with their ancestors or the beliefs associated with witchcraft and divination, often leaving them rather isolated from their people. Many other Christians have on their own comfortably integrated their Christian faith into the traditional cultures and participate in rituals relating to the ancestors without any feelings of guilt.[112]

This observation, though general, is true for the Anglican Christians in the Diocese of Harare. We should note that those who dissociate themselves from traditional funerary practices and observances are rather isolated from their people. We should ask 'Why?'

---

[111] See Report of the All-Africa Seminar on The Christian Home and Family (17th Feb - 10th April 1963), Kitwe, Zambia, p. 44.

[112] Moyo, The Risk of Incarnation, op. cit., p.16.

We can only begin to answer this question when we understand that in the traditional Shona setting, life is communal. Failure to recognize this aspect of the Shona worldviews renders the Gospel irrelevant. Mulago, in a different context, has useful insights into this. He advises:

> You cannot Christianise a people until you have begun to understand them, unless you are willing to be content with a superficial Christianity ... After penetrating the mentality of the people whom you wish to conquer, you must 'graft' the Christian message into the soul of the proselyte. This is the only method which will give lasting results.[113]

Death is a reality which knows no religion. Both Christianity and Shona Traditional Religion hold that death is not the end of life. For the Christian this is dealt with in the Gospels, and for the Shona person it is dealt with through traditional cultural ritual. In other words, death must be handled in a way that provides support for the grieving, yet paying attention to the dead. This is when religion really comes alive. This is probably why most Shona Anglicans in the Diocese of Harare appeal to both religions, but not in an integrated way.

Both Christianity and Shona Traditional Religion, in their own right, offer communities and individuals symbolic structures for the understanding of life changes. But death exposes divergences between the official teaching of a religion and the beliefs and practices of individuals, as is clear with Anglicanism in Zimbabwe. At this stage Shona Traditional Religion ceases to be what the Church purports it to be, 'superstitious'. It offers what the Christian faith and rituals do not adequately provide. Moyo, a Lutheran,

---

[113] Quoted in K. Bediako, Theology and Identity, Oxford: Oxford Regnum Books, 1992, p.351.

offers a general, but useful, observation on this. He says:

> While many Christians today manifest respect for the departed ancestors and take part in ceremonies relating to them openly, many others do so privately. They live a Christian life during the day, and live the real African life during the night, resulting in what Desmond Tutu and others have described as a kind of Schizophrenia.[114]

Desmond Tutu describes the schizophrenia of the African Christian as follows:

> The fact is that, until fairly recently, the African Christian has suffered from a form of schizophrenia. With part of himself he has been compelled to pay lip service to Christianity as understood, expressed and preached by the white man. But with an ever greater part of himself, a part he has often been ashamed to acknowledge openly and which he has struggled to repress, he has felt that his Africanness was being violated. The white man's largely cerebral religion hardly touched the depths of his African soul; he was being redeemed from sins he did not believe he committed; he was being given answers, and often splendid answers, to questions he had not asked.[115]

If dual observance continues, when is the Christ-ness of Christ going to be a reality for the Shona Anglicans of the Diocese of Harare? When are they going to ask their own questions of faith? Is Jesus really the way, the life, and the truth? When then are they going to wrestle with this fact? There is both a pastoral and a theological need for dialogue between Christianity and Shona Traditional Religion. This could help to end the deep-seated dual observance, which is acknowledged in the Shona expression *Chikristu ne Tsika* (Christianity and traditional culture).[116]

---

[114] Moyo, The Risk of Incarnation, op.cit., p.19.

[115] D.M.Tutu," Whiter African Theology," in E.Fashole-Luke (et.al) Christianity in Independent Africa, p.366.

[116] This is the name of a Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation programme on Radio 2, broadcast on Sunday evenings at 7.30p.m. It has a panel discussing issues relating to Christianity and traditional culture. This dual observance is dealt with later in Chapter four under the heading 'The Dialogue' p.204.

3.3.4 African Initiated Churches

African Initiated Churches are both a practical way of responding to imbalances in Christianity and a reaction to discrepancies in missionary Christianity. As Dillon-Malone points out:

> By the early 1920's great numbers of Shona had become members of one or other of the established Mission Churches. They had become familiar with the Bible as the word of God and had been continually encouraged to discard their traditional religious practices.[117]

In fact, some of them had joined the clerical ranks, thus sharing the ministry with the white missionaries. It was to some of these that the claim to equality before God was problematic.

Though they did the work, they were hardly recognized. They carried out missionary instructions irrespective of whether they were sensible or not. Their leadership qualities were not acknowledged, so they could not contribute to matters of policy. Those who broke with this tradition were dealt with either by excommunication or suspension, in the name of discipline. Etheridge helps us to understand this from a missionary perspective as he writes:

> There is among some of our Christian natives a growing spirit of independence of a kind which is not to be desired. It may be that the spirit which has been at the bottom of Ethiopianism has found its way unconsciously up here ... It seems to me that I can detect a spirit of independence, a fretfulness under control, a dislike of rebuke and a desire for self assertion which were not manifest a few years ago. There seems to be somewhat a feeling - I do not say amongst all - but amongst some who

---

[117] Dillon-Malone, op.cit., p.8.

> would naturally be regarded as leaders that there is an endeavour not merely amongst white men in general but amongst missionaries to keep them down and to prevent them from rising as they ought to. This feeling leads apparently to a wish to be free from white control and to a desire to assert an equality, to which they have not attained in reality.[118]

In his view this was because native Christians could not 'endure hardships,' and, he concludes, "clearly akin to this is a dislike of the hardships of Christianity and of the Cross."[119] The *Mashona* saw things very differently, all they wanted was to be recognized as equals. This had nothing to do with any "dislike of Christian hardships."[120]

Shoniwa Masedza Tandi Moyo, born of parents who had converted to Anglicanism, was himself baptised in the Anglican Church, as Peter.[121] He did not feel comfortable with the teaching and practice of the Anglican Church, so taking the name 'Johane' he established an Independent Church, that is, one not controlled by the European missionaries. His timing was perfect, as Dillon-Malone says:

> It must be remembered, however, that Johane's preaching was taking place in the aftermath of the severe economic depression which had spread throughout Mashonaland at the end of the 1920s resulting in an atmosphere of frustration and discontent in the midst of large-scale unemployment.[122]

---

[118] E.62, USPG Archives, 1906.

[119] Ibid.

[120] The point was that they were resisting the void Christianity was forcing upon them. In their traditional setting "the past was not far away, for the dead ancestors lived close at hand, and the future might be predicted or controlled by means of religious rituals." J.Weller and J. Linden, Mainstream Christianity, p.7.

[121] Dillon-Malone, op.cit., p.15. Se also A.Hastings, The Church in Africa 1450-1950, Oxford: Claredon Press, 1994, p.521.

[122] Ibid., p.17.

Johane was listened to "by people who tended to see the whole of life and its various misfortunes through religious spectacles,"[123] that is, the African way. His preaching was relevant because it made his followers wrestle with the realities of the day. The "white Christian Churches, which had failed to bring saving power to the black man, were to be shunned as well, and a return to the ways of their forefathers encouraged."[124] As Andrea alleges:

> He (Johane) preached that he was John the Baptist sent by God to earth. He urged everyone present to adopt the religion of their forefathers, to drink plenty of kaffir beer and eat meat blessed by our forefathers; further, that we should burn the religious books of the European, as our forefathers did not have books. He suggested that the Bible, hymn books and the New Testament should be destroyed, together with all other religious books. He promised that he would carry out baptising after which he (would) foretell the end of the world.[125]

This was a frustrated man's response to Anglican Christianity as it was then presented. But did he really burn the Bible?

To the contrary, in his teaching on death and the dead, the Bible actually plays a key role "as the Word of God for Africa."[126] Following the death of a member, apostles should gather at the house of the deceased. In the traditional setting there would be wailing and mourning. But at this gathering such "a display of grief betrayed a lack of confidence in God."[127] So everyone present had to pray for the deceased's soul

---

[123] Ibid., p.17.

[124] Ibid., p.17.

[125] Quoted in Dillon-Malone, op.cit., p.17.

[126] Dillon-Malone op.cit., p. 58.

[127] Ibid., p.96.

believed to be on its way to heaven in the company of its guardian angel.

Apostles, rather than blood relatives, prepare the body for burial. They dress it in white and lay it in a coffin on its back, facing upwards, fully stretched.[128] They no longer observe any of the cultural practices which acknowledge witchcraft. They show a disregard for witchcraft and speak strongly against it.[129] When the coffin is carried out of the house, there is singing by the faithful.

Halts punctuate the procession to the grave, as in a traditional Shona funeral procession. At each halt the preacher reads Bible passages, and hymns are sung by all. There is none of the traditional turning of the coffin, meant to confuse the spirit should it want to come back into the home before time. When they get to the grave side the coffin is placed on the ground, and all pray. They dig the grave so it is diagonal to the east and the west.

The coffin is lowered into the grave with the head pointing west in readiness for the resurrection. This is to enable the deceased to see the Lord approaching from the east.[130] Women fill the grave, helped by men, while the rest of the people sing. This is a break with tradition, designed to prove the power of the Holy Spirit, and to demonstrate the effects of faith. The message is that the deceased do not get peace

---

[128] Ibid., p. 96.

[129] Ibid., p.98. For teaching against witchcraft see M.L. Daneel, The Independent Churches in Africa, Missiology Guide 2 for MSB302-G, Pretoria: UNISA,1982, p.205.

[130] Ibid., p. 97.

in the next world because they were buried by their relatives, but because they were committed to God, and commended to Him by fellow believers. As a result there is no duality in the funerary practices and observances of these churches.[131]

Before leaving the grave the people sit to hear the apostles preach. After this the people go and wash their hands in the river (if none is nearby, water is provided); "this custom has both traditional and biblical roots for contact with the dead is believed to incur defilement."[132] Apostles forbid some traditional observances of burial rites. So there should be no beer, no meat, or rather no beast slaughtered. Instead people are fed on tea, soft drinks and bread.[133] There is no doubt that such burial observances are influenced by biblical practice. Instead of the all-important traditional *kurova guva,* they have a *runyaradzo,* a ceremony meant to conduct the spirit of the deceased to heaven.[134] African Initiated Churches have grasped the opportunity that the Anglican Church has failed to exploit; there is no room for dialogue between Shona Traditional Religion and Christianity for as long as the former is seen as evil.

3.4 CONCLUSION

---

[131] The attempts by the Anglican Church to bridge the gap through providing literature and debates at Synods does not seem to adequately address the reality of dual observance. A new method is the only answer. See Chapter two p.102 for reference to Church literature on burial.

[132] Ibid., p. 97.

[133] Ibid., p.97.

[134] M.L. Daneel, The Independent Churches in Africa, op.cit., p.230 and p.236.

From the foregoing we can conclude that dual observance became entrenched in Zimbabwean Anglicanism right from the beginning. The Church and the settlers arrived at the same time, and when the Mashona dealt with the intrusion, it was white people, settlers and all, that they were resisting.

Their dislike for the *varungu* was such that they were prepared to take up arms against them. When this did not provide the required results, it was interpreted as a war of religions. For a while, Christianity was seen as a religion of prosperity. But when the economic boom was on the decline, it was believed to indicate the decline of Christianity's potency. It was then that the dual observance was ratified, giving the *Mashona* an alternate way of dealing with life changes, including maintaining a relationship with the spiritual world and coping with the loss of a loved one.

African Initiated Churches, were actually wrestling with the reality of what belief in God as life-giver meant. In so doing they were confronting the dual observance. Dialogue between tradition and the new faith bore fruit. Their funeral practices have God right in the heat of mourning. The Anglicans could learn a lesson from this approach.

In Shona Anglicanism, the adoption of dual observance indicates lack of dialogue between Christian and Shona traditional religious practices. The problem, as we shall see in the next chapter, is that they were, and still are perceived as alternatives. There is need for harmony between the two religions if this situation is to be redressed. We now turn our attention to the present practices of Shona Anglican Christians.

CHAPTER FOUR

CHRISTIANITY AND SHONA TRADITIONAL RELIGION IN DIALOGUE

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter we will look at the responses of Shona Anglicans of the Diocese of Harare to the reality of death and the dead. I shall do this by analysing present practices, particularly noting how traditional views persist. This will be done at two levels, namely, the laity and the official church level. The fact that the Christian religion has influenced Shona traditional religious beliefs and practices presents us with a peculiar context. It is from within that context that Shona Anglicans, like most Christians from the mainline missionary churches, engage in a continuous negotiation with and vacillation between these two systems of religious belief. Perhaps this is because there is always the tendency, not unique to African peoples, "to understand the new faith in terms of what one already knows."[1]

---

[1] A.Moyo, "Religion and Political thought in independent Zimbabwe," in C. Hallencreutz and A.Moyo, Church and State in Zimbabwe, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1988, p.202.

Oliver Mutukudzi,[2] a local Zimbabwean singer, picks up four characteristics of death, to which people respond. He does this in two of his songs, *Rufu ndimadzongonyedze* and *Jerry*. In the former, he identifies three of the four characteristic qualities of death: it is disruptive, indiscriminate and saddening. In *Jerry*, a tribute to his late colleague, he points out that death brings loneliness.

It is true in Zimbabwe that when death occurs it disrupts the flow of events. When the wailing and weeping that announces a death is heard, ignoring it is difficult. Subsequently, people have to suspend their work patterns because they take days off work to attend to the death and all that goes with it. Close relatives of the deceased also spend a lot of money, and sleepless nights, during the run up to the burial, and even afterwards. Some have to travel long distances to advise other relatives.[3]

Death is indiscriminate. It does not only occur to invalids and old people, but to anyone, young and old, healthy and sickly. So when a loved one dies, sadness and loneliness become realities, the company of a loved one is lost. These features are better highlighted in the present practices of Shona or African Anglicans.[4]

---

[2] Oliver Mutukudzi is a local singer whose songs are commentaries on life as he observes it. For instance he has songs on AIDS, street children and widowhood, and other such issues.

[3] The communal understanding of life and the strength and value of the extended family network demand that this must be done.

[4] We now examine how popular Shona or African Anglican Christianity deals with the cultural integration of Christian Burials and related rituals with their traditional views. This is important because the Anglican Church has an affinity with the Roman Catholic Church, which has since led the way to the extent

4.2 PRESENT PRACTICES

In Zimbabwe, hearing African women wailing and weeping at the top of their voices following the death of a close relative is not uncommon. This is irrespective of where one is when the death message is delivered; so one who breaks the death news has to be very discreet. Hospitals, both urban and rural, are the places where this happens most often. Other places where the wailing and weeping occur spontaneously are the residences, that is, houses in urban areas, and homes in either the communal lands or on farmsteads. Because it is important that "all relations and friends are informed, either by some symbolic act such as beating a drum or blowing a horn audibly in the neighbourhood of the deceased's home, or by word of mouth,"[5] wailing and weeping serve as both an expression of grief and a way of announcing the death. Whenever people in the neighbourhood hear any of these, they always make their way to the homestead in question to find out who has died.

New arrivals offer their condolences to all who are already present, shaking hands (*kubata maoko*) and saying *nematambudziko* or *ndimi madziona* (you have witnessed the hardships) or some such words conveying sympathy for the 'caused suffering.'[6] After this

---

that local customs of burial are part of the expression of the Christian faith.

[5] M.F.C. Bourdillon, The Shona Peoples, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1976, p.231.

[6] E.B. Magava," African Customs connected with the Burial of the Dead in Rhodesia," in J.A.Dachs, (ed) Christianity South of the Zambezi, Vol 1, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1973, p.152. See also T.F.Makuvise, "Christian and Traditional Funeral," in J.L. Cox, Rational Ancestors: Scientific Rationality and African Indigenous Religions, Cardiff: Cardiff Academic Press, 1998, p.227.

they sit close to someone else who is most likely to know the details, who will tell them the details of who has died, and anything else he or she heard about the death. This process goes on for as long as people are coming into the 'house' or homestead.

4.2.1 Urban Setting

In the urban areas, chances of someone dying in the 'house' are very limited, and even if one did, the police[7] would come and collect the deceased. The assumption therefore is that one should die in a hospital. So if someone falls ill, he or she must be taken to a hospital. Because most people work, this hospitalized relative is visited during scheduled hospital visiting hours, which are usually early morning before work, 6.00-8.00 a.m., lunch hours, 12.00 -2.00p.m., and after working hours, 5.00p.m. onwards. Should a visiting relative meet with the death news, it is his or her responsibility to inform others. This will be done either by phone or by travelling to where other relatives are, to advise them personally . The closest relatives would usually be informed personally, though this depends upon the temperament and sensitivity of the one bearing the news. When the circle of close relatives has been advised, they make their way to the 'house' of the deceased. Meanwhile, a piece of red cloth is flown at the gate or entrance to the house.

---

[7] It is normal practice that when one dies in an urban house the Zimbabwe Republic Police should be advised. They then come and collect the corpse and take it to the mortuary and arrange for a postmortem. If the cause of death was natural, that is, not due to violence or poisoning, permission to bury the deceased is granted.

Occasionally the house is stripped of its curtains.[8] As other relatives and friends arrive the wailing and weeping is revived as *kubata maoko* goes on.

Close relatives get together to consider such matters as who should go and break the news to those in the rural areas. They also work out provisionally where the deceased is to be buried. If the infrastructure is there, messages about the death can be sent through the police, or by phone. Word is also sent to other church members, such as the chairperson of the Mothers' Union, and the *Wabvuwi* [9] "fishers of persons", if the parish has these groups. The priest is also contacted. If the parish is part of a *Mubatanidzwa*[10] (Interdenominational Fellowship) the relevant persons on that committee are advised of the death.

In most urban parishes Mothers' Union members make a fixed monthly financial contribution towards eventualities. In addition, there is an agreed sum which is contributed when there is a death. Once they receive a message about the death through the agreed

---

[8] This is a practice which was introduced in the late 1960s by the Smith government, following a ban on African political meetings. African politicians met under the guise of funeral gatherings. So the government ordered that at a funeral gathering curtains should be taken off, so that the police could easily see through without disturbing the mourners.

[9] *Wabvuwi* is a men's guild, which has a constitution of its own as well as a set of rules by which its members should live. See p. 422 for an extract from the Wabvuwi Constitution.

[10] *Mubatanidzwa* encourages interdenominational interaction. It is mostly the women who are involved in it.

channels, those responsible for collecting such contributions start work.[11] At *Mubatanidzwa* level similar arrangements are also set in motion. People responsible for collecting and releasing the agreed sums in each case are usually the respective treasurers.

When news of the death is being broken to other church members and to the *Mubatanidzwa* members, the question of affiliation should be clarified. The members of the Mothers' Union, and other denominational guilds will want to know if the deceased was a church member, because in this case they will attend in their guild uniforms. It is usually the women who do the cooking, and their different denominational uniforms clearly identify them.[12]

Where the deceased was a member of a burial society, the burial society is contacted. Burial societies usually make financial contributions towards the feeding of the mourners and may take responsibility for the provision of the coffin and the transportation of the deceased to his or her burial place. This is dependent on two things, (a) the constitution of the burial society and (b) the member's subscription record prior to his or her death.[13]

---

[11] The task that these people do is that of collecting both the money and some foodstuffs to be used for feeding the mourners. They go from door to door, and this is quite acceptable.

[12] This is important, because it displays the visible unity of the denominations, while also demonstrating something of the traditional understanding of communal life.

[13] These are social groups specifically constituted for the purposes of helping with funeral requirements for their members. Each has a constitution of its own.

It is important to note that close relatives and church members are present at the house of the deceased from the very first day, until the burial has taken place or until the corpse has been transported to the rural home. Their main responsibility is to attend to the inner circle of the bereaved. For some, the shock of death is such that they fail to care for themselves. So other relatives and church members make sure that such people are nursed and fed.[14]

Once the date and place of burial have been settled, a funeral undertaker is approached to do the preparation of the corpse. The Mothers' Union provide the white material for the shroud, if it is desired, and send it to the undertakers. They actually make the shroud themselves. It is commonly not sewn with needle and thread but is stuck together by hand, using a pair of scissors and thin strips of cloth trimmed from the main gown. With the pair of scissors, holes are made, and the strip of cloth is threaded into those holes by hand. Sewing this 'gown' with needle and thread is believed to be disastrous because (a) death will always strike and (b) those who sew the shroud could become blind.[15] At times close relatives go to the undertakers to wash the corpse and dress it in the shroud.[16]

---

[14] A demonstration of the communal support system at work.

[15] See interview with Mrs. Ellen Chinyeke, p.384.

[16] The relatives have to go to the undertakers to do whatever else they want to do with their relative, because of the law.

In keeping with the bye-laws, no corpse is ordinarily allowed to spend the might in the suburbs in private homes. Only registered funeral undertakers have permission to keep corpses on their premises. All arrangements and movements of the corpse are agreed with the undertakers in advance. Before taking the corpse either for burial in town, or transporting it to the rural home, the undertakers bring the deceased to the 'house'. This is especially important if the house belonged to the deceased.[17] This practice reflects the people's belief in life after death, and the unpredictability of the spirit of the deceased person. The basic fear is that it might anger the deceased if he or she were taken for burial without bidding farewell to his or her house. Simple rituals mark this occasion. The writer has been a participant observer in quite a number of such observances.

The general pattern is that the oldest member of the family present, with other close relatives, male and female, gather in a room with the coffin. They allow no outsiders into the room at this stage. Men usually crouch while women sit. A designated member of the family, usually the *muzukuru (*nephew or grandchild*)*, depending on custom, claps his hands and sets the formalities in motion. He engages the *kusuma* process,[18] letting everyone present know that the deceased has reached his house. The family

---

[17] The guiding expression is, "*unofanira kumbopinda mumba make*" (he or she should enter his or her house), so as to enable his or her soul to rest in peace. See J.Kumbirai, p.434, below.

[18] *Kusuma* or *kupira nyaya*, is to formally present a case for consideration. See chapter one p.24. "When a matter is presented it starts off with the most junior member of the ritual unit or forum. When it reaches the most senior member his or her response is communicated back through the ranks." S.Zwana, Tombstone Unveiling: Significance and Theological Implications, Unpublished paper, p.4.

representative then takes it up and addresses the deceased using almost the same words as the previous speaker, but emphasizing the fact that, according to custom, they have brought the deceased into his or her house. At this the women ululate and clap hands together with everybody else in attendance. After this they let the deceased 'rest ' a while in his or her house.

The process is repeated again before the deceased is taken away to his or her burial place. The *muzukuru,*[19] or whoever is charged with that responsibility, announces that, in his view, the relatives are ready to take the deceased away, for burial or 'home'. The eldest member then claps his hands, and addresses the deceased. He addresses the deceased by his totem (*mutupo),* explaining that they are about to take the deceased to his or her final resting place. He asks the deceased to clear the way for a smooth journey. Everybody in the room claps their hands and the women ululate once more. This varies from people to people, but the practice of *kusuma* is very common and prevalent among the Shona people. It marks every stage of the ritual.

After this, other people are allowed into the room and prayers can then be said. If the deceased was a church member, the expression *inzira yake yaakazvisarudzira* (it is the route the deceased chose for him or herself) is used to indicate the deceased's desire to

---

[19] In most traditional Shona rituals the *muzukuru* acts as the Master of Ceremonies. So he is not someone chosen only for the occasion.

have prayers said.[20] In reality there is no possibility of prayers not being said for someone who was a Christian, because even non-Christians have prayers said for them for the sake of their Christian relatives. After all this has been done, the top part of the coffin is opened, to allow the face of the deceased to be seen. All who wish to view the deceased are invited to do so. This marks the beginning of the journey to the cemetery or the deceased's 'home' in the village. Once the viewing is completed the people leave the house, and get into buses or other vehicles to take them to the burial place. Most people express much grief at this stage since it is the last time they will ever see the face of the deceased.

If the burial is taking place in town, all roads will then lead to the cemetery. Prior to this, the undertaker will have completed the required paperwork. One of the requirements is that the relatives, together with the undertaker, will have clarified in which section of the cemetery the deceased will be laid to rest. Most urban cemeteries have designated burial sections for Christians, non-Christians, adults, children and people of other faiths.

Bye-laws of the particular city or town council apply. Municipal employees dig the graves to respective municipal specifications. Relatives of the deceased are allocated a numbered grave and the record is kept by the municipal office. So there is not much

---

[20] This kind of dialogue between Christianity and Shona Traditional Religion is easier among the laity, as can be seen from the expressions they have coined around it.

choice on their part. They are also allocated a time within which to carry out the burial of their beloved. Since relatives and friends have to comply with municipal requirements some burial rituals are left out, prompting, in many, a preference for burial in their traditional homes.[21] Maybe it is for this reason that only about twenty per cent of African funerals take place in towns, like Harare.

One form of burial that has not yet been fully appreciated by many African people is the practice of cremation. Very few Shona people are cremated. There are a variety of reasons why this is the case. Among them are the traditional beliefs rooted in worldviews and the need for an ancestral grave.

4.2.2 Rural Setting

In rural areas the death rituals and observances are more elaborate than in urban settings. It is acceptable that one can die at home and be buried without the police being involved. The police are only involved if the death was a murder, or when foul play is suspected.[22] The need for paperwork is only now beginning to be recognized, now that most people have bank accounts, which means that a death certificate is needed before the estate is wound up. The law of the land now encourages people to register every death so that a

---

[21] M. Gelfand, African Crucible, Cape Town: Juta & Co Ltd, 1968, p.187.

[22] In this case foul play does not involve suspicion of witchcraft.

death certificate can be issued. When one dies in hospital, getting the paperwork processed is even easier.[23]

In most rural areas, a hospitalised person will always have a relative, usually female, looking after him or her. Should the patient die, it is the responsibility of this relative to advise other family members and relatives. However far the hospital is from the home of the deceased, the messenger will have to wait until she reaches the deceased's homestead before she can express her grief through the usual wailing and weeping. Once they hear this wailing and weeping, relatives and neighbours gather immediately. They suspend all other activities. Word is sent to other relatives, both far and near, in the same way as described in relation to the urban setting.

If one dies at home, the pattern is slightly different. Those who are present at the time of death see to it that they control the eyes, mouth and hands of the deceased (*kudzora munhu*).[24] They then wrap the deceased up, either in a white bed sheet or a blanket and lay the corpse on a mat behind the door.[25] Only then will they start wailing and weeping.

---

[23] What makes it easier is that the doctor will have given a brief medical history and completed most of the required documents.

[24] J.Kumbirai, Kurova Guva Ceremony, Unpublished paper, p.434. 'Control' is used to indicate that those who are in attendance make sure that the dying person has his or her eyes shut, the mouth closed, and lies straight.

[25] See also M.F.C. Bourdillon, The Shona Peoples, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1976, pp.231-2.

The procedure for advising those in the urban areas is almost the same as that for advising the rural people of an urban death. Normally news of death is sent to one or two urban relatives, who are, in turn, expected to contact others. This is done either by sending someone from the village, or through the police, or by telegram or telephone. It is then the duty of those relatives who have received the message to travel home to join the burial party. No one who dies at home is ever taken to the town or city for burial. This should not surprise us given that urbanization in Zimbabwe stands at just 27%.[26]

If someone dies outside Zimbabwe, efforts are made to bring the deceased home so that he or she can be accorded a proper burial, which simply means being buried by his or her relatives according to traditional custom. When relatives receive the news of such a distant death, normal activities come to a semi-standstill until the arrival of the corpse. Usually it arrives at home in the afternoon or evening, in time to "sleep" at home. The wake-keeping observed on this night is more intense than usual, presumably because there will be no other opportunity for wake-keeping.

4.2.3 The wake-keeping

---

[26] See Welcome to Zimbabwe, Turn to God: Rejoice in Hope, Geneva: WCC Publication for the 8th Assembly, Harare, front cover. This is endorsed in Ministry of Information and Tourism Brochures on Zimbabwe, available at the Zimbabwe High Commission, London based on the 1995 Census.

Right from the first day of the death there is a wake-keeping at either the house or home of the deceased. In urban settings, as we have already noted, bye-laws control much of what goes on. The singing, and any other activities, are restricted by the specifications of the appropriate neighbourhood bye-laws. For example, the wake-keeping is observed without the body. As the name wake-keeping infers, these activities are organised so that people are kept awake. We will not dwell very much on wake-keeping in the urban areas, because very little goes on there.

In the rural areas a variety of activities mark the wake-keeping, which proceeds without any restrictions.[27] We will look at what happened at a specific wake-keeping, where the writer was a participant observer. It was one held in honour of a fellow clergyman and friend, at his homestead in Murehwa in 1983.

We arrived at the homestead at about 7.30 pm, to be welcomed by the familiar wailing and weeping. Most of the people at the homestead were on their feet, except the very old and infirm. They all wanted to be near the hearse, the car that brought the deceased. In another corner of the yard, they had made a big fire. It gave light to the burial party as we carried the coffin from the car into the rondavel where the corpse was going to spend the night. It is important to note that the corpse could have spent the night in any room in any

---

[27] See also M.F.C. Bourdillon, The Shona Peoples, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1976, p. 233. Wake-keeping has long been part of traditional practice. It is believed that it helps deter witches from coming to eat the corpse before burial.

house, or in any hut.[28] In the rondavel were four lights and three old women sitting on a mat.[29] They asked that we place the coffin on the other side of the mat.

After that a relative of the deceased asked us to crouch, and he started clapping his hands, telling the elderly women that we had brought their son home for interment. The elderly ladies clapped and ululated and thanked God and the ancestors for the safe journey. They asked for a prayer before letting us go outside to join other men who were sitting by the fire.

As it turned out, a beast had been slaughtered[30] earlier in the day, when the news of our travel to the homestead was confirmed. At about 8.30 pm the whole gathering was fed on *sadza (*thick porridge*),* meat and green vegetables. Perhaps it is important to mention that even when one is not hungry, out of solidarity one is expected to eat a little. Refusing to partake of the food suggests that one is not in solidarity with other mourners,[31] or knows something else about the cause of death, hence the protest.

---

[28] This rondavel was not built specifically for the funeral, but it is one in which the deceased spent most of his time when he was on leave.

[29] According to tradition, there should always be people attending to the corpse with lights, so as to deter witches.

[30] This could be connected with the traditional sacrifice, wherein a *mombe yenheedzo* (beast of accompaniment) is slaughtered in honour of the deceased, to provide mourners with food, and the deceased with a blanket. See Chapter one, p.37.

[31] Underlying this custom is a Shona proverbial saying, "*ukama igasva hunozadziswa nekudya*," (relationships are incomplete, till they are sealed by a meal).

At about 9.15 a group of men with animal skins over their trousers, brought a big drum, which they started beating. They were joined by some women who had been cooking and washing up. Together they performed the *Jerusarema* dance.[32] It is an erotic dance where men and women in the arena dance towards each other with simulations of sexual acts. [33] This went on for quite a while. When the women started feeling exhausted they left the *dariro (*dancing ring*)* one by one till none were left. The dance came to a natural end.

The local catechist called people to prayer. It seems as if he had already planned the way he was going to go about this prayer session. He announced a hymn, and without giving anyone a chance to look it up, started singing it. Most people knew the hymn. A passage of scripture was read and a series of short addresses followed. Choruses interspaced them. Prayers were said; the tone of the prayers was that some evil spirit had caused the death. Nevertheless, since the deceased was a clergyman, God knew best what to do with him and how to deal with the source of the evil spirit that caused his death.

It was not long after the prayers that the deceased reverend gentleman's life was being dramatized by some of the women who had been doing the *Jerusarema* dance. One of them was putting on the deceased's spectacles, cassock, surplice and stole. She imitated

---

[32] The *Jerusarema* is a popular traditional dance in Murehwa, its drumbeat precedes and concludes most news items of the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Cooperation.

[33] By its very nature this traditional dance is erotic. Depriving the deceased of it at his or her funeral is considering him or her as an outsider. So the traditional dance is part of life in Murehwa and this includes death and mourning, presumably indicating the need for fertility or life to continue in the descendants.

the deceased's mannerisms in prayer. Others were dressed in his suits and clerical collars. All this was done to great laughter and applause by all in attendance. At a deeper level it showed that people were mourning someone they really knew. It was an effective way of consoling the bereaved. They call it *kunemera*.[34]

After this group came another, which related my deceased friend's life history. One member of this group told the deceased's life history from a family perspective. She told us about his birth and how he grew up, and how he had always shown leadership qualities. The next spoke about the deceased's working life, including his priestly ministry. Some places he had worked in and some people he had influenced were mentioned. In Shona they call this whole episode *kupa nhoroondo* (giving the life history).[35] This aspect of the deceased's life reflected that he was part of this community which loved and cared for him. He belonged with them.

While all this was going on, people were served with beer, tea and cool drinks. Those who felt too tired to stay awake left. I was advised by another clergyman that at a funeral

---

[34] *Kunemera* means, "to joke with". At funeral gatherings it is engaged in as part of the process of consoling the bereaved. It can be very sarcastic at times.

[35] Given what happens at *kubata maoko*, where people just join those who have been before them and hear from them about the death, this is very important. It serves as the official announcement of the facts about the dead person and the death.

gathering, announcing your departure is not customary, so people simply leave when they are ready.[36]

4.2.4 The day of interment

At daybreak, the deceased's paternal uncle led a group of younger family relatives to the family cemetery, where he marked his nephew's grave and left the digging to this group. Before he left, he asked them to finish digging in time for the interment, which was to be led by the Bishop of Harare, Ralph Peter Hatendi at 10.00 am. This marked the end of the wake-keeping, as people dispersed to different duties.

In the homestead the *varoora (*daughters-in-law of the extended family) divided themselves into groups. One group had the task of clearing the pathway from the homestead to the grave. The other group went to fetch water from the borehole, while the other tied pieces of *mupfuti* fibre onto peoples wrists, or hung them on their necks as necklaces.[37] This was done to close relatives, colleagues and friends of the deceased, including clergy and all the catechists who were present.

---

[36] Tradition has it that since death hardly gives one a chance to bid loved ones farewell, mourners are not expected to announce their departure.

[37] See E. B. Magava," African Customs connected with the Burial of the dead in Rhodesia", In J.A.Dachs, Christianity South of the Zambezi, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1973, p.152. The significance of this is (a) to identify the inner circle of mourners and (b) to solicit for some money, since to have the fibre taken off you had to pay some money.

When the then Bishop of Harare arrived it was interesting to note that his whole entourage, including himself, shared our customs. They had *mupfuti* fibre hung on their necks. He went into the rondavel where the corpse was, and gave his condolences to the elderly ladies mentioned earlier. He said some prayers and then came out to join the rest of the mourners who were outside. We all sat there chatting, waiting for the diggers to send word on their progress.

At ten, word came that the grave was ready. A few elderly men and women, close relatives of the deceased, went into the rondavel where the corpse was and spent some time there on their own. After this, one of them came to invite the bishop in. They asked him to say some prayers before the corpse was taken outside. The *varoora* followed the bishop and stood blocking the doorway with their materials called *mazambia* (lose cloth obtained from Zambia, which women wrap over their skirts). In exchange for letting the coffin out they had to be given some money.[38] The same was true for seeking to have the *mupfuti* fibre removed. It was only after they were given an amount of money they were satisfied with, that they obliged. That money belongs to the *varoora;* it is an indirect payment for the work they do.

---

[38] See also, Chimbera, "Burial Ceremony," in J.L. Cox, Rational Ancestors: Scientific Rationality and African Indigenous Religions, Cardiff: Cardiff Academic Press, 1998, p.222. In a sense, it was the daughters-in-law's payment for the hard work they had done.

The coffin was brought out and put on a table from which the viewing was to take place. Officiating was the bishop, who led the viewing, followed by us, the clergy and the catechists, then the relatives and all the others who wished to do so. After all had viewed the face of the deceased, the coffin was closed and the procession to the grave began. Once again the bishop led the way, since he was the officiant.

In the procession to the grave side the Bishop recited excerpts from the Bible, according to the Book of Common Prayer, while the rest of us walked in silence. There were halts on the way,[39] at which point the carrying party would change. *Varoora* would put their *zambia* cloths on the ground for the coffin to rest on, each time there was a halt. For the last part of the procession, Shona hymn number 142, *Kwasara kunesu* (A few more years shall roll)[40] was sung till we got to the grave.

4.2.5 The interment and its observances

It seems that the family cemetery was already consecrated ground, because the bishop did not bless the grave. Before the interment he said a few words, after which close relatives of the deceased went into the grave to receive the coffin and lay it to rest. They

---

[39] There were no 360 degree turnings of the coffin as would have been the case in a purely traditional procession. In a traditional funeral procession, for fear of the deceased's unpredictable spirit, the coffin is turned round so as to confuse the spirit should it want to come into the homestead before time.

[40] Minamato/Ndwiyo, Anglican Prayer/Hymn Book.

cut the mat on which the coffin was placed into two. The first half lined the floor of the grave and the other covered the coffin. A few of the deceased's clothes were thrown into the grave. Those who received the coffin came out, and the committal prayers were said. The bishop, clergy, relatives and those who wished, filed past the grave throwing soil into the grave. Some of the deceased's relatives threw in some soil on behalf of their absentee children.

After this the filling of the grave commenced. Those who were using the shovels did not hand them to the next person. When they felt that they had done enough they would just leave the shovel on the loose soil. On enquiring why this was the case, I was told that if they handed each other the shovels they would be handing each other the death that had struck this family. It is one of those taboos that reflects an understanding of death as something physically contagious, that is, it can be passed on through a shovel.[41]

When the grave was filled, the closing prayers were said. After these prayers everyone in attendance was invited back to the homestead for food. Two containers flanked the entrances to the homestead, each strategically placed so that people would wash their hands. The water was mixed with a smelly herb known as *zumbane*, to act as a

---

[41] Since death is traditionally believed to be 'caused' by an unseen force, this is an attempt by custom to avoid passing this death from one person to the other.

disinfectant.[42] There were also some people waiting to direct those who were coming into the homestead to appropriate food points.

Meanwhile some elderly relatives of the deceased remained at the grave, covering it with thorny bushes so that cattle would not be attracted to the fresh mound of earth. They also swept round it, and then came to the homestead on their own. According to Shona tradition this was so that the elders would be able to detect if witches, or anyone else, had tampered with the grave in any way. Since the inspection of the grave was done early the following morning, it was also a way of finding out if anyone had visited the grave the previous night.

In the homestead, by custom, those who had had their fill were free to leave, without announcing their departure. This was a bit difficult for those who came by car, as was the case with the bishop and my own party. When we rose to go to our respective cars it was clear that we were about to leave. The uncle of the deceased noticed this and asked us to sit down for a while so that he could make a speech, mainly to thank us for being in attendance. He thanked the bishop for coming to bury a fellow clergyman, the clergy for

---

[42] E.B. Magava, "African Customs connected with the Burial of the dead in Rhodesia," in J.A.Dachs, Christianity South of the Zambezi, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1973, p.155.

accompanying their colleague, and the rest of the people for their attendance and assistance. After this the people rose to sing us off.[43]

4.2.6 Variations in observances

Attending a fellow clergyman's funeral was just the beginning of a learning process which has resulted in this study. As I discovered in the ensuing years, views on death and the dead are varied, even within one tribal group, let alone among the many Shona tribal groupings. These differences are reflected in the cultural, traditional, and religious emphases that accompany the death and burial rites. There is no uniform way of conducting a funeral, that is, the elements of a funeral which are considered essential in one setting are not necessarily held in high esteem in another. It would therefore be misleading to assume that what happened at the reverend gentleman's funeral is prescriptive. Having said that, it is however important to note that there are basic phenomena and notions which guide every funeral. M.F.C. Bourdillon sums up this point, observing that:

> As is the case with most Shona rituals, the details of the rites surrounding death and burial vary from area to area, and they vary even for different clans within a given locality. Yet we can find a general structure to the rituals which is common to all or most Shona peoples.[44]

---

[43] This is a clear attempt at accommodating western courtesy, which did not seem to violate the tradition.

[44] M.F.C. Bourdillon, The Shona Peoples, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1976, p.231.

In the Anglican Diocese of Harare the interchange between Christianity and Shona Traditional Religion is influenced by the traditional communal understanding of society. Both Anglicanism and Shona Traditional Religion hold dear the communal nature of life, but from different perspectives. Within this communal setting, the Shona have a hierarchical social structure which prescribes their relationships.[45] Every member in such a community has a place and a role to play. In other words all have a social status. The living and the dead are all integral members of the community, in fact a community without the dead is unimaginable. In Anglicanism some of the dead are part of the 'communion of the saints,' while in the Shona understanding they are the 'living-dead.' It is understood that the "*mweya* continues in an afterlife defined in terms of its believed influence on the community it has left."[46]

This would probably explain the Shona Anglicans' variation of death ceremonies, which still reflect a strong traditional, religio-cultural understanding of life. Each person has a place in society. This is illustrated in the burial rituals. For instance, infants are buried with very little ceremony.[47] Depending on the local custom, when an infant dies there is usually no big gathering, neither is there the usual wailing and weeping nor the elaborate *kubata*

---

[45] Ibid., p.45-6.

[46] V.Whidborne, "Africanisation of Christianity in Zimbabwe," in Religion in Southern Africa, 4(1) 1983, p.40.

[47] E.B. Magava, "African Customs connected with the Burial of the dead in Rhodesia," in J.A. Dachs, Christianity South of the Zambezi, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1973, p.155.

maoko. It is as if by accident that people stumble on the news of the death of an infant. When they do, the expression used is *'yadeuka'* (it is spilt), implying that the infant is liquid.[48] In the urban areas, when an infant is buried, water plants are buried with it. People might be in attendance and prayers said if it is desired. In the rural areas the burial of an infant is the responsibility of elderly women, usually those who are in menopause.[49] If prayers are desired, they are said in the homestead before the body is handed over to the aged women. The usual burial place is a riverbed, but if no river is nearby water plants are buried with the infant.[50]

At the death of older children, there might be wailing and weeping, depending on the local practice. People gather, and there is proper *kubata maoko*. There might also be a wake, though this varies according to location. Christian presence is pronounced; prayers are said and hymns sung. At their burial Christian rituals and some degree of Shona traditional ritual are interchanged, but since they are children (*vana*) their spirits are considered unable to speak.[51] Offering Christian prayers for them becomes a way of remembering them, because they are excluded from the ancestors.

---

[48] See above, p.46.

[49] See interviews with M. Chikonamombe p.381 and E.Chinyeke p.384, and Chapter one p.46.

[50] See also V.K.Sachikonye's submission to the Commission of Enquiry, p.432.

[51] D.W.T. Shropshire, The Church and Primitive Peoples, London: SPCK, 1938, p.142.

A bachelor or spinster of marriageable age has religious traditional observances performed before he or she is buried. What is actually done depends on the location.[52] At the burial of a grown person, that is, one who has left a wife or husband and children, special arrangements are clandestinely made to enable the living to welcome back the spirit of the deceased.[53] Such arrangements are made outside the public setting by close family members, even for Christians. There is still more pomp and ceremony at the burial of a chief.[54] At national level, cabinet ministers and those designated as national heroes, are buried with national honours at the National Hero's Acre in Harare. In all these settings traditional religion and Christianity are mingled in the process. The traditional practices are given their place alongside Christianity, even though a Christian minister of religion leads the ceremonies. This observance is believed to give the deceased's spirit consolation and rest.[55]

In fact every class of person is catered for in terms of death and funerary rites. Christian prayers and traditional observances in the present Shona setting continue to move side by side up to the end. Christian belief, and the traditional desire to maintain harmony with the spiritual world, both stemming from belief in life after death, sustain both Christian and

---

[52] See what we said about this age group in Chapter one, p.46.

[53] See chapter one p.45.

[54] E55a,USPG Archives, 1900. This is probably what led Herbert Selmes to report that the Shona believe that the spirit of an *induna* goes into a lion and thus becomes a *mhondoro*, regional spirit.

[55] M.F.C. Bourdillon, The Shona peoples, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1976, p.256.

traditional ritual practices.[56] The need to make sure that this continuity of life is not disturbed is mostly witnessed in burial rituals. For that reason most Shona people still believe that the deceased has two shadows, a black shadow representing his flesh and a white shadow representing the soul or spirit.[57] Those who are knowledgeable about these matters constantly seek to know whether either of the shadows was seen near the corpse or in the room where the corpse was. This is to help them with the traditional burial ceremonies, for which, in their minds, Christianity does not provide.

In some areas there are people who, depending on social status, are buried with elaborate symbolism. Some areas observe this symbolism for every adult person. The first thing to note is the way the grave is dug. Some dig it straight down and then make a recess for the coffin either to the left, or to the right, depending on local custom. Others make a narrow compartment, the size of the coffin, at the bottom of the grave, usually in the middle. When the time comes to bury the deceased, Christian prayers are said over this traditionally dug grave. Only the soil put in at the time of bidding the deceased farewell, plus some of the deceased's personal possessions are put on the coffin in this compartment. The compartment is then sealed with stones or pieces of wood before the grave is filled.

---

[56] M.F.C. Bourdillon, The Shona peoples, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1976, p.256. See also under 'Textual Analysis' p.183, below.

[57] See also Ibid., p.256-9. See also Kumbirai, p.434.

If the Anglican Diocese of Harare is to offer effective pastoral ministry, then it needs to consider seriously how it can accommodate the emotions, feelings and beliefs of the Shona people. They give content to the ceremonies.[58] As Shropshire says:

> These ceremonies, therefore, have a real effect on the future happiness and contentment not only of the deceased person but also of the relatives who are living, lest they should be haunted and constantly plagued with sickness and misfortune by a miserable, homeless, uncared for and wandering spirit.[59]

The ceremonies reveal the communal nature of the understanding of life and seek to maintain its full relationship. The living and the dead are, in a real sense, brought together by these funerary rites.

4.3 TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Our analysis of current practice has been revealing, but, we can also learn much about views of death and the dead through textual analysis. Here we shall look at the three Christian textual sources that are used at funeral gatherings, namely, songs, prayers and bible readings. Individually and collectively, these textual sources offer insights into the complex understanding of death and the dead. It should be kept in mind that there are

---

[58] This is particularly significant, given the historical development and understanding of death in the West. See especially P. Aries, Western attitudes, op.cit.

[59] Op. cit., Shropshire, p.134.

diverse ways in which the Shona, like most people, express their feelings and receive consolation.

The songs that are sung at funerals can be put into two categories, Christian and Shona traditional. In our analysis we shall look at Christian songs, which can be divided into two groups, that is, hymns and choruses. Prayers also follow the same pattern. Some are said from the prayer book, while others are extempore. Most songs and prayers have a biblical base. Biblical passages are chosen for their relevance to the situation. They are mainly meant to give consolation and courage. Let us consider these sources in some detail.

4.3.1 Hymns

The current Shona version of the Anglican hymn book comes in two forms. There is a small paperback hymn book, *Ndwiyo*, with 268 hymns in it. The other is the combined Prayer/Hymn book, known as the *Minamato/Ndwiyo.* Both versions contain the same hymns, which are translations from other languages. Most of the hymns in the Anglican hymn book are seasonal. But many hymns have become more popular as funeral hymns than as the seasonal hymns they were intended to be. There are a number of reasons for this.

For example, there are those hymns which explicitly address death, others which only imply it, and yet others which are 'made' to be relevant to funerals. This might be because they have a message for the situation, or it may be that the deceased loved them. One can confidently say of these hymns that they project an understanding of death. They communicate strongly to both singer and hearer. In short, the hymns console the bereaved in a personal way.

We now look at a few popular hymns to see how they reflect a development in the Shona Christian understanding of God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, death and the dead. It is important to note that this use of hymns by Shona Christians demonstrates that Christianity and Shona Traditional Religion are finding common ground in popular religion. However this is not necessarily reflective of the official position of the Anglican Diocese of Harare. Though Shona Christians have not composed any hymns of their own, they use translated versions, at times with added choruses. They sing them to local tunes, with some set to traditional rhythmic tunes accommodating the drums.

4.3.1.1 God

In the face of bereavement, the need for God is very great,[60] and singing helps to make it bearable. The cloud of grief and sorrow is so dark, heavy and thick, that no one else can help disperse it, except God. He is perceived as the only one who can bring order out of such chaos. The chaos is seen as so strong that it might make the mourning relatives fall prey to the machinations of the devil, hence they need the assurance of God's companionship.[61] The presence of God in such a setting is highly desirable. It renders bereavement and its attendant forces powerless. In fact, it is light.[62]

In most hymns God is acknowledged as the one who is in control of time. What this means is that the death of a loved one is not outside God's control; he or she has died because God has willed it. With the help of God, "it shall all be forgotten just like dreaming a dream."[63] God is positively seen as a helper, *mubatsiri*.[64] God's omnipotence is understood to enable the bereaved to overcome an otherwise overwhelming situation.[65]

---

[60] See the hymns, (Abide with me, fast falls the eventide) *Gara neni usiku hwasvika* in *Minamato/Ndwiyo*, hymn No. 9 verse 3 and (Sun of my soul, thou Saviour dear) *Zuva rangu Muponesi* in *Minamato/Ndwiyo*, hymn 12 verse 1 evening hymns which are popular at funerals because the evening darkness it refers to is interpreted as death. Its whole message is heard in that light. *Minamato/Ndwiyo*, London: SPCK, 1963, later reprinted in Zimbabwe at Gweru: Mambo Press, 1975 and 1983.

[61] See the hymn, 'Abide with me, fast falls the eventide.' in *Minamato/Ndwiyo*, hymn No 9 verse 4.

[62] See *Minamato/Ndwiyo*, hymn numbers 9 verse 1 and 12 verse 1.

[63] See the hymn, (O God our help in ages past) *Mubatsisri wedu Mwari* in *Minamato/Ndwiyo*, hymn No. 106 verse 4.

[64] Ibid. verses 1 and 6.

[65] See the hymn, (My God my Father) *Baba ndiri kurasika* in *Minamato/Ndwiyo*, hymn No. 129 verse 6.

There is an eschatological understanding which holds that, while God is the judge of souls, Godself prepares the souls for judgement.[66] This is what makes prayers important, they are a way of establishing a relationship with God. Perhaps this is why the Shona people desire them so much for their dead. It is only when one has a relationship with God that one can see the heavenly Jerusalem, where God lives.[67]

These Christian hymns have concepts which resonate with traditional Shona attributes of God. In traditional Shona religion:

> fundamental belief is in a supreme, immortal being, manifested through natural phenomena such as drought or locust plagues and can be invoked directly. This being is known by various names, *Mwari* being the most common; others are *Musikavanhu* (Maker of the people), *Chipindukire* (One who can change anything), *Mupizvirambiri* (One who cannot be refused), *Chikara* (One who inspires awe).[68]

With such an understanding of God, the Christian teaching about God is not at all contradictory to Shona views of God. Christian teaching in fact endorses what the Shona people hold dear about God. This enables Shona Christians to relate easily to Christian

---

[66] See the hymn, (A few more years shall roll) *Kwasara kunesu* in Minamato/Ndwiyo, hymn No.142 the chorus.

[67] See the Hymn, (Jerusalem my happy home) *Jerusarem' rinofadza* in Minamato/Ndwiyo, hymn No. 237 verse 3.

[68] K. Sayce,(ed) Tabex Encyclopedia Zimbabwe, Harare: Quest Publishing Pvt. Ltd., 1989, p.322. Gelfand cites Murphree's list of names for God. They are,"*Nyadenga* (The Great One of the Sky), *Chipindukire* (He who turns things upside down), *Chirazamauya* (The One who provides for good or bad), *Musikavanhu* (The Creator of the people), *Dzivaguru* (The Great Pool -The Giver of rain) and *Mutangakugara* (The One who existed in the beginning)." M.Gelfand, The Genuine Shona, p.111.

hymns, such as those already cited. Because God is the 'maker of people', it is easy to note the shift in perception when it comes to death. Shona Christians, though still believing that death is caused, believe that it is only when it is God's will that death occurs. Believing that God is the giver of all things, including life, leads one to see, in death, God taking away his own.[69] In which case no one could stop him, so his will should be accepted. The expression '*Mwari waita kuda kwake*' (God has done his will) is commonly heard among Shona Christians in response to death.

In the context of this understanding of God the need for prayer cannot be overemphasized. Prayer among the Shona people is believed eventually to get to the Creator, though at times it might seem to be offered to ancestors. In the face of death, addressing God directly is acceptable, just as it is in any other emergency.[70]

If God is one who turns things upside down (*Chipindukire*), then it is not difficult for him to do anything. The Christian eschatological teaching that there will be a judgement at the end of this life probably finds expression among the Shona people because of their understanding of this attribute. Popular religion is making great strides ahead of officialdom.

---

[69] This is a very clear demonstration of how the Shona Christians are wrestling with the Christian faith and finding it consoling. The book of Job seems to speak clearly here, see Job.1:21.

[70] See Chapter one p.24 for the '*Kusuma*' process.

4.3.1.2 Jesus Christ

It is clear from their choice of hymns that Shona Christians are accommodating Jesus Christ into their own lives and understanding of God in a practical way. They probably find it easy to do so by using traditional categories. This is particularly pertinent in the face of death. The teaching about Jesus' death and subsequent resurrection becomes a source of hope for Shona Christians. It is because of some of their own traditional beliefs that they can make these connections. In traditional Shona thinking, "people are believed to have a spirit which survives death but retains its relationship with its descendants. These ancestral spirits (*vadzimu*) protect, guide or punish their descendants."[71]

In the face of death Jesus is seen as one who can offer protection and guidance, if given the opportunity. In a sense he is related to as a *mudzimu* (ancestral spirit). The cross on which he died is a sure sign of hope and light.[72] Even when one's eyes are closing in death, the cross continues to shine before one so much that one sees the way to the next world.

---

[71] K. Sayce (ed) Tabex Encyclopedia Zimbabwe, op.cit., p.322. See also what we said about Jesus Christ in Chapter three, p.143.

[72] See the hymn, (Abide with me fast falls the eventide), *Minamato Ndwiyo*, op.cit. hymn No. 9 verse 5. The cross could be understood as a symbol of love and intimacy.

There is a sense in which the bereaved are encouraged to learn from Jesus' death, and draw strength from it.[73] What makes Jesus' death so powerful is the fact that he became a human being for the sake of human beings. The anthropocentric nature of Shona Traditional Religion is accommodated. Further, the incarnation makes him identify fully with humanity in all life situations. All human life makes sense to him, so as a *mudzimu,* he can effectively help the bereaved to deal peacefully with death and the dead. His experience of death on the cross is significant, it strengthened his passion for humanity so much that when one calls, Jesus can stretch his arms to receive the dying person's soul.[74]

That death of Jesus makes sense to the Shona people because it takes up the theme of sacrifice. Jesus' blood is seen as efficacious. Putting this in the eschatological context helps to connect it more clearly to Shona thinking. The sacrificial nature of the blood of Jesus is enhanced in the understanding that a soul washed in His blood is ready for judgement.[75] If Jesus, as an ancestor, approves of the sacrifice, it becomes life giving, since he died that we might live.[76]

---

[73] See the hymn, (O Sacred head surrounded), *Musoro Unoyera* in *Minamato/Ndwiyo*, hymn No. 72 verse 4.

[74] Ibid., verse 4.

[75] *Minamato/Ndwiyo*, op. cit. hymn No. 142 the chorus.

[76] Ibid., verse 5.

Though this is not the official teaching of the Anglican church, the reality of death and the need for mechanisms for coping with it, gives it force among Shona Christians, and makes it a possible basis for an African Christology. The need to do things well, coupled with the desire to commit a loved one into capable hands, bypass orthodoxy. So, as the hymns are sung, these perceptions help to make Christ an important figure. Going to Christ is like going to join the rest of the ancestors, hence prayers are said even for non-Christians.

4.3.1.3 The Holy Spirit

Hymns that make reference to the Holy Spirit are not different from those that make reference to God and Jesus Christ. Their assimilation into Shona thinking is deeply dependent on how adaptable they are to the Shona worldview. Shona worldviews hold that good and evil spirits inhabit the universe.[77] Both seek access to the living. It is one's relationship with one's ancestors which is determinative. If one has a good relationship with one's ancestors, the belief is that the ancestors will protect one from the attacks of the evil spirits. But if one does not have a good relationship with one's ancestors the reverse is true.

The Holy Spirit is seen as the good spirit which is a channel of God's companionship and the assurance of Jesus' continued presence. Through its influence and guidance the

---

[77] See Chapter one, p.22, for what we said about Shona world views.

power of death and the grave is overcome.[78] In other words, this good spirit gives the mourners the power and confidence to face the reality of bereavement with fortitude.[79] In the final analysis it is this good spirit's presence which also enables the mourners to carry out the appropriate burial rituals satisfactorily.

In the face of death the Holy Spirit enables the wayward to repent. One of its duties is to keep the sick alive, probably to give them a chance to repent. It blesses the poor and consoles the mourners.[80] It is the Holy Spirit which enables people to experience God's joy in the face of hardships such as death.

4.3.1.4 Death

As already noted, death is seen as darkness; this explains why evening hymns are so popular at deaths and funerals. The family struck by death feel deserted. There is nothing much they can do about it other than wrestle with the reality. This is what makes death confusing, disruptive and unwelcome. It is actually portrayed as an enemy to be feared. Perhaps this is what leads to its being attributed to the devil. The relationship between

---

[78] *Minamato/Ndwiyo*, op. cit. hymn, No.9 verse 4.

[79] *Minamato/Ndwiyo*, op. cit., hymn No. 12 verse 5.

[80] Ibid., verse 5.

death and the grave is obvious, but the hymn points out that these are not the ultimate end. God alone is the one who does not change.[81]

Looking at death as the work of the devil echoes Shona belief which holds that death is not natural, and is almost always caused by a witch or an evil spirit, but willed by God. Death is caused by a *muvengi* (an enemy) or a *mhandu* (an adversary). These spiritual enemies are like armies of darkness which are constantly in search of someone to grab.[82]

Death is acknowledged as a phenomenon which solicits responses. Because different people respond to death differently, the need for help to respond is seen as great.[83] This is especially significant if we appreciate that death is like a cloud. When a cloud covers the sun, it casts its shadow onto the ground and on all who are under it. Death and its effects are well encapsulated in this analogy. In Shona society all to whom the death relates, through relationships of all kinds, are like people under a cloud. They feel and share the sense of loss very deeply and directly.[84]

---

[81] *Minamato/Ndwiyo*, No. 9 verse 2.

[82] See the hymn, (Christian seek not yet repose) *Mukristu Usanete* in *Minamato/Ndwiyo*, hymn No. 130 verse 1.

[83] Ibid., verse 6.

[84] *Minamato/Ndwiyo*, op. cit., No. 12 verse 2.

There is a Passiontide hymn, popular at funerals, which reveals two features of death, namely (a) that it distorts and (b) that it puts out the light of life.[85] It is important to note that it 'puts out' rather than destroys the light of life.[86] The distortion that death brings is twofold: (i) the deceased is stone-faced with no expressions at all, (ii) the deceased ceases to participate in any of the activities. Instead it is others who read features into the deceased, such as 'peaceful', 'calm' and so on.

Death tests belief in God in many ways.[87] In the process some beliefs are shaken while others are strengthened. Most people draw comfort from beliefs they understand, thus making Shona traditional views very real. The eschatological element makes this even more significant.

4.3.1.5 The dead

The belief that the dead are not gone and lost comes through in a number of hymns.[88] The dead are referred to in a variety of ways depending on the referee. At times they are known as those who have conquered, or the faithful departed, or those who have gone to their rest

---

[85] *Minamato/Ndwiyo*, op. cit., No. 72 verse 2.

[86] Ibid., verse 2.

[87] *Minamato/Ndwiyo*, op. cit., No. 130 verse 6.

[88] *Minamato/Ndwiyo*, hymns, 9, 130, 142 and 237.

in the hope of rising again. It is unfortunate that in the official language of the Anglican Diocese of Harare the term 'ancestors' does not feature. For that reason it is also not found in any of the hymns. However, the various names given to the dead affirm the belief that death does not annihilate life, so the dead, like the living, still need God's guidance.[89]

The Anglican teaching that the living Christian community can pray for the dead, though foreign to traditional Shona thinking, is becoming acceptable. The understanding in Shona tradition is that the dead pray for and protect the living from evil spirits,[90] the underlying assumption being that the dead are nearer to God than are the living. Because of this closeness they know the appropriate *kusuma* process of the spiritual world.[91] Christianity enables the living to *suma* the dead to God through prayers.

Christian eschatology emphasizes that the dead need God, and so need the prayers both of their progeny and of the Christian community. These prayers are essential because if they are to face judgement they need to be as ready as possible. Their own life account, and such attendant prayers of fellow Christians pleading for mercy, contribute to the just

---

[89] *Minamato/Ndwiyo*, hymn No. 9 verse 5.

[90] See Chapter one p.66 for a full discussion of the significance of the relationship between the living and the dead.

[91] See Chapter one p. 24, for a description of the *kusuma* process.

judgement of God.[92] After this judgement, those found worthy then proceed to the blissful, final home, Jerusalem.[93]

The idea of a final home to which one goes after death is very attractive to the Shona people. What makes it very significant is that it connects with their own understanding of what obtains in the afterlife. They believe that the social hierarchy of this life prevails in that final home. For them, such a home is established in ways similar to the earthly homes and social life they already know. Being given permission to enter into that home is an occasion to meet with the ancestors. That is a very consoling thought indeed.

4.3.2 Choruses

Like the hymns, the choruses sung at funerals are mostly meant to console, and give strength and hope to the bereaved. Occasionally, reflective choruses are sung. An interesting point about most of the choruses is that they are based on some biblical passage. Though thus based on the Bible they still reflect the dual observance of belief, in that they simultaneously satisfy both Shona traditional and Anglican religious constructs. At one level they express an undoubted understanding of Christ and the

---

[92] *Minamato/Ndwiyo*, op. cit., hymn No. 130 verse 4. This is not to be construed as saying prayers can change one's plight at the final judgement, but it is only an indication that God judges justly cf. Luke 12:48 .

[93] Minamato/Ndwiyo, hymn No. 237 verses 1 and 4.

Christian faith, while at another, Shona traditional conceptions. It is difficult to define where Christianity ends and Shona Traditional Religion begins, and vice versa. The interchange is essentially parallel. But in popular Anglicanism the two belief systems are employed together as mechanisms for coping with death and the plight of the dead.

To illustrate the above, I have chosen two choruses which talk about preparedness. The idea of preparedness touches on the Christian and the Shona traditional religious understandings. The first one is "*Garai Makagadzirira*" (Always be prepared). This chorus advises that people should always be ready for death. It goes on to point out that the Son of man, who can be understood as one who wills our death, comes at an unknown day and hour. The Son of man is also acknowledged as the judge of both the living and the dead. In short, the chorus invites people always to be prepared for both death and judgement.

The second one is "*Zvibvunze ugere ipapo*" (Ask yourself while you sit there). Its message is poignant in a funeral setting because it asks the questions 'do you know what could happen to you?' and 'what will your destination be should you die now?' These questions are asked in the light of the belief that the rest that awaits humanity after this life is for the good ones (*vatsvene*). In a sense the question is, 'how good are you?' or 'how consistent is your life with the good moral conduct of both heaven and earth?' It invites the mourners to engage in an exercise of self examination.

Some choruses are extracts or narrations of a biblical passage, for example, '*John 14:1*' and '*Shamwari dza Job*' (Friends of Job). The former chorus consists simply of the message of the verse in question. It reads, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God ; trust in me." This chorus highlights Jesus' role in the face of death.

The latter relates the familiar story of Job's pain and suffering, and of his friends' wayward advice. Job's resistance is sung of as a virtue which the bereaved should emulate. His experience is interpreted as a case study for those going through difficult times, which might lead them to deny God. The chorus, summarising the story of Job, encourages faithfulness in response to difficult situations.

4.3.3 Prayers

Like the songs discussed above, prayers offered at death and at funerary gatherings can be split into two groups. There are prayers from the prayer book and extempore prayers. Prayers from the Book of Common Prayer are by their nature constant and changeless, though revised from time to time. No wonder they cannot adequately capture the feelings of the bereaved. However, they continue to be used as the 'funerary prayers' of the Anglican Church. This is in spite of the recommendations of the Pastoral Regulations of 1978, and Bishop Burrough's assurance. On 30 August, 1980, The Sunday Mail, a local weekly Zimbabwean newspaper, reported Bishop Paul Burrough as saying "traditional

burial customs had been incorporated into Anglican worship. So changes are taking place."[94] In fact, no changes have taken place; the Prayer Book which is presently in use is the one which was being used before these statements were made.

The Book of Common Prayer, Shona version, (*Minamato/Ndwiyo*)[95] has provision for the burial of a baptised adult,[96] an unbaptised adult, [97] a baptised child [98] and an unbaptised child.[99] Each section of the burial service is prefaced by rubrics, that is, italicised instructions on how the officiant should proceed. This is perhaps something that makes the prayer book seem out of touch, especially among the Shona, for whom burial is by social status.[100] For our purposes, we will only look at the burial of a baptised adult.

There is a litany to be said or sung for one who is about to die. This is preceded by a prayer for one who is likely to die soon. The aim of this prayer is to commend the soul of the dying to God, and thereby, in addition, to give comfort to the relatives. Words to the effect that, though this person dies on earth, he or she is alive with God, are recited.

---

[94] V.Whidborne, "Africanisation of Christianity in Zimbabwe," in Religion in Southern Africa 4(1) 1983, p. 42.

[95] This is a revision of the 1928 Book of Common Prayer which was first published in Shona in 1963, as the official Prayer book of the Church of the Province of Central Africa. CPCA was created in 1955.

[96] Op. cit., Minamato/Ndwiyo, p.434.

[97] Ibid., p. 645.

[98] Ibid., p. 448.

[99] Ibid., p.643.

[100] See p.181, above.

Forgiveness of sins is prayed for on behalf of the person in question. This prayer has a pastoral concern, for it prepares the way for the reception of the soul of such a person by the Creator, should he or she die without personally confessing.[101] When such a person is actually dying, there is yet another prayer which is said, committing his or her soul to God.[102]

There is an acknowledgement in the prayer that the soul is on its journey from earth. It is thus entrusted to the Triune God and the company of the apostles, martyrs, witnesses and saints, with the assistance of angels and archangels and all the company of heaven. The final commendation is to Jerusalem, projected as a place of peace, where the soul should have a home in heavenly Zion.[103] There is no mention of the ancestors at all.[104]

After this there is nothing else that the prayer book provides for till the burial proper. At the time of burial, the priest and his assistants meet the corpse at the entrance to the church, and go before it, either into the church or towards the grave. This setting assumes that the

---

[101] Ibid., pp. 430 or 431.

[102] Ibid., "Go forth upon thy journey from this world, O Christian soul, In the name of God the Father Almighty who created you. Amen. In the name of Jesus Christ who suffered for you. Amen. In the name of the Holy Spirit who strengthens you. Amen. In Communion with the blessed Saints, and aided by Angels and Archangels, and all the armies of the heavenly host. Amen. May your portion this day be in Jerusalem, and your dwelling in the heavenly Zion. Amen." The Shona equivalent is found in *Minamato/Ndwiyo,* p.433.

[103] Ibid., p.433.

[104] Other parts of the Anglican Communion are beginning to acknowledge local spirituality. The Church of the Province of Kenya is renowned for that. In Zimbabwe it is the Roman Catholic Church and some African Initiated Churches who have recognised the ancestors as part of the Shona religious heritage.

person is to be buried in a church graveyard, which is not very far from the church building.[105] This procedure is no longer tenable because most people are being buried in their homes. So the last prayers are said at the person's home, after which there is a procession to the grave.[106]

At the grave, if the ground is not blessed, the priest blesses the grave. While the final preparations for the interment are going on the priest says some prayers. When the coffin is placed in the grave the priest says the interment prayer.

> For as much as it has pleased Almighty God of his great mercy to take unto himself the soul of our dear brother/sister here departed: We therefore commit his/her body to the ground; earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust, in sure and certain hope of the Resurrection to eternal life, through our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our corrupt body, according to the mighty working, whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself. Amen.[107]

This prayer seems to speak mainly of the body of the deceased, and sees the soul as already at rest in God. It further introduces an aspect of the body not usually singled out. In saying "..., ashes to ashes ..." it sounds as if the bones are being committed as a component of the deceased. In the Shona understanding humanity is body and soul; when burying the body the soul is also committed. If each part is to be commended, as this prayer suggests, then let it be the whole human being, body and soul. In the Shona

---

[105] See Chapter two on Church burial practices, p.98.

[106] This was the case in most of the funeral services at which I was either an officiant or a participant.

[107] Op. cit., The Shona equivalent is found in *Minamato/Ndwiyo*, p. 442.

understanding, what happens to the body is linked with what happens to the soul, and the soul does not get any rest till the body is buried. With that understanding 'how can God receive the soul without it being offered at the same time as the body of which it is part?' Somehow the committal is not complete from a Shona view point. I would suggest that the *Minamato/Ndwiyo*, despite being in the Shona language, is nevertheless inadequate for the Shona context.

Perhaps it is these, and many other concerns, that Eli Magava, an Anglican priest who loves the prayer book, was made aware of by his parishioners. While he himself thought that the prayer book burial service was all embracing, he noticed "people performing a number of acts after the service has ended. They do such things as washing their feet and hands with water to which some green leaves have been added". This was valuable experience for him because it opened his eyes to the reality of the people he ministered to. He admits, "I am now convinced that in the eyes of the African Christians the burial service in its present form is considered inadequate, and that its inadequacy lies in its failure to accommodate these "extra" actions."[108]

On the other hand, extempore prayers are more in touch with the people's feelings. They even reflect the people's theological understanding of death. In some instances, they hint

---

[108] E.B. Magava, "African Customs connected with the Burial of the dead in Rhodesia," In J.A. Dachs, Christianity South of the Zambezi, 1973, p.151.

at the suspected causes of death, including witchcraft. The belief that death is caused is thus constantly affirmed. Most extempore prayers seek to encourage the bereaved to take heart in a more direct way. They give advice and direction, at times cautioning the bereaved not to be too hasty in their conclusions as to who the enemy was. Words to the effect that "*Mwari ndimi moga munoziva*" (God you are the only one who knows) and *vadzimu* (ancestors) form part of such prayers.[109]

4.3.4 Bible Readings

The Bible is a great source of inspiration and consolation in times of bereavement. Different passages speak differently to the grieving. In the Anglican Prayer Book there is a variety of Biblical readings for use at burial. They fall into two categories, (i) those that could be used in the context of a Requiem Mass, (the Shona word for it is *Misa)* and (ii) those that are used where there is no Eucharist. The range of funerary readings is fairly wide, and so are the different aspects of bereavement they address.

Bible readings are part of the wake-keeping. A number of passages are read by different people and some expositions or reflections offered. Such expositions and reflections done by the local people often disclose the people's real theology. Their real beliefs and views

---

[109] This indicates that popular Anglicanism is moving ahead of official church practice in integrating Christianity and Shona Traditional Religion.

on death and the dead are also communicated. These usually expose divergencies between them and the official teaching of the Church in relation to the Bible. Among the biblical passages most often heard are Job 1:21ff; Job 19:25ff; Psalm 23; Psalm 90 and John 14:2ff.

Where a Eucharistic celebration precedes the burial, the Prayer Book suggests these readings, (John 5:24ff: John 6:37ff: Rom.8:35ff; 1 Cor.15: 20ff; 2 Cor. 4: 16ff; 1Thes.4:13ff; and Rev.21: 1ff). Though suggested for use in a Eucharistic setting, these readings can be used at the discretion of the officiant and/or the bereaved, outside a Eucharist. In addition to these the Prayer Book also has extracts from specific books of the Bible for recital at various stages of the burial. They could be recited as people process to the grave, or while the coffin is being placed into the grave or at any other appropriate point.

4.4 THE DIALOGUE

As can be noted from the textual analysis the dual observance of rituals concerning death and the dead continues. This is an indication that there is no effective dialogue between the church and the traditional Shona views at a meaningful level. There is an underlying duality, or dual observance. The Anglican Church has failed to engage in a full theological debate or encounter with the Shona people and their culture and context, consequently it

also fails to appreciate their predicament. This is clearly illustrated by the three attempts it has made to redress this dual observance.

The Church recognised this weakness a long time ago, but because of its thinking at the time, it probably believed that all that was needed was more education, and these beliefs would die a natural death.[110] But when Shona views did not seem to succumb to missionary education and influence, a booklet was offered for guidance in the 1920s. It is "The Way of the Christian", in Shona, "*Rwendo RweMuKristu*." Typical of the Anglican Church, on the topic 'burying the dead', the booklet tells Christians what to 'think' when there is a death.[111] It then goes on to prescribe how Christians should respond to death and how the burial should be conducted. This did not help the situation, first because it did not address it adequately, that is, did not address the existential and pastoral issues openly, and secondly, because it was overly prescriptive.

A second, more serious attempt resulted in the publication of the document, Pastoral Regulations: Issued by the Bishops for the guidance of the clergy, 1978.[112] Like its predecessor, it did not address the problem, neither was it less prescriptive. Instead it

---

[110] That thinking was based on the 'evangelise to civilize' missionary approach.

[111] See Chapter two on 'Church literature on burial' p.102.

[112] See Chapter two p.105, on 'Winding up the Missionary era' for a fuller discussion of the contents of this booklet.

emphasized the point that the Book of Common Prayer has four orders for burial.[113] It also goes on to spell out who can be buried, where and how they are to be buried, including advice on how to dispose of the ashes of cremated bodies.[114] As if that was not enough advice, it goes on to say "Christian ministers and laymen may say prayers at the funeral of heathen persons, if they are asked to do so, but no Prayer Book Service should be used."[115] Surely such a detached prescriptive approach cannot offer a lasting solution.

In 1993, under indigenous leadership, a Commission of Enquiry was set up to research Shona views of death and the dead. This was in recognition of the widespread practice of traditional Shona burial rites among Shona Christians. What led to the establishment of the Commission was the observation by Synod that:

> when one observes the daily lives and activities of some of our people and takes account of the rites or ceremonies connected with the various stages of their lives, one soon realises that a great deal of the normal communal activities lie outside their Christian activities and that for all their influences; the Christian Church is still an alien institution, intruding upon, but not integrated with the cultural institutions.[116]

---

[113] See page 199 above, for the orders of burial; that for a baptised adult, unbaptised adult, etc..

[114] Pastoral Regulations, pp. 14-15.

[115] Ibid., p.15.

[116] These are the words which prefaced the Commission's mandate, given at Harare Diocesan Synod 1993.

Some research on why this was the case was needed. The Commission's task was 'to research on how dialogue with Shona traditional religion in the area of death and dying could be possible.' [117] A comprehensive report was to be presented to Synod 1994.

At Synod 1994, the Commission, among other things, recommended that open dialogue with Shona Traditional Religion was important. It is to be regretted that the Synod did not seem to take the report and its recommendations as seriously as it had taken the establishment of the Commission. The report was rejected from the chair and, in the writer's view, a premature resolution made against the proposed dialogue. So Harare Diocesan Synod 1994 said:

> This Synod resolves that to the extent that traditional Rites and Ceremonies incorporate communication with spirits or Religious beliefs which have no origin in or harmony with Christianity, such Rites and Ceremonies are wholly irreconcilable with and therefore repugnant to Christianity, its precepts and teachings.[118]

This hardly counts for a resolution. If only the Diocese of Harare had considered how the doctrines of the Christian faith were formulated, and that some so-called Christian rites and

---

[117] See Commission's preliminary report p.429, below.

[118] Diocese of Harare, Synod 1994.

ceremonies incorporate communication with spirits, and religious beliefs which do not originate in Christianity, the Commission's proposal could have been upheld.[119]

The Chairman of that Commission, the Rev'd Sebastian Bakare, now Bishop of Eastern Zimbabwe, reflecting on this in The Drumbeat of Life, says:

> It is evident that the Western-oriented churches are often fearful of the power the traditional rites might exercise on African Christians. This came home to me when I took part in a project to adapt and Christianize traditional African rites surrounding birth, marriage and burial. The aim was to offer pastoral help for church members who are practising these rituals outside the Christian context. The response of the majority of church members, both ordained persons and laity, was negative. Obviously, many would prefer to maintain Western rites, even though these do not express their experiences and will thus inevitably be artificial, rather than risk being confronted by the power of the traditional practices. The result is an ambiguous spirituality. Christian liturgy and traditional rites co-exist, but they have no connection with each other. The inference which many draw is that traditional rites are thus somewhat outside the realm of God's creation and therefore evil.[120]

Bakare's observations help to explain why the Church has failed to enter into dialogue with Shona traditional religions. They also offer insights into why the duality or dual observance prevails. This duality or dual observance indicates that popular theology goes far beyond the official Church theology of death. It is therefore my submission that the methods of dealing with the problem engaged by the Anglican Diocese of Harare have been faulty. A new method of doing theology is needed, which recognizes that for the Church to be

---

[119] J.N.D.Kelly, Early Christian Creeds, London, New York, Toronto: Longmans, Green and Co, 1950. Kelly adequately illustrates this process, he traces the formation of the early Christian creeds, noting the significance of each context and its thought patterns, beginning with the New Testament.

[120] S.Bakare, The Drumbeat of Life, Geneva: WCC Publication, 1997, p.17.

relevant, it must interact with the people it is addressing. Such a theology would be dialogical and contextual; a theology which is not contextual is as good as no theology.

4.5 KUROVA GUVA

Most Shona Christians now observe the traditional ceremony of *kurova guva* with prayers, bible reading, hymn and chorus singing. It can be held any time from six months to one year or more after the burial. In various settings it seems to serve the same purpose of welcoming home the spirit of the deceased father or mother[121]. It is a ceremony which marks the end of the wandering period of the deceased's soul. One could call it the "graduation ceremony", because through it the spirit of the deceased is instituted as a *mudzimu.*[122] "In most areas it is also associated with the dissolution of the deceased's estate, the installation of the new family head who carries the name of the deceased and the inheritance of the widow/s."[123]

---

[121] According to Whidborne, it either repairs the broken relationship or tames the 'unpredictable and dangerous spirit'. Whidborne, op. cit., p.40. See also Chapter one p.55 for a full discussion of the *kurova guva* ceremony.

[122] It wakes the spirit up so that it can take its rightful place in the home and among the other ancestors.

[123] J. Kumbirai, *"Kurova Guva* and Christianity," in M.F.C.Bourdillon, Christianity South of the Zambezi, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1977, pp. 123-130. See also P.Gundani, "The Roman Catholic Church and the *Kurova Guva* Ritual in Zimbabwe," in J.L. Cox, (ed) Rites of Passage in Contemporary Africa, Cardiff: Cardiff Academic Press, 1998, p.199. See also interview with G. Mashura p.400.

After the customarily acceptable period has elapsed, the *kurova guva* ceremony is held, usually at the home of the deceased, with most of his or her relatives in attendance. Those who cannot be present must have valid reasons. The ceremony is characterised by a lot of feasting and drinking, and ceremonial relating to ancestors.[124]

It is probably because of this (feasting, drinking and ceremonial relating to ancestors), that the Anglican Diocese of Harare does not approve of it. Shona Anglicans have however found their own way of dealing with the situation. First, they have given the ceremony another name. It is called the 'unveiling of the tombstone.'[125] This makes it more acceptable to the Church. Secondly, all the traditional rituals are carried out the night before, or after the unveiling of the tombstone. The slaughtering of the sacrificial animal is done before the unveiling function, so as to provide food for the people. So they devote the day time observances to acceptable Church practices such as praying, singing, reading the bible and feasting. Even clergy, including those who still think like the missionaries, that is, those who consider *kurova guva* as 'ancestor worship' and a violation of the first commandment, will happily officiate at the unveiling of the tombstone.

4.6 CONCLUSION

---

[124] See what was said about *kurova guva* on page 55, above.

[125] Where possible a tombstone is erected on the grave, and where it is not possible a visit to the grave, marked by prayers, bible reading and singing in remembrance of the deceased, is enough.

It is clear from the foregoing that at the level of the laity, the dialogue between Christianity and Shona traditional practices relating to death and the dead can be intensified, with the possibility of a synthesis. At the level of the official Church however, things look rather different.

It would seem as if clergy and officialdom stand between the laity and the belief, practice and teaching of the Church, at times not fully conversant with both belief systems, or playing one against the other. This not only confuses the people, but it blocks the dialogue. In the process, the clergy emerge as what Bediako calls, "a class of displaced persons."[126]

This official rigidity is further consolidated at Synod; most of those who come to Synod as representatives want to be seen to uphold the 'acceptable Christian' position, that is, castigate traditional practices. However, if only we took the reality of our fellow Christians seriously, we would seek to address the prevailing 'ambivalent spirituality.' Perhaps this would help the Christian faith to take root, enabling it to wrestle with Shona traditional views and vice versa, thus breaking away from the dual observance. The Anglican Diocese of Harare needs to re-assess the situation and adopt a fresh approach to the problem. In the next chapter we propose to do this by advocating the "Interactive Dialogical model."

---

[126] K. Bediako, Theology and Identity, Oxford: Regnum Books, 1992, p.350.

CHAPTER FIVE

TOWARDS A THEOLOGICAL SYNTHESIS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I shall explore the possibility of a theological synthesis between Christian and Shona Traditional Religious views of death and the dead. On the basis of the research findings of the previous chapters, I propose what I shall term the 'interactive dialogical model.'[1] To do this effectively, I consciously acknowledge the place of culture, history and religion in society. I shall also engage with the methodological questions for clarity and focus.

In chapter three we looked at the way the Shona people responded to missionary approaches to their life in general, and specifically how they did so with regard to death and the dead, with the resultant dual observance. We saw in chapter four how entrenched this dual observance has become. An unofficial integration of Christian and Shona practices co-exists with an indigenous clergy who, for the most part, still represent what I

---

[1] See p. 258 below, for a comprehensive description of this model.

call "Missionary Anglicanism."[2] This creates a barrier, so that clerical and lay views of death and the dead are not congruent. Those of Anglican historical orthodoxy, represented by the clergy, and those of popular religion, represented by most Shona laity are polarised.

Max Weber's words, spoken in a different context, but referring to a similar situation, shed some light on this issue. He said:

> The decisive consideration was and still remains: who is deemed to exert the stronger influence on the individual in his everyday life, the theoretically supreme god or the lower spirits and demons? If the spirits, then the religion of everyday life is decisively determined by them, regardless of the official god-concept of the ostensibly rationalized religion.[3]

Though Weber's words reflect the dilemma existent in the Anglican Diocese of Harare, I do not subscribe to the "lower spirits and demons" perception, as a fitting description of Shona traditional beliefs. I would be comfortable with "...in his everyday life, God or the ancestors?" However, the dilemma highlights the weakness of the Church's insensitive approach. This research is a contribution towards the search for a solution to the dual observance.

---

[2] By Missionary Anglicanism we are referring to the Anglican missionary approach which assumed that the Anglican Church in Zimbabwe 'is a church by law established' even though it was not. It confronts and condemns Shona traditional practices, perhaps because of its western inclinations.

[3] Cited in J. Obelkevich, Religion and Rural Society: South Lindsey 1825-1875, Oxford: Claredon Press, 1976, p.259.

In pursuit of a theological synthesis we now turn our attention to the process and discussion of topics appropriate for such an undertaking.[4]

5.2 METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The dichotomy which characterizes both the observance and execution of rituals relating to death and the dead is undesirable. The practical question is, "how do we deal with it?" In responding to this question, I shall spell out the method or approaches I am going to adopt in dealing with this problem. It would not be out of place to suggest that we should look at the missionary and colonial history of the country. There are two reasons for doing this: firstly, to appreciate how the dual observance developed in the first instance, and secondly, from an informed position, to use that knowledge in working out an effective and workable solution. Our aim is to eliminate the dual observance so that the Christian faith can be rooted in Shona religious culture or vice versa, that is, Christianity and Shona traditional religious views should enter into dialogue. But why has this not happened?

5.2.1 Missionary approaches

---

[4] Here the writer is adopting, A. F. McGovern, Liberation Theology and its critics: Towards an assessment, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, p. 31, where the author makes reference to the analytical process, see, judge and act. This formula was borrowed from the Young Christian Workers Groups of the 1930s and 1960s.

In chapter two we identified part of the answer to the question posed above. The missionaries saw themselves as representatives of God and light, and the Shona people as those who were in darkness and under the control of the evil one. This confrontational approach meant that, in the perception of the missionaries, the devil and all he stood for had to be defeated at any cost. Listening to the Shona people, or seeking to understand something of their culture, was like compromising with the devil.[5] It was not part of the missionary agenda.

As a result they adopted the condemnatory approach. Because missionaries thought of themselves as heralds of the 'real god', they condemned Shona Traditional Religion out of hand.[6] To them it was not religion at all and nothing good could be found in it.[7] This is in spite of the fact that the Shona people had lived their lives guided by such religion prior to the missionary invasion. Confrontation and condemnation were consolidated by disciplinary measures. Everyone who resided on land designated as 'mission land' was forced to adopt the missionary religion. On such land anyone found to be adhering to

---

[5] Part of the problem was (a) the misconceptions about the African people in general and (b) the missionary understanding of the Gospel. M. Perham, African Outline, London: Oxford University Press, 1966, p.34 sheds light on (a). She writes, "the attitude to the Negro race is partly based on the general view however vague, that the Negro comes from a wild primitive continent which needed the rough intrusion of the white man to bring it into the twentieth century. J.K. Parratt, Reinventing Christianity: African Theology Today, Michigan: Eerdmans Grand Rapids Publishing Co., 1995, p.167 says of (b) "the missionaries, on the contrary described their task in terms of military campaign - the conquest of the heathen, the victory of the cross."

[6] See Chapter two under, historical setting, p.74.

[7] It reflects something of the discussion between Philip and Nathaniel, "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" In this instance it could have been 'Can anything good come from heathens?'

Shona traditional religious practices was either disciplined, excommunicated or evicted without consideration of the fact that this might have been home for generations. [8]

In such a setting it is easy to understand how, in the eyes of the missionaries, the Shona converts appeared superstitious, with a tendency to over-emphasize the role and significance of death and the dead. Equally, in the perception of the Shona converts, the missionaries failed to understand the significance of this very vital area of life. This demonstrates the lack of mutual dialogue between missionary Christianity and Shona Traditional Religion. The missionaries secure in their more "enlightened" education and religion, saw no need for dialogue. All they wanted to do was to convert the infidel Shona people.

Considering Shona Traditional Religion as a non-religion was a grave misconception, demonstrated by the fact that, though most of the mainline Christian denominations in Zimbabwe celebrated their centenaries in the last decade, traditional religion is still a force to reckon with, particularly in the area of death and the dead. If, as the missionaries thought and taught, traditional religion was nothing but superstition, the hundred years of Christianity would have rendered it ineffective, that is, it would have lost its following. On the contrary, people are prepared to be 'pluralists' *that is, to hold fast to their old way of*

---

[8] There are echoes of the English parochial system underlying this practice. In the English parochial setting the clergyman as landlord, "could scrutinize the religious behaviour of his tenants and their families, whether they were farmers or labourers, and evict anyone who displeased him." J. Obelevich, Op.cit. p.13.

life [Shona Traditional Religion] and embrace the new faith [Christianity].[9] This is an indication that traditional religion has something to offer which the Christian faith and rituals seem not adequately to provide.

Two religions, representing two cultural perspectives and different sets of world views, each offering its adherents structures for understanding and coping with life changes, interacted and continue to interact with each other. The missionaries seemed oblivious to this reality, so they imposed set responses to their religion. Most Shona converts did not, and probably continue not to see the contact point between Christianity and their religious culture and identity with regards to death and the dead. But they are Christians on the outside and traditional Shona inside.[10] For that reason, when death strikes they feel that Christian rituals alone are not adequate. This leads us to the observation that while the reality of death and the dead challenges every religion, it also exposes divergences between the official teaching of a religion and the beliefs and practices of individuals. The behaviour of most Shona Christian people in the Anglican Diocese of Harare demonstrates this.[11]

---

[9] N.Bhebe, Christianity and African Traditional Religion in Western Zimbabwe 1859-1923, London: Longman Group Ltd, 1979, p.19.

[10] This is the situation the Commission of Enquiry, (1993-1994) of the Diocese of Harare described as follows, "some Anglicans have no difficulties in 'accepting' the Gospel the way it is presented to them. They may occupy a leading position in the church, take services every Sunday, but when the chips are down, they readily resort to traditional explanations of the evil eye or somebody trying to destroy them spiritually."

[11] See Chapter four on 'The dialogue', p. 204.

5.2.2 Missionary and colonial collaboration

Both the missionaries and the colonial powers wanted to exploit the labour of the Shona people. The missionaries targeted them for conversion and labour on mission farms. Colonial settlers wanted them for labour on farms or in mines. These two groups of "outsiders" used almost the same tactics to get what they wanted from the Shona people. Their basic approach displayed no respect for the Shona as fellow human beings.[12] Eighteenth century views of race concerning African people in general, seemed to be the guiding reality. Karl Kumm helps us to appreciate how the continent of Africa and its people were conceived. He says it was "the land of darkness ... dark are the bodies of the people who live there, darker are their minds, and darker still their souls."[13] In contemporary thinking it was inconceivable that an unenlightened people could be rational, let alone have minds capable of comprehending God.

---

[12] Two historical documents help us to understand the demand for, and methods used to get Shona labour. C. Leys, European Politics in Southern Rhodesia, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959, p.9 states, "moreover cheap and abundant native labour had also to be provided to attract settlers from kinder environments and this meant creating artificial inducements to the Africans to leave their own farming, on an even larger scale than was already necessary to provide labour for the mines." The Native Pass Ordinance No. 10 of 1910, extending the Natives Registration Ordinance No. 16 of 1901 says "this supply of labour was achieved largely by the 'Native hut tax'. First imposed in 1896 this was increased in 1904 to £1 per hut (equivalent to a labourer's earnings for 1 or 3 months) and 10 shillings for each polygamous wife. In 1902 the hut tax was reinforced by a pass law to get the labour to go where it was wanted." See also Zimbabwe: A new history, p.63. The other missionary who stood for African rights, a friend of Cripps, was the Methodist John White who suffered the same fate.

[13] Cited in B. Stanley, The Bible and the Flag: Protestant missions and British Imperialism in the 19th and 20th centuries, Leicester: Apollos, 1990, p.163.

Obviously, considering the Shona people as inferior to the "white" settlers and missionaries meant that they had to be treated as such. That this was the official 'white' approach is adequately demonstrated in the whites' practice of ostracizing those of their own number who were sympathetic to the Shona people. The famous Anglican missionary, Arthur Shearly Cripps, who saw in African spirituality a deep understanding of God, ate Shona people's food, spoke their language, and valued their customs relating to death and the dead, is a case in point.[14] He was not liked either by colonial settlers or fellow missionaries because he spoke out on behalf of the Shona people, including introducing Shona as a language for Synod debates.

Such practices sent divergent messages to the Shona people, resulting in both confusion and the need to preserve their own self identity. The missionaries preached that all human beings were equal in the sight of God, but did not take kindly to those who wanted to see this equality implemented. The Shona people observed that they were being exploited in the name of equality.[15] How could they be equal with people who despised them and their way of life? Their feelings and sentiments were not acknowledged in the same way as

---

[14] Most of his thinking and feeling for the Shona people is found in his publications. Some of the publications tell the story through their titles. They are, An Africa for Africans (1927), Africans All, (1928) Chaminuka and Lion-Man (both 1928). See also D.V. Steere, God's Irregular: Arthur Shearly Cripps, A Rhodesian Epic, London: SPCK, 1973 and G.R.Brown (et al) Arthur Shearly Cripps: A Selection of his Prose and Verse, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1976. See also p.101, above.

[15] S.Bakare, My Right to Land, is an extensive study of the land question and how it impinges on equality. See also R.Palmer & J. Birch, Zimbabwe: A Land Divided, Oxford: Oxfam, 1992, p.8 point out a reality that concerned the people of Zimbabwe very much. It is the fact that "Zimbabweans were moved off their land into native reserves." How could equality be understood in such a setting?

those of the whites. So the whites and the Shona people went their parallel ways not only in matters religious but in other spheres of life as well. The missionaries and the colonial powers were thus seen as one, a group of people to whom the true Shona values, including religion, were not to be revealed.[16]

Life for the Shona people still had a reality which the missionaries and colonialists did not and could not understand. It was dependent on their worldviews which emphasised the communal nature of life, which includes both the dead and the unborn, the place and role of ancestors, and the significance of rituals and symbolism.[17]

When the colonialists and the missionaries dispossessed the Shona people of their land, the implications were deeper than simple eviction or relocation. The symbolic communion between family members was threatened. Relocation meant that family members were being separated. From a traditional perspective the dead were being abandoned by the living, especially in cases where the departure was not marked by the relevant symbolic rituals. On the other hand the symbolic interpretation of these rituals strengthened dual observance and gave the Shona people the space to be themselves. There was no

---

[16] This marks the unintended beginnings of dual observance.

[17] J.Weller and J.Linden, Mainstream Christianity, op. cit., write, "the ancestors were the most powerful influence in village life. Each family had simple rituals ... and asked for their help." p.8.

dialogue between Christianity and Shona Traditional Religion, so any misconceptions that either side had about the other could not be resolved.

Although oral or popular methods of theologising tend to emerge within the context of the people, rather than following recognised 'academic' patterns, it is possible, with hindsight, to describe and evaluate the theological process that has been going on in the Diocese. Given the missionary and colonial history of the country,[18] one would have thought that, under indigenous church leadership, the desired dialogue between Christian and Shona traditional religious views on death and the dead would be in place. Unfortunately, this is not so. Shona culture in general is still considered evil, and Shona Traditional Religion continues to be seen as superstitious. This could be an indication that the established churches 'fear' the powerful influence traditional religion has on African Christians,[19] and that Church leaders are working with an exclusive model largely abandoned by progressive theologians elsewhere on the continent of Africa.

Though people are no longer dispossessed of their land by the church, they still feel that the church is 'other' than them. Lack of dialogue is still a major weakness. To add to the problem, it is not foreign missionaries, but indigenous Anglican clergy who uphold the

---

[18] Most of this is fully dealt with in Chapter two.

[19] S. Bakare, The Drumbeat of Life, op.cit. p.17.It is this fear which perpetuates the dual observance.

nineteenth century confrontational and condemnatory missionary approach. This has strengthened and consolidated the dual observance.

5.2.3 African Theology

My theological synthesis seeks to reflect the process of theologising that characterises African theology. African theology is an umbrella term for theological approaches on the African continent, namely, African theology and Black theology. By African theology we refer to that process of doing theology which starts from culture. Aylward Shorter, Peter Turkson and Frans Wijsen, from the Roman Catholic Church, prefer to call it Inculturation.[20] John Parratt says, it "is usually taken to mean Christian thought that concerns itself fundamentally with the relationship of Christian theology to African culture, and that evinces a particular concern to relate this to the Bible and Christian tradition." [21] This was the popular approach to theology in sub-Saharan Africa north of the Limpopo.

Black theology on the other hand is that process of doing theology, with its roots in America, which emerged in the Republic of South Africa during the 1970s. Basil Moore sheds more light on this when he writes:

---

[20] See P. Turkson & F. Wijsen, Iculturation: Abide by the otherness of Africa and the Africans, Kampen: J.H.Kok, 1994 and A. Shorter, cf, Towards a Theology of Inculturation, London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1988.

[21] J. Parratt, Reinventing Christianity: African Theology Today, Grand Rapids, Michigan: William Eerdmans Publishing Co/ Cambridge, U.K., Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press, Inc, 1995, p.25.

> while the catch title 'Black Theology' has been imported from the United States into South Africa, the content of American Black Theology has not been imported with the title. This is to be expected, for while there are many striking parallels between the situation of the black man in America and South Africa, the differences are almost as striking as the parallels.[22]

Black theology in the Republic of South Africa was the theological response of the black person to the pressures of Apartheid. As John Parratt notes, "it therefore represents a "political" theology as opposed to the cultural-biblical theology found elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa."[23]

Archbishop Desmond Tutu demonstrates in his article, Black Theology and African Theology- Soulmates or Antagonists? that these theological methods, though approaching the subject of theology from different angles, both aim at giving the African a humane theological identity.[24] My synthesis considers both political and cultural factors, first, for the same reason advanced by Tutu, and secondly, because they both are an integral part of the context. Initially, they contributed to the establishment and development of the dual observance we now seek to undo.

---

[22] B. Moore, "What is Black Theology?" in B. Moore (ed) Black Theology: The South African Voice, London: C. Hurst & Company, 1973, p.1.

[23] J. Parratt, Reinventing Christianity, p.25.

[24] Desmond M. Tutu, "Black Theology and African Theology - Soulmates or Antagonists?" in J. Parratt, (ed) A Reader in African Christian Theology, London: SPCK, (revised edition) 1997, pp. 36.

Since we understand Shona traditional religion as a religious culture, our synthesis should accommodate this understanding. In other words we do not need to be confrontational, neither do we need to be condemnatory. Understanding the Shona people entails appreciation of their religious views. These have given them the strength to cope with life changes. Christian and Shona traditional religious views of death and the dead should be studied alongside each other and integrated if the dual observance is to be adequately redressed.

From an anthropological perspective, religion is:

> a system of beliefs and practices, found in every culture that formalizes the conception of the relation between man and his environment. It helps explain difficult and seemingly inexplicable events. Religion embodies the idea of a supernatural power and of personified supernatural forces. Ceremonies, rituals and observances are used to communicate with the supernatural, with certain persons believed to have greater access. Religion organizes a group's members in a condition of solidarity and gives a broad base to social interaction, being a symbolic statement of the social order. Religion suggests a system of authority which enables one to know what is right. It permits imagination to exercise itself.[25]

By this definition, Shona traditional beliefs are not superstition, but religion. They are not "beliefs for which there is no basis in either science or religion."[26] One might not find a

---

[25] C. Winick, Dictionary of Anthropology, Totowa, New Jersey: Littlefield Adam & Co, 1977 p.454.

[26] Ibid. p.516. The Dictionary of Anthropology defines 'superstition' as "a belief for which there is no basis in either science or religion." It goes on to explain that, "most superstitions are vestiges of decayed systems of belief." Shona traditional religion is none of these.

scientific explanation for them, but there is no question about their religious explicableness, especially in the area of death and the dead.

If it were not for the prejudiced approach which regards the Church as the custodian of orthodoxy, and popular religion as heretical and misleading, the religious nature of Shona tradition would have long been appreciated and upheld as such. It is for that reason that such an approach should be challenged. Both the Church and Shona Traditional Religion need to engage in dialogue.[27] If this does not happen, there are serious pastoral implications, such as, "what is the mission of the Church among the Shona people?" We shall discuss the pastoral implications in detail in the next chapter. But presently let us turn our attention to the contextual considerations which are important to our synthesis.

5.3 CONTEXTUAL CONSIDERATIONS

For any theology to be meaningful it must take cognisance of the context within which it is developing. In the case of the Anglican Diocese of Harare, this means engaging in serious dialogue with the culture and world views of the Shona people. Dialogical reciprocity has to be respected, so the Church should not ask and answer questions which the Shona people are not asking. What it should be doing is to listen to, and answer the

---

[27] It should be noted that dialogue is at two levels, (a) between people, that is, Christians and adherents of Shona Traditional Religion and (b) within people, that is, how a Shona Christian understands the two religious belief systems.

questions that Shona Anglicans are asking with reference to death and the dead. Shona traditional religion and culture should have a place in the "mother" Church's approach. This is a 'theological imperative' to which many people in different contexts should be committed.[28]

In many parts of Africa, Asia and Latin America "Christians are becoming increasingly convinced that traditional approaches to theology do not really make sense within their own cultural patterns and thought forms."[29] So they are wrestling with the question of the relevance of imported theology to their daily lives. They seek to create a theology which addresses them in their context.

Likewise, our synthesis of Christian and Shona traditional views of death and the dead must understand the context and relevance of such theologising. One question we need to face squarely and respond to is "why have Shona traditional observances prevailed for so long in the face of so much Christian hostility?" Investigating "pluralism" could be a relevant and rewarding exercise.[30] In other words we need to revisit our so-called Christian theology of death and its rituals to examine its relevance among the Shona people.

---

[28] S.B. Bevans, Models of Contextual Theology, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1992, p.1.

[29] Ibid. p.5.

[30] It should be noted that the 'pluralism' we are referring to is not that advocated by John Hick. The one we are talking about is the one described by N. Bhebe, where people welcome Christianity and continue to uphold traditional religions at one and the same time.

Apparently the Shona people have a theology of death and the dead which satisfies their needs, giving them the necessary strength to cope with this life change. The Church does not seem to appreciate this reality, hence its continued confrontational and condemnatory approach to Shona Traditional Religion and its considerable irrelevance.

While the issues raised above are very significant and important for a sound synthesis, a willingness to address them could be seen as a sign of weakness on the part of the Church. In the first place, the whole exercise of taking the context seriously could be seen as compromising the Gospel. The thinking behind such an objection is that the church's mission is to preach "Christ crucified, risen from the dead and alive today," irrespective of contextual considerations.[31] Christ's victorious nature should not be compromised or diluted for any reason.

This argument is proven weak by the simple observation that the church has used that kind of approach all along with little result. The victorious nature of Christ has not come into contact with the Shona people's lives.[32] Dual observance has continued to intercept the

---

[31] A. M. Moyo, Zimbabwe: The Risk of Incarnation, Geneva: WCC Publications, 1996, p.11.

[32] In saying this I am fully aware that there are some scholars who hold the view that there can be no such thing as a 'pure' un-inculturated gospel. Since we are not undertaking a New Testament study, suffice it to say that there are scholars like E.P.Sanders, The Historical Figure of Jesus, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books Ltd, 1993, who strongly challenge that position, who need to be listened to.

lines of communication, hence Christianity has continued to be seen as an alternate or 'other' religion.

Secondly, the whole exercise might be seen as a deviation from orthodoxy. It is the Church (the institution, the bishops, clergy and Synod) which wields the truth of salvation and not the world (laity and non-Christians). The third objection, which is closely related to the second, is that such an approach reverses the acceptable order by making Shona Traditional Religion inform Christian theology rather than the reverse.

The weakness of these two related accusations is that they do not appreciate the fact that "the work of theology needs to be done again and again, for its formulations are culturally conditioned, and therefore need reinterpretation as cultural forms change."[33] Secondly, they do not appreciate that down the ages the church has always responded to issues within a given time frame and context.

Though there are weaknesses in the objections raised above, the theologian should be cautious not to be contextual simply for the sake of being contextual. The question that needs asking is, which approach will make Christ a reality with which the Shona people can identify? In response to that question, it is obvious that the traditional missionary approach has failed, so we should try another. This is especially true with reference to

---

[33] J. Macquarrie, Principles of Christian Theology, London: SCM, 1966, p.12.

death and the dead. Upholding tradition for the sake of tradition is equally damaging and such closed thinking is no longer tenable, if we are to deal with the dual observance. The Shona Christian caught in such a situation "is a divided person, wishing to be true to both his or her cultural values as well as to the Gospel values - values which are often presented as opposed to each other."[34] How can such a person have a personal identity? In fact, one is tempted to ask if there is a ready-made theology which can be used as a fixed model for evaluating whether certain praxis or understanding deserves the epithet "Christian"?

We have seen that in Shona culture religion acts as a unifying factor. It functions to uphold the relationship which exists between members of a family, be they dead or alive. Central to this is the cult of the ancestors, which has a profound impact on Shona culture.[35] It becomes very difficult to understand and appreciate Christianity if it continues to employ alienating approaches, that is, approaches that do not seem to build community.

---

[34] J.M. Waliggo, "African Christology in a situation of suffering," in J.N.K. Mugambi & L. Magesa (eds) Jesus in African Christianity - Experimentation and diversity in African Christology, Nairobi: Initiatives Publishers, 1989, p.99. Tutu calls it "religious schizophrenia", see D.M. Tutu, "Whiter African Theology," op. cit p.366.

[35] C.G. Baeta, Christianity in Tropical Africa, London: Oxford University Press, 1968, p.298. He actually emphasizes the relationship that exists between religion and culture in African circles. He says, "Religion acts as a unifying factor in African culture. It is like a soul that keeps the whole body healthy. The cult of the ancestors has made a profound impression on that culture and its components."

The dual observance we identified arose as a result of the forced acceptance of missionary teaching. It is difficult to justify it now, given that the leadership of the Church is in indigenous hands. Maybe this is an indication that the Church leaders are not aware of the significance of the Shona people's views for its ministry. Or maybe it is a reflection of how deep the missionary brainwashing was, which still makes indigenous clergy, and some Shona laity accept dual observance. We have to ask whether the problem is in the people or in the Church's teaching. When life is running smoothly most Shona Anglicans are Christians, but deep down they have another god, a 'real god' (a god who understands the language of ancestors) to whom they turn when they are in trouble. Why should this be necessary, if they can approach God as Shona Christians? Could it have something to do with the fact that "Anglicanism is an ecclesiastical culture and the concern to maintain Anglican identity as defined by the historic traditions of the Mother Church dies hard?"[36] For the time being the missionary legacy lives on, and any move to 'change' some of the traditions is construed as tampering with God.

Resistance to change is another contextual consideration which must not be overlooked. This resistence can be witnessed both among the clergy, and also among the laity. Some clergy want to uphold the teaching of the Anglican Church as it was handed down by the missionaries. This is encapsulated in the expression, 'that is not Anglican'. At times this

---

[36] J. Hodgson, "African and Anglican," in Thinking Mission, a quarterly publication of the United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, Issue 24, October 1995, p.3.

is done blindly, that is, the historical context within which the traditions were formulated is taken as normative for all time. Such conservatism is partly strengthened by the need to preserve Anglicanism according to the Book of Common Prayer and partly by the quest for uniformity. Another element is that of wanting to keep abreast with developments in the Church of England, which is somehow considered as the role model of orthodoxy. The ordination of women is a case in point.[37]

In some cases Church members can frustrate the contextualization process. For some, dual observance safeguards orthodoxy in terms of how Christianity and traditional views should relate.[38] The traditions, as handed down by the missionaries, are Godself, so changing them is seen as tampering with the Godhead. In other words, traditions are seen as God-given. Janet Hodgson once again colourfully illustrates this attitude by citing the incident of an Anglo-Catholic Ghanaian woman, who when she "was told that fasting was now limited to a few hours before Holy Communion, she asked, 'Since when has God changed his mind?'"[39]

---

[37] The General Synod of the Church of England resolved to ordain women to the priesthood in 1992. In some quarters that was seen as a resolution for the whole communion. Other parts had ordained women long before then, but no one seemed to take note of that. Anglican Liturgy is another area which needs to be studied seriously by non-Europeans, though some African Provinces have very progressive liturgies e.g. Kenya.

[38] Some of my informants clearly believed that the two, Christianity and Shona Traditional Religion cannot be integrated because they are two different belief systems. See interviews with Mrs V. Mutandwa p.414 and Mr. T. Mukwishu p.407.

[39] J. Hodgson, "African and Anglican," op. cit. p.3.

Theological education is another factor. We have already cited the hostile attitude of some indigenous clergy towards Shona Traditional Religion. Clergy are still trained in line with western patterns, while they serve African contexts. They should not be trained to look at Shona traditions and religious culture as a threat to Christianity, but as part of the context within which they will be working.[40] Once again the need to clarify the purpose of the Church cannot be over-emphasized, if it is to be representative of this context-sensitive approach which is long overdue.

5.3.1 Social changes

Other contextual considerations are social. For a variety of reasons many families are no longer living together as communities. Members of families leave home to go and look for work in urban areas.[41] Some become established there, buy properties, and visit the communal home only occasionally. On the other hand, enhanced mobility enables

---

[40] In this regard Roland Allen, from a different context, makes very pertinent comments on clergy training when he notes that, "Christ trained His leaders in the midst of their own people, so that the intimacy of their relation to their own people was not marred and they could move freely among them as one of themselves; we train our leaders in a hothouse, and their intimacy with their own people is so marred that they can never thereafter live as one of them, or share their thought." R.Allen, The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church: and the causes which hinder it, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B.Eerdmans Publishing Co., Reprinted, August1982, p.21.

[41] It is important to note that property continues to be referred to as house (imba) A. M. Moyo elaborates, "Those who own beautiful houses in a city like Harare, possibly even with several acres of land attached, might feel that place to be their permanent home. However, according to African tradition, such a home cannot be permanent but only a place of residence for the purposes of employment in Harare." op,cit .A. Moyo, Zimbabwe: The risk of Incarnation, p.17. This is corroborated by W.Sitshebo, "How African Anglicans deal with death, funerals and bereavement," in A.Wingate, K.Ward, C. Pemberton and W. Sitshebo (eds) Anglicanism: A Global Communion, London: Cassell, 1998, p.32.

younger members to go to school away from home, where they meet people from different parts of the country. Some of these contacts result in inter-marriage. Working abroad has also become common. Even within such a dynamic society, the unity of the family is maintained by the custodians of tradition, who are usually the elders. These live in the family home, close to where the ancestors are buried.

In spite of this dynamism, traditional views of death and the dead continue to be strong. As we noted in chapter four, should someone die in the urban area, the expectation is that the deceased will be buried at home. If a daughter-in-law dies, members of her home family must be advised before any rituals can be carried out. All rituals relating to her death and burial should be done to the satisfaction of both families.[42] The trouble that some families go through to make sure that a member of the family who died away from home is brought home for burial,[43] demonstrates the significance of traditional views of death and the dead.

In cases where the deceased has made a prior request for burial in the urban area, it would nevertheless be expected that a representative of the home family should be present.[44]

---

[42] Phyllis Chiwanza a member of the Mothers'Union, and a Mothers' Union Worker herself, in an interview with the writer emphasized the importance of such collaboration for the sake of the guardian ancestors of both families. Informal interview, Birmingham, 29th March, 1999.

[43] See Chapter four, p.168.

[44] See Chapter four, p.163.

Because of the bye-laws, there can be no elaborate rituals, but symbolic rituals suffice. In all of these rituals the representative also represents all those left at home, including the ancestors. A sod of earth from the grave will be taken back to the home village, where the usual elaborate ritual ceremonies, and, later, *kurova guva,* will be performed. This is so that the spirit of the deceased is able to live amongst the other kin.[45]

5.3.2 Culture and Theology

Culture and theology are related, in that the former is a formative factor of the latter. In that relationship culture is a factor which has to do with theology's character as an intellectual discipline, and with its intention to find expression in the clearest and most coherent language available.[46] Clearly therefore, culture helps theology to be earthed in a given context, allowing it to express itself. Our quest for a synthesis should be guided by interactive dialogue between Christianity and Shona Traditional Religion. We should remember that in the Shona perception, culture and religion are inseparable and interchangeable. So views of death and the dead express both cultural values and religious beliefs. The rituals that are associated with them also express theological

---

[45] M. Gelfand, African Crucible, Cape Town: Juta & Co Ltd, 1969, p.20. Gelfand indicates the importance of the home with reference to death and the dead.

[46] J Macquarrie, Principles of Christian Theology, op.cit., p.12.

understanding. The Willowbank Report on Gospel and Culture of 1978 captures some of this vividly. It sees culture as:

> An integral system of beliefs, of values, of customs, and institutions which express these beliefs, values and customs, which bind a society together and give it a sense of identity, dignity, security and continuity.[47]

Emmanuel Lartey offers an anthropological definition of culture, in which culture is seen as:

> the way in which social groups develop distinct patterns of life and give 'expressive form' to their social and material life experience... In this sense, the culture of a group of persons is the particular and distinctive 'way of life' of a group. This includes the ideas, values and meanings embodied in institutions and practices, in forms of social relationship, in systems of belief, in mores and customs, in the way objects are used and physical life organised.[48]

Shona people have maintained their identity, dignity, security and continuity by holding on to their traditional beliefs, and particularly their views of death and the dead. Their philosophy, which does not split life into religious and secular, has also helped in the expression of these beliefs within a changing society. In a way, their views and their

---

[47] B. Stanley, The Bible and the Flag, op.cit., p.170.

[48] E.Y.Lartey, In Living Colour: An intercultural approach to pastoral care and counselling, London: Cassell, 1997, p.9-10. It is perhaps important to point out that there is no universally accepted definition of culture. What are offered as definitions are only working definitions which, however, disclose something of what culture incorporates. For a chronicled demonstration of this fact, see E.M.Ezeogu, "Bible and Culture in African Christianity," in International Review of Mission, Vol LXXXVII No. 344, January 1998, p.26.

philosophy of life continue to bind society together, and give content to their lives, in so far as they relate to death and the dead.

The dynamic nature of culture can be witnessed in the ability of the Shona people to adapt to the historical changes that have taken place in Zimbabwe.[49] They survived the hostile confrontation and condemnation of both the missionaries and the settlers. They managed this by letting their cultural and traditional beliefs take a peripheral role in public life. But, as noted, this led to a deeply rooted dual observance. An attempt to break off from this political and religious oppression is witnessed in the uprisings of 1896/7. Something of Shona traditional beliefs, values and customs was publicly revived. This process repeated itself in the liberation war of Independence, which led to the establishment of Zimbabwe. Here, Shona traditional beliefs and practices took centre stage, and the relevance of the Church was questioned. Archdeacon Alban Makoni helps us to appreciate this as he recalls that, "at this stage of the war (1976) the comrades were very hostile to Christianity. `We don't want to hear about Jesus. Jesus can do nothing.' In the crisis of the war they put emphasis on the spirits ....."[50]

---

[49] Reference is made to the religio-political pressures as described in Chapter two.

[50] Cited in, T.O. Ranger, Peasant Consciousness and Guerilla war in Zimbabwe, op.cit., p. 209-210. 'Comrades' is the name by which the freedom fighters were known.

The Rev'd Philemon Mudzvovera, an Anglican priest, raised the question of the relevance of the Anglican Church in a politically independent Zimbabwe. It was at the July, 1980 Diocesan Synod that he put the question. He submitted that:

> Since the 4th April 1966 when the first guns were fired in Sinoia (now Chinhoyi) Christians in Tribal Trust Lands (*now Communal lands*) became open to war propaganda. This propaganda has shaped the thinking and life of these Christians to such an extent that some of these Christians are now different Christians from the Christians they were before the war started. Their thinking has been very much coloured by the events of the war .... In what direction is the Anglican church in Zimbabwe going?[51]

This sums up the question of historical change among Anglican Christians. It also touches on the question of the dynamic nature of culture and the relevance of theology, at the same time acknowledging the adaptability of the Shona people. It is a speech which acknowledges the Shona people as key players. In short, it was a call to contextualization, which was unfortunately not heeded.

We noted that Shona views of death and the dead and their accompanying rituals were and still are considered evil. Their survival and development is the responsibility of the Shona people themselves against all odds. They were wrongly classified as 'ancestor-worship,' in line with the claim that the Shona people did not worship God, but their own ancestors. Robert Moffat once said "one seeks in vain to find a temple, an altar, or a single emblem

---

[51] Ibid., p.342.

of heathen worship. No fragments remain of former days, as mementoes to the present generation, that their ancestors ever loved, served or reverenced a being greater than man."[52] His conclusion, which many after him shared, was that the lack of western-type reminders of God meant no worship of God among the Shona people. Observing the prevalence of rituals related to the ancestors, the missionaries concluded that it was ancestors who were being worshipped.

In the light of these conclusions, it is ironical to note that the Anglican Church remembered, and still remembers, the dead. This was tantamount to saying to the Shona people, "forget your departed and remember the European departed, because your departed are not as important as the European departed." On the second of November each year names, mostly of European departed, were read as part of the All Soul's Day commemorative worship. These were people held dear by the Church, but they meant little, if anything, to the Shona people. Later, names of African Christians were also included, but it was mainly those who had been buried in Church cemeteries. When the burial rules were relaxed and people were buried in their own homes, it was only names of 'Christians'[53] which were brought to the mission. At this stage, only those names approved by the Church through its clergy were read out in public worship. The rest had

---

[52] Cited in E. Kendall, The End of an Era: Africa and the Missionary, London: SPCK, 1978, p.55 with an explanatory note on page 182.

[53] By 'Christian' is meant a western English name usually adopted at baptism.

to be remembered privately by their own relations. The implication was that Shona people with Shona names were not good enough for the Christian 'god'.

Reflection on this conflict between Christianity and African tradition has led some contemporary theologians to make a connection between ancestor veneration and the commemoration of the saints, and to conclude that the ancestors are as much God's people as anybody else. Fellowship with them is akin to the communion of saints. They can be remembered gratefully before God, and be prayed for without any feeling of guilt. Edward Fashole-Luke's insights, though specifically relating to Sierra Leone, inspire the remembrance of the dead before God in prayer. He argues, "finally, we are linked with our departed through the fellowship of reciprocal prayer: we pray for them and they pray for us."[54] This upholds the communal understanding of the African community and acknowledges the active participation of the ancestors in the lives of their progeny.

5.3.3 A theological understanding of culture

I propose a theological synthesis[55] which takes culture seriously, because I believe that culture is a formative factor of theology which also gives the Shona people an identity,

---

[54] E.Fashole-Luke, "Ancestor Veneration and the Communion of Saints," In M.E. Glasswell and E.W. Fashole-Luke (eds) New Testament Christianity for Africa and the world: Essays in honour of Harry Sawyerr, London: SPCK, 1974, p. 220.

[55] My theological synthesis is an attempt to bring together Christian and Shona traditional views so as to develop a Shona Christian theological view.

dignity, security and continuity. In their views of death and the dead, there is an underlying theology which needs to be understood and appreciated. It is this theology which helps the maintenance of Shona beliefs. The words of Dr. Cyril Bailey help to shed light on this thinking:

> Whether it is thought to be part of the deliberate divine purpose or not there was undoubtedly in the pagan world a Preparatio Evangelii, nor could the Gospel have won its way if it had not found an echo in the religious searchings and even religious beliefs of the time.[56]

This citation acknowledges the place and significance of culture, though employing the unfortunate words 'pagan world'. Bailey saw in traditional culture traces of the Gospel, an insight many of his contemporaries lacked. If this insight had been upheld by Anglican missionaries, dual observance would probably not have become as entrenched.

Ralph Peter Hatendi spoke to our situation more directly when he observed that "the commission to 'go and make disciples of all nations' does not authorise the missionary to ignore or destroy the foundation which God Himself has laid, for the grace of God takes nature for granted".[57] This is anchored in the theological assumption that all cultures are God-given. If we take Bailey and Hatendi's words seriously we can conclude that

---

[56] Cited in W.V. Lucas, Christianity and Native Rites, London: Central Africa House Press, 1950, p.49.

[57] R.P.Hatendi, "Shona Marriage and the Christian Churches," in J.A. Dachs, Christianity South of the Zambezi, Gwelo: Mambo Press, 1973, pp.146-7.

acknowledging Shona views of death and the dead as a source of theology indicates a balanced theological understanding of culture. But if there is no opportunity for the two to come into a dialogical contact these observations remain futile. It is my conviction that the Diocese of Harare needs to hear this once more.

If, as Christians believe, God is everywhere and reveals Godself in a variety of ways, culture is one possible channel of such revelation. Depending on one's theological orientation, this observation could be interpreted diversely. We need however to note that this "revelation does not happen in set-apart, particularly holy places, in strange unworldly circumstances, or in words that are spoken in a stilted voice. It comes in daily life, in ordinary words, through ordinary people."[58] God's revelation is therefore not restricted to a specific set pattern.

It is important briefly to clarify the question of theological orientation, since it has a bearing on theological interpretation. Bevans advances two such orientations, which he sees as almost mutually exclusive. These are, the creation-centred and the redemption-centred orientations to theology. "In the creation-centred approach, human experience, current events, and culture would be areas of God's activity and therefore sources of theology."[59] It can be argued that this orientation to theology acknowledges the world as sacramental;

---

[58] S.B. Bevans, Models of Contextual Theology, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1992, p.16.

[59] Ibid., p.17.

the place where God reveals Godself. Our synthesis is weighted towards this orientation, hence we take culture seriously as a source of theology. So in our study, we take Shona views of death and the dead seriously.

On the redemption-centred approach, Bevans says:

> a redemption-centred theology, in contrast, is characterized by the conviction that culture and human experience are either in need of radical transformation or in need of total replacement. In this perspective, grace cannot build on or perfect nature, because nature is corrupt. In a sense, therefore, grace replaces nature .... Rather than a culture being already holy with the presence of God, Christ must be brought to a culture for that culture to have any saving meaning whatsoever.[60]

We note the differences between the two theological orientations, but we do not uphold Bevans' polarisation of the approaches. Our contention is that the creation-centred and the redemption-centred theological orientations need each other. They are like two poles on which the theological orientation line balances. Our theological synthesis is like a piece of cloth hung on this line. Its balance depends on the two poles. Perhaps this analogy helps us to understand the Triune nature of God in the world and so to discern the Holy Spirit at work in all cultures. All cultures are God-given, but none of them is perfect; all need redemption.

5.4 THE BIBLE AND ITS TRANSLATION

---

[60] Ibid.p.16. It can be strongly argued that the Anglican Diocese of Harare is still guided by this theological approach.

As we noted in chapter two, the interpretation of the Bible was intended to promote the missionary theological orientation. It was the missionary who determined which passages of the Bible were read, and even how they were to be read. In doing this they firmly established the redemption-centred theological orientation. The following citation adequately illustrates the point we are making:

> In 1894 the work of translation was begun at Umtali [Mutare]. The translators were three of the colonial native catechists, Kapuya (one of the Mashona), the Bishop, and Mr. Walker. All lived in the Mission House, and worked for five hours a day at a translation of parts of the Bible and Prayer Book .... Later on the work of translation was taken up by the Rev D.R. Pelly.[61]

Even though they did not fully understand the language, the Bishop and Mr. Walker represented officialdom, ensuring that the translators would respect them and render authentic translations. Douglas Pelly took over the supervision for the same reason. The Shona people could not be trusted to work on their own, though in reality they did the work.

5.4.1 Biblical hermeneutic

Given the history of the colonization of Zimbabwe and the role of the missionaries, the Bible was a powerful and useful weapon. Sugirtharajah[62] advances three ways of reading the Bible, which are very relevant to the Zimbabawean setting, namely, the pre-colonial

---

[61] C.F. Pascoe, Two Hundred years of the SPG: A Historical Account of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in foreign parts 1701-1900, London: SPG Office, 1901, p.366c.

[62] R.S.Sugirtharajah, Post-Colonial Reading of the Bible, (Upublished) a paper which he presented at the Federation of the Selly Oak Colleges Staff Day, at Wadderton Centre, on 15 December, 1998.

reading, colonial reading and the post-colonial reading. The pre-colonial reading (of the Bible) sees the Bible as a participant in the oppression, functioning to legitimize colonialism. The reader or interpreter was none other than the missionary, since he was the herald of Western education.

In the colonial reading, the Bible was read to the Shona people by the colonizers who also interpreted it in support of their aims. Most of the reading was spiritual. This was meant to civilize and tame the Shona people since they were supposed to be barbaric and uncivilized. The Bible was read as the word of God to be listened to and obeyed as given by the missionary. There was no room for Shona interpretation and reflection on it. To a great extent, this displaced oral tradition and its dynamic nature.

In a post-colonial reading, the Bible is read by once colonized people still experiencing the burdens of the past. Their ability to read the Bible was a consequence of their western education. For them, authentic reading was to read and interpret the Bible as the missionaries did. No consideration was given to the context, that is, the Shona people's traditions and culture. To some extent, this would explain why we still have the problems of dual observance spelt out above, in spite of having indigenous Church leadership. If this dual observance is to be tackled head on, a new reading, reflection and interpretation of the Bible which recognises the Shona people as key players should be adopted. They

should not be objects of the Church's reading and interpretation.[63] It should be Shona people reading and interpreting the Bible from within their own context for themselves. This way they are directly challenged to respond relevantly to the Bible.[64]

In the field of hermeneutics there are many possible approaches to choose from. However we need to be aware that the approach we adopt should advance our search for a sound theological synthesis. Ezeogu advances two extreme approaches to the Bible. These are (a) the dialectic and (b) the dialogic readings of the Bible.[65] In the dialectic model, which basically incorporates Bevans' redemption-centred theological approach, there is no relationship between the Bible and culture. In this approach the two are irreconcilable:

> The Gospel is from "above", culture from "below"; the gospel is "divine", culture "human"; the gospel is light", culture "darkness"; the gospel is "eternal", culture "time-bound"; and so on. According to the advocates of this view, the

---

[63] It is to be noted that the shift of the hermeneutical centre towards the readers has been prompted by the reading experiences of marginalised people in the Third World, with reference to Liberation Theology. Yang discusses this from a Korean perspective in Geun Seok Yang, Korean Biblical Hermeneutics Old and New: A Criticism of Korean Reading Practices, Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Birmingham, 1997, pp.328-344. See also R.S.Sugirtharajah, Voices from the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World, London: SPCK, 1991and I.Mukonyora, J.L.Cox & F.J. Verstraelen (eds) Rewriting the Bible: The Real Issues, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1993. There is need to guard against subjectivism and loss of commitment to a stable meaning of the text. The authority of the reader should not substitute the authority of the text. So the underlying question should be, 'how does the text fit into the whole purpose of God in his revealing and saving work in human history?'

[64]Christopher Wright in the Henry Martyn Lecture of 1998 makes a vital point on contextual reading of the Bible. He says, "but I think we cannot deny that when people read the text, its meaning for them will relate to whatever agenda is of vital importance to them." Christopher J.H. Wright, Interpreting the Bible Among the World Religions, November, 1998.

[65] E. M. Ezeogu, "Bible and Culture in African Christianity," op.cit. pp. 25-38. See also Julius Lipner, "Being One, Let me be Many: Facets of the Relationship between the Gospel and Culture," In International Review of Mission, LXXIV/294 (1985) pp. 158-168.

> dichotomy between the gospel and culture can be resolved only by culture yielding to the demands of the gospel.[66]

As we noted earlier, this was the usual missionary approach. They saw themselves as soldiers marching to war against demonic powers and forces of darkness in order to liberate the land for Christ and save the hell-bound souls of its helpless inhabitants.[67] There was no way in which they could compromise, so Shona culture had to yield to the gospel.

In the dialogic, which is Bevans' creation-centred approach to theology, culture is acknowledged as open-ended and the gospel as transcending and transforming. These qualities of both culture and the gospel allow for dialogue and provide for 'radical spiritual decolonization.'[68]

It is my submission that the dialogical approach should be the one the Anglican Diocese of Harare should adopt. However the two approaches should not be seen as opposed to each other, they only mark the extremes. We do well to consider what each has to offer, and then employ those insights in our dialogue. In such a dialogue we should be

---

[66] Ibid., p.28.

[67] Ibid., p.29.

[68] Desmond Tutu, cited by J. Hodgson, "African and Anglican," op .cit., p.4

remembering the past, living in the present and trusting in the future.[69] In other words, the Diocese of Harare should be looking at Shona views of death and the dead for what they were and are, without romanticizing them, hoping that the dual observance will eventually give way to a sound synthesis.

The immediate question for many is, 'will that not be promoting syncretism?' My answer is 'no'. It is actually a healthy and reflective approach which gives rise to a powerful new reading of the Bible, wherein the Bible is allowed to enter into dialogue with its context. The central theological question will become how to understand anew, on theological grounds, the unity amidst so wide and potentially rich a diversity of readings. A dialogue between Christianity and Shona traditional religious views of death and the dead should give us an understanding of the unity that exists between the Bible and culture.

5.4.2 A theological hermeneutic

I am going to use the question of land as an example of a theological hermeneutic of death and the dead for the Zimbabwean context.[70] Shona views of death and the dead are not unrelated to the land. Since in the Shona understanding there is no distinction between

---

[69] Welcome to Zimbabwe: Turn to God - rejoice in Hope, WCC 8th Assembly Dec, 7th -14, 1998, Geneva: WCC Publications, 1998, p.21 (Assembly Handbook).

[70] S. Bakare, My Right to Land: A Theology of land in Zimbabwe, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1994. In this book Bakare, a Zimbabwean Anglican clergyman, discusses the question of land and its place in theological hermeneutics.

religious and secular, this link with land has strong theological connotations.[71] It is believed that God is in control both of human lives, and of the land on which the people live, and that in turn, the land links the community with God. The ancestors are the custodians of the land, so if they are not honoured by their progeny they will not ask God to provide generously, but if they are honoured, all will be well. Community, in its totality, includes the dead, the living and the unborn. As we noted in chapter one, the dead are believed to plead with God on behalf of the living for a good rain season, a good harvest and plenty for all. Gabriel Setiloane, writing from a Tswana perspective, echoes this:

> When one understands what religious undertones are associated with land, how, therefore, the place of man's birth and upbringing is 'a holy place', because there he meets his ancestors, only then will one be able to comprehend the depth of insult and the feeling of being raped and dismembered of the victims of wholesale removals of villagers and townspeople in Southern Africa, whether it be Mozambique, Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), South West Africa (Namibia) or South Africa itself.[72]

Association with the land begins at an early stage in the Shona person's life. A child's umbilical cord is buried in the soil. It is believed that since it (the umbilical cord) gave the child sustenance while in the womb it symbolically fulfills the same task with the spiritual world. Traditionally soil provides sustenance to its inhabitants. This is the same soil where

---

[71] See S.Bakare, My Right to Land, 1994. J.Weller and J.Linden observe that,"whenever Bantu conquered Bantu in the great migrations, the incoming rulers were obliged to make their peace with the land, and with the Spirits connected with it. Often this was done by retaining the religious institutions of the rulers." J.Weller and J. Linden, Mainstream Christianity, op. cit., p.7.

[72] G.Setiloane, "How the traditional world-view persists in the Christianity of the Sotho-Tswana," in E.Fashole-Luke, R.Gray, A.Hastings & G. Tasie (eds) Christianity in Independent Africa, London: Rex Collins, 1978, p.410 (pp.402-412).

the child's ancestors are buried, so the child is not only committed to the life-giving forces but also linked with her or his ancestors.[73] Because the ancestors are believed to have a special relationship with God, the child so committed also benefits from this relationship.

The writer has a Shona mother-in-law, who, when he and his wife visited following the birth of a child, would symbolically demonstrate this link. She would take some soil from the homestead, put it into a cup, mix it with water, and give it to the child to drink. This drinking of 'soil water' is known as '*kurapira*'[74] (just taking a taste of the soil). What she was doing was to conduct a symbolic introduction of the new grandchild to the ancestral members of her family, buried in the soil. In turn, they were expected to accept the child into the home and then protect him or her from any harm while in their care.

These, and many other symbolic links with the soil, give authenticity to the proverbial expression "*mwana wevhu*"[75] (child of the soil). This expression later became a popular political slogan during the years of nationalism and the subsequent war of liberation for

---

[73] Ibid. p.410. It is interesting to note that the rituals in the different contexts have the same symbolic interpretation.

[74] M.Hannan, Standard Shona Dictionary, p.554 places this word under *rapa* (Apply or administer medicine. 2. Cure. Heal). It gives an example of what *kurapira* means; rapira uchi (even if you do not want to eat the honey , take just a taste of it). *Uchi* is honey.

[75] G.Setiloane, "Traditional World-view of the Sotho-Tswana," op.cit. p.410. This Shona proverb as attributed to Setiloane reads *mwana we mvu*. This is not correct, the correct expression does not have the 'm' before 'vu'. In the old Shona orthography it would have been *Mwana wevu*, in the new orthography it is *Mwana wevhu*.

Zimbabwe. It should be noted that land was, and still is, not only the property of the living, but of the total community of the living and the living dead. So, the proverbial expression demonstrates the social and religious links that inspired the people.

Even now when the people of Zimbabwe talk of their land, these sentiments are still echoed. It is recorded in the Zimbabwe Kairos Document that the people say:

> Land is life for all Zimbabweans. The land is our birthright and inheritance. It is the centre of our spiritual and cultural lives. When we lost it to the colonial settlers we lost our being and identity. This was the primary reason we fought the liberation war for our independence.[76]

It is clear that this association with land is not a mere agenda, neither is it a method nor an approach; it is the centre of spiritual and cultural life. That makes it central and not peripheral to the understanding of God and community. Acknowledging it as such in our synthesis helps us to sharpen our theological and pastoral engagement.

We should also note that traditional views of death and the dead found expression in a political system which allowed people to be buried in their homes. The political system now operating inhibits full expression of the rituals that encompass these views. The end result is that they are adapting, and will continue to adapt accordingly.

---

[76] Zimbabwe Kairos Document, A Call to Prophetic Action: Towards the Jubilee 2000, For a socially just, democratic and prosperous Zimbabwe, Monday Printers, November 1998, p.23.

These changes are not problematic as long as the Anglican Diocese of Harare clearly understands its Christian mission and purpose in that dynamic society. It also needs to adapt this dynamism itself, to be relevant. Understanding its mission and purpose is a big question which I believe should be studied further by African church historians and ecclesiologists. Addressing the land question in a wholistic manner is not only a hermeneutical concern but a theological and pastoral need.[77] Let us now turn our attention to the theological synthesis.

5.5 TOWARDS A THEOLOGICAL SYNTHESIS

Considerations of the questions of methodology, contextualization and hermeneutics dealt with above give us our cue. While we were dealing with the above preliminaries we raised two concerns which perhaps should be clarified as a way of sharpening our focus. These were (a) the undesirability of the dual observance which characterizes the observance and execution of rituals relating to death and the dead among the Shona Anglicans of the Diocese of Harare, and (b) the question of whether there is a ready-made theology which can be used as a fixed model for evaluating what praxis or understanding deserves the term "Christian."

---

[77] This probably what leads Dickson to note that, "... the fellow-feeling that the African has with nature has led sometimes to the description of African Religion as 'nature' religion." K. Dickson, Theology in Africa, op.cit., p. 48.

First, we look at the undesirability of dual observance. There are basically three reasons, from a Christian Church perspective, why dual observance is objectionable. Firstly, it does not justify the presence of the Church among the Shona people. Rather it promotes a feeling that there are areas in people's lives which are sacred and others which are not. This leads secondly, to a distorted understanding of God. God is not only understood in dual terms but split into two. In the first instance there is a Christian God who is experienced through Church sacraments and Christian rituals. Such a god is represented by the Church hierarchy, the bishops, the clergy and the like; he does not relate to nature, as understood in the traditional Shona setting. In short, this god is concerned with the Church hierarchy and its teaching (orthodoxy) and not with the ordinary people.

Then there is the god of nature who is experienced by the ordinary people in their day to day lives. By contrast, this is not an institutional god but the god of real life experiences.

(c) Related to point (b) above, the conclusion is reached, from a political view point, that there is a god for the Europeans (*varungu*) and europeanized Africans and a god for the Shona people. Arguing politically the facts are that the god who does not understand the ordinary Shona people is the one preached by the Church; this is the god of the white people who deprived the Shona people of their land. There is therefore very little point in worrying about such a god.

We question 'if there is an unchangeable theology which can be used as a fixed model for evaluating whether certain praxis or understanding deserves the description 'Christian". The question is asked as a critique of the way Christianity has been propagated in the Anglican Diocese of Harare. One fails to see the essence of Christianity if it is constantly confronting people with a dehumanizing teaching. If our aim as the Church is to give the Shona people any dignity, there is no point in condemning them. In confronting and condemning we shake their confidence in the Church and there is very little that we can achieve from such negative approaches, especially if we believe that presenting the Christian faith should allow the hearers to discover for themselves the mystery of Christ. It is the Christian church's duty to be marketing this mystery. How can the Shona people be interested in it, if the Anglican Diocese of Harare presents it as something not meant for them? The question becomes more appropriate when asked in the light of developments within the Diocese in question.[78]

The concerns relating to (a) the dual observance and (b) to the method of presenting Christianity are in contrast to what the Christian church has achieved over the centuries.[79] Our synthesis aims to redress this situation by advocating dialogue between Christian and Shona traditional religious views of death and the dead. In the history of theology,

---

[78] See Chapter four for attempts in popular Christianity to address the question of traditional views in the face of death and dying.

[79] People have related to Jesus Christ in a very special way to the point of martyrdom. They would not have done so if they believed that Jesus Christ was not real to them.

Christianity has always taught that there is only one God, who chose to reveal Godself in Jesus Christ. This God is the God of nature, the God of the church, the God of the people and indeed of all life. It is this God who is experienced in the sacraments and in the common everyday life - the God who is revealed in the context of human need. A word of caution is needed here; "the problem of Christian particularity in revelation should not be confused with claims to exclusivity."[80] If there is anything deserving of being called 'Christian', it must have something to do with Jesus Christ, who came to a specific culture and partook of it.

Fundamental to our theological synthesis are the following words: "the word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). They provide the basis for our theological construct. The mystery of the word (Jesus the Christ) taking flesh to dwell among humanity, that is, the Incarnation, is the basis for the model we shall use in our attempt to synthesise Christian and Shona views of death and the dead.

5.6 THE NEED FOR A THEOLOGICAL MODEL

---

[80] D. Tracy, On Naming the Present: Reflections on God, Hermeneutics, and Church, London: SCM Press & Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1994, p.114.

The question of methodology is very important in the contextualization of theology. In considering a method or model of theologising for our study, we note that exponents of different theological persuasions have advanced a range of theological theories.[81] Each theory has been adopted for a specific context.[82] I will suggest a theological model which addresses the historical, cultural and contextual realities of the Diocese of Harare, as discussed in chapters two and three. The strength of such a model is that it is able to acknowledge:

> the Christian message as having failed to reach the real needs of African Christians because it has been presented in foreign dress, that is, in thought-forms which belong to the western world. It sees theology in Africa therefore as needing to work out an approach which will relate directly to the African world-view.[83]

In discussing the Anglican Church's response to traditional Shona views and practices connected with death and the dead, we found no sympathetic appreciation of their value and significance by the Church. As we saw in chapter four, that approach has led to dual observance, a situation where the gospel message and the traditional Shona views run parallel to each other.

---

[81] S. Bevans, Models of Contextual Theology, discusses five models of theologising, namely, the Translational, the Anthropological, the Praxis, the Synthetic and the Transcendental models.

[82] I.J. Mosala, Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology in South Africa, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1989, p.4. A good example of why a specific model is chosen for a particular context is given by this author, an exponent of South African Black Theology. He writes;" I have chosen the historical-materialist method of analysis...If Black Theology is to become an effective weapon in the struggle to critique and transform present realities, it needs to employ analytical concepts that can get to the bottom of events..."

[83] J. Parratt, (ed) A Reader in African Christian Theology, op.cit., p.143.

This separation of Christian and Shona traditional views of death and the dead leads to a number of problems, not least of which is the question of the significance of Christian views, as taught by the Anglican Church, for the Shona people. This also leads to the question of the relevance of the Church itself, and not least its pastoral care. If Christianity is to be of any significance to the Shona people such separation of views and practices is unnecessary and unsatisfactory.[84]

Differences in thought-forms and world views distort the situation further. Shona people have a communal outlook which acknowledges the dead as integral members of the community, yet the Church has adopted the western, individualistic view. This raises the question of identity, that is, how can one be Shona and Christian at one and the same time, in such a Church? Ralph Peter Hatendi, the first Shona cleric to serve as Diocesan Bishop of Harare, on reflection after sixteen years of service, highlights this paradoxical situation. He pointed out that even as Bishop he had been battling with the question of whether he was an African Christian or a Christian African.[85] Here we are talking about the need to relate Shona thought-forms and world views to Christianity, given that:

---

[84] In Chapter four we examined how this position has led to the development of parallel observances of death and the dead, one Christian and the other Shona traditional.

[85] R.P. Hatendi, Retirement Speech, delivered at Bishop Gaul College as a challenge to that Institution to find a theologically balanced expression of Shona Christianity, 26th June, 1995.

> for too long, embracing Christ and his message meant rejection of African cultural values. Africans were taught that their ancient ways were deficient or even evil and had to be set aside if they had to become Christian.[86]

The core question is, how can a Shona person be a Christian in a Church that does not speak to her or him in contextually and culturally comprehensible terms? This question, crucial as it is, was and still is not given due attention. The interactive dialogical model is proposed as one which is sensitive, sympathetic and relevant to the search for a theological synthesis.

The proposed model takes cognisance of three important facts. First, that death is the natural end of every human being's life, that, "we are all born helpless, grow from dependence toward relative self-management, we relate to other beings and to a physical environment and ten out of ten die!."[87] This is irrespective of whether one is an adherent of a religion or not; it is a fact of life. However, we do not know when that individual time of dying will be.

Secondly, when death occurs, the living react and respond to it diversely. Most of these reactions and responses, though coloured by emotions, reflect something of the theology and philosophy of the mourners. The Anglican Church in Zimbabwe upholds missionary

---

[86] R.Schreiter, "Jesus Christ in Africa Today," in R. Schreiter, (ed) Faces of Jesus in Africa, London: SCM Press, 1991, p.viii.

[87] E.Y.Lartey, In Living Colour, p.12.

teaching, with the Bible for guidance, in response to death, while the Shona people revert to their traditional beliefs and the Bible.[88] In both instances the Bible is the second reference point, providing fertile ground for dual observance.[89]

Thirdly, views of death and the dead find expression in the immediate and subsequent rituals. The rituals are symbolic ways of coping with the phenomenon of death. So when the Anglican Church, in loyalty to the missionary approach, rejects Shona rituals it is actually rejecting a true expression of grief. It comes across as insensitive. Whereas if it appreciated and understood these rituals, its pastoral care would be more relevant. The interactive dialogical model adequately addresses these realities.

5.6.1 The Interactive Dialogical Model

This model is based on the mystery of the incarnation: God taking on humanity in its fullness.[90] The incarnation informs and shapes the development, understanding and growth

---

[88] See Chapter four, p.202 for how the Shona people engage the Bible and their traditional beliefs in response to death.

[89] See Chapter one p. 29 for a description of what happens in response to death in the Shona setting and chapter two, p.98ff for a missionary response. And also chapter four p.158 for how the people seek to bring about an interaction between the responses of the two belief systems.

[90] A.E.McGrath, The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Modern Christian Thought, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1993 p.269. McGrath says, "Incarnation is a central Christian doctrine, according to which the Son or Word of God, the second person of the divine Trinity, assumed a fleshly human body in Jesus Christ and lived a historical existence on this planet, subject to all the constants and limitations of such an existence."

of this model. It sets both the tone and stage of contextualisation, by emphasizing that the divine entered a specific culture, and from within it communicated, through dialogue and interaction, the constant divine message, the gospel.[91] In Jesus, the Word which became flesh took root in a culture,[92] and the life and ministry of Jesus became the gospel which is communicated to other cultures, through cultures.[93] The incarnation we now seek is that of the gospel; the question is how the gospel can be rooted in Shona traditions, synthesising Christian and Shona views of death and the dead. In his definition of inculturation, Pedro Arrupe, a Roman Catholic clergyman, sheds more light on the incarnation we seek. He sees it as:

> the incarnation of Christian life and the Christian message in a particular cultural context, in such a way that this experience not only finds expression through elements proper to the culture in question... but becomes a principle that animates, directs and unifies culture, transforming it and remaking it so as to bring about a 'new creation.'[94]

---

[91] Biblical tools such as exegesis and hermeneutics seek to bring us ever closer to both Jesus' setting and words, thus indicating that his context and words are significantly constant. If they were not, then Canaan Banana's call for "Rewriting the Bible," should not be seen as so outrageous. See I. Mukonyora, J.L.Cox and F.J. Verstraelen (eds) Rewriting the Bible:the real issues; Perspectives from within Biblical and Religious Studies in Zimbabwe, Gweru: Mambo Press,1993. See also S.Bevans, Models of Contextual Theology, p.30 who helps us to classify this model as a translation model, because of "its insistence on the message of the Gospel as an unchanging message."

[92] In the book, Toward a Theology of Inculturation, Aylward Shorter links the Incarnation with Inculturation, and seems to see the words as synonymous, p.11.

[93] It is not surprising that there are traces of Jewish, Greek and Roman thought patterns behind some of the doctrines of the Church. That only helps to highlight the significance of culture in transporting the gospel.

[94] Cited in A. Shorter, Towards a Theology of Inculturation, op. cit., p.11.

This should be an ongoing process if the incarnational nature and value of the gospel is to be adequately experienced. Since culture is dynamic, each cultural development needs to be given a chance to engage in the contextualisation of the gospel. Christian and Shona traditional views of death and the dead should not only engage in dialogue, but should also interact if we are to have a sound Shona Christian theology of death.

The interactive dialogical model should be seen as distinct from a dialogically interactive model. The difference between the two models is that the latter suggests that only dialogue is interactive. This has unfortunately been the model that the Diocese of Harare has used. No wonder that dialogue has not adequately addressed the problem of dual observance.[95] In our proposed model, the interactive dialogical model, dialogue and interaction are two sides of the same coin. So, dialogue on views of death and the dead should be complemented by open interaction of the practices of the two religious belief systems.

This model is an open and systematic attempt to bring about a synthesis of Christian and Shona traditional views of death and the dead through dialogue and interaction. It has the potential for constantly challenging both the Church and Shona Christians not to follow their traditions uncritically. The model is both a theological critique of the constraining

---

[95] This is born witness to by the results of the 1980 dialogue and the 1994 Synod. See p.204, above.

approaches, as well as a way forward in the ongoing contextualization process. As Dickson notes:

> It is essential that African Christians should be in a position to express in a vital way what Christ means to them, and to do so in and through a cultural medium that makes original thinking possible.[96]

A vital expression of Christ by the Shona people assumes a contextual reading of the Bible. It is through such an undertaking that Jesus Christ can be rediscovered. If this Christological quest is done in a culturally conscious manner it could help to shape Shona Christianity today, with special reference to death and the dead, by allowing both interaction and dialogue.

The interactive dialogical model pleads for dialogue and interaction between Christian and Shona views in a manner intelligible to the Shona people. This is important because the Christian faith was brought to the Shona people for their salvation. Through dialogue and involvement in the cultural matters of his day, Jesus helped to highlight his host culture's need for redemption from misconceptions. His involvement with that culture brought about a revision of these misconceptions. From within he challenged the custodians of the culture to change. He allowed his message to take root among the people, as he also took his place among them. We submit that if Christian and Shona views enter into dialogue and interaction modelled on such an approach, dual observance will be addressed. Church

---

[96] K. Dickson, Theology in Africa, p.4.

doctrines, Church history, missionary and present traditions and approaches, the Bible and the Shona people's views will find contextual expression. This model is contextual because it recognizes the validity of another *locus theologicus*: present human experience.[97] It sees religious experience as part of the data of theology.

Given a chance, the interactive dialogical model can greatly help the Anglican Church in the Diocese of Harare to engage in a self-defining exercise which would help it to understand itself and its ministry better. It would provide a neutral starting point for the study of Church traditions and the local Anglican Church's received practices and Shona traditional views in the light of the gospel. This would contribute towards a synthesis expressive of a Shona theology of death which appreciates cultural burial customs, observing that Jesus was buried "in accordance with Jewish burial customs."[98] The model encourages reading the Bible with new eyes and enhances the contextualization exercise.

5.6.2 Assumptions of the Interactive Dialogical Model

We adopt the interactive dialogical model for our synthesis with five basic assumptions derived from the doctrine of the incarnation. These assumptions are brief reflections on

---

[97] S. Bevans, Models of Contextual theology, p.2.

[98] This is to be understood in the light of the fact that Jesus was born into this culture. Its customs and observances were part of his life. Though Jewish cultural practices became the source for Christian practices; the significance of culture in understanding Christianity remains even in those cultures to which it is brought.

the implications of Christ's becoming flesh and making his dwelling among us.[99] Behind each one of them there is something of the love of God being communicated. First, the model assumes that dialogue is an essential quality for understanding other contexts. It enables the concerned parties to hear and appreciate each other. Jesus was constantly in dialogue with his context, and this led to a synthesizing of a variety of views, for example, the question of cleanliness, Matt.15:1-20 and the paying of taxes, Matt. 22:15-23. For this reason we hold that, if Christian and Shona traditional religious views are given a chance to enter into dialogue, a synthesis of Christian and Shona traditional views of death and the dead will emerge to enable the gospel to take root among the Shona people.[100]

Secondly, participation or interaction is an essential tool of contextualisation. Jesus participated in the life of a first century Jewish community, which was his context. He was part of their culture, so he was intelligible to them through the use of familiar concepts and language. This does not mean that he agreed with everything that the culture held dear, but that he challenged it from inside. The Gospels provide several examples of how Jesus

---

[99] Chiefly, John 1:14 where we read, "The word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."

[100] This model goes further than Dickson's correlation model of contextualization which only proposes a method of identifying themes that are to be prominent in African Christian Theology, with no guidance for their development. See K. Dickson, Theology in Africa, Chapter 5, pp. 108-140.

challenged the theological concepts of his host community.[101] In like manner Christian and Shona thought-forms and world views cannot remain closed to each other if there is this mutual interaction and participation in cultural essentials, such as death and dying.[102]

Thirdly, the incarnation displays humility. The fact that God chose to take flesh in order to identify with his human creatures is an act of humility. The process of taking flesh brings us to the angel's encounter with Mary.[103] According to Luke's account, the divine messenger is humble enough to converse with this young Jewish woman, and even waits for her response. Jesus himself, at the age of twelve, shows great humility when he encounters the teachers of the law. He was sitting, listening and asking them questions, in spite of the fact that when he spoke everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers.[104] He humbly engaged with them in contextualising from their familiar religious and theological ground. The same humility is displayed in the

---

[101] Jesus' host community had a religious culture which made them see themselves as a special people. His involvement with this community reveals to them some aspects of God which they find difficult to comprehend. In his teaching he challenges them to re-establish their personal relationship with God.

[102] All the four Gospels are a witness to this observation, that through participation in Jewish culture, Jesus broke many artificial barriers.

[103] Lk 1:26-38.

[104] Lk 2:47.

manner in which he accepted his death. He could have called for divine intervention.[105] If our theological dialogue and interaction are to bear fruit, they should be humbly conducted.

Fourthly, the incarnation does not distort cultural identity, Mary is approached as a young Jewish woman who is betrothed, hence the need to explain the situation to Joseph, the prospective husband, so that the incarnation would not become a scandal. Jesus himself grew up as a Jewish boy, fulfilling the requirements of his religious culture, such as the presentation in the Temple Luke.2:22ff. He learnt the trade of his foster father, and went to the synagogue as any culturally astute Jew of his day would do. The cultural identity of the host community is the basic context from, and to which, theology has to speak. It is for this reason that theologians like Dickson, Ambrose Moyo, Nyamiti, and Pobee emphasize the significance of cultural identity in their works.[106]

Fifthly, the incarnation has no meaning without the death and resurrection. The four presuppositions listed above only make sense in the light of this final messianic sign. The significance of Jewish views of death and the dead is demonstrated in the manner in which Jesus died. It was believed that a traitor had to die by execution, so did Jesus die, even

---

[105] Matt. 26:53-54, where he is quoted as saying to one of his disciples who had drawn a sword, "do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?"

[106] See K. Dickson, Theology in Africa, focussing on Akan people of Ghana, A.Moyo, The Risk of Incarnation, focussing on Shona people of Zimbabwe, C. Nyamiti, African Tradition and the Christian God, focussing on Kikuyu people of Kenya and J.Pobee, Toward an African Theology, focussing on the Akan people of Ghana. They emphasize the importance of culture for understanding contexts.

though he was no traitor (Gal.3:13-14).[107] The corpse of one who had met his death in that way had to be buried before nightfall.[108] So, in John's account, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea took his body, wrapped it , with the spices, in strips of linen, in accordance with Jewish burial customs.[109] Jesus, the word made flesh, is fully contextualized, identifying with human culture, but transforming it from within, giving it new life, through his resurrection.

The final and principal assumption of this model is that Shona culture, and indeed all cultures, are God-given, and therefore can be brought into harmony with Christianity. This anthropological understanding is highlighted by Bevans, who writes:

> it is within human culture that we find God's revelation - not as a separate supra cultural message, but in the very complexity of culture itself, in the warp and woof of human relationships, which are constitutive of cultural existence.[110]

---

[107] Chiefly Luke 22:52, where Jesus addresses the chief priests, the officers of the temple guard and the elders who had come for him, "Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come with swords and clubs?"

[108] Chiefly Deuteronomy 21:22-23, "If a man guilty of a capital offence is put to death and his body is hung on a tree, you must not leave his body on the tree overnight. Be sure to bury him that same day, because anyone who is hung on a tree is under God's curse. You must not desecrate the land the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance."

[109] Chiefly, Jn 19:40.

[110] S. Bevans, Constructing Local Theologies, p.49. It is in such a dynamic setting that the relationship between Christ and culture should find expression. The dialogical interactive model accommodates the adjustments as expressed by Richard Neibuhr. Depending on the context, it can be Christ *against* Culture, The Christ *of* Culture, Christ *above* Culture, Christ and Culture *in paradox* or Christ *the transformer* of Culture. R. Neibuhr, Christ and Culture, London: Faber and Faber, 1951.

Starved of interactive dialogue, such thought patterns, and therefore the significance of Jesus Christ for Shona Christians, can never be fully appreciated.[111]

5.6.3 A Critique of the Interactive Dialogical Model

Aware of the contextual and analogical nature of models, we have chosen the Interactive dialogical model for the Anglican Diocese of Harare. First, we have chosen this model because of its "methodical openness to dialogue."[112] It does not approach difference with suspicion. Neither does it see any one context, or culture, or institution for that matter, as having all the revelation and truth. Instead, it acknowledges that Christianity and Shona Traditional Religion can enrich each other, therefore the dialogue. This fits in well with the Shona approach of seeking a solution to something of communal concern. All concerned parties are invited to participate in the discussion and each person's views are listened to. Though the process might be long, the outcome is a product of the whole group of concerned persons. In such a setting "Truth ... is understood not as something 'out there,' but as a reality which emerges in true conversation between authentic women and men when they 'allow questioning to take over.'"[113]

---

[111] See Chapter six for an explanation of how the model is intended to work in practice.

[112] S. Bevans, Models of Contextual Theology, p.56. R.Schreiter notes that, "its interdisciplinary approach and its concern for all dimensions of culture, both verbal and nonverbal, both empirical and nonempirical, represent the kind of holism that is important when it comes to listening to a culture." Constructing Local Theologies, p.52.

[113] Ibid. p.87.

This is not to be understood as negatively allowing questioning for its own sake. It is purposeful questioning aimed at sharing insights from all angles. So in recommending the model for the Diocese of Harare, we are not creating an arena for the destruction of the Church's structures, neither are we seeking to attack or demean the office bearers. We are rather looking for ways in which the Shona people can own the gospel, as Shona Christians. On the process of searching for insights through conversation, David Tracy submits with great acumen that:

> Conversation is a game with some hard rules: say what you mean; say it as accurately as you can; listen to and respect what the other says, however different or other; be willing to correct or defend your opinions if challenged by the conversation partner; be willing to argue if necessary, to confront if demanded, to endure necessary conflict, to change your mind if evidence suggests it.[114]

So the model's ability to facilitate dialogue between the Christian faith and Shona traditional religious views of death and the dead, with a view to a synthesis, is essential to the process of redressing the present position. Such dialogue should also be encouraged at the personal level, where the two faiths wrestle each other within the individual Shona Christian.[115] This is where the firm rooting of the faith begins. As Bevans has correctly observed, "it is only when cultures are in dialogue that we have true growth.

---

[114] Cited in S.Bevans, Models of Contextual Theology, p.87.

[115] A. Shorter, Towards a Theology of Inculturation, p.11. Shorter emphasizes that we continue such dialogue because he sees it as an essential part of the process of inculturation where culture and faith shape each other. He notes, "culture, as we have seen, is a developing process, and there must be, therefore, a continuous dialogue between faith and culture."

Each culture has something to give to the other, and each culture has something from which it needs to be exorcised."[116]

Secondly, this model encourages cross-fertilisation of cultures, contexts, traditions and views through interaction and participation. In so doing it also accommodates and upholds the uniqueness of Christ and the contextual nature of theology. If theology is to make an impact, it must be in touch with its context. Once again this honours the traditional Shona approach reflected in the manner in which people come together on hearing the news of death.[117] People participate in the mourning, grief, ceremonies and rituals. The dual observance we identified above can only be dealt with by allowing open interaction and participation of Christian and Shona traditional rituals and ceremonies, in synthesis, to express Shona Christianity.

Thirdly, more than other theological models, the interactive dialogical model witnesses to the true universality of the Christian faith.[118] As we have noted, not only does it acknowledge the essence of every culture, but also admits that the gospel is capable of being part of every culture. This means that it respects other models of theologizing, and accommodates other approaches to religion, such as the anthropological, the

---

[116] S. Bevans, Models of Contextual Theology, p.84.

[117] See Chapter four p.158.

[118] S.Bevans, Models of Contextual Theology, p.87.

phenomenological and the social approaches.[119] It is indeed interactive and dialogical. The openness of this model can be expressed in question form; 'if Jews can bury their dead according to their customs and still experience God's love through it, what is there to stop the Shona people from experiencing the same if they bury their dead according to their customs?' For the Diocese of Harare this question has implications for pastoral care.

If Jesus is the 'logos' (the Word) through whom all things were made, then wherever there is life, he must be present.[120] This view (of general revelation) is based both on creation and on the view of the cosmic Christ. Whether he is consciously acknowledged as present is another matter. But if his gospel is consciously given an opportunity to enter a given culture it activates the people's responses, just as it has done down the ages. The Shona people and their celebration of life which acknowledges God through the ancestors, could find new and meaningful expression through this model.

Fourthly, the fact that the Christian faith is a product of the death and resurrection of Jesus is fully accommodated by our model. The model continues to uphold Jesus' death and resurrection as essentials for any gospel and culture encounter. The risen Christ is the hope and focus of Christianity. From both the missionary and Shona convert's perspective,

---

[119] P.Connoly, Approaches to the Study of Religion, London: and New York: Cassell, 1999.

[120] Chiefly John 1:1-3, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made."

it is hoped that participating in Jesus' faith means participating in this hope. His spirit, which continues to be with us to the end of the age,[121] it is believed, directs and inspires us. However this only makes sense when the gospel is allowed to take root in culture (specifically Shona culture), because it is only then that the theological and phenomenological connections can be made. By means of this model we strongly advocate that the gospel should enter into culture with God's power and the assurance of resurrection, and enliven the whole of the people's culture with that message of God's love.[122] Though resurrection is not part of the Shona world view, dialogue enables it to be assimilated into their understanding, that is, there are points at which the Shona view needs to be expanded by the new elements of Christian doctrine. Shona people believe that their dead are alive and active in the lives of their progeny. This is a foundational conception for presenting the resurrection for sensitive and interactive dialogical consideration.

This is probably what leads Ambrose Moyo to see the incarnation as a risk. It is a risk:

> which God took in order to communicate his love for the world. That risk must be repeated wherever the gospel of Christ is proclaimed. This means allowing the gospel to die in culture in order that it may bring to life a new culture and people. Christian missions in Zimbabwe have tended to see African traditional beliefs and practices as pollution, from which the gospel needs to be protected.

---

[121] Matt. 28:20, part of the Great Commission.

[122] A.M.Moyo, The Risk of Incarnation, p.49.

> The message of the resurrection challenges the church to recognize God's power in bringing to life that which is inseparably bound to him.[123]

Adopting the interactive dialogical model could be a productive risk for the Diocese of Harare because it allows for self examination without condemnation. The Diocese's practices and approaches, from the reading of the Bible, to its rituals and ceremonies, can be revisited with openness. Acknowledging its African-ness, it can wrestle with the death and resurrection of the incarnate Jesus Christ in dialogue, and experience them as powerful and useful tools for connecting with Shona views of death and the dead. A new culture and a new people who can proudly identify themselves as 'Shona Christians' could be brought to life.

As we have already noted, no model or method of theologizing is watertight. Contexts constantly change, as does human understanding of God, so our model, as an approximation, can be faulted. The first weakness it could be accused of is that, because it desires to be authentic to the local context while at the same time advocating the universality of the gospel, it is in danger of 'selling out.'[124] In simple terms, the danger is that the model seeks to make Shona views of death and the dead acceptable by spelling them out in universally acceptable language. In that case, the Shona views are compromised for the sake of universality. One might respond that, while the model may be

---

[123] A. M.Moyo, The Risk of Incarnation, pp.48-9.

[124] S.Bevans, Models of Contextual Theology, p.88.

capable of being universalised, the application must be specific, hence the desire to help Shona Christians.

Secondly, the model might be labelled weak. There are two reasons why this could be so: (a) in accommodating other models and approaches to integrating gospel and culture, it destroys their strength. For example, in seeking to make the gospel part of a culture it might overemphasize one at the expense of the other. In short, it is capable of being biased; so it could be seen as inexact or feeble.[125] (b) What is emphasized as needing to be part of the interactive dialogue might not necessarily be the most important thing in both camps, that is, in Church and in Shona traditions. As is the case with the Diocese of Harare, its approaches and patterns of ministry seem to emphasize the need to entrench the missionary approaches, while the Shona people emphasize the need for a cultural expression of their Christian faith, especially with reference to death and the dead.[126] Adopting our model in such a situation could send the wrong message. Incarnating Shona views within the gospel might lead to a suspicion that Shona culture is dictating the terms, and so negating the gospel. Though this could be interpreted as a weakness, it is in fact an acknowledgement of the fact that each context sets its own agenda according to its

---

[125] Ibid. p.88.

[126] See the Commission's preliminary report, p.429, below.

theological need. What concerns Shona people now, might not be what concerns English people.[127]

The third criticism levelled against this model is that it is based on a top-to-bottom approach. The accusation is that, at the incarnation, Jesus came from God and imposed himself on the Jewish people, [128] so how can that be a viable model for doing theology? Looked at from another angle, it is seen as a replication of the missionary approach, where they came as those who had all the knowledge.[129] But in his interactions with his community, Jesus did not impose himself at all. He engaged in dialogue and asked searching questions. In like manner, if Shona Christians who are aware of Shona culture take up the task of synthesizing, the accusation that the approach is a repetition of missionary approaches falls away.

Finally, the model can be accused of overemphasising interactive dialogue at the expense of sound theology and doctrine. Taking note of these supposed weaknesses is very important because it helps us to avoid pitfalls. The purpose of the interactive dialogical model is to provide space for the gospel and culture to dialogue and synthesize within a

---

[127] There is no doubt in the writer's mind that Christianity has a lot to offer, but it is the way in which the valuable Christian contributions are presently being offered which are cause for concern.

[128] The Biblical passages we were quoting as supporting our model could be seen as evidence enough for the conclusion to be made that God forced himself on the Jewish people.

[129] See Chapter two on 'Missionary Approaches,' p. 78.

given context. If it is done by those who know and understand the Shona culture from within, it will bear fruit. It is in that light that Bevans' remarks make sense:

> The essence of the gospel will only become clear when all cultures hear it from messengers who have understood it from their own cultural point of view and are convinced that it is of value to the world.[130]

My conviction that the Christian faith and gospel are of value to the Shona people inspires this study. This model is an attempt from within to share with Shona Anglicans this belief. So, in spite of its weaknesses, the interactive dialogical model, when applied cautiously and sensitively, is a powerful and creative model for theologizing, and could be particularly so with reference to death and the dead. Through it, the Christian faith could find new vitality and deep rooted expression among the Shona people,[131] especially if shared in familiar idioms and expressions, that is, comprehensibly. The theological model we propose to adopt could have far-reaching implications for pastoral care in the Anglican Diocese of Harare. Let us first examine the implications of engaging the interactive dialogical model.

---

[130] S.Bevans, Models of Contextual theology, p.58.

[131] Ibid. p. 88.

CHAPTER SIX

IMPLICATIONS OF ENGAGING THE INTERACTIVE DIALOGICAL MODEL

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter I offered a theological model which I hope can promote the process of synthesizing Christian and Shona views of death and the dead in the Anglican Diocese of Harare. This model was suggested after having established the importance of methodological and contextual considerations for the construction of a sound and relevant theology. Along with this, the role and significance of culture and the need for a contextual reading or interpretation of the Bible were demonstrated. In this chapter I seek to highlight more fully the implications of engaging this theological model for doing theology and how it can impact on the mission and pastoral ministry of the Diocese of Harare with reference to death and the dead.

I am aware that for the interactive dialogical model to enhance the synthesis and construction of a contextually sensitive theology of death and the dead, it should take its sources seriously. These sources both Christian (missionary and folk) and Shona (traditional cultural and the sub-cultural) provide the substance of the dialogue, which should be drawn from significant strands of the local context namely, (i) Shona Traditional Religion, (ii) imported "official" Anglican practice and theology, and (iii) the unofficial synthesis of these reflected in "folk" Anglicanism. This is particularly important

if we are to construct a relevant contextual theology of death and the dead out of which might come meaningful liturgy, ministry and pastoral care.

All the relevant strands need to interact in an open but critical dialogue. Since our aim is to come up with a sensitive Christian theology of death and the dead, the outcome of the interaction and the dialogue I propose should be testable for coherence with the confession of faith in Jesus Christ, the Bible and Christian tradition. This implies that there should be theological insights which guide, but not dictate how the process develops. Such theological insights need to balance the theological and missiological perception that all cultures are God-given and are therefore possible vehicles of godly qualities; and the reality that though all cultures are God-given, they also need redemption from those tendencies and practices which seem to contradict godly qualities. This means that Christianity [missionary and folk], and Shona views [traditional cultural and sub-cultural] engage in this dialogue as significant theological formative factors, which help the Shona Christian to understand the world, life and matters spiritual.

The model I propose assumes that all these contextual sources deserve a hearing, but also all, including current official Anglican practice are in need of critique. Instead of condemning any one of them off hand, I see open interaction and dialogue within Christian parameters as the way forward.

6.2 THE ZIMBABWEAN SOCIAL SETTING

As noted in Chapter four, Zimbabwe has two distinct social set-ups, namely, the urban and the rural. These social settings not only represent places of residence, but mind sets, which influence contextual and conceptual dispositions to religion and society.[1] However, these settings are not exclusive of each other since most Zimbabweans live in both. The urban setting is referred to as *kuchirungu*, the white people's place,[2] though it is no longer strictly so. It is still identified with western urban patterns, laws, and lifestyles of the settlers. In the urban setting large groups are not traditional, therefore the city is a "foreign" construct culturally, and so is believed not to be the habitat of the ancestral spirits. For this reason, however westernised and urbanised the individual is, the urban is not home (*musha*) but house or dwelling (*imba*).[3] Ambrose Moyo helps us to understand these settings as he describes what home, (*musha)*, is. He says:

> the real home is out in the communal lands where one's people live. It is there that one is entitled to a piece of land to build one's home, and indeed many of those living and working in towns do so. It is there that they expect to be buried when they die - and this may be done even against their own will or that of their spouse. It is there that they are expected to spend their holidays or celebrate the most important festivals of the year. Home is ... where your people live, and these include both the living and the dead. Since the African community is made up of the living and the living dead, the land belongs equally to both, and the living dead are in fact believed to be its guardians. Hence people continue to interact with them and to share everything they have with them.[4]

---

[1] This is clearly demonstrated in Chapter three where I look at Shona responses to Christianity.

[2] See Chapter three for an understanding of *murungu*, from which the word *kuchirungu* derives.

[3] See Chapter four, p.163 and p.232 footnote number 41. This is because the house is considered a residence only for the purposes of employment in the town or city in question.

[4] A.Moyo, The Risk of Incarnation, p.17.

Traditionally the expectation that an individual should be buried at home (rural area) overrides even the spouse's wishes. This indicates the prevailing influence of community over the individual, and the pastoral need to be part of one's own people which upholds a sense of continuity and belonging. On the other hand an urban sub-culture is developing which is affecting some of the traditional beliefs. Open dialogue is useful here too, it helps in the exploration of tension between community and the individual, and that between traditional Shona culture and its sub-cultures.

However, for the model to be effective it should have theology as the engine which drives the mutual interaction and dialogue of a broad spectrum of perspectives such as the anthropological, sociological and theological.[5] Let us examine the theological insights which need to inform this process of synthesising.

6.3 THEOLOGICAL INSIGHTS

The theological insights which need to inform a synthesized contextual Shona Christian view of death and the dead should first and foremost acknowledge God as Creator and Redeemer. These two attributes of God are also the basis of two significant Christian doctrines, namely, the doctrine of creation and the doctrine of redemption. These

---

[5] See introduction, p.9.

doctrines, in turn, describe two theological approaches, namely, the creation-centred and the redemption-centred.[6] These approaches represent a theological tension.

The creation-centred approach to theology is characterized by the conviction that culture and human experience are generally good. I suppose this is in keeping with the doctrine of creation, and the words recorded in Genesis, where God is said to have created all things and saw that they were good (Gen.1:9ff). If humanity in their full variety were created by this God, it follows that their cultures are also God-given and therefore good. They can be useful vehicles of relating with the Creator-God, and thus capable of being perfected.

This theological approach sees the world as sacramental, that is, the place where God reveals Godself. For this reason culture, life experiences, even the tensions of the present, can thus be seen as sources of theology.[7] It is in the world of daily life where God reveals Godself in diverse ways.[8] Revelation is thus seen as part of this mundane engagement with reality; God is part of these real life activities and experiences. So the creation-centred approach to theology sees a very close relationship between humanity and the divine. It is perhaps because of this that it is also seen as incarnational.

---

[6] See Chapter five, p.242.
[7] See Chapter five, p.242.
[8] Ibid., p.242.

The climax of the incarnational nature of the creation-centred approach is better understood in the light of Jesus' incarnation, God taking humanity. It is a full expression of God's love and appreciation for humanity. This brings us to yet another quality of the approach; it is anthropological because "it centres on the value and goodness of *anthropos* , the human person ... and makes use of the insights of the social science of anthropology."[9]

Having said all this about the creation-centred approach to theology, it should not be construed as a statement on the sinlessness of the world and humanity. Part of the reason why the incarnation took place was that humanity and the world should be redeemed from the effects of sin inherited at the fall. So to complete the picture of the incarnation it is necessary that this aspect should also be highlighted. The words from the famous verse, John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life," adequately spell out the significance of redemption. It is clear that the redemption-centred approach to theology is also incarnational and anthropological, but puts more emphasis on the Fall. Let us now examine the redemption-centred approach to theology.

In contrast to the creation-centred approach, the redemption-centred approach is characterised by the conviction that culture and human experience are either in need

---

[9] S.Bevans, op.cit. pp.47-8.

of a radical transformation or in need of total replacement.[10] This approach basically denies the world and humanity an automatic right to godliness, since they are corrupt. They are not seen as vehicles of God's grace but as hindrances. For that reason, Christ must be brought into the culture for that culture to have any relevance for salvation.

This approach to theology takes seriously the fall of humanity (Gen.3). The argument would be that, if culture is inherently good, how then did it not help humanity to avoid the fall? Having fallen, it was not culture that redeemed humanity, but Jesus Christ, the incarnate God. Therefore without Jesus, there is no way in which culture can save.

The tension that characterises these two approaches to theology is better summed up in these words, "the Gospel is from "above", culture from "below"; the gospel is "divine", culture "human"; the gospel is "light", culture "darkness"; the gospel is "eternal", culture "time-bound"; and so on."[11] The words encapsulate aptly the reason why this tension should characterise theology.

I submit that this is a necessary and constructive tension because it allows the two approaches to illuminate, and in fact challenge each other's excesses for a theologically balanced approach to theology in general, and to contextual formative factors in particular. The tension helps the creation-centred approach not to romanticise the world

---

[10] See Chapter five, p. 242.
[11] E.M. Ezeogu, "Bible and Culture in African Christianity," op.cit. p.28; see also Chapter five p.245.

and culture, while it also challenges the outright condemnation of culture in the redemption-centred approach.

The interactive dialogical model of doing theology is sensitive to both these approaches to theology in that it acknowledges the fact that a balanced approach to theology needs to recognise the importance of the contextual realities. In our case, these are Christianity (missionary and folk) and Shona culture (traditional and sub-cultural). It allows them to articulate themselves without prejudice. On one hand this is a salutary counterbalance to the rigid condemnation of missionary Anglicanism, and a necessary check on the extreme accommodative position of folk Anglicanism. On the other, it is a powerful liberative exercise from the demeaning and oppressive demands of Shona culture and its sub-cultures. It also highlights the existence of sub-cultures within the Shona culture, and allows them expression and consideration, thereby highlighting the fact that culture is fluid, not fixed; and always in need of redemption, because no culture is without sin, including the Christian culture.[12] This means that the interaction and dialogue is multi-directional and more involved, and thus capable of producing a sensitive theological synthesis of views of death and the dead.

Given that there is a need for liberation from foreign theological ideas represented by missionary Anglicanism which saw Shona culture as sinful, to be eradicated and, unfortunately, be replaced by western dress presented as Christianity, there are also

---

[12] See Chapter five, p.242 and S.Bevans, op.cit. p.16.

indigenous issues which call for liberation. These include those cultural approaches which do not recognise women as fully human and capable of a meaningful relationship with God in their own right. In the sphere of death and the dead their grief is also trivialised. Engaging the interactive dialogical model gives room for all these short-comings to be part of the dialogue which feeds into the theological synthesis.

In adopting the interactive dialogical model, the incarnation of Jesus Christ and what it stands for in the Christian tradition is taken seriously. That is, its affirmation of culture and its critical discernment or transformation of culture are fully appreciated. We pointed out that the interactive dialogical model is patterned on this doctrine,[13] this is because it upholds the significance of humanity in God's plan. Humanity are the only creatures who can rationalise on the incarnation and its implications. This is not problematic for the Shona people because in their re-incarnational beliefs, there is an understanding that an honoured deceased person can re-enter life through one of his or her progeny and influence it. This is a contextual reality which is taken on board, tried and tested in dialogue with several others for theological balance.

If Jesus had been born Shona he would have spoken, dressed, behaved, in fact been as much a Shona as he was a Jew. However, he would have maintained a critical distance from the culture, and called people to repentance and transformation. So, he would have been rooted in Shona society, but judging it as he did the Judaism of his

---

[13] See Chapter five, p.258.

time. This is what makes contextualisation a theological imperative.[14] Our chosen model opens new ground on the Zimbabwean Anglican theological scene because it proposes that the many approaches be recognized and, should openly interact in dialogue.

The centrality of Jesus Christ's death and resurrection play a significant role in the construction of a Shona Christian view. These are the basis of the Christian hope, that life continues after physical death. This hope is founded on two facts, (a) that Christ rose from the dead, and (b) that people continue to experience the power of His risen life in the on-going life of the Church. Christ, being the word of God "through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made," (Jn 1:3) identifies with the Creator-Redeemer God, and carries that work forward. He does so by breaking the connection between death and sin, he Himself having tasted its pangs. That makes Him the first-born of the dead (Rev.1:5, 8).

Jesus illustrates that death is not annihilation, and therefore not to be feared because He took its sting away; **sin** (1 Cor.15:56). This is nicely summed up in the last two sentences of the Nicene Creed, they read, "we acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come."[15] So, those who are associated with Jesus Christ through faith have His assurance that nothing shall separate them from the love of God that is found in Him,

---

[14] S.Bevans, op.cit., p.10.

[15] Cited from, An Anglican Prayer Book 1989, Church of the Province of Southern Africa.

Jesus the Lord (Rom 8:39). They have become new creatures in Christ (2Cor 5:17). Once again the dynamics of creation-centred and redemption-centred approaches to theology can be repeated; since both are traceable in the death and resurrection of Christ. Understanding the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ must be central to developing a theology of death for the Shona people, just as it is for Christianity.

6.4 APPLICATION OF THE MODEL

We should recognise that our model facilitates the on-going encounter between gospel and culture, holding in balance culture and the need for liberation to freely express oneself.[16] In short there should be no dichotomy between cultural and liberation theology. The Shona Christian is culturally and theologically handicapped by the present approach, so he or she needs liberation.[17] Dual observance as an expression of the Christian faith by the Shona people negates the presence of the Church. Through dialogue patterned on the traditional Shona style (*the consensus model*) the undesirability of dual observance can be highlighted, with a view to addressing it.

---

[16] One would have to read the works of exponents of cultural theology alongside those of the exponents of political theology. This is important because it provides a complete picture of what African Theology is all about. So, to John Parratt's list of Sawyerr, Pobee, Dickson, Ambrose Moyo and Gwinyai Muzorewa we comfortably add the names of Desmond Tutu, Allan Boesak, Gabriel Setiloane, Itumeleng Mosala and Manas Buthelezi. J.Parratt, (ed) A Reader in African Christian Theology, pp.142-3

[17] J.Parratt, (ed) A Reader in African Christian Theology, p.142. This is because the guiding theology is not contextual, it is still foreign, that is, western. Parratt sheds more light on this by noting that, 'western theology ... is inadequate for the task, for it deals with quite different issues than those which are important in Africa, and arises from a quite different context. European theologians further lack the personal experience of 'African-ness' which is a basic tool for the task.'

The use of culturally acceptable patterns of dialogue enables the Shona people to engage with the mission of the Church, without suspicion. This could clear the way for the full expression of the gospel in Shona views of death and the dead. The liberty to express oneself culturally becomes a significant factor which informs the reading of the Bible and the subsequent dialogue between gospel and culture.[18]

The second function of our model is to conscientize[19] the Shona people to the need to rediscover their sense of religiosity. African Theology rescues them and enables them consciously and freely to participate in this search for liberation, at the same time allowing them to experience the goodness of the gospel for themselves. Through this approach the Christian faith is rooted into the culture by engaging language and idioms and categories of thought and action, which speak clearly to the Shona Christian.[20] It therefore empowers them to engage with the fundamental theological insights in relation to death and the dead with seriousness. Further it challenges them to manifest the essence of being a Christian.

---

[18] I return to this question when I deal with 'Gospel and Culture in relation to Shona traditions,' below.

[19] P.Freire, Cultural Action for Freedom, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Penguin Books, 1972, p.7. Freire states that "education is either for domestication or for freedom." I employ conscientization as expressing the process of education for freedom. See also 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed.'

[20] J.Pobee, 'The Skenosis of Christian Worship in Africa,' in Studia Liturgica, 14, pp.37-52. Pobee describes the process of Christianity taking root as *skenosis*. He says, 'we have coined this word on the basis of '*skenos*', a tent, a dwelling. We use it to cover the attempt to make religion have a true dwelling in a society ... . *Skenosis* is our preference because it highlights the visible manifestation of something else and also underlies the temporariness of it.' p.51.

The third function of our model is to point out that culture is an essential vehicle for the transportation of the gospel. In fact it demonstrates that the gospel cannot be shared with a culture-less society, hence the need for interaction and dialogue with the Christian faith. Therefore, when it upholds Shona views of death and the dead and engages traditional Shona models of sensitive dialogue, it demonstrates the significance of culture for both understanding and sharing the gospel.

In a sense the model we are advocating provides for an acknowledged cultural expression of the gospel in a contextually relevant and sensitive manner. This expression, as the product of open interaction of traditional Shona views, official Church teaching and "folk" Anglicanism could translate into worship which projects an understanding of the significance of being a Christian. The process of incarnating the gospel never ceases because contexts are always changing. As a result, this function of the model enables Shona Christians to continue working for the rooting of the gospel in their own culture. It continuously challenges them to project what it means to be a Christian. In that sense it becomes a tool through which they engage with the different theological insights. Let us start with a reflection on present patterns of Anglican theology in Zimbabwe.

6.5 PRESENT PATTERNS OF ANGLICAN THEOLOGY

Present patterns of Anglican theology in Zimbabwe are represented by three groups,

namely, (i) missionary or official Anglicanism, (ii) folk Anglicanism and (iii) those sceptical of incorporating aspects of Shona culture, such as the *Wabvuwi*, and the Rev'd L.Muyambi. The first two represent two extremes, while the third group is in between. I do not intend to rehearse the theological positions of these groups, but simply want to evaluate them in the light of the need for a sensitive contextual theological synthesis with reference to death and the dead.

6.5.1 Missionary or Official Anglicanism

The missionary model, which is in reality the official Anglican model of doing theology in the Diocese of Harare, adopts the extreme understanding of the redemption-centred approach to theology. As a result it brooks no compromise with the local Shona cultures. It demands that those who become Christians should become "cultureless" so as to enable the Church to write a "Christian" culture on them. A typical example of this position was demonstrated by the Rt. Rev'd Ralph Peter Hatendi at the 1994 Diocesan Synod at which the proposal by the Commission of Enquiry was dismissed ignominiously. That position has hardly shifted since.[21]

I argue that in its excessive mistrust for Shona religious values it has ignored the creation-centred or incarnational models of doing theology. At the same time it has not actively sought to firmly root the gospel into its context. This is in spite of the fact that

---

[21] See Chapter four, p.207.

it uses local language to express the fundamentals of Christianity. There is no room to test the credibility of the gospel message, and Christianity comes across as the religion which demands the keeping of laws. The problem with this approach in the Zimbabwean context is that the Shona people are cultural people; they cannot but express themselves within a cultural framework. Their culture is full of symbolism. Since the missionary approach is condemnatory of culture, it does not provide for full expression of the faith, so dual observance of ritual increases, thus making the Shona people split life into Christian and Shona traditional. This thinking has traces of western thinking, where life is split into sacred and secular; this is a notion which is not Shona.[22]

6.5.2 Folk Anglicanism

As already outlined in chapter four, folk Anglicanism pretends to be sensitive to the culture and sentiments of the Shona people by taking their cultural practices on board. This indeed gives the Shona people the space to deal with death and the dead in a manner that speaks to them in familiar symbolism. It also helps the community to maintain its values. This is all very well if looked at from the community perspective, but when looked at from the Christian perspective, that is, conformity with the life and teaching of Jesus, the Bible and Christian tradition; folk Anglicanism, its reading and interpretation of scripture and its practice in this regard are faulty.

---

[22] See especially Chapter one, p.16 footnote number 2.

I submit that in its bid to accommodate culture, it has been insufficiently aware of God's judgement on culture. In fact, it can be argued that in folk Anglicanism, culture is the gospel, Shona traditional and in some cases, sub-cultural, practices have been cloaked with Anglican presence without any form of critique. In its accommodative approach, folk Anglicanism has inhibited a proper integration of gospel and culture values by not subjecting its approach to any theological or Christian scrutiny, thus entrenching syncretism and dual observance of rituals.

What the interactive dialogical model seeks to do in this case is to draw attention to the fact that, if the Christian faith is to have an impact on the Shona people, it has to be in touch with them and their way of thinking. The Christian faith has to be the lenses through which they see life. What makes a practice Christian or unchristian, is that practice's ability or failure to reflect a coherence with the confession of faith in Jesus Christ, the Bible and Christian tradition. That classification should not be arbitrary, it should be a classification that comes out of interactive dialogue. A practice which fails to measure up to the Christian expectations, is given room for transformation in a non-prescriptive, and non-condemnatory manner.

My submission is, engaging the interactive dialogical model helps the Shona Christians to deal with the root cause of the fear of offending the spiritual world, ancestors and

guardian spirits,[23] at the same time demanding from them an appropriate Christian response born from dialogue with the Christian faith and insights.

I further contend that engaging the interactive dialogical model, effectively breaks the wall of suspicion which exists between Christian and Shona views of death and the dead, squarely challenging the dual observance and providing for interaction and effectively preparing the ground for a sound synthesis which leads to a contextual theology of death and the dead.

So by engaging the interactive dialogical model I seek to demonstrate that blind condemnation does not help the Church and its mission. Instead it continues to promote the duality and confirms the suspicion which have characterized the relationship of Christianity (official and folk Anglicanism) and Shona tradition (traditional cultural and sub-cultural) in the Diocese of Harare. It also enables theological insights squarely to address these problems. Most importantly, it acknowledges that folk Anglicanism and Shona tradition have some valid theological insights which should be brought into dialogue with those of official Anglicanism.

In a denomination which believes in the communion of saints and the resurrection of the dead, the condemnatory approach of missionary Christianity is outdated. Such an approach is further undermined by the fact that the Anglican Diocese of Harare is now

---

[23] The fine details are extensively presented in Chapters one and four.

under indigenous Shona Christian leadership. This situation demands that theological thinking should wrestle with the contextual realities and, the theological application should be meaningful to the Shona people, in order to make them seek to demonstrate the effects of the Christian faith on their day to day lives, even in the face of death. Stated differently, being Shona, Christian and indigenous, the leadership should be in a position to seriously enable Shona Christians to engage with the rudiments of their faith in a manner which affirms their identity as Shona people.

Engaging the interactive dialogical model of doing theology, with a view to a synthesis of Christian and Shona views of death and the dead empowers and recognises folk Anglicanism as a valid source of theology. It is given space to "officially" express itself; its beliefs, practices and weaknesses. Belief in "the communion of saints and the resurrection of the dead," is openly authorised to contextually engage with the Shona belief in "community-in-relationship with the ancestors,"[24] and to critique it. This provides the Church with the opportunity to challenge dual observance of rituals, while taking seriously the people's everyday lives, faith and personal response to Christ.

6.5.3 The Sceptics

---

[24] See Chapter one under 'Views on the Dead' p.55 for an understanding of how the dead are assimilated into the community; and how, as ancestors they relate to the living and the significance of that relationship.

An attempt at upholding the Church's official position is probably the force that propels the dedication of the men's guild called the *Wabvuwi* and people like the Rev'd Lazarus Muyambi. Their basic concern is the same as that of the Church, that is, a Christian's life should be different from that of a non-Christian person. The *Wabvuwi* approach this axiomatic perception from within the Shona culture, thus helping us to be sensitive to their enthusiasm for the Church's official position. They understand the importance of Shona culture and the significance of most of the cultural practices relating to death and the dead. Things come to a head when these cultural practices have to be balanced with the requirements of Christianity for the Shona person. It is perhaps for this reason that they have a list of prohibitions for themselves.[25] Their constitution concludes the part on prohibitions by saying, "a *Wabvuwi* member must be seen by his work, in his family, to all other people and before God,"[26] to emphasize the relevance of being a Christian. They desire that all Christians should take this principle on board with seriousness.

For example, the Rev'd Lazarus Muyambi's objection to ancestral involvement should be seen as an objection to dual observance.[27] It also challenges the Shona Christian to reflect on the significance of his or her faith in the face of death. In other words, he is demanding that the beliefs that make life meaningful for the Shona Christians should be clearly expressed. Though Muyambi seems to see the ancestors as demonic, he

---

[25] In the list of prohibitions, there is no beer drinking, smoking, adultery, betting, consulting traditional healers and spirit mediums and ancestor worship for a member of the *Wabvuwi* guild.

[26] See Wabvuwi Constitution, p.422.

[27] Muyambi speaks against the practice discussed in Chapter four where we have two strands of Anglican Christianity, namely, official and folk.

rightly believes that Christians should not fear them because there is no way in which they can be more powerful than the life-giver, God. He holds that at death and at the funeral service the dead should be commended to God and not to the ancestors. When he says the "dead do not come back to the living,"[28] he is condemning the Shona cultural practice of over emphasizing the presence of the dead in the family. It is perhaps fair to say that though Muyambi seems not clearly to express his position, his concern is that the Shona Christian should reflect something of the Christianity he or she confesses.

While this is a plausible concern, it overlooks the fact that Christian theology is and has always been shaped in and by different cultures down the ages.[29] This is true of the theology which the missionaries brought to Zimbabwe. In this approach missionary theology is fossilised and made normative for all time, and thus not subjected to any critique. It is presented as a set of divine truths that needs to be accepted for salvation. The weakness in this approach is that Church officialdom, the *Wabvuwi* and people like Rev'd Muyambi come across as the only ones who represent orthodoxy, and everyone else is in the wrong. This is misleading, because theology is evolving. The interactive dialogical model flags the fact that, if official Christianity is to make sense to the Shona people, it should recognize them and not simply condemn their culture from a detached position.

---

[28] See interview with the Rev'd L. Muyambi, p.417.

[29] This is aptly summed up by F.George when he says, "... even a cursory glance at the history of theology reveals that there has never been a genuine theology that was articulated in an ivory tower with no reference to or dependence on the events, the thought forms, or the culture of its particular place and time." Cited in S.B.Bevans, op.cit., p.4.

The views of the *Wabvuwi* and the Rev'd Lazarus Muyambi, the sceptics are neither 'missionary' nor 'folk' in that they seek to balance in a peculiar way the incarnational (creation-centred) approach and the redemption-centred, but make the Christian faith depend on the ability of the individual Christian to keep laws. This is clearly illustrated in the *Wabvuwi* Constitution with its list of prohibitions for those who have opted to be Christians. They seem not to adequately demonstrate that the Holy Spirit is at work and can change circumstances.

On the other hand they differ from the interactive dialogical model because they adopt a condemnatory and prescriptive approach to Christianity. They do not seem to allow for a constructive reflection on the contextual and formative factors of theology, neither do they seem to recognize them, let alone appreciate their significance. In this regard they lack the contextual sensitivity which characterizes sound theology.

To influence Shona views the Church's official Christianity has to be in dialogue with both folk Anglicanism and Shona culture(s). If, as Bevans advises, "theology is the way religion makes sense within a particular culture,"[30] Christianity and Shona views should be in touch. The process of interaction and dialogue should be enhanced. In our case we could be asking, how can official Christianity make sense to the Shona people if it does not have contact with them and their views of death and the dead? The answer is, it cannot, because it confronts and condemns them off hand, hence it remains "other" creating room for dual observance of rituals to prevail. In short, it does not demonstrate an appreciation and understanding of culture as a contextual source of theology. A weakness adequately addressed by engaging the proposed model.

---

[30] S.Bevans, op.cit., p.7.

6.6 ANALYSIS OF THE CHURCH'S OFFICIAL APPROACH

To appreciate the official approach we need to remind ourselves that the church has an identity of its own. One does not become a member of the church by birth, as is the case with community. To be a member of the Church one has to be baptised and be dedicated to Christ, this also includes infants, who have the vows and commitments made on their behalf. Such action signifies that one is taking on a new identity. In his or her life, one would have felt the need for a conscious commitment to God. Henceforth the person so baptised is expected to lead a life that reflects obedience to God. The apostle Paul captures this beautifully when he says, "therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he *or she*[31] is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" (2 Cor 5:17). In practical terms, this means that Christian life should be different from the life that one lived before being a Christian. The emphasis shifts, in spite of being in the community, a Christian should not conduct him or herself according to the demands of society, but of Christ. This is basically what the "official" Church position is demanding.

Contextualization, if adequately implemented should critique cultures but at the same time give each culture the opportunity to examine itself in the light of what it means to be created and redeemed by a loving God. This is not possible if we keep folk Anglicanism at arm's length. It remains unchallenged and unmodified, and thus not subjected to scrutiny, and remains traditional practice cloaked in Anglican dress. This entrenches hypocrisy, double life and dual observance. The gospel is not incarnated and the tradition is not transformed. Since folk Anglicanism is the effort at indigenization arising out of need, it needs theological scrutiny for soundness. So, openly allowing it to enter into dialogue with official Anglicanism and Shona

---

[31] Italics are mine, to make the language inclusive.

tradition(s) is the only way forward, because addressing strengths means weaknesses can also be tackled.

With reference to our subject of study, the Church is simply calling for a compliance with the values of being a Christian. If one has become a new creature in Christ through baptism; that baptism has symbolism. The apostle Paul explains the symbolism of baptism. He says, "or don't you know that all of us who were baptised into Christ were baptised into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life" (Rom 6:3-4). When one seeks to be bound by this symbolism, could there any reason why he or she should be subjected to the demands of the old life? If there is, what is the point in becoming a Christian?

An honest response to these fundamental questions explains why the "official" approach brooks no compromise with the things of the old nature. These were the very things that were denounced at baptism anywhere! This illustrates why the Church burial services primarily make a distinction between baptised and non-baptised persons. A baptised person has to be buried differently from a non-baptised one, because a baptised person, that is, one who consciously committed his or her own life to Christ, belongs to Christ and should be committed to Christ and not the ancestors.

The interactive dialogical model serves as the means by which a theological synthesis of Christian (missionary and folk) and Shona (traditional cultural and sub-cultural) views of death and the dead can be achieved. As we have already noted, it does so by providing the space and a conducive atmosphere for the different view points to be considered and thereby, to contribute

to the construction of an appropriate contextual theology. It is important to make an analysis of the Church's official position, if our contextualization is to avoid the weakness of the approach we critique, which is, condemning out of hand.

Engaging the proposed model means acknowledging and scrutinizing the variant view points, and being open to criticism. This assumes that our theological synthesis seeks to grow from dialogue with official and folk Anglicanism and Shona traditional views.

The task at hand for theology and missiology is that of subjecting missionary theology to the same critique as traditional religion. Hopefully, this will help the Anglican Diocese of Harare to achieve the theological synthesis of Christian and Shona views of death and the dead which can be expressed in its liturgy, worship and pastoral care in a non-dualistic manner.

6.7 TOWARDS AN OFFICIAL CONTEXTUAL PRACTICE

There are a number of ways in which the official position of the Church can be positively carried forward to uphold a contextual practice of Christianity which, firstly, addresses the dual observance of ritual and secondly, upholds Christian life. The major theological consideration for the Diocese of Harare in its teaching and practice is how this can be done, given the fact that "folk" Anglicanism and Shona traditional practices relating to death and the dead seem to be irreconcilable with official Christianity.

By engaging the interactive dialogical model, the Anglican Diocese of Harare is able to challenge both folk Anglicanism and Shona traditional practices, and critically examine its own

approach from an informed position. The end result is that, it will be able to demonstrate its contextual practice through its liturgical practice and pastoral care, which will speak to the people in their situation and also challenge them to reflect the Christian character.

If the adage, *lex orandi, lex credendi* (the way we pray points to the way we believe, and vice versa),[32] be our guide, official liturgical practice needs to speak to the context in sensitive Christian terms. This is also true of liturgy relating to death and the dead, it should express contextual theology, represent and honour people's strong feelings. This requires that liturgies should not be a set of formularies for worship which speak only to Church officialdom. Rather, they should facilitate public worship by freeing participants to take part in the event of worship and participate in the action. In relation to Shona Christians (with reference to death and the dead) liturgies should allow the Shona Christian to express his or her beliefs in prayers or vice versa. This should also be the case with rituals, they are a practical way of doing theology which reveals beliefs.

It is important that liturgy should acknowledge and accommodate the reality of grief. So there should be pastoral sensitivity, creating room for the expression of grief before God, and an atmosphere that makes one feel that such an expression is acceptable. Grief is part of creation and is therefore a natural and desirable response to death, and hope, as an element of the redemption, places grief in the right overall context. This is not only liturgical but also pastoral and missiological. Official practice could confront the bereaved person with the reality of Christ, to which he or she should respond in mutual dialogue.

---

[32] Bevans, op.cit., p.18.

The Church is a community of those who believe in Christ, its worship and liturgy are meant to bring together and strengthen the community, especially in the face of death. One way of bringing the community together is by acknowledging each person. In Shona setting, at death the communal spirit is fostered by the division of labour; as many people as possible are involved in the rituals.[33] This practice is traceable in some of the practices of folk Anglicanism. Official Christianity in its own right needs to integrate this community spirit into its practice, so that it can explicitly challenge the Shona Christians to demonstrate their faith.

In chapter two we saw how the Church through its literature,[34] teaching and liturgical practice prescribed for how people had to feel and behave in the face of death, and how anything different was condemned. We also saw how this helped to polarise official Christianity and Shona traditions resulting in the establishment of "folk" Anglicanism. The interactive dialogical model challenges the condemnatory approach, allowing for interaction of the various viewpoints. This is conducive to the construction of a relevant, contextual, liturgical practice. It is important to remember that the right way to worship is determined by the context, which implies that a liturgy relating to death and the dead should take cognisance of its context, in our case, the Shona context. The emotions that go with this part of life make the prescriptive approach untenable, yet incorporating the practices of folk Anglicanism and traditional Shona practices provides a more challenging atmosphere for the expression of Christian belief and practice.

Concern for a clear demonstration of the value of being a Christian, expressed by the Church in language that is intelligible to the Shona people should help to shape the Anglican Diocese's

---

[33] See Chapter four under "Present Practices", p.158ff

[34] See Chapter two, p.102.

pastoral guidelines. Though challenging, such guidelines must show sensitivity to the local culture, otherwise they will not achieve the desired theological synthesis of Christian and Shona traditional values. If the synthesis is contextually sensitive and relevant it should reflect a Christian character, and not provide for duality. In other words, the guidelines should be such that they challenge the Shona Christian to express and live out his or her faith in a genuinely Shona cultural form and style.

6.8 GOSPEL AND CULTURE IN RELATION TO SHONA TRADITIONS

I addition to the social settings we explored earlier in this chapter Zimbabwe is also a patriarchal community with traditions and values which are male dominated. It is in relation to views of death and the dead and their respective rituals and ceremonies that this domination is particularly evident. This is also traceable in the Shona sub-cultures in the different settings.

The urban setting reflects western values and approaches to life while the rural is basically traditional with traces of western values. Part of the reason is that people who lived or live in urban areas were primarily there because they were working. When they retired from work the expectation was that they will come home to the rural areas. That trend is changing for a variety of reasons; the most important ones being (a) the political situation - urban areas are safer than the rural areas, and (b) the economic situation - facilities are better and people have since bought properties in the urban areas, thus making their "homes" there. In spite of all this, the rural setting is still considered the more appropriate of the two, and still remains the place where most Shona people are buried or desire to be buried.

It is important to note that Shona tradition is changing in that the urban, though traditionally considered a foreign cultural construct, is fast becoming part of the Shona set up. The growth of an urban Shona sub-culture which has traces of the traditional culture means that the interactive dialogical model has to be aware of and accommodate it. This has further implications in that the dialogue I propose is no longer between Christian and straight forward Shona views; but becomes more complex in that it also has to be aware of the changing contextual ways of being Shona.

Traditionally, the desire to bury one's relative in the rural areas is so strong that verbal or written "Last Wills" are sometimes ignored resulting in great conflict among family members. Perhaps this is because of the nature of the Zimbabwean community which expects the last word on where the deceased is to be buried to rest with the male relatives; who usually prefer the rural areas. It is only when they cannot afford the transportation of the deceased to the rural areas that they would settle for an alternate burial place. The growth of an urban sub-culture which basically revolves around the nuclear family is eroding this traditional base.[35] There are, however, a number of ways of looking at the desire to bury one's deceased in the rural areas; in some quarters this is seen as a gospel and culture issue.

Those who see it as a gospel and culture issue interpret the desire to want to bury one"s relative in the rural areas as an indication that culture is in conflict with Christianity. This conclusion is reached by arguing that, since Shona tradition holds that one must be buried among his kith and

---

[35] The famous Silvano Otieno case from Kenya adequately illuminates this observation, especially highlighting the conflict that arose between the male relatives of the deceased Silvano and his urban, educated wife. Though the emphasis is more political than theological, the salient features of the urban sub-culture versus traditional rural culture are very evidently clear. See D.Cohen & E.S. Atieno Odhiambo, Burying S: The Politics of Knowledge and the Sociology of Power in Africa, London: James Currey, 1992.

keen, anyone who is buried in the rural areas cannot be a Christian. In short, the perception here is city equals Christian; and rural equals unchristian.

My submission is that this is a contextual hermeneutical matter. By this I seek to emphasize the fact that it is a matter of interpretation. At times the interpretation seems to reflect the subtle arrogance of western Christianity which confuses Christianity and culture to the extent that, "the way we think and do things is the right way, anything done differently is unchristian." Stated differently, it would be something like this, "if what is done, conceptualised and said cannot be comprehended by the western mind, it cannot be Christian." This has residues of the colonial mind set which did not make a distinction between gospel and culture, hence western culture was presented as the gospel. Engaging the interactive dialogical model helps to place these hermeneutical issues into perspective.

I argue that, though rural and urban settings are different contexts, they cannot be respectively categorized as unchristian and Christian. Christians are found in both settings and so are non-Christians. What this question of preference of burial place seems to reflect is the significance of contexts and world views; a purely pastoral consideration. The sacredness of land is such that one is believed to be fully laid to rest only among his or her own people. Though there is an interface of the rural and urban contexts, the context that most frees people to express this is preferred. As it happens, the rural setting is the context which provides the Shona people with such freedom and pastoral satisfaction.

This is probably the time to discuss developments relating to women and the way in which they are challenging some of the traditional beliefs in the light of the urban sub-culture. This is a product of new social trends, many of them associated with social change and mobility,

urbanisation, "western" education and globalization. They bring new tensions and questions which should be part of the contextual debate. The fact that women's voices traditionally counted for next to nothing when it came to the final word on where one is to be buried is being strongly questioned by women themselves. Their world views and contextual insights shaped and influenced by the urban sub-culture, with reference to the importance of recognizing the closeness of spouses, are clearly articulated. In the process they invite society to value the sanctity of marriage and respect family units, by drawing attention to the fact that husband and wife share their life together. The fact that the other is dead should not take away the relationship and closeness of the two.[36] They are clearly challenging the traditional society to acknowledge that they also grieve for the deceased in the same way as do their male counterparts, and also want to maintain the closeness that characterised their relationship by having the spouse buried in the vicinity of the urban 'home'.

I contend that by engaging the interactive dialogical model of doing theology, these cultural realities are given full expression and leads to the inclusion of women into Shona Christian thought and practice. Articulating them in mutual dialogue allows them to be recognized as contextual formative factors of a sound but evolving theology of death and the dead, which upholds the equality of humanity before God. Men and women, genuinely searching for deeper expression of their love for God, and each other, as Christians will also find this exercise both liberating and refreshing.

The women, mostly urban, are challenging male dominance and demanding a rereading of the Bible which recognizes the liberative power of Christ. Their basic contention is, if anyone who

---

[36] See p.297, above for the need for dialogue between the individual and the community.

is baptised into Christ's fellowship is a new creature; why should Shona Christian women continue to be regarded as the old creature, that is, be regarded as inferior to men? The inferiority that they inherit from traditional culture for that matter. These women are not seeking to be equal to men in a vindictive manner, but they are calling for space to be themselves before God and in the community, just as their male counterparts are. They seek to demonstrate that Christ liberates those who put their faith in him, both male and female, making them fully human and equal before God, even in the face of death and bereavement. They want to be recognised for who they are, and their views need to be taken seriously.

Their search for space to articulate themselves and uphold their dignity is better provided by engaging the interactive dialogical model of doing theology. It allows for a systematic and mutual interpretation of scripture, Christian tradition and reason, and how they feed into their contextual reality. This means that traditions become something that can be spoken about rather than be taken as given mandates which have to be obeyed without question. Even some of the traditions of the Zimbabwean community which seem not to have been questioned, could be part of this theological dialogue, because the interactive dialogical model provides space for these varying views to be in meaningful dialogue with each other.

I further contend that, the implications of engaging the interactive dialogical model are that Shona Christian men and women are empowered to explore together the liberating power of knowing and believing the gospel. Traditions of death and the dead cease to be dominated by (a) cultural exigencies which oppress and demean a section of the community and (b) western views presented as Christianity. Choice of places of burial cease to be a male prerogative, but become the concern of the whole people of God within the Zimbabwean context. This is of significance if we are to construct a sound contextual theology of death and the dead, which

does not provide for dual observance of rituals. Hopefully, the official Church will be persuaded to respond to these issues in a manner which provides for the process to be expressed in official liturgical practice, taking on board the views and concerns of women and the pressures of the emerging urban sub-culture.

To conclude this section on gospel and culture in relation to Shona traditions, it is perhaps useful to offer some thoughts on how I see the official Church responding to the theological issues raised by engaging the interactive dialogical model of doing theology. I will restrict my thoughts here to liturgy and worship for the simple reason that in the next chapter I deal with the pastoral implications. It is my submission that if the Church takes on board the insights of the interactive dialogical model, it follows that its liturgical practice will be affected as it attempts to accommodate the contextual theological realities. What this means in practical terms is that, Shona spirituality [traditional or sub-cultural] will become an integral part of the liturgical resources along with other spiritualities which have helped to shape the Christian liturgical practice so far. This will be in keeping with the spirit of seeking to formulate a truly Shona Christian liturgy born of the theological synthesis outlined above.

This in turn will lead to the need to express in worship the Shona world views and views of death and the dead. Instead of confining Shona Christian creativity to choruses, engaging the interactive dialogical model could lead to the composing of Shona songs and hymns for use in official worship. As stated above, the symbolism of Shona tradition will become a component of such Christian worship. In the end, the animated rhythmic singing of the Shona people will cease to be a spectacle, and become what it really should be, a way of praising God with one's whole heart, soul and strength (Deut.6:5).

6.9 CONCLUSION

Engaging the interactive dialogical model of doing theology in the Anglican Diocese of Harare implies that confrontation and condemnation of traditional or other views of death and the dead should be abandoned. The various Christian and Shona views and practices relating to death and the dead should be seen as valid sources for the construction of a contextual theology. They should be given a hearing rather than be dismissed off hand. Each set of views should be allowed to express itself, interact and enter into dialogue with the rest, and be critically evaluated in the light of the gospel, and this should include "official" Church practice and teaching.

In adopting this process, the interactive dialogical model is seen for what it really is, a tool for the achievement of the desired theological synthesis of Christian and Shona views of death and the dead, which is open and mutual. It does not prejudge the sources, but lets them prove themselves valid by standing the test of satisfying the basic requirements of the Christian faith as contained in the history of God's revelation to His people; the Bible.

I submit that the strength and validity of this model is in the fact that it seeks to formulate a contextual theology using the real contextual factors, and giving them an opportunity to be in dialogue with the Bible, Christian traditions and reason. This provides for a sound synthesis, which is what I am advocating. However, it should be noted that such a synthesis will have serious implications for pastoral care in the diocese in question. In the next chapter we consider these implications.

CHAPTER SEVEN

IMPLICATIONS FOR PASTORAL CARE

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter we outlined the implications of engaging the interactive dialogical model of doing theology and highlighted how it would enhance a contextual theological synthesis of Christian and Shona views of death and the dead, and as an antidote to dual observance. However, adopting this model has implications for pastoral care for the Anglican Diocese of Harare and its ministry among the Shona people, and it also affects how the Anglican laity and the community at large look at themselves and understand the Church. In short, it raises the question of the relevance of the Anglican Church among the Shona people. This question arises because the Anglican Church has been seen to be condemnatory and confrontational in its attitude towards Shona views of death and the dead, and the dual observance we now seek to redress through this proposed model, thrived as a result of that approach. It should also be noted that adopting the interactive dialogical model could make some people in the Anglican Church's hierarchy feel dis-empowered.

Among the laity, there will be some who feel empowered by this method. In other words, they will see in the process a positive approach to their views of death and the dead, which affirms them before God. This could be a demonstration of the fact that the Church has come of age, hence it recognizes that it should be grounded in and speak to its context in familiar idioms and expressions.[1] The whole approach could be seen by some as a compromise with evil, making the Anglican Church an accomplice to perversion.[2] Our theological method, though dialogical, is radical enough to have an effect on the Church's pastoral care and the different groups represented therein.

It is at this point that the community at large comes into the debate. For those who are not members of the Church, such an approach is either a threat, or a victory, or an attraction, depending on the perceiver. Those for whom it will be a threat, Shona Traditional Religion will be seen as under attack. But for those who see it as a victory both Shona Christians and adherents of Shona Traditional Religion will be recognized as socially equal human beings (*vanhu*).[3] The perception of the Anglican Church as the enemy of traditional

---

[1] After all, this is what contextualization or inculturization is all about. However the history that has shaped and has been shaped by the church should not be disregarded, neither should the African past be romanticised, in the name of contextualization. It should be noted that dissenting voices are not only heard among laity but also among the bishops, clergy and office bearers.

[2] A good example of this, is the men's guild known as "Anglican Wabvuwi" (Fishers of man), whose principles are very much against African traditional beliefs. For example, its members are not allowed to smoke or partake of any alcoholic beverages. (See Wabvuwi Constitution p.422). On the other hand this could be a demonstration of how brainwashed the people were by the missionaries when it comes to their culture and worship of God. Unfortunately, the missionary way still remains the 'proper way', for many.

[3] In the Shona language the word *vanhu*, (human beings), is loaded. It also means 'those who uphold traditional beliefs. For that reason some Christians *maKristu* might not be seen as proper *vanhu*. Our

practices and traditional dignity will no longer hold. Instead, the Church will come across as the friend of the people, seeking to understand their traditions through dialogue and interaction. The interactive dialogical model becomes an attraction for the Shona people in that their views of death and the dead will be given recognition.[4] In this way, these views will be acknowledged as an integral part of the process of understanding God from a Shona perspective. Since we are exploring the possibility of a synthesis of Christian and Shona traditional views of death and the dead, with reference to Shona Christians, we shall concentrate on the specifically Shona response.

The interactive dialogical model has a theological impact. It engages the concerned parties in dialogue on the understanding of God. The present approach allows for a dual understanding of God, but the envisaged synthesis seeks to present a single unified picture. In effect, we are reiterating the epistemological fact that though God can be experienced differently, He is the same (a) in the Church and (b) in daily or traditional life. God is one and the same in both Christianity and Shona Traditional Religion, it is only the way in which he is perceived and presented which makes the difference. With reference to death and the dead, our theological model seeks to reflect that God is the ultimate end

---

theological method adequately bridges the gap by providing a forum where discussion of what it means to be 'human Shona Christians' can take place.

[4] See Chapter two above, for a discussion on how the missionaries imposed a way of life on the Shona people in the name of Christianity and civilization, especially p.78 ff.

of all life. If the Church is to demonstrate this reality, it is through its pastoral care.[5] Now we examine how the interactive dialogical model can help the Church to achieve its pastoral task. We begin by addressing the question of its relevance among the Shona people.

7.2 THE RELEVANCE OF THE CHURCH

What makes relevance a pastorally pertinent question for the Anglican Diocese of Harare is that, officially the diocese does not seem to engage fully with Shona people's views on death and the dead. Consequently, it fails to appreciate their predicament. This is clearly illustrated in the three attempts that have been made by the diocese to resolve the pastoral concern raised by dual observance. The attempts were (a) in the 1920s through the *Rwendo RweMuKristu*, (b) in 1978 when the Bishops issued pastoral guidelines to clergy on how they had to deal with the situation,[6] and (c) in 1993 through a Commission of Enquiry.[7]

---

[5] This addresses the dualism and dual observance which characterise the understanding of God among the Shona people. There is a *chivanhu* (traditional) understanding of God which is different from the *chiKristu* (Christian) understanding of God. See also footnote 3 of this Chapter on page 310 above.

[6] See Chapter two p.102, on 'Church literature on burial.'

[7] See Chapter four p. 204 under 'The Dialogue' for a full discussion of the attempts.

In the light of what we have learnt about the Shona people, we know that they are people who are proud of their traditions. When we examined their traditional views of death and the dead we discovered that these are closely woven into their world views. For that reason, Shona people would find it difficult to react to death in any other way. Gelfand cites a proverb which helps to illustrate the significance of tradition among the Shona people. It says, "*murao ndishe* (not any man but traditional custom, is the ruler of the people.)"[8] We saw something of this belief in the manner in which the people are attempting to integrate Christian and Shona observances of death and the dead. On one hand they are observing their traditions and on the other they are seeking to assimilate Christian practices, while the Church officialdom distances itself.

In this setting, there is a sense in which the Church is external to the Shona context. This was clearly reflected when we examined how the Anglican Church came into the then Mashonaland.[9] It came into this part of the world on English terms. Its context was very English; in other words, the Church established itself as an English church. This was understandable because it had English leadership, mostly serving English people.[10] Now the Church has a Shona context, local leadership and the majority of its membership are

---

[8] M. Gelfand, The Genuine Shona: Survival Values of an African Culture, op.cit.p.102.

[9] See Chapter two, p.73.

[10] See Chapter two, chiefly under 'Missionary Approaches', p.78f. The Church had to provide for the settlers.

Shona people, but it still uses the missionary approach.[11] These Shona people still come into the Church on English terms. The words of Desmond Tutu, criticising the missionary approach, still have their cutting edge in today's setting, in the Diocese of Harare, though some time has passed since he said this. He said, "these poor native pagans had to be clothed in western clothes so that they could speak to the white men's God, the only God, who was obviously unable to recognize them unless they were decently clad."[12] Through condemnation and confrontation, the Anglican Church seems to be upholding the approach, condemned by Tutu, which demanded that local people had to change certain aspects of their life before they could be acceptable to God. In such an approach, people are encouraged to adopt a false spirituality with reference to death and the dead, in order to be Church members. The result is that dual observance becomes more entrenched.

Directly following from the above observation, the condemnatory and confrontational attitude which characterises relationships between the Anglican Church and Shona traditional views of death and the dead makes effective pastoral care difficult. Basically the Church portrays itself as incapable of adequately addressing Shona religious and spiritual needs. This could also be an indication that its self-understanding has not changed, hence the continuation of this insensitive approach. Where this becomes a problem is when the

---

[11] See Chapter four, p.204f, 'The Dialogue.'

[12] D.M. Tutu, "Whiter African Theology," in E. Fashole-Luke, Christianity in Independent Africa, op.cit., p.365.

condemnation and confrontation sees the Shona people who hold dear their traditional views as 'repugnant to Christianity, its precepts and teaching.'[13] A case of throwing away the baby with the bath water.

Though the mission station setup has virtually died out, the mission station mentality lives on. It lives on in the funeral liturgies which are in use in the diocese. In a sense the Church continues to see the Shona people as those who need redemption from the grip of the evil one and darkness. This is exactly what the mission station setup was about, taking people away from evil environments (their villages) and bringing them to the beacons of light (the mission station). Though the move is now not physical, the Church still wants to uproot the Shona people from their so-called dark and evil environment,[14] the traditional views, ceremonies and rituals relating to death and the dead, and bring them to the enlightened Christian ones, represented by the Book of Common Prayer.[15]

These observations, which highlight why the Church's relevance is questioned, could be addressed by adopting the interactive dialogical model. This theological model allows for open, honest, interactive dialogue between the Church and its context. In that way, the

---

[13] Diocese of Harare, Synod 1994, resolution on the Commission's report, p.207.

[14] W.H. Hutton, The English church: From the Ascension of Charles 1 to the Death of Anne 1625-1714, London: Macmilan and Co., Ltd, 1903, p. 315. Hutton was highlighting the church's approach to so-called pagans who "had to be uprooted from their dark and evil environment."

[15] See Chapter two, 'Burial practices,' p.98.

question of relevance is fully addressed and the opportunity to grapple with the Church's shortcomings and the different world views is provided. The end result is informed, relevant and sensitive pastoral care.

This model advocates a shift in emphasis. The practice has been that the Church identifies what it thinks is the problem and then provides the answer. As we saw, this has not worked and will not work. It only makes the Church more irrelevant. Instead of creating artificial problems, the interactive dialogical model is challenging the Church to deal with real pastoral issues from an informed position. Interactive dialogue brings the laity's perspective into the equation. So, Church concerns cease to be a matter for bishops and synod alone, but for the whole people of God. Granted, this shift will cause some problems.

Those problems arise because the openness of the dialogical model attempts to provide Christian and Shona views with a mutuality. That mutuality roots the gospel into the Shona context, allowing it to speak freely to, and from within, the Shona culture. The traditions, ceremonies and rituals that have helped Shona people to cope with life changes are not written off, but given a transformed lease of life. What makes this possible is the fact that Shona people will have been given the dignity of identity, that is, allowed to be their true selves. Synthesized rituals and observances around death and the dead will form the basis of Shona Christian rituals of death. So the Christian church and its rituals will cease to be viewed as other. The Church's pastoral appropriateness will be less likely to be

questioned because it will be where the people are, sharing their true concerns and reflecting on the reality of death and the dead sensitively.

7.3 THE BIBLE AND SHONA TRADITIONS OF DEATH AND THE DEAD

There is a need for biblical and Shona world views to be examined if we are to appreciate the contribution of the Bible to pastoral care. Such an undertaking enables their similarities to be upheld and differences to be noted and recognized in the dialogue. Both biblical and Shona world views acknowledge the presence and activity of spirits in the universe, and in people's lives. In the sphere of death and the dead they both acknowledge that death is polluting and dangerous.[16]

The paradoxical nature of death is also acknowledged in the biblical setting; it is referred to as the natural enemy (1Cor. 15:26). It is natural in that it marks the end of every human life, and an enemy, in that, when it strikes normalcy is affected. Hill observes that, when it occurred it "was treated with great solemnity by one's family. It set in train a series of

---

[16] Lods explains how, in the Old Testament, some of these common fears were dealt with. A. Lods, Israel: From its beginning to the middle of the eighth century, London: Kegan Paul, Trech, Trubner & Co., Ltd, 1932, p.224 writes, "the purpose of placing the hand on the head was probably to protect this important part of the body, the abode of the spirit, from the same wandering spirit. By covering their mouths, those present at the time of death sought to prevent the spirit of the dead from drawing out their spirits through the mouth or nose." Shona beliefs about the unpredictability of the spirit of a deceased person were discussed in chapters one and four.

events to be done quickly because of the hot climate."[17] In that sense it was disruptive.[18] In both, the Bible and Shona (African) understanding, death is also seen as fulfilment.[19] Death is not seen as the end, but "death leads into life."[20] Banana aptly puts it, when he says, "Death is not death; it is a vehicle from the ontology of visible beings to the ontology of the invisible beings. Death is part of life, it is a gateway to eternity, it is a gateway to life in the here-after. LIFE - DEATH - LIFE."[21]

People respond to death with a degree of fear. This is witnessed in some of the symbolic rituals. The fear of death, in the biblical setting, was such that one had to take off one's clothes and wear the coarse material called sackcloth. This was to prevent the dangerous emanation from the dead from attaching itself to the clothes which were being worn at the time the death occurred.[22] People could also roll in earth or ashes or put earth or ashes on the head and sit or lie on bare ground. These practices were probably intended to render the mourner unrecognizable by the spirit of the dead.[23] In addition, "the first meal

---

[17] C. Hill, The Real World of the New Testament, Ongar, Essex: C-L Publications, 1976, p.22.

[18] See Chapter one p.29f for Shona views.

[19] See Gen.35:29; 1Chron. 29: 28 and Job 42: 17.

[20] K.A. Dickson, Theology in Africa, p.193.

[21] C.S.Banana, Come and Share, p.79.

[22] Lods, Israel: From its beginnings to the middle of the eighth century, p.224.

[23] W.Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament, Vol. 2, London: SCM Press, 1967, p.215.

eaten by mourners was brought from outside by the neighbours."[24] According to Eichrodt's interpretation of Num.19:15, these practices "derive from the fear that the spirit of the dead may try to hide itself in the house in order to avoid having to enter the grave with the corpse."[25] This would also explain why a strict fast was kept by the bereaved, till evening. There was also the mourning wail and the lament, made on behalf of the dead, for whom it was a terrible disaster to be deprived of it.[26] In this, one sees the communal nature of responding to death. Hill records that this was practised even in New Testament times. He notes that following a death:

> the family and friends entered into a time of intense grieving. This expressed itself in the normal way with much weeping, and the mourners were usually supported by other women engaged to 'wail' alongside the family mourners. Some of these supporting women might even be professional wailers. Often the relatives would tear their clothes and put ashes on their heads.[27]

Following death, the corpse had to be attended to by close relatives. It was acceptable that some of these relatives, out of grief, would embrace the corpse or even kiss it (Gen.50:1), though it was considered unclean. These close relatives had to shape the corpse for burial; this included closing the eyes. This custom is simply explained by the resemblance of death to sleep. After this, the body was washed in preparation for burial.

---

[24] Lods, op.cit. p.225.

[25] W.Eichrodt, op.cit. p.215. This also echoes the Shona perception of the spirit of the dead as unpredictable. See p.40.

[26] Lods, op.cit. p.225.

[27] C.Hill, The Real World of the New Testament, p.23.

At times the body could be displayed (Acts 9:37). For the wealthy, the complete preparation saw it:

> rubbed with olive oil and perfume. Then ointment, herbs and spices were applied and the corpse was bound in linen strips (very much like the 'swaddling clothes' used to wrap a baby). The face was not wrapped around with the winding cloths but left open.[28]

Among the poor, who could not afford the perfume and herbs, the corpse would only be washed and wrapped in a simple shroud. Treatment of the corpse would be deferred if one died on the Sabbath or a holy day. This was in spite of the fact that "rabbis permitted preparation of a body on the Sabbath."[29]

This overview of biblical and Shona traditional views of death and the dead highlights a closeness that has implications for pastoral care. Hopefully this might challenge the Church to consider the interactive dialogical method and give it a chance. Failure to recognise and acknowledge Shona traditional world views, in the light of biblical evidence, further widens the gap between the official Anglican Church position and Shona views. As we have seen, both biblical and Shona traditional world views have a lot in common.

7.3.1 Contextual reading of the Bible

---

[28] Ibid. p.22.

[29] J.Bowker, The Complete Bible Handbook, London, New York, Sydney, Moscow: Dorling Kindersley, 1998, p.362. The Rabbinic source is the Mishnah Semahot 23.5.

Official Anglican Church language used to describe Shona views is unfortunate and misplaced in the light of so much similarity with the Bible. Archbishop Desmond Tutu, speaking generally of the Africans and the Bible, perceptively reflects that:

> In many respects, the African was much more on the wave length of the Bible than the occidental ever was. The African understood more easily in his bones, as it were, the meaning of corporate personality, for instance, than the more individualistic Westerner. It was shown time and time again that the African sense of the numinous, his awareness of the proximity of the spiritual, his attitude to death and disease, in all these ways, he was far closer to the Biblical thought patterns than Western man could ever hope to be.[30]

If Shona people's views of death and the dead have resonances with biblical views,[31] then that should be courteously acknowledged by the Church, which should then allow biblical and Shona traditional views to engage with each other in open interaction. Given that the Bible is the account of God's revelation to his people, allowing it to be read and interpreted by the Shona people for themselves could prove productive. It might actually enable the Shona people to benefit from a contextual interpretation of that revelatory history.[32] For example, if the observation that Shona people understand and appreciate corporate personality more easily than do Western people[33] is anything to go by, then they should

---

[30] D.M., Tutu, "Whiter African Theology?" Op. cit. p.366.

[31] See Chapter five, pp.242ff.

[32] F.J.Verstraelen,"The Real Issues Regarding the Bible: Summary, Findings and Conclusions," In Rewriting the Bible, op. cit. p.287 sheds more light on contextual reading by stating that, "it is a contextual reading of the Bible which implies two things: 1) it takes cognizance of the message contained in the Bible, and 2) links its message to the contemporary needs and aspirations of people, their context.

[33] A. Moyo, The Risk of Incarnation, op. cit. p.16. He clearly spells out the content of this concept in the Zimbabwean context, as he notes that: "in the African way of living ... life can be meaningful only if

be listened to. The reason why they have not benefited from this closeness is that they continue to be condemned as not good enough. Some psychologist is reported to have said, "if you continue to tell someone that 'you are a dog', do not be surprised when he or she barks."[34] In like manner, because of the constant attacks, Shona people cannot identify fully with the Bible because of what the Anglican Church has been saying to them about their views of death and the dead, hence the continued dual observance.

It is unlikely that the Anglican Church in present day Zimbabwe would like to be seen to be alien to its context. The interactive dialogical model could help the Church to address this problem. It also deals with the root cause of dual observance. Professor Imasogie, speaking from a different context, identifies an additional problem which contributes to a lack of African commitment to Christianity. In his words, this:

> is due to the lack of "fit" between Christian theology and African life. This lack of fit is, in turn, due to this same failure of Western orthodox theologians to take African world views into consideration in their theological formulations. Hence the African reverts to his traditional practices in times of serious problems.[35]

---

it is life in communion with and among your people. This way of life is based on a kinship system that any discussion of gospel and culture in Zimbabwe must take into account, as it reflects a very important aspect of the African world view." John Parratt cites an African proverb which is common in many Bantu languages which emphasizes the same point. It goes, "man is only really human in the company of others." J. Parratt, Reinventing Christianity, op. cit. p.93.

[34] Exact source not known. I found the expression illuminating!

[35] O. Imasogie, Guidelines for Christian Theology in Africa, op.cit. p.12.

Our theological model provides an alternative approach which redresses the problematic situations spelt out above. In the first place it addresses the dual observance by providing a living contact between Christianity and Shona traditional religious views, through dialogue. The incarnation is about God taking on human nature and being with humanity.[36] For that reason our theological reflections take Shona world views and life seriously, and enable them to enter into dialogue with Christian views,[37] informed by biblical insights.

The interactive dialogical model brings Christian views into the world of the Shona people in a pastorally sensitive manner. Both positions become vulnerable and open to the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. Neither side feels condemned and confronted, both sides 'fit' into the dialogue because they look to the Bible for direction and inspiration. The Christian church, in such a dialogue, effectively fulfills its pastoral task. According to Bediako, that task is to make Jesus Christ:

> confront the people of Africa, that in Him and through Him they will find access to God whom they already acknowledge in their traditional ideas to be the Creator of all things, as one who established kinship between man and God. In this manner, this eternal Gospel of the Incarnation will begin to accommodate itself in African environment, making its challenge felt and its promises realized.[38]

---

[36] Matthew's Gospel, chiefly chap. 1, "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him 'Immanuel' - which means, 'God with us.'(Matt. 1:23).

[37] An indication of how the situation can be handled by employing the Interactive Dialogical Model is given in Chapter six, above.

[38] K. Bediako, Theology and Identity, op. cit. pp.310-311.

The church should make the Gospel of Jesus Christ confront, not only the people of Africa, but people of all cultures. When it does this it fulfills one of its fundamental tasks. May it be noted that the church should 'make Jesus Christ confront', not that the 'Church should confront', the people and cultures.[39] When the church makes Christ confront the people and cultures, it releases Him, and lets insights about him inform dialogue with the given contexts. This is particularly significant because something of those people's cultures and views of God is recognized and acknowledged. So from an interactive perspective, such a confrontation is not dehumanising, but empowering.[40] It is confrontation in mutual dialogue, healthy and desirable confrontation, which challenges the Shona people to demonstrate their understanding of Christ.

7.3.2 Contextual relevance of the Bible

The appropriateness of the interactive dialogical model for pastoral care is in the fact that it acknowledges that the Gospel of Jesus Christ, though written long ago, has a contextual dynamism. This can only be experienced when it is listened to and interpreted in the light

---

[39] We employ this phrase to describe a process. The people of Africa should be given an opportunity to demonstrate their own understanding of Jesus, without being forced to imbibe other people's experiences of him (Jesus), rather, they should make the connections for themselves, and be given space to articulate such experiences. This is said in the light of the fact that I do not think that dual observance is a healthy reflection of the integration between Christian and Shona views of death and the dead.

[40] E.Y. Lartey, In Living Colour: An Intercultural Approach to Pastoral Care and Counselling, London: Cassell, 1997. He speaks of this word in two ways, namely as a function and as a model of pastoral care. On page 31 he speaks of empowering as a model of pastoral care and on pages 41-2 he speaks of it as a function of pastoral care. We use the word in both senses.

of the real life experiences of the Shona people, that is, contextually. In Rewriting the Bible, the point is clearly made by Frans Verstraelen that:

> a contextual reading adds something new to the Bible message in that it becomes relevant in a context different from its own; this happens not by adding to or subtracting texts from the Bible, but by a process of re-reading in context, leading to a new interpretation.[41]

We are actually suggesting that the Bible is not the one and only source of the history of salvation; it is a kind of "model experience."[42] It should therefore help each group of people to discover in their own way the presence of God who journeys by their side. Every single people has its own history of salvation, and the biblical context cannot be forced to "fit" all circumstances and contexts. Rather, each context has to enter into dialogue with the Bible in order to accommodate it and experience its dynamism. In addition, Christ's comforting presence should be made as real as possible in each context which purports to proclaim Him. If the Diocese of Harare affirms this and allows it to happen, its ministerial and pastoral care systems are bound to change.

The importance of contextual relevance, in the light of the interactive dialogical model, cannot be over emphasized. Clement of Alexandria's words are instructive in this regard.

---

[41] F.J., Verstraelen, "The Christian Bible and African cultural and Religious Realities," in I. Mukonyora, J. L. Cox (eds) and F.J. Vertraelen (Co-ordinator) Rewriting the Bible: the real Issues, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1993, p.240. It would be important to note that this was written in response to a call for the rewriting of the Bible by Rev'd Canaan Banana, of Zimbabwe, because it has, in his opinion, discrepancies.

[42] Carlos Mesters, "The use of the Bible in Christian Communities of the Common people," in A.T. Hennelly, (ed.) Liberation Theology: A documentary history, op.cit., p. 25.

He said,"God saved Jews in a Jewish way, the barbarians in a barbarian way."[43] We could go on to say, 'God saves the Shona people in a Shona way'. This emphasizes that each people has its own history or situation, so God cannot save the Shona people in an English way, for if He did, they might not benefit fully from such salvation, or perhaps they might not be able to identify with such salvation.[44]

W.V. Lucas, writing in Christianity and Native Rites, makes two very noteworthy points. First, he comments on the approach of the Christian church, noting that the form of the approach that it needs to adopt should respect the individuality of every person, and its appeal should be adapted "to be perfectly intelligible to each separate nation."[45] Secondly, he comments on Christian converts and how they should be understood. He says, "the Zulu who becomes a Christian in no way ceases to be a Zulu, but his life is raised to a higher supernatural plane as a Zulu Christian."[46] This is both affirming and empowering.

Both citations are pastorally significant in approach and relevance. They clearly honour the identity of the people concerned. The Gospel is brought to them as they are, presented to

---

[43] Cited by Carlos Mesters, "The Use of the Bible in Christian Communities of the Common people," op.cit. p.25.

[44] In the writer's view, salvation is a constant which needs to be communicated to dynamic contexts, so the way in which it is mediated should make it contextually perceptible.

[45] W.V., Lucas, Christianity and Native Rites, London: Central Africa House Press, 1950, p.3.

[46] Ibid., p.4.

them in a manner that makes them hear of the marvellous works of God in their own languages. Contact with the word of God thus becomes a challenge, because it provokes an open response from them. In a sense, the Holy Spirit is given a chance to work in the lives of the individual hearers.

This would mean that Shona people should not be expected to respond to the Gospel in a particular way, that is, reject their traditional views, rituals and ceremonies. Rather they should be encouraged to see in them means of understanding and relating appropriately to Christ. Such an approach enriches the reading of the Bible and opens it up, making it a valuable tool for pastoral care.[47]

Our discussion on the relevance of the Bible for understanding traditional Shona views of death and the dead within the Diocese of Harare is rooted in the firm conviction that the Church has something to offer. The best way in which it can offer its theological insights is through engaging the interactive dialogical model, which deals effectively with defensive attitudes. This enhances the Church's relevance, giving it the opportunity to understand itself. Its pastoral care, especially, with reference to death and the dead, should be

---

[47] The intention is not to romanticise Shona culture; though it is important, it must be subjected to critical scrutiny, as Christ took a critical stance against his own cultural context. Carlos Mesters sheds more light on the pastoral nature of the Bible when he says, "the great challenge for an interpreter is this: to present the features of the face which appears in the Bible in such a way that it can awaken today in the people a longing and memory. This requires that the interpreters remain close to the people to whom they seek to explain the Bible." C. Mesters, Defenseless Flower: A New Reading of the Bible, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1989, p.39.

informed by Shona people's views, because they are crucial to its ministry. Pastoral care is the most suitable field for the dialogical model because it grants the space for Christian and Shona views of death to engage with each other. It provides room for insights to be shared, explained and appreciated, thus enabling sensitivity in approach.

7.3.3 Understanding pastoral care

To fully appreciate the implications of the interactive dialogical model for pastoral care with reference to death and the dead, I suggest that we establish what we mean by 'Pastoral Care.' A range of definitions is on offer, but we can only look at a few. We need to note that the word 'pastoral' is loaded. It "still retains something of the agricultural nuance which characterized its beginnings when care of the flocks of animals began to be used in biblical times as a vivid analogy for the activity of leading and caring for God's chosen people."[48] It is obvious that this metaphor is dangerously one-sided, misleading and unhelpful in our day and age. The implication is that the provider of pastoral care is the only one who is knowledgeable, and the rest are like sheep being led. We are not using the word in that sense.

Michael Taylor raises a related technical question, by distinguishing between pastoral care and Christian pastoral care. He points out that pastoral care can be done by anyone and

---

[48] S. Pattison, A Critique of Pastoral Care, London: SCM Press Ltd, 1988, p.8.

yet Christian pastoral care is done by Christians. The point is therefore made that Christians have a distinct pastoral care, that is, one which brings Christ into people's lives. Christian pastoral care is an engagement with reality, in a way which best reflects Christ. This is a point to be born in mind as we look at the views of death and the dead. We are weighted towards Christian pastoral care for two reasons, (a) because we want to examine the relations between pastoral care and Christian faith[49] and (b) because we seek to affirm the relevance of the Christian Church in this regard.

Clebsch and Jackle define pastoral care by identifying four specific tasks carried out by representative Christian people. For them pastoral care:

> consists of helping acts, done by representative Christian persons, directed towards the healing, sustaining, guiding, and reconciling of troubled persons whose troubles arise in the context of ultimate meanings and concerns.[50]

When one looks at traditional Shona views of death and the care system organised around them, it is clear that they fall within this definition of pastoral care. In chapter one we saw how the traditional Shona community engaged in helping acts. This was demonstrated in the initial responses to death and then in the subsequent ceremonies, rites and rituals.[51] In chapter four we saw how popular religion, Shona Christianity, has established a care

---

[49] M. Taylor, Learning to Care: Christian Reflection on Pastoral Practice, London: SPCK, 1983, p.19.

[50] W.A. Clebsch and C.R. Jaekle, Pastoral Care in Historical Perspective, New York: Harper, 1976, p.4 also cited in S. Pattison, A Critique of Pastoral Care, op.cit. p12, and also in E.Lartey, In Living Colour, op.cit. p.1.

[51] See Chapter one, p.27.

system that recognizes representative Christian persons. In most cases these are lay persons, who have a role to play in the process of healing, sustaining and guiding following a death. Within that context the observance of traditional practices is accommodated, providing for the enhancement of community welfare. Note that we refer to 'community' in its broad Shona sense, which includes the dead.

Stephen Pattison says:

> Pastoral Care is that activity, undertaken especially by representative church persons, directed towards the elimination and relief of sin and sorrow and the presentation of all people perfect in Christ to God.[52]

This definition has Christian principles which could be misconstrued, especially because of the reference to relief of sin, in relation to death. This might have adverse connotations, by echoing what the condemnatory and confrontational approach has always emphasized; that Shona views are evil. This could be hard to balance, particularly where the Church is struggling to make Christ relevant to every sphere of life. In such a situation this would not be a new message, that is, the Church will be reinforcing its insensitivity. This is because the Shona have always been told that their traditional practices relating to death and the dead are evil, and therefore sinful. The elimination and relief of sorrow would only be meaningful if the sorrowing person's perception of the situation is affirmed and addressed. This is not meant to undermine the power of Christ and his gospel, but is an

---

[52] S. Pattison, A Critique of Pastoral Care, op.cit. p.13.

acknowledgement of the fact that where this power breaks through in living contact with a given culture, changes occur. Our interactive dialogical model provides for that dynamic contact.

Emmanuel Lartey offers a definition which captures a variety of insights. He says:

> Pastoral Care consists of helping activities, participated in by people who recognize a transcendent dimension to human life, which by the use of verbal or non-verbal, direct or indirect, literal or symbolic modes of communication, aim at preventing, relieving or facilitating persons coping with, anxieties. Pastoral Care seeks to foster people's growth as full human beings together with the development of ecologically holistic communities in which all persons may live human lives.[53]

This definition recognizes the place of other religious insights and the role they play in people's lives. In a deeply perceptive way, it upholds the interactive dialogical model we are advocating. It takes cognisance of variant world views, acknowledging their role and significance, without judging them. This is the definition of pastoral care which we adopt, and it is this understanding which informs our approach.

We need to note that effective or meaningful pastoral care should take other people seriously. W. Arnold suggests two levels at which pastoral care should take other people seriously. (a) At the level of the people themselves, we should recognize "who they believe

---

[53] E.Y. Lartey, In Living Colour, op.cit. p.9.

themselves to be and the values which that belief attaches to them."[54] And (b) at our own level, because we care for people "in terms of who we believe them to be according to our theological understanding, and the regard in which they are held according to that belief."[55] This is very important in the Zimbabwean situation, especially among the Shona people, because their self dignity with reference to their beliefs has not been valued. If the Anglican church adopts the interactive dialogical model it might understand the Shona people better, and in turn give them the respect and dignity they deserve. Its own self-perception could also change.

Campbell gives a very brief, but significant, definition of pastoral care. We shall use it as a summary to the definitions we have considered. For him, "pastoral care is, in essence, surprisingly simple. It has one fundamental aim: to help people to know love, both as something to be received and something to give."[56] All the other definitions we have considered assume this basic quality, but the fact that Campbell specifically mentions it makes a difference. This element of love requires demonstration by the Anglican Diocese of Harare, if its claim to be passing on Christ's love to the Shona people is to have any significance.

---

[54] W.V.Arnold, Introduction to Pastoral Care, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982, p.15.

[55] Ibid., p. 15-6.

[56] Cited in S. Pattison, A Critique of Pastoral Care, op.cit., p.15.

7.4 SHONA VIEWS OF DEATH AND PASTORAL CARE

Our theological model is best understood from within a pastoral care context such as the one we are dealing with. Shona views of death, in their own right, serve a pastoral purpose. If the Anglican Church is to be pastorally effective it should understand the essence of these views. They relate to a life change which is emotionally demanding because it affects relations.[57] Alongside this, lingers the view that death is always caused.[58] This should be seen in the light of the shift in emphasis, noted in chapter four, where God is seen as the one who permits the death finally to occur. In other words, though the spiritual powers, or powers of evil cause the death, because they start the process, they cannot on their own effect it.[59] Another strongly held view which is the basis for most rituals relating to death, is expressed in the belief that death is not the end of life.[60] It is not annihilation, but essentially a transition from physical life to spiritual existence.

When death strikes, the Shona people believe that tears should be shed, accompanied by wailing and weeping. Traditionally, this is an outlet for grief as well as a way of pleading

---

[57] See Chapter One p.29ff. for a full discussion of the views of death.

[58] This view is found in the traditional thinking mostly recorded in Chapter one. There is a shift in emphasis in chapter four, where death is not so much caused, but willed by God. The line of thinking here is that 'if God does not allow it, death cannot occur.' See p.188.

[59] See Chapter four, p.188, where this shift in understanding is discussed. It is also confirmed by my field work data.

[60] See Chapter one p.27.

for mercy before the ancestors on behalf of the deceased.[61] Because ancestors could be responsible for the death, special rituals have to be carried out to protect members of the family, near and far away.[62] This illustrates that, according to Emmanuel Lartey's definition of pastoral care, these are 'helping activities, participated in by people who recognize a transcendent dimension to human life, which by the use of verbal or non-verbal, direct or indirect, literal or symbolic modes of communication, aim at preventing, relieving or facilitating persons coping with, anxieties.'[63] They need to be taken seriously.

The link between the corpse and the soul is believed to be such that what is done to the corpse has an affect on the destiny of the soul.[64] Once again ancestors are the key players. They must be satisfied with the respect that is shown to the corpse in order to be happy to receive the corresponding soul.[65] What this means is that the corpse has to be buried according to tradition. In a sense it symbolises the biblical burial, referred to in Old Testament terms as being "gathered to one's people,"[66] or in the New Testament as

---

[61] See Chapter One p.29-30.

[62] This will be discussed fully under 'Symbolism and Rituals', see p.346.

[63] E.Y.Lartey, In living colour, op.cit. p.9.

[64] See Chapter one p.53 and Chapter four p.195.

[65] See what was said about this in chapter one pp.40-1.

[66] See Genesis 25:8; Gen. 49:33.

Jesus' being buried 'in accordance with Jewish burial customs'.[67] This refers to all other practices associated with death. From a Shona perspective, the burial customs help the bereaved to cope with the reality of death. They form the basis of condolences. Pastoral care informed by the interactive dialogical model will be aware of all this, and has the capacity to respond sensitively, but upholding the faith.

7.5 SHONA VIEWS ON THE DEAD AND PASTORAL CARE

What makes views on the dead significant for pastoral care among the Shona people is the belief that the dead are not gone forever. Though death physically withdraws them from their living family members, they are believed to be spiritually present and active among their living relatives and to have a role in their welfare. The maintenance of this spiritual relationship is important for the welfare of the living members. In other words, if the living do not do something about this relationship, they stand to lose the ancestral, spiritual protection.[68] It is to be noted that not all dead persons become ancestors.[69]

Even those who are accorded the honour of being ancestors have to wait for the appropriate rituals. As we noted in chapters one and four, it is only when the *kurova guva*

---

[67] John 19:40.

[68] See Chapter one, p.66.

[69] See Chapter one, pp.69-70

ceremony has been held in the deceased's honour that he or she becomes an ancestor. He or she becomes a member of two families henceforth. On the one hand, he or she is a member of the living family with specific obligations. On the other, he or she belongs to the spiritual family, the source of his or her supernatural powers.[70] Endowed with these supernatural powers, the dead are expected to protect their living family members from any spiritual assaults. In general, ancestors are expected to be benign to their off-spring. However this is only possible if the living play their part in keeping the relationship going. There should be communion between the two family groups. In dealing with Shona people there is a need to understand 'community' from their viewpoint.

Should the living need to communicate with the spiritual world, they confidently approach the ancestors for mediation of their needs and requests. It is also believed that the ancestors sometimes visit their living members, and communicate with them, mostly through dreams. Where there are good relationships, such visits might be to assure the living of the continued benevolent disposition of the ancestors.[71]

There are two things we need to note here: (a) the entry of the dead into the spiritual family is believed to bring them nearer to God. That is why they can mediate and plead before Him on behalf of the living. (b) Communication with those in the spiritual world is patterned

---

[70] See Chapter one for the full discussion of this belief, p.68.

[71] See Chapter one p.67.

on traditional procedures. Requests that the living want to communicate to the spiritual world follow the *kusuma* process, that is, they are not communicated directly to God, but are presented through the recently departed , and therefore most junior ancestor.[72]

Rather than simply condemning traditional Shona views, the Anglican church needs to understand them if its pastoral care is to be of any relevance. For example, deep seated as these views and accompanying beliefs are, there are indications that fear sometimes influences their observance.[73] At times, the living feel obliged to fulfill the traditional requirements irrespective of whether they are efficacious or not. The interactive dialogical model adequately takes all such factors into consideration and allows them to be honestly expressed, facilitating better pastoral care. The model does not threaten the Anglican Church, neither does it threaten the Shona people. What it does is to encourage both sides to look afresh at their respective positions with a view to bringing about a Shona Christian perspective. Not only will such pastoral care be relevant, it will also help address the dual observance.

If pastoral care is to facilitate persons coping with anxieties, then this approach adequately provides the means, by allowing views of death and the dead to be shared openly. The dead will continue to be seen as part of the family, but in a different light, perhaps as part

---

[72] See Chapter one p.24 for the *kusuma* process and p.67 for the rationale.

[73] See what we said on p.31ff, above to appreciate the 'fear' underlying death.

of the communion of saints. The fact that some are recognized as ancestors should be understood as indicating that they are believed to have something to contribute to the lives of the living, that is, they are an example not only to their progeny, but also to the community at large. Only sensitive interactive dialogue helps to unlock the treasure stores of such beliefs. Shona Traditional Religion, like the Christian faith, acknowledges heroes, and considers them inspirational. Even for the Shona people, not all such heroes come from within the tribe; some might be from outside. The concept is well demonstrated in the understanding of *mhondoro* (guardian spirit of a region or tribe).[74] The hero of the tribe or region, to whom the *mhondoro* owes its origin, is believed to work for the good of the tribe or region. In turn the tribe or populace of the region have to observe certain customs, in honour of that *mhondoro*. This upholds communion between the living and their *mhondoro*.

Facilitating interactive dialogue between Shona and Christian views on the dead requires mutual respect and the willingness to listen, on the part of the adherents of both belief systems. Condemnatory and confrontational tendencies have no place in such a pastoral undertaking. Starting from where the people are, and allowing them to be themselves, helps to bring about the desired results. Although this might sound simplistic, it is at least an attempt at addressing the dual observance. It makes it possible for the Shona people's conception of the world and God to enrich the Christian theological forum. In this way they

---

[74] These guardian spirits are believed to protect anyone who happens to be in their geographical area. This could be a geographical area occupied by a particular tribe, or a number of tribes.

make a valuable theological contribution to Christian pastoral care from their distinctive cultural perspective.

Incidentally, our theological model is not a call for a change of structures within the diocese, but an invitation to review the relevance of pastoral care and ministry. Such a review requires honest and open dialogue between all concerned parties. Earlier we demonstrated how the self-understanding of the diocese was reflected in its pastoral approach to the Shona people.[75] If the diocese's self understanding changes, its approach to pastoral care will reflect this change.

This model's impact will definitely be felt at all levels of the Anglican Church. Bishops, clergy and lay Christians will, one way or the other find themselves having to react. These reactions could be either positive or negative; much will depend on how the people concerned view the relationship between Christianity and Shona traditional religious beliefs. If they feel strongly that the Christ proclaimed by the church is "above African culture and against African culture, [and] clearly not in African culture,"[76] the interactive dialogical model will be hailed as positive. That is because it seeks to bring Christ into Shona culture. But for those who feel that the present state of affairs is acceptable, the model may well be seen as an unnecessary intrusion. It is because of this that the

---

[75] Chiefly, Chapter two, where we examined the establishment of the Anglican Church in Zimbabwe.

[76] A.Moyo, The Risk of Incarnation, op. cit. p.11.

theological model has implications for pastoral care. Before we deal with the implications for pastoral care, let us examine the process of bringing about a relevant pastoral care system.

7.6 THE QUEST FOR RELEVANT PASTORAL CARE

The interactive dialogical model proposes a mutual theological relationship between Christian and Shona traditional views of death and the dead. There are two strong indications that this relationship is possible. First, the Shona people themselves demonstrate a desire to have Christian practices as part of their observances of death and the dead. We saw in chapter four how Christian and Shona rituals are alternately engaged.[77] Secondly, the diocese itself recognizes that there is a need to address the pastoral problem created by dual observance.[78] Our model seeks to provide the missing link, interactive dialogue.

These observations should not be interpreted as an indication that such a relationship is acceptable to all. The fact that we are advocating a new theological approach to the pastoral problem caused by dual observance is in itself an acknowledgement of the

---

[77] This is fully demonstrated in the fact that while the wailing and weeping are done, Church representatives are also invited to attend and given space to offer prayers. Traditional rituals are held while Christian songs are sung. What is required is the patience to enter into dialogue so that the traditional intricacies can be appreciated and considered.

[78] See 'The dialogue' on p.204, above.

inadequacy of the present approach. This conclusion is not shared by all. So, in both Church and society, there will be varying responses to our proposed approach. Some will feel that this is the right way forward, while some feel uncomfortable.[79]

7.6.1 Varying positions

For a variety of reasons, to those who appreciate the shift in approach, the Church becomes a real haven, whereas in the past it has been alienating. From a biblical perspective the teaching of the Church which holds that all people are made in the image of God, finds new and real meaning.[80] A new sense of belonging is aroused in them. When they are thus affirmed, dialogue between Christian and Shona views is seen as natural. Trust and mutuality become the basis on which the two religious traditions interact. Both Christian and Shona traditional views and rituals of death and the dead find full expression. They then become open to the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. A process of adjustment takes place, re-enacting the process by which the Christian faith took shape in history.[81] Both religious views are subjected to scrutiny.

---

[79] See what we said in the introduction to this chapter.

[80] That teaching is contained in Genesis 1:27, which reads, "so God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." The interactive dialogical model provides the framework for mutual respect, based on this teaching, to be exercised.

[81] The Christian Faith took shape through dialogue and interaction with various philosophies and religions. See J.L. Gonzalez, A History of Christian Thought, Volume 1: From the beginnings to the Council of Chalcedon, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1983 (8th print) chiefly the Foreword.

The question of denominationalism discussed in chapter three, could become a factor at this point.[82] It is important to note that Roman Catholics form the majority of Christians in the geographical area covered by the Anglican Diocese of Harare. The Roman Catholic Church in Zimbabwe is well ahead of the Anglican Church when it comes to issues of inculturation or contextualization. An indication of how well-established this approach is, is the fact that, as far back as July 1969, the Roman Catholic Church recommended that "the ban on the *kurova guva* should be lifted at once because it felt that there is no adequate theological reason for proscribing the ceremony."[83] In so doing, it enabled the traditional death rituals of its Shona Christians to be practised alongside the church's rituals. Although a missionary church, the Roman Catholic Church has, in its approach to death and the dead (and like many of the African Initiated Churches) become a church of the people.[84]

In working towards relevant pastoral care, the Anglican church will be joining the ranks of those denominations which are making indelible in-roads into the lives of the people. While

---

[82] See Chapter three under the title "Denominationalism" for a fuller discussion, p.141.

[83] V. Whidborne, "Africanisation of Christianity in Zimbabwe," in Religion in South Africa, op.cit. p.41. J.Kumbirai, "Kurova Guva and Christianity," in M.F.C.Bourdillon, Christianity South of the Zambezi, Vol. 2, Gwelo: Mambo Press, 1977. Kumbirai, a Shona Roman Catholic priest, writing on the lifting of the ban says: "recently in the Roman Catholic Church, the traditional 'kurova guva' ceremonies have been held publicly, camouflaged by new rites, commonly called 'Musande' or 'Bavadeyi', which may be construed as a compromise between 'kurova guva' and traditional missionary teachings ... they include the traditional gathering of relatives to drink beer in honour of the spirits of the dead, but a Church minister blesses the grain for the ceremony and conducts a service of Christian prayers and hymns." pp.127-8.

[84] See Paper by Rev'd X. Marimazhira p.440 and AIC practices described on p.154 above.

this is a positive move, it can add to the confusion, as we shall see. But on the positive side, such a move facilitates appropriate pastoral care, strengthening the Church's relevance, and enhancing a practical revision of its theological approach. This conveys the message that Shona people and their views are worthy of God. Those churches that have led the way could then be consulted, and the spirit of ecumenical cooperation promoted.

On the other hand, those who do not appreciate the model will see it as playing down the role of the Anglican Church. For them, such a move is nothing short of surrendering Anglican values, or rebelling against the Church's practices. In other words, the model is seen as suggesting radical practices to people, almost like asking them to reject the Anglican church. For such people, Shona traditional views of death and the dead are not God-worthy, so they should not be brought back into the theological arena. Though this kind of thinking negates the incarnational understanding of Christianity, it exists among some Shona people. Christianity is believed to have nothing to do with culture, because culture is evil.[85] As hinted earlier, this could either be an indication of (a) how brainwashed some Shona Christians have become, or (b) the need to set in motion a viable contextualization process of the Christian faith. Whichever is the case, noting these varying clerical and lay positions[86] helps in the search for relevant pastoral care.

---

[85] See Chapter four for a full discussion.

[86] Especially among the Anglican W*abvuwi*, see p.422, below.

Lazarus Muyambi, a Shona Anglican priest, is a good example of those who do not seem to see any connection between Christianity and Shona traditional views of death and the dead. He holds the view that "in the kingdom of Heaven there is no communication between the dead and the living."[87] While this purports to be a Christian standpoint, that is, rejecting communication with the dead, it seems to give little consideration to the concept of the communion of saints. Muyambi seems not to realise that saints are indeed dead people who somehow communicate with the living in the kingdom of heaven. May be a re-reading of the passage that concludes Jesus' discourse with the Sadducees on marriage and the resurrection might shed some light. Mark 12 : 26-7 reads, "Now about the dead rising - have you not read in the book of Moses, in the account of the burning bush, how God said to him, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not the God of the dead, but of the living. You are badly mistaken!" When Jesus said this, the named ancestors had long died. They were remembered as living because (a) they were the patriarchs of the nation and (b) they had a living relationship with God, hence God is 'not the God of the dead, but of the living.' This relationship was not mediated by Christ. In like manner, the writer suggests, Shona ancestors who have a living relationship with God, even though not mediated by Christ, continue to be alive and communicate with the living in the kingdom of heaven, see 1 Pet 3:19. The point is this, the plight of those who died before Christ is not determined by us, but by God who knows

---

[87] J.C.Weller, A Centre of Healing in Zimbabwe: An account of St. Agnes Mission, Gokwe 1972-80 and its priest Fr. Lazarus Muyambi, (Unpublished paper) Harold Turner Collection, Selly Oak, 1980, p.3.

us better than we know ourselves. Interactive dialogue helps to make this clear for relevant pastoral care.

Denominational pride could lead some into believing that upholding the interactive dialogical model means abandoning Anglican Christians to Roman Catholic beliefs.[88] Alternately this could be seen as indicating that the Anglican church has been swallowed up by the Roman Catholic Church, in which case, the immediate question would be, 'with its denominational position compromised can the Anglican church offer valid pastoral care?' In working out a relevant pastoral care system, the effects of denominationalism should be taken into consideration, lest the diocese be accused of negating responsibility or even betraying its flock.

Denominationalism can cause problems for the pastoral implementation of the interactive dialogical model in the Diocese of Harare with its Roman Catholic presence. We continue to use the Roman Catholic Church as an example for two reasons; first, because they share an almost identical ecclesiastical structure, in the country [Zimbabwe]. In some places their celebration of the Eucharist and the name they use for it, 'Mass', is the same. Requiem Mass, a Eucharistic celebration in memory of the dead is also identical.[89] The

---

[88] Both denominational pride and rivalry could come to play in such a setting. The danger is that some people might reject even what they feel strongly about only to maintain their denominational identity. There are some who will see this as a move in the right direction, (a) because it will be demonstrating the one-ness of God and (b) by burying the dead in recognition of their culture.

[89] In some cases even the liturgical colour is the same.

use of words such as 'Father' for a priest, 'Parish' for a pastoral charge, 'Mission' for an established mission station and 'Bishop' for the head of a Diocese, are the same. This has implications for pastoral care.

Secondly their approach to food substances is almost the same. For example, they share the same views on people's consumption of alcoholic beverages and use of tobacco. Neither church condones excessive use, but both leave the judgement of what is acceptable consumption to the conscience of the individual Christian. Because of these similarities the model might lead some laity to expect the Anglican clergy to be as pastorally and culturally sensitive in the area of death and the dead as their Roman Catholic counterparts. This might lead to frustration for many Anglican clerics.

7.6.2 Symbolism and rituals

Views of death are an integral part of the Shona world views which are usually symbolically expressed. For instance, on receiving news of death, certain symbolic actions are performed, which express the belief that death is not annihilation. These vary from place to place. Joseph Kumbirai, a Roman Catholic priest, explains one such symbolic act and its significance. He states that on receipt of the news of death "the *vatete* (aunt) takes some grains of rapoko (*rukweza)* and throws them into the fire mentioning the names of absent close relatives (*kudzima shura).* This is done to prevent the relatives from getting

telepathic shock".[90] This use of symbolism is corroborated by Violet Mutandwa from Mhondoro, who says that, "at receiving news of death an elder, usually a woman, goes to the *chirongo* (earthenware pot for carrying and storing drinking water) with a *mugoti* (stirring-stick e.g for stirring *sadza).*[91] She stirs the water mentioning the names of absentee relatives for the same reason as given by Kumbirai.

The understanding is that when this is done the ancestors will take control of the situation on both sides. (a) They will incapacitate the spirit of the deceased, so it does not cause mishaps to other relatives, especially those who are far away. (b) They are expected to protect any of the vulnerable relatives from that moment onwards, particularly blood relatives.

After this, word is sent to the priest, who is expected to come and offer prayers. This is a pastoral response automatically expected of the Church.[92] If the priest is too far away, representative members of the denomination, especially those who lead local congregations, are advised of the death. Depending on the setting, members of other

---

[90] J. Kumbirai, Kurova Guva Ceremony, (Unpublished and undated paper) p.434, below.

[91] See interviews with Mrs V Mutandwa, p.414 and Mr T Mukwishu, p.407 where they describe how to deal with telepathic shock, they agree that, "in some areas on receiving news of death, the elder goes to the *durunhuru* (rubbish heap or pit) and beats the rubbish with a nhanzva (pouzolzia hypoleuca) *shamhu* (switch). The rationale is this, as the clouds of dust dissipate so does the dangerous power of the deceased's spirit." For the correct Shona words I have used S. Hannan, Standard Shona Dictionary.

[92] See interview with Mrs E Mhaga, p.404 and Chapter four, for how this works on the ground.

denominations are also informed. In each case the expectation is the same; that they should immediately come and say some prayers. It is interesting to note that these prayers are expected even when the deceased was not a Christian.

There is something of the communal understanding of death in this procedure. The view that death is not for an individual family, but for the community, is upheld in the manner in which the news of death is shared. On receiving news of death, whether by witnessing the symbolic actions, or through word of mouth, people leave what they are doing. This has pastoral connotations which members of the community understand and respond to appropriately.[93] Death is seen as a social and a religious phenomenon, which affects all. This should inform the Church's pastoral care programme.

Symbolism and rituals serve a pastoral purpose; through them (a) the living derive a sense of satisfaction and consolation for themselves and (b) somehow they assure the bereaved that their dead will get the desired rest in the next world. It is perhaps important to understand the motives for symbolism and ritual. Fear of death is almost always a factor which should be addressed.[94] Any pastoral care system that does not take these realities into account will not only make itself, but the whole church, irrelevant.

---

[93] See chapter one for details, p.29.

[94] In Chapter five we pointed out that this fear was expressed through the elaborate responses to news of death. The Shona people want to pass it on, that is make it as widely known as possible, while the Biblical response is tearing one's clothes or sitting in ashes.

7.6.3 Dealing with dual observance

Both our theological model and pastoral care will not yield the required fruit if we do not rightly locate the problem of dual observance. Dual observance in the final analysis is a theological, as well as a pastoral reality, and our pastoral theology needs to address it. We should seek to reflect the Christian incarnational reality. This christological slant should then help us to make our specific contribution to the pastoral significance of ceremonies and rituals of death and the dead.

The pastoral significance we give to the traditional views should reflect that, in the traditional Shona setting, ancestors are believed to be under God's power and authority. If they are kept happy by their living relatives, they will always plead favourably on their behalf before God. After all, they are believed to be nearer God than the living family members.[95] Clearly therefore, their fellowship with the living is not outside God's jurisdiction, in other words, they are not a force outside, or in competition with God. They collaborate with God and work for the good of the living.[96] This remains true as long as

---

[95] See chapters one and four for discussions on the supernatural powers that the ancestors are believed to have.

[96] A.Moyo, The Risk of Incarnation, op.cit. p.6. Moyo demonstrates that the Shona are very clear about this, hence, "one often hears the expression, '*Kana Mwari nevadzimu vachida*' (if God and the ancestors are willing)." This echoes the shift in understanding death, and God's involvement in it discussed in Chapter four, under 'Textual Analysis.'

good relationships are traditionally maintained, or till generations who do not know the ancestor are custodians of tradition.

One thing is clear in both Christianity and Shona tradition, that relationships between God and humanity are not terminated by death. Though conceived of differently, there is agreement that such relationships outlast death. The Church's pastoral task to the Shona people is to enable them to understand that their rituals and ceremonies are a means of consolation, which should not be condemned out of hand. At the same time, they are not the source of life, and should not be viewed as determining eternity. Here sensitivity is called for on the part of the Church in its pastoral care of bereaved Shona Christians. It should use the material gathered through interactive dialogue to put across a theological understanding of humanity which is consistent with the belief that God is the giver of life. If God is the sole giver of life, the Shona Christian should be challenged not to seek life elsewhere? In other words, dual observance should not prevail?

Christian and Shona understandings of eternity need to be reconciled if the Anglican church's pastoral care and ministry are to be relevant. The interactive dialogical model of doing theology is the most appropriate for this task. It considers all the relevant contextualization questions without being prescriptive, thus allowing Shona Christians to express themselves. Such an approach by the Church demonstrates its commitment to ministering to the Shona people, and any other people for that matter, with sensitivity.

Among other things, it encourages a balanced and open reflection on God, death and the dead, free from suspicion.[97] This dialogue, with interaction, will help to break down the dual observance. However, it needs to be followed up by an equally sensitive contextual pastoral care approach. I would suggest that taking this process seriously is our contribution to the establishment of a relevant and sensitive pastoral care system which deals with dual observance, in the Diocese of Harare. But, it has implications.

7.7 IMPLICATIONS FOR PASTORAL CARE

As we have seen above, attitudes and habits die hard, and both clergy and laity will need time to assimilate the method. This will involve the ability to appreciate, understand and interpret the traditional rituals and their symbolism as important theological sources. There will also be a need to hold reverently in balance the Christian and Shona traditional views of death and the dead if the theological method is to be of any value.

For us to appreciate the pastoral implications of the interactive dialogical model, we need to remember that the Anglican church has been in Zimbabwe for over a century. During

---

[97] This is discussed in Chapter four. See A. Moyo, The Risk of Incarnation, op. cit. p.16. He observes that, "many other Christians have on their own comfortably integrated their Christian faith into the traditional cultures and participate in rituals relating to the ancestors without feeling guilty." The writer wishes this was the case in the Anglican Diocese of Harare.

that period it has grown from one to four dioceses.[98] Three of the diocesan bishops are indigenous Zimbabweans. The present bishop of the Diocese of Harare is the second indigenous leader.

The implications of the interactive dialogical model are that we will have to re-examine present pastoral approaches with a view to identifying their contextual appropriateness. This means that we should also redefine the Church's mission. Related to this is the need to clarify the purpose of pastoral care with specific reference to death and the dead among the Shona people. A clear understanding of the goal of Christian pastoral care from an Anglican perspective is essential.

We have noted that current methods of pastoral care seem to be inadequate. Both the Anglican Church and the Shona people demonstrate this.[99] The Church has made three attempts to address the pastoral situation, but failed.[100] These attempts mean that dual observance is identifiably a pastoral problem.[101] On the part of the Shona people, we see a desire to have Christian observances of death and the dead integrated into their

---

[98] The Diocese of Mashonaland, which was virtually the whole country, was formed in February 1891. So the Anglican church has been in the country for over 108 years, and now has four dioceses, see map, p.xii, above.

[99] See above, 'The quest for relevant pastoral care,' p.340.

[100] See 'Relevance of the Church,' p.312, above.

[101] Bishops' Pastoral Regulations, 1978.

traditional views.[102] Even now, dual observance prevails.[103] Perhaps this is the only way in which the Shona people can deal with a Church which seems not to "foster people's growth as full human beings together with the development of ecologically holistic communities in which all persons may live human lives."[104] In other words, the present methods still do not recognize that Shona traditional views have something to offer, which the Christian faith and rituals seem not to adequately provide.

Shona traditional views of death and the dead should be brought centre stage, so that they become key players in understanding the Christian faith. This means that the Shona people should be empowered to wrestle, faithfully and openly, with the involvement of Christ in their lives and world view. Note, they are invited to identify themselves as they are, and, through dialogue and interaction, work out for themselves who Christ is for their lives, their relationships, their environment and their life after death. The model aims at a holistic and wholistic view of life. Though some Shona Anglicans are already unofficially engaging with these questions, for the "official" Anglican Church as a whole to be seen to be seeking to understand its Shona Christians' views without condemning and confronting them, would be an important step forward.

---

[102] Chiefly, chapter four.

[103] See Chapter four and interviews with Mrs V Mutandwa, p 414 and Mr T Mukwishu, p.407.

[104] E.Y.Lartey, In Living Colour, p.9.

If this were to happen, the need to engage clandestinely in traditional rituals would no longer exist. In the same way, the kind of harsh discipline which demands that those 'caught' engaging in traditional practices should be excommunicated, would have no room. The All-Africa Seminar on the Christian home and family life, commenting on excommunication in another context, noted that the practice has resulted in,"(a) hypocrisy; sin is hidden in order to avoid detection; and (b) pharisaism; those who are not tempted (or not caught) may become satisfied and proud, and are tempted to look down upon the sinner."[105] The openness we advocate through the interactive dialogical model will mean a change in methods of, and attitudes to, Shona traditional views.

When the Church as an institution ceases to be seen as an enemy, its pastoral care becomes the concern of all its members, and though those Christians may hold different views,[106] the proposed theological method provides them with room to enter into dialogue with each other as Shona Christians. This will not only enable them to understand each other, but it will also equip them for dialogue with people of other denominations. The method gives them the tools for engaging in ecumenical dialogue, an area which might still be viewed with suspicion by some Anglican Christians. Granting expression to the

---

[105] Report of the All-Africa Seminar on the Christian Home and Family Life, held at Mindolo Ecumenical Centre, Kitwe, 17 February to 10 April 1963. p.44.

[106] See p.341, above under 'varying positions.'

cultural communal understanding of life and relationships could greatly enrich our understanding of ecclesiology as well.

Our aim is neither to condemn nor to romanticise traditional Shona views. The theological method we propose to adopt is not prescriptive, but attempts to allow the process to evolve from familiar Shona views of reality. Through this interactive dialogue, Shona Christians are challenged to express their understanding of Christ in the light of their traditional views.[107] This is made possible by the fact that we adopt the consensus model for dialogue, community building and problem solving. This provides the space for sharing a variety of insights, to enrich the process, including opening the pastoral concern to the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

In interacting, diverse Shona symbolism and rituals are allowed to be part of the 'legitimate' or official procedure, engaged with in relation to death and the dead. By acknowledging them (symbolism and rituals), the model endeavours to provide the Church with an opportunity to provide meaningful comfort and care. When someone is bereaved, he or she needs support, or counselling. Effective counselling enables the one counselled to see his or her disintegrated system coming back to normal, or at least, making sense . It should speak to the situation in understandable language, backed where necessary, by

---

[107] We are actually using the insights we got from Chapter four, where an attempt to express faith in Christ within traditional views is demonstrated.

appropriate symbolism and rituals. This helps the grieving process. Such counselling also facilitates the coming to terms with the reality of losing a loved one, providing comprehensive, spiritual support.[108]

7.8 CONCLUSION

A relevant and viable method like the interactive dialogical method can fully address the shortfalls of present theological methods in the Diocese of Harare and provide for a change. But the situation it creates has strong pastoral implications. It makes the Church revise its relevance through dialogue with its context.

Dual observance is addressed through shifting the emphasis. Instead of starting with the Church, the model proposes that we start with the people. It is the people and their

---

[108] The writer attended *Manyaradzo* (Condolence Service) on the 14th August, 1999 following the death of Mr Zephaniah Matimba, a local leader who was also a famous hunter. Zephaniah was a member of the Baptist Church who had died on the 19th of July,1999. Though the whole setting was to be Christian, there was traditional beer which had been brewed earlier in the week. People spent the whole night in singing and prayer for the soul of Zephaniah and the condolences of his relatives and family. Early the next morning, there was the traditional practice of *kugova nhumbi* (distribution of the deceased's clothes) done in traditional Shona style. It is the words and actions of the headman which are informative.(a) He stood up and said, "Zephaniah was a child of God who has now gone to be with his ancestors. .... So I thank all of you for having come to pray for the rest of Zephaniah's soul and the strengthening of his family. Above all I thank you for representing God in our community..." (b) Clapping his hands he squatted and said, "we also thank you the custodians of this land for protecting our visitors; go with them as they leave this place..." He spoke to both the world of the living and the spiritual world (God and the custodians of their land) acknowledging their involvement in the world of the living; an all-embracing, and strong Shona world view that needs to be taken note of.

understanding of God from a cultural standpoint which should inform the Christian approach to Shona traditional views of death and the dead.[109]

The possibility of dialogue between representatives of differing opinions helps to build the community of Christ. Such a community, built in openness, with sensitivity, can make ecumenical dialogue possible, thus demonstrating unity in Christ.

By engaging the consensus model in its dialogue, the interactive dialogical model leaves room for the Holy Spirit. Though this should not be construed as implying that only the consensus model creates room for the Holy Spirit. What this model does is to (a) allow the expression of as many views as possible (b) provide room for the discussion of each view by all concerned. The whole process should be conducted in a prayerful atmosphere. All concerned are challenged to exercise a degree of self-introspection in the light of faith.

Finally, the open expression of Shona traditional views of death and the dead has theological significance for Shona Christians. It gives them the opportunity to express themselves and their feelings honestly before God. The consequence is that God is affirmed as the one true 'Creator God' for both belief systems. Pastoral care carried out according to the interactive dialogical model would be affirming and relevant.

---

[109] V. Donovan, Christianity Rediscovered: An epistle from the Masai, London: SCM Press, 1978, p.30. Particularly when Donovan realized that "God enables a people, any people, to reach salvation through their culture and its tribal, racial customs and traditions."

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

8.1 THE COMMUNAL NATURE OF SHONA LIFE

This is a concluding summary of the study in which we raised a number of issues relating to Christian and Shona traditional views of death and the dead that have significant theological and pastoral implications. We saw how fundamental the sense of community is among the Shona people, and how their views of death and the dead make sense within that communal setting. The Shona people do not split life into secular and religious;[1] religion permeates all life. In dealing with death and the dead from a Shona perspective, there is a wholeness, in which both the physical and the spiritual are involved, which is the totality of existence. The ceremonies, observances and rituals they engage in are the means through which this totality is expressed and maintained. We shall highlight some of the views again in this concluding chapter.

The communal nature of Shona life offers us some useful theological insights. God is believed to be ultimately involved with the whole of human life, but the responsibility for ordering day to day activities and concerns is delegated to the ancestors. So, in dealing

---

[1] See Chapter one, p.16.

with death and the dead from a Shona view point, awareness of the involvement of the ancestors has theological implications which reinforce the communal nature of life. It complements the understanding of religion permeating all life. It further reflects the Triune God as a communal God who by his nature fosters community.[2] This strengthens the perception of God as God in, and beyond life. Understanding community and God in this way explains and justifies the solidarity shown by Shona people in the face of death, helping them to experience and witness something of the love of God, who is three in one and communal.

The pastoral implications of this communal understanding of God and community are that the present generation feels attached to past generations through social practices, observances, rituals and symbols. Participating in these communal activities is a vital expression of belonging, which gives a deep sense of identity. In turn, this enables participants to play their role in community. In a sense, by adhering to traditional views, a Shona person believes that he or she is co-operating with past generations and sharing their lives and values. For that reason, he or she is a vital link between the past and the future of the community. He or she has the responsibility for keeping the different categories of the community in harmony with each other. It is against this background that

---

[2] Gen.1:26 "Then God said, "let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea..." Von Rad helps to spell out the communal nature of God when he says, "The extraordinary plural ("Let us") prevents one from referring God's image too directly to God the Lord. God includes himself among the heavenly beings and thereby conceals himself in this multiplicity." G.von Rad, Genesis, London: SCM, 1961, p.58.

the pastoral nature of Shona views of death and the dead should be understood. Admittedly, the communal nature of Shona life is anthropocentric, that is, it has humanity as its starting point, rather than God.

8.2 CONDEMNATION AND CONFRONTATION

When the Anglican missionaries brought the gospel of Christ to Zimbabwe over 108 years ago, Shona views became a source of conflict, because the missionaries put their understanding of God first. With the benefit of hindsight, we are able to see how they approached the Shona people, and evaluate their methods. As we noted, their close identification with the colonial powers tended to discredit them. In fact, it was detrimental to their initiatives, especially because they were party to the land apportionment which was championed by the British South Africa Company. The missionaries were perceived as accomplices to the colonial settlers. They did exactly what the settlers were doing, though using different language, the language of the gospel.[3]

The missionaries were from a different ethnic background, and so did not prize the communal nature of Shona life. They resorted to condemnation and confrontation of Shona traditional life, characterising it as evil. This meant that, from the initial encounter between Christianity and Shona traditional views, there was no reciprocity. This missionary

---

[3] See Chapter three, 'Anthropological responses,' p.111.

approach was justifiable, only if we understand that the missionaries believed themselves to be soldiers of Christ, who had come to liberate the Shona people from the devil and his forces. In reality, this approach was anthropologically, religiously, sociologically and theologically insensitive to the realities of Shona people's lives, thus failing to provide for mutual interaction between the two religious belief systems.

Christianity was presented to the Shona people as a universal, tailor-made religion which required that the Shona people should adopt English values. Shona traditional values and views had no place, as the condemnatory and confrontational tendencies made clear. For instance, vernacular names could not be accepted as Christian names. The mission station approach further consolidated this relationship of suspicion by withdrawing to the mission station those who had become Christians. Christianity seemed to be a religion which sought to destroy the communal nature of Shona life, hence giving rise to mistrust. It was therefore seen as a religion which was not part of village life, but a 'mission'[4] religion to which people had to go. Given the Shona people's understanding of life, this made Christianity 'other,' right from inception, so curtailing any chance of genuine dialogue.

---

[4] See Chapter two, p. 88, above for a discussion on 'Mission stations.'

It is important to note that, though the approach was not the most suitable one, seeds of the gospel were sown and aspects of Shona culture were transformed.[5] However, lack of opportunity for Christianity and Shona Traditional Religion to enter into dialogue, because of condemnation and confrontation, led to the embracing of dual observance. I would suggest that dual observance demonstrates the otherness of Christianity which has characterised the co-existence of the two religious belief systems, from their first encounter to the present. Some Shona people still do not see any way in which the two religious belief systems can be integrated,[6] especially in matters to do with death and the dead.

It can be argued that zeal made the missionaries fail to appreciate that Shona views of death and the dead needed time and space to develop[7], just as views of death and the dead had developed over time in their own home countries. This could be because of (a) a peculiar understanding of ministry and pastoral care. Clergy in the Church of England, through the parochial system, controlled the pastoral ministry of death and the dead. (b)

---

[5] Cf, Isa. 55:10-11, where the Lord says,"As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return from it without watering the earth ... so is my word that goes out from my mouth: it will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it."

[6] Evidence from field work, pp 409 and 414.

[7] There are three distinct stages through which the understanding of death in the west passed. They are (a) The Tame Death; where death was regarded as a "communal and public act whose approach could be anticipated and met with ritualised expression of mourning around the deathbed." (b) The Death of the Self; here, the 'individual' began to take centre stage. Instead of the communal view, individuals saw something of their own deaths in the deaths of others. The idea of a final judgement caught on marking a shift from universal salvation to individual judgement. (c) Remote and Imminent Death; during this period of development, people realised that death was everywhere and that all people were equal before it, so, people always had to be ready for it. Cf. D.W.Moller, Confronting Death, New York, Oxford:OUP,1996.

There was also a sense of religious superiority. Perhaps it is for these reasons that they condemned and confronted Shona views, and became overly prescriptive.[8] Unfortunately, this was adopted as the Christian approach, and is still used as such, in the Anglican Diocese of Harare. This leads us to conclude that Shona views of death and the dead have not been considered as relevant to the Christian life of the Diocese of Harare.

8.3 CHRISTIAN AND SHONA TRADITIONAL VIEWS

Christian and Shona traditional views of death and the dead, as we noted above, have always co-existed in parallel and, at times, as rivals. Anglican missionary Christianity saw, and continues to see Shona Traditional Religion as evil, while adherents of Shona Traditional Religion viewed, and continue to view Anglican missionary Christianity as insensitive to their views of death and the dead. This relationship of suspicion has been the fertile ground on which dual observance has thrived. In the face of condemnation and confrontation by the Anglican Church, the Shona people have clung to their traditional views as the only way of upholding their dignity and identity. Interestingly, they are happy to experiment with Christianity in their own way, so much so that they have developed a "popular Christianity" as opposed to the "official Christianity".[9] This is an indication that

[8] See chapter two, p.102.

[9] See Chapter four for the way in which Shona Christians have integrated the views of the two religious belief systems in the observances of death and in honour of the dead. Official Christianity is what the Anglican Church hierarchy teaches and popular Christianity is what the people practice, all need to be in dialogue with each other.

Christianity has something to offer to the Shona people; perhaps the Anglican church is failing to pass it on effectively.

This development of 'popular' and 'official' Christianity has rightly been seen as a problem by the Diocese of Harare. But because the Church did not appreciate how deep seated the traditional views of death and the dead were, it believed that they would die out as Shona people became more educated. So, instead of seeking to understand the Shona people's views, the diocese issued guidelines prescribing what the Shona people had to think and do in relation to death and the dead.[10] It is perhaps such tendencies which made the Church's pastoral care appear insensitive to the Shona people's views. On the other hand, the ordination of indigenous black clergy was seen as a step in the right direction, but because official thinking did not change, no specific attention was given to Shona views. Instead it was condemnation and confrontation as usual, even by the black clergy.

Even with an indigenous suffragan bishop, the diocese continued to prescribe how the Shona people should think and respond to issues relating to death and the dead.[11] This only helped to reinforce dual observance. In 1980, when Zimbabwe gained its independence, statements were made to the effect that the recognition of Shona traditional views of death and the dead was long overdue. However, no practical steps were taken to

---

[10] Especially Chapter two, 'Church literature on burial,' p.102.

[11] See discussion on 'Pastoral Regulations' in Chapter two p.106/7.

reflect the seriousness of these statements. The missionary era came to an end in 1981 with condemnation and confrontation firmly established as the official Christian approach to traditional Shona views of death and the dead. Another indigenous clergyman became the first diocesan bishop of the Diocese of Harare, where indigenous Shona clergy were already in the majority. In 1993 a Commission of Enquiry was set up to investigate this long-standing problem. Surprisingly, the Commission's report was dismissed out of hand, by a majority of Shona people at the 1994 Synod. In the meantime popular Christianity was gaining ground.

One might be persuaded to accept that the missionaries' approach to Shona traditional views of death and the dead was prompted by fear, ignorance, suspicion and sheer neglect of anthropological insights. Add to this the conviction and enthusiasm which Gann notes in the evangelists who took the Anglican Church from South Africa to the Far North (Zimbabwe). He says of them:

> Early evangelists - black and white - took their lives into their hands by going to the Far North; they did not go to analyse, synthesize or apologise, they went to fight Satan and all his works; they took risks because they believed they were fighting evil, and evil brooked no compromise.[12]

It is difficult to find such justification for a similar approach to Shona traditional views by Shona clergy, given that the diocese is under indigenous leadership. It is most probable that the relationship of suspicion is subconsciously being upheld in the name of 'good'

---

[12] L.H.Gann, A History of Southern Rhodesia, p.206.

Anglican practice. This could perhaps be an indication of lack of contextual theological reflection. In which case, a theological method which allows the Anglican Church to re-examine its own approach, self-understanding and relevance among the Shona people could be a natural and lasting solution to this problem.

It is with this in mind that we submit an approach which shifts the emphasis from 'officialdom' to the whole people of God, with the aim of meeting their spiritual needs. The tendency has been for the hierarchy to identify the problem and then provide what they think is the solution. Such an approach always started from the biased position which holds that Shona Traditional Religion is evil.[13] The model we propose recognizes that Shona Traditional Religion has an important place in the lives of its adherents, offering them what Christian rituals do not seem adequately to provide. For that reason it should be taken seriously as a formative factor of a sound contextual theology of death and the dead. This model does not only address the problem, it also seeks to help the Anglican Church honestly to evaluate its ministry among the Shona people.

The interactive dialogical model, through dialogue and interaction, seeks a mutual drawing out of the essentials in both Christianity and Shona Traditional Religion with reference to views of death and the dead. It seeks amicably to break down the walls of suspicion that

---

[13] See Chapter four p.204, 'The dialogue,' for what we said with reference to why the three official attempts to solve the problem of dual observance failed.

have existed between the two belief systems, providing each side with an opportunity to articulate itself. Popular religion and official Anglicanism are given a chance to wrestle with their different views. Such an approach has the potential to help both the Anglican Church and Shona Traditional Religion to each appreciate and articulate the significance of Jesus Christ, and so break the dual observance for Shona Christians.

While this model is a critique of present practices of the Anglican Church it also offers a way forward. The insights gained in the process of dialogue and interaction point to a solution. It challenges Shona Christians to demonstrate, in their own way, what it means to be a Christian. We use the words 'Shona Christians' to emphasize that such Christians will be upholding their traditional views and expressing them openly as part of their faith.[14]

8.4 TOWARDS A SYNTHESIS

Before mapping a way forward, it is fitting to make a few submissions based on the research findings. First, it is my submission that there is no such thing as a "Christian burial", but, rather the "burial of a Christian". There are two arguments to support this observation, (a) Jesus Christ, on whom the Christian claims hinge, does not seem to have

---

[14] This model also corrects the mistaken thinking that it is the preaching of the Church which converts. When the Church preaches conversion it is only doing its duty, but the actual act of converting is done by the Holy Spirit. If this is born in mind, then the condemnatory and confrontational approaches will be seen for what they are - misguided enthusiasm.

been buried according to any practice we can recognise as distinctly Christian. Instead, he was buried according to Jewish custom.[15] (b) The so-called Christian burials, and practices around them, developed over a period of time, and down the years have incorporated practices which had little to do with Christ.[16] At the burial of a Christian, Christ is the focus,[17] and the Christian is commended into the fellowship of those who share the risen Christ's eternity. At a Christian burial, Christian liturgy is the focus. In the writer's view, popular Christianity undertakes the "burial of Christians",[18] and the Anglican Church, "Christian burials". This helps to explain why Shona Christians experiment freely with Christianity, while finding it difficult to go along with the Anglican Church's official teaching. Christianity is broader than the denominations, hence the need for interactive dialogue.

Secondly, following from the above, there seem to be neither theological nor pastoral reasons to justify the condemnation of Shona traditional views of death and the dead. The Shona people, even in popular religion, see the hand of God in death and acknowledge his sovereignty over the dead. They hold that unless God wills it, a person cannot die simply because the ancestors have withdrawn their protective powers, which ironically,

---

[15] Shona burial customs have similarities with Jewish burial customs, (i) they share the same sentiments about death which are (ii) based on similar worldviews.

[16] See P.Aries, Western Attitudes towards death, op.cit.

[17] See chapter five, p.258, 'The interactive dialogical model.'

[18] See Chapter four for 'present practices,' particularly how official Christianity and "popular" or "folk" Christianity are integrated.

they are given by God.[19] This gives Shona views both theological and pastoral integrity. Instead of writing them off, the Anglican Church could seek to find out why they have held their own for so long. The best way of doing this is to adopt the interactive dialogical model.[20]

Thirdly, interpreting 1 Thessalonians 4:13 as authority to forbid wailing and weeping in the face of death is misplaced, and probably outdated when it comes to pastoral counselling. Such interpretation reflects the official Anglican thinking, where the Church tells people what to think and how to react to death.[21] It does not recognise that death whips up emotions. In most cases the relationship which prevailed between the deceased and the bereaved intensifies the emotional reactions. Good pastoral care and counselling should be aware of this in order to accommodate and provide for it. So by suppressing the traditional Shona wailing and weeping in the name of faith, the Church is ignoring the psychological need for emotional expression. "The good, healthy bewailing cry of grief should be accepted as normal rather than be treated as sick."[22]

---

[19] See the shift in Chapter four, p.188.

[20] See Chapter four, p.258 for a full discussion on the interactive dialogical model.

[21] See what we said about the *Rwendo rweMuKristu* and the Pastoral Guidelines, under 'Church literature on burial,' p.102.

[22] M. Rawlings, Before Death Comes, London: Sheldon Press, 1980, p.84.

Fourthly, in the light of the commandment, "Honour your father and mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you" (Exodus 20:12), condemning the Shona people's views is perhaps not necessary. What makes it unnecessary is the fact that one's parents remain one's parents, whether they are alive or not. People refer to their deceased parents as 'my late father or mother.' If we take the communal nature of Shona life seriously, one's parents, whether dead or alive, are an integral part of the community and should be honoured. With regard to death and the dead, this commandment touches the core of Shona relationships, because the Shona people "live with their dead."[23] It is clear therefore that, from a cultural perspective, for the Shona people, honouring one's parents does not end with their death. The complexity of this religio-cultural situation justifies dialogue between biblical and traditional Shona views.

Finally, it is perhaps useful to discuss the 'communion of saints' at this stage, since it has connections with some of the concerns raised above. The Christian phrase is employed to emphasize that the 'communion of saints' is based on (a) the saints' communion with the Father through the Son.[24](b) They also have communion with each other through the Spirit (2 Cor. 13:13). This covers the 'saints' both living or departed. For the Shona people both understandings make sense from the point of view of the communal nature of life. The

---

[23] An expression from C.G.Baeta, cited by E.W.Fashole-Luke, "Ancestor Veneration and the Communion of Saints," in M.E.Glasswell and E.W.Fashole-Luke (eds) New Testament Christianity for Africa and the World, London: SPCK, 1974, p.210.

[24] A.. Richardson & J. Bowden, (eds) A New Dictionary of Christian Theology, London: SCM Press, 1983, p.114. It echoes 1 John 1: 3f.

understandings become even more comprehensible when we define a saint as a canonized person regarded as having a place in heaven, or as a holy person. Obviously, for one to become a saint in this sense, one must have died. The canonizing is done by people who obviously have a desire to remain in communion with the deceased, for good religious reasons. It is important to note that for one to be considered to be in communion, in the Shona setting, he or she should have lived a socially responsible life. With this at the back of our minds, there is nothing to justify condemning the Shona Christians for claiming to have communion with their deceased, as long as they do so within the parameters of the Christian faith, that is, they should do so from the joy of being in Christ.[25] However, there is a need to understand their views better.

My thesis is this; there is no reason for retaining condemnation and confrontation as a viable theological approach to Shona views of death and the dead. It is my submission that there are no anthropological, or biblical, or ecclesiastical, or pastoral, or psychological, or sociological, or theological grounds to sustain its continued use. Its resultant dual observance is equally undesirable, serving a negative purpose. Taking our cue from the Shona traditional religious understanding of life, where 'religion permeates all life,'[26] a synthesis of Christian and Shona views of death is defensible; that is, 'official' and 'popular'

---

[25] St. Paul says, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he or she is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" 2 Cor. 5:17.

[26] See Chapter one, p.16, particularly explanatory footnote no. 2, and Chapter three.

views of death[27] should engage in interactive dialogue. Orthodoxy and ortho-praxis should complement each other, to produce a Shona Christian theology of death.

8.5 THE WAY FORWARD

We identified dual observance as an unnecessary burden that some Shona Christians have to live with. To be able to offer relevant ministry and pastoral care the Anglican Diocese of Harare has to locate Shona views of death and the dead within their cultural and social context. To facilitate this, the diocese has to be prepared to face reality from a Shona view point. This will assist the diocese honestly and seriously to establish why dual observance still exists , in spite of all its efforts to eradicate it. In the light of the fact that the Anglican Church has been in Zimbabwe for over one hundred years, this remains a relevant question. So asking that question will enable the diocese to re-assess its own self-understanding, and help it to clarify its aim or mission and purpose among the Shona people. It is my submission that there is need for a different theological approach to this pastoral reality; interactive dialogue should be part of the ongoing apologetical, pedagogical and contextualization process.

Since adopting new methods is difficult, the viability of the whole process demands an element of re-education for all involved. Such education should aim at changing attitudes,

---

[27] See Chapter six.

particularly those of the Church's hierarchy.[28] Through dialogue and interaction the educational method aims at enabling the Church to re-learn the implications of the incarnation; how Christ became part of the Jewish context, to the extent of synthesizing contemporary beliefs. The hope is that this process will lead to an enriching contextual re-reading of the Bible which could help the Church officialdom to extricate itself from the colonial mentality and obsolete traditions. To use a phrase from Roland Allen; so that the Church officialdom may learn not to "fear for the doctrine."[29]

When the Anglican Church has redefined its purpose, revised the relevance of both its ministry and pastoral care, and re-examined its theological methods and approaches, it should be ready to move forward. This search for contextual sensitivity can be facilitated by three basic assumptions relating to the Church's preparedness. First, the Church should be prepared to learn from its own history.[30] Secondly, it should be willing to learn from popular Anglican Christianity. Thirdly, it should be inclined to learn from other

---

[28] Ralph Peter Hatendi, the Bishop who was instrumental in setting up the 1993 Commission of Enquiry "maintains that a Christian is one who turns away completely on conversion from his or her old way of life, embraces in its entirety the new life of Christ. Therefore a church member who continues to follow traditional religious practices is not fully converted. Among its responsibilities, the church should foster the complete conversion of its members. Although Christians are to honour their parents in terms of the Fifth Commandment, this is not a warrant for praying to the ancestors." Cited in P.D.E. Bertram, The Kurovaguva Ceremony and some Responses of the Churches and their Members, (Unpublished) University of Zimbabwe, B.A. Honours Thesis, 1992, p.28. This is an example of rhetoric by church leadership; it gives the impression that the Church's teaching is adequate, if there is anything lacking, it is the convert's fault.

[29] R.Allen, The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church, p.43.

[30] In this study we have highlighted a lot of historical baggage which needs to be shed.

denominations and also Anglicans elsewhere in Africa who have addressed these issues. Such a predisposition will help to balance the theological and pastoral aspects of its ministry.[31]

To do this effectively, the Anglican Diocese of Harare probably needs to consider establishing a Theological or Pastoral Committee, as opposed to a Commission of Enquiry.[32] Such a Committee could have the responsibility for overseeing the ongoing dialogue and interaction with traditional Shona views, and engaging in research on how other provinces in the Anglican communion have dealt with such issues. This could also include researching into other denominations. The appropriateness of the contextualization process could be left to this Committee, which could experiment with burial liturgies as it deems fit. Whenever there is Synod, this Committee should share something of its ongoing work and receive comments, insights, queries and questions from members.

Another area which needs looking at, as part of the way forward, is clergy training. Teaching methods, content and approach, need some revision if the contextual nature of theology is to be realized. Perhaps it is important to point out that clergy should not be

---

[31] I draw attention to a paper which could be used in pointing out that synthesizing Christian and traditional Shona views of death and the dead is not a hit and run exercise. It demonstrates how the pastoral aspect can be developed by encouraging the theological involvement of the church in the preliminary arrangements for the *kurova guva* ceremony. X. Marimazhira, Kurova Guva Rites and Procedures, p.440.

[32] The Committee, as its name suggests, has to deal with relevant theological and liturgical issues which need addressing. My preference for a Committee stems from the observation that a Commission of Enquiry suggests a limited and specific engagement. Once the pressing need is over the Commission has accomplished its work. I see this as an ongoing reflection exercise.

trained to see Shona traditional views, or any other indigenous views, as necessarily opposed to Christianity. Their theological reflection should enable them to realise that such views are part of the context within which they will be serving. I would suggest that an approach to training which seeks to equip clergy for a mutual understanding of the context of their ministry and pastoral care, without fear of losing control, is the most appropriate.

Learning from one's mistakes is a very edifying, but humbling undertaking, which the diocese should take on board. In a number of attempts by the Anglican Church to address the pastoral problem of dual observance, it has offered solutions which have not helped much. But, if there is to be progress, the context has to be understood, and all key players identified. As we have noted, Shona views of death and the dead do not simply relate to death and the dead, but to the whole understanding of humanity. The same is true of the ceremonies and rituals which are engaged as a means of coping with these life changes. So in our quest for theological contextualization, the totality of human existence has to be appreciated from a Shona perspective. This helps to inform the theological and pastoral approaches to be adopted.[33]

---

[33] Though this could be said of the missionary approaches, what makes it different is what Paul in the letter to the Philippians calls the motive "of goodwill." Phil. 1:15. The interactive dialogical model is liturgically, pastorally and theologically sensitive, with the aim of enabling the Shona Christians to integrate the faith into their worldviews, see Chapter six for an elaborate discussion.

We have come full circle to realise that the words of Pope Gregory the Great to Augustine contained godly wisdom. They were words which sought to make the Christian faith take root in the English context using familiar imagery, practices and symbols. Pope Gregory's letter was written on June 22, 601, and excerpts from it, as cited by Margaret Deanesly read:

> Pagan temples (*fana idolorum*) are not to be destroyed among that people, but the idols among them must be destroyed: 'let holy water be sprinkled in the temples, altars built, and relics set there'. This must be done especially if the temples are well built. People will resort to the temples the more readily if they are used to frequenting them. 'And because many oxen have been wont to be sacrificed to demons, in this matter also there should be some substitution of solemnity: on dedication days, or the feasts of the holy martyrs whose relics have been set there, let them make tabernacles of boughs of trees around these churches which used to be pagan fanes, and keep the solemn day with religious feasting: let them not sacrifice animals to the devil but slaughter them for their own eating to the praise of God, so that while certain external joys are preserved for them, they may the more readily share in internal joys.'[34]

If only the early Anglican missionaries to the then Mashonaland had cared to learn a lesson from their own past, their methods of approach to what appeared heathen to them would have been different.[35] The relationship of suspicion might not have developed, and

---

[34] M. Deanesley, The Pre-Conquest Church in England, London: Adam &Charles Black, 1961, p. 52. Contents of the same letter are also found in W. Hunt, A History of the English Church from its Foundation to the Norman Conquest 597-1066, London: Macmillan & Co Ltd, 1901, pp. 32-3. In the latter work the pagan background to some of the Christian festivals is given.

[35] Article xxiv of the 39 Articles of the Church of England composed in relation to Rome is an excellent statement of contextual theology from the 17th century with roots in the 16th century. Speaking of the traditions of the Church, it says, "it is not necessary that traditions and ceremonies be in all places one, or utterly like, for at all times they have been diverse, and may be changed according to the diversity of Countries, times, and men's manners, so that nothing be ordained against God's word.... Every particular or national Church, has authority to ordain, change, and abolish ceremonies or rites of the Church ordained only by man's authority, so that all things be done to edifying." O.O'Donovan, On the Thirty Nine Articles: A Conversation with Tudor Christianity, Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1986, pp.150-1.

dual observance would not be presenting itself as a pastoral problem. Revisiting their approach to the Shona people with a view to learning from it is a positive way forward. In this study we have attempted to do just that. We took our cue from the words of the late David Bosch who said, "we reflect on the past not just for the past's sake; rather, we look upon it as a compass - and who would use a compass only to ascertain from where he or she has come?"[36]

I am fully aware that in writing on this subject I am joining an ongoing theological debate from a specific perspective. In this way I am emphasizing that the need for contextual theological reflection is ever before us. It is therefore my prayer that this study will provoke some response. The following issues demand urgent examination: Shona Spirituality; the relevance of traditional Anglican liturgy to Shona Christians; and the place of traditional Shona religious songs and instruments in the worship of the Anglican Church in Zimbabwe.

---

[36] D.J.Bosch, Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1991, p.189.

Wilson T. Sitshebo
Towards a theological synthesis of Christian and shona views of death and the dead

Thesis (Ph.D) - University of Birmingham, Faculty of Arts, Department of Theology, 2001

The appendices are not available in this digital version

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abraham, K.C., (ed) Third World Theologies: Commonalities and Divergences, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1990

Adeyemo,T., Salvation in African Tradition, Kenya: Evangelical Publishing House, 1970

Aries, P., Western Attitudes towards Death from the Middle Ages to the Present, translated by Patricia M. Ranum, Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1974

Allen, R., Missionary Methods: St Paul's or Ours, Grand Rapids, Michigan: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1962

Allen, R., The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church: And the Causes which hinder it, Grand Rapids, Michigan: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1962

Alves, R., What is Religion, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1991

Anderson, G.H. & Stransky, T.F. Mission Trends No 3: Third World Theologies, New York, Ramsey, Toronto: Paulist Press and Grand Rapids: Eerdmanns Publishing Co., 1976.

Appiah-Kubi, K., & Torres, S., (eds) African Theology en Route, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1979

Arnold, W.E., Here to stay: The Story of the Anglican church in Zimbabwe, Sussex: The Book Guild Ltd, 1985

Arnold, W.V., Introduction to Pastoral Care, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982

Aschwanden, H., Karanga Mythology: An analysis of the consciousness of the Karanga in Zimbabwe, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1989

Augsburger, D.W., Pastoral Counselling Across Cultures, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1986

Badham, P., Christian Beliefs About Life after Death, London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1976

Baeta, C.G. Christianity in Tropical Africa , London: OUP, 1969

Baillie, J., And the Life Everlasting, London: OUP, 1934

Bahemuka, J.M., "The hidden Christ in African Traditional religion," in J.N.K. Mugambi & L.Magesa (eds) Jesus in African Christianity: Experimentation and diversity in African Christology, Nairobi: Initiatives Publishers, 1986

Bakare, S., My Right to Land: A Theology of Land in Zimbabwe, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1994

Bakare, S., Jubilee in an African Context: The Drumbeat of Life, Geneva: WCC Publications, 1997

Ballard, P. & Pritchard, J., Practical Theology in Action: Christian Thinking in the service of church and society, London: S P C K, 1996

Banana, C. S., Come and Share: An Introduction to Christian Theology, Uppsala: Swedish Institute of Missionary Research, 1991

Barth, K., The Resurrection of the Dead, London: Hodder & Stouton Ltd, 1933

Bascom, W.R., & Herskovits, M.J., (eds) Continuity and Change in African Cultures, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959

Baur, J., 2000 years of Christianity in Africa: An African history 62-1992, Nairobi, Kenya: Pauline Publications Africa, 1994

Beach, D.N., Zimbabwe Before 1900, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1984

Beach, D.N., War and Politics in Zimbabwe 1840-1900, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1986

Beckford, R., Jesus is Dread: Black Theology and Black Culture in Britain, London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1998

Bediako, K., Theology and Identity: The impact of culture upon Christian thought in the second century and modern Africa, Oxford Regnum Books, 1992

Bediako, K., Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1995

Beguerie, P. & Duchesneau, C., How to Understand the Sacraments, London: SCM Press, 1989

Berdyaev, N., The Beginning and the End, London: Geoffrey Bles, 1952

Berdyaev, N., The Destiny of Man, London: Geoffrey Bles, 1954

Berens, D., (et.al.) A Concise Encyclopedia of Zimbabwe, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1988

Bernhardt, R., Christianity Without Absolutes, London: SCM Press, 1994

Bertram, P.D.E., The Kurovaguva Ceremony and Some Responses of the Churches and their Members, Unpublished B.A. Honours Thesis, University of Zimbabwe, 1992

Beuken, W. & Freyne, S., The Bible as Cultural Heritage, London: SCM Press, 1995

Bevans, S.B., Models of Contextual Theology, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1992

Bhebe, N., Christianity and African Traditional Religion in Western Zimbabwe 1859-1923, London: Longman Group Ltd, 1979

Blaxter, L. Hughes, C. & Tight, M., (eds) How to Research, Buckingham. Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1996

Boff, L., Trinity and Society, Tunbridge Wells, Kent: Burns and Oates, 1988

Bosch, D.J., Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1991

Bourdillon, M.F.C., Religion and Society, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1979

Bourdillon, M.F.C., The Shona Peoples: An Ethnography of the Contemporary Shona, with Special Reference to their Religion, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1976

Bourdillon, M.F.C., Where are the Ancestors? Changing Culture in Zimbabwe, Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications, 1993

Bowker, J., (ed) The Complete Bible Handbook, London. New York. Sydney. Moscow: Dorling Kindersley, 1998

Bozongwana,W., Ndebele Religion and Customs, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1983

Britten, B., We Don't Want Your White Religion, Lusaka: Multimedia Publications, 1984

Brown, C., (ed) The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, Vol.1, Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1975

Brown, G.R., (et al.) Arthur Shearly Cripps: A Selection of his Prose and Verse, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1976

Brown, P., The Cult of the Saints: Its rise and function in Latin Christianity, London: SCM Press, 1981

Brunner, E., Christianity and Civilization, London: Nisbet & Co Ltd, 1948

Bujo, B., African Theology, Nairobi: St Pauls Publications,1992

Bultman, R., What is Theology, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1977

Cadorette, C., (et.al) Liberation Theology: An Introductory Reader, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992

Carr, W., The Pastor as Theologian: The Intergration of Pastoral Ministry, Theology and Discipleship, London: S P C K, 1989

Carr, W., Handbook of Pastoral Studies: Learning and Practicing Christian Ministry, London: SPCK, 1997

Carrell, B., Moving between Times, Modernity and Post Modernity: A Christian View, Aukland, New Zealand: The Deep Sea Trust, 1998

Cassidy, M., The Passing Summer, Ventura, California: Regal Books, 1990

Chabudapasi, T., "Three Ceremonies for the Dead," in Clive & Peggy Kilef (eds) Shona Customs, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1970

Chadwick, O., The Victorian Church Part 11 1860-1901, London: SCM Press,1970

Chambati, A.M., "Africans and the Struggle for their Rights in Rhodesia 1923-1972," in S.E. Wilmer (et al) Zimbabwe Now, London: Rex Collings, 1972

Chavunduka, G.L., Traditional Healers and the Shona Patient, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1978

Chimbera, G., "Burial ceremony," in J.L. Cox (ed) Rational Ancestors: Scientific Rationality and African Indigenous Religions, Cardiff: Cardiff Academic Press, 1998

Clebsch,W.A.;& Jaekle, C.R. Pastoral Care in Historical Perspective, New York: Harper, 1976

Cohn-Sherbok, D., On Earth as it is in Heaven, Jews Christians and Liberation Theology, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1987

Cokins, G.O., Retrieving Fundamental Theology: The three styles of contemporary theology, London: Geoffrey Chapman & USA: Paulist Press, 1993

Cone, J. H. & Wilmore, G.S.,(eds) Black Theology: a documentary history volume one:1966-1979, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1993

Cone, J.H., & Wilmore, G.S.,(eds) Black Theology: a documentary history volume two:1980-1992, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1996

Connolly, P., Approaches to the Study of Religion, London and New York: Cassell, 1999

Cox, J.L., The Impact of Christian Missions on the Indigenous Cultures: The "Real People" and the Unreal Gospel, Lewiston/Queenston/Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1991

Cox, J.L., Rational Ancestors: Scientific Rationality and African Indigenous Religions, Cardiff: Cardiff Academic Press, 1998

Cuppitt, D., The Last Philosophy, London: SCM Press, 1995

Curtin, P.D., The Image of Africa: British Ideas and Action, 1780-1850, Volume 2, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1964

Daneel, I., Quest for Belonging, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1987

Daneel, M.L., Old and New in Southern Shona Independent Churches Vol. 1: Background and Rise of the Major Movements, The Hague: Mouton, 1971

Daneel, M.L., Missiology: Guide 2 for MSB302-G (The Independent Churches in Africa), Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1982

Daneel, M. L., "Mwari the Liberator: Oracular Interventions in Zimbabwe's Quest for the 'Lost Lands,'" in J.L. Cox (ed) Rites of Passage in Contemporary Africa, Cardiff: Cardiff Academic Press, 1998

Davies, J.G., Dialogue with the World, London: SCM Press, 1967

Deanesley, M., The Pre-Conquest Church in England, London: Adam & Charles Black, 1961

De Mesa, J.M., & Wostyn, L.L., Doing Theology: Basic Realities and Processes, Manila: Wellspring Books, 1982

De Waal, V., The Politics of Reconciliation: Zimbabwe's first Decade, London: Hurst & Company, 1990

Dickson, K, A., Theology in Africa, London: Darton Longman & Todd Ltd, 1984

Dillon-Malone, C.M., The Korsten Basketmakers: A Study of the Masowe Apostles an indigenous African Religious Movement, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1978

Dyrness, W., Themes in Old Testament Theology, Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1979

Edwards, D., The Last things now, London: SCM, 1968

Ela, J., My Faith as an African, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988

Elliott, M., Freedom, Justice and Christian Counter-Culture, London: SCM Press/Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990

Ellis, M. H., Toward a Jewish Theology of Liberation, London: SCM Press, 1987

Evans, St John T., The Church in Southern Rhodesia, London: SPCK, 1945

Ezeanya, S.N., "God, Spirits and the Spirit World: with specific reference to Igbo speaking people of Southern Nigeria," in K.Dickson & P. Ellingworth (eds) Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs, Lutterworth Press, 1972

Fanon, F., The Wretched of the Earth, Gt. Britain: Macgibbon & Kee, 1965

Farrant, J.C., Mashonaland Martyr: Bernard Mizeki and the Pioneer Church, Cape Town, O.U.P., 1966

Fashole-Luke, E., "Ancestor Veneration and the Communion of Saints," in M.E. Glasswell & E.W. Fashole-Luke (eds) New Testament Christianity for Africa and the World: Essays in honour of Harry Sawyer, London: SPCK, 1974

Flindall, R.P., The Church of England 1815-1948, London: SPCK, 1972

Fohrer, G., History of Israelite Religion, (translated by D.E.Green) London: SPCK, 1973

Foster, J., The First Advance: Church History 1 AD29-500 - TEF Guide 5, London: SPCK, 1972

Freire, P., Cultural Action for Freedom, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Penguin Books, 1972

Fulljames, J., God and Creation in Intercultural Perspective: Dialogue between the Theologies of Barth, Dickson. Pobee, Nyamiti and Pannenberg, Frankfurt am Main; Berlin; Bern; New York; Paris; Wien: Lang, 1993

Gann, L.H., A History of Southern Rhodesia: Early Days to 1934, London: Chatto & Windus, 1965

Gehman, R.J., Doing African Theology: An Evangelical Perspective, Kenya: Evangelical Publishing House, 1987

Gehman, R.J., African Traditional Religion, Nairobi: East Africa Educational Publishers Ltd, 1989

Gehman, R.J., African Traditional Religion in Biblical Perspective, Kenya: Kijabe Printing Press, 1993

Gelfand, M., Shona Religion, Cape Town: Juta & Co Ltd, 1962

Gelfand, M., The Genuine Shona: Survival Values of an African Culture, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1973

Gelfand, M., Growing up in Shona Society, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1979

Gelfand, M., UKAMA: Reflections on Shona and Western Cultures in Zimbabwe, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1981

Geswell, J.W., Research Design: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches, California: Sage Publications, 1994

Gilbert, A.D., Religion and Society in Industrial England: Church, Chapel and Social Change 1740-1914, London: Longman Group Ltd, 1976

Glasswell, M.E. & Fashole-Luke, E.W., (eds) New Testament Christianity for Africa and the world: Essays in honour of Harry Sawyer: London: SPCK, 1974

Goodall, N., (ed) Missions under the Cross. Addresses delivered at the Enlarged Meeting of the Committee of the International Missionary Council at Willingen, Germany,in 1952; with Statements issued by the Meeting, London: Edinburgh House Press, 1953

Graham, E., Making the Difference: Gender, Personhood and Theology, London: Mowbray, 1995

Gundani, P., "The Roman Catholic Church and the *Kurova Guva* Ritual in Zimbabwe," in J.L.Cox (ed) Rites of Passage in Contemporary Africa, Cardiff: Cardiff academic Press, 1998

Gurevich, A., Medieval Popular culture: Problems of belief and perception, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988

Gurney, O.R., The Hittites: A Summary of the art, achievements, and social organisation of the great people of Asia Minor in the second millennium B. C., as discovered by modern excavations, Melborne. London. Baltimore Penguin Books, 1952

Gutierrez, G., A Theology of Liberation, London: SCM Press, 1974

Gutierrez, G., The God of Life, London: SCM Press, 1991

Hampson, J., Old Age: A Study of Aging in Zimbabwe, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1982

Hannan, M., Standard Shona Dictionary (revised edition with addendum), Harare, Bulawayo: The College Press, in conjunction with The Literature Bureau, reprinted1987

Hastings, A., African Catholicism: Essays in Discovery, London: SCM Press/Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1989

Hastings, A., The Oxford History of the Church: The Church in Africa 1450-1950, Oxford: Claredon Press, 1994

Hatendi, P., "Shona Marriage and the Christian Churches," in J.A. Dachs, Christianity South of the Zambezi Vol. 1, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1973

Hatch, J., A History of Postwar Africa, London: Andre Deutsch, 1965

Healey, J. & Sybertz, D., Towards an African Narrative Theology, Maryknoll New York: Orbis books, 1996

Heaton, E.W., Everyday Life in the Old Testament Times, London: B T Batsford Ltd, 1956

Hennelly, A.T., (ed) Liberation Theology: A Documentary History, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1990

Hesselgrave, D.J., Communicating Christ Cross-culturally: An Introduction to Missionary Communication, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978

Hesselgrave, D.J., & Rommen, E., Contextualization: Meanings, Methods and Models, Leicester: Apollos, 1989

Hick, J., Death and Eternal Life, London: Collins & Co, 1976

Hill, C., The Real World of the New Testament, Ongar, Essex: C-L Publications, 1976

Hinfelaar, H.F., Bemba-speaking women of Zambia in a Century of Religious Change (1892-1992), The Netherlands: E.J.Brill, 1994

Hinton, M., The Anglican Parochial Clergy: A celebration, London: SCM Press, 1994

Hodgson, P.C. & King, R.H., (eds) Christian Theology: An Introduction to its traditions and tasks, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, (Second edition) 1988, pp. 35-60

Hoekema, A.A., The Bible and the Future, Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1978

Holleman, J.F. Accommodating the spirit among some North-Eastern Shona Tribes, Rhodes-Livingstone Paper No.22, London: Rhodes-Livingstone Trust, 1953

Honderich, T., (ed) The Oxford Companion to Philosophy, Oxford: OUP, 1995

House, J., (et.al) Zimbabwe: A Handbook, Harare: Mercury Press (Pvt) Ltd, 1983

Hunt, W., A History of the English church from its Foundation to the Norman Conquest 597-1066, London: Macmillan & Co Ltd, 1901

Hutton, W.H., The English Church: From the Accession of Charles1 to the Death of Anne 1625-1714, London: Macmillan & Co Ltd, 1903

Idowu, E.B., African Traditional Religion: A Definition, London: SCM Press Ltd, 1973

Imasogie,O., Guidelines for Christian Theology in Africa, Worthing: African Christian Press, 1983

Imbisa, Inculturation: The Faith that takes root in African Cultures, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1993

Inbody, T.L., The Transforming God: An interpretation of suffering and evil, Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster /John Knox Press, 1997

Isichei, E., A History of Christianity in Africa: from antiquity to the present, London: SPCK, 1995

Jeanrond, W., (2nd Impression) Theological Hermeneutics: Development and Significance, London: SCM Press, 1997

Jensen, R. W., Essays in Theology of Culture, Grand Rapids, Michigan: William Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1995

Kalu, O.U., "Church Presence in Africa: A Historical Analysis of the Evangelisation Process," in Kofi Appiah-Kubi & Sergio Torres (eds) African Theology en Route, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1979

Karotemprel, S., (ed) Following Christ in Mission: A Foundation Course in Missiology, Bombay: Pauline Publications, 1995

Kearl, M.C., Endings: A Sociology of Death and Dying, Oxford: O.U.P., 1989

Kendall, E., The End of an era: Africa and the missionary, London: SPCK, 1979

Kidd, D., Kafir Socialism and the dawn of Individualism: An Introduction to the study of the Native problem, London: Adam and Charles Black, 1908

King, N.J., African Cosmos, Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Co, 1986

Kumbirai, J., "*Kurova Guva* and Christianity," in M.F.C. Bourdillon (ed) Christianity South of the Zambezi Vol. 2, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1977

Kummel, W., Promise and Fulfilment, London: SCM, 1957

Kung, H., Eternal Life, London: Fount, 1985 (Translated by Edward Quinn)

Kuper, H., (et al) The Shona and Ndebele of Southern Rhodesia, London: International African Institute, 1954

Kurewa, J.W.Z., Biblical Proclamation for Africa Today, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995

Ladd, G., Jesus and the Kingdom, London: SPCK, 1966

Lan, D., Guns & Rain: Guerillas & Spirit Mediums in Zimbabwe, London: James Currey, 1985

Lartey, E.Y., Pastoral Counselling in Inter-Cultural Perspective, Frankfurt am Main, Bern. New York: Verlag Peter Lang, 1987

Lartey, E.Y., In Living Colour: An intercultural approach to Pastoral Care and Counselling, London: Cassell, 1997

Lewis, C., The Great Divorce, London: Geoffrey Bles, The Centenery Press, 1945

Lewis, C., A Grief Observed, London: Faber & Faber, 1961

Leys, C., European Politics in Southern Rhodesia, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959

Linton, R., The Cultural Background of personality, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1947

Loades, N., (ed) Feminist Theology: A Reader, London: SPCK, 1993

Lowe, J., Rivalry and Accord: International Relations1870-1914, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1988

Lowrie, D., Christian Existensialism, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1965

Lucas, W.V., Christianity and Native Rites, London: Central Africa House Press, 1950

Luey, B., Handbook for Academic Authors, (3rd edition) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995

Lyall, D., Counselling in the Pastoral and Spiritual Context, Buckingham. Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1995

Mackenzie, J.M., The Partition of Africa 1880-1900 and European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century, London and New York: Methuen & Co Ltd, 1983

Mackintosh, R., Christianity and Sin, London: Duchworth, 1913

Macquarrie, J., An Existentialist Theology, London: SCM Press, 1960

Macquarrie, J., Principles of Christian Theology, London: SCM Press, 1966

Macquarrie, J., The Faith of the People of God: A Lay Theology, London: SCM,1972

Macquarrie, J., In Search of Humanity: A Theological and Philosophical Approach, London: SCM Press, 1982

Magava, E. B., Ndebele people and their Ancestral Spirits BUT no table of the Lord with the table of Demons, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1986

Magava, E.B., "African Customs connected with the burial of the dead in Rhodesia," in J.A. Dachs, Christianity South of the Zambezi, Vol. 1, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1973

Magesa, L., African Religion: The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life, Maryknoll New York, 1997

Makhubu, P., Who are the Independent Churches? Johannesburg: Skotaville Publishers, 1988

Makuvise, T.F., "Christian and Traditional Funeral," in J.L., Cox (ed) Rational Ancestors: Scientific Rationality and African Indigebous Religions, Cardiff: Cardiff Academic Press, 1998

Malina, B.J., Windows on the World of Jesus: Time Travel to Ancient Judea, Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press,1993

Mandaza, D.M., "Traditional Ceremonies which Persist," in Clive & Peggy Kilef (eds) Shona Customs, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1970

Martey, E., African Theology: Inculturation and Liberation, Maryknoll New York: Orbis Books, 1993

Martin, D. & Johnson, P. The Struggle for Zimbabwe: The Chimurenga War, London: Faber and Faber, 1981

Mason, P., The birth of a Dilemma: The Conquest and Settlement of Rhodesia, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958

Mbiti, J.S., Concepts of God in Africa, London: SPCK, 1970

Mbiti, J. S., New Testament Eschatology in an African Background, Oxford: OUP, 1971

Mbiti, J.S., Bible and Theology in African Christianity, Oxford: OUP, 1972

Mbiti, J. S., An Introduction to African Religion, London: Heinemann, 1975

Mbiti, J.S., The Prayers of African Religion, London: SPCK, 1975

Mbiti, J. S., African Religions and Philosophy, Oxford: Heinemann, 1990

McDonagh, E., The Demands of Simple Justice: A Study of the Church, Politics and Violence with special reference to Zimbabwe, Dublin: Gill & Macmillan Ltd, 1980

McGrath, A.E., The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Modern Christian Thought, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1993

McGrath, M., & Gregorie, N., Africa: Our way as God's people, London: Mission Book Service, 1981

McGovern, A.F., Liberation Theology and its Critics, Toward an Assessment, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989

Meredith, M., The Past is Another Country: Rhodesia 1890-1979, London: Andre Deutsch Ltd, 1979

Mitchell, R.C., African Primal Religions, Niles, Illinois: Argus Communications,(Date of publication not given)

Moller, D.W., Confronting death: Values, Institutions and Human mortality, New York, Oxford: O.U.P., 1996

Moltman, J., Theology and hope, London: SCM Press, 1967

Molyneux, K. G., African Christian Theology: A Quest for Selfhood, USA: Mullen Research University Press, 1993

Montefiore,H., (ed) The Gospel and Contemporary Culture, London: SCM Press, 1995

Moore, B., "What is Black theology," in B. Moore (ed) Black Theology: The South African Voice, London: C Hurst & Company, 1973

Mosala, I.J., Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology in South Africa, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1989

Moscati, S., Ancient Semitic Civilizations, London: Elek Books, 1957

Moyo, A., Religion and Political Thought in Independent Zimbabwe, in C. Hallencreutz and A. Moyo, Church and State in Zimbabwe, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1988

Moyo,A., Zimbabwe:The Risk of Incarnation, Gospel and Cultures Pamphlet 8, Geneva: WCC Publications, 1996

Mudenge, S.I.G., A Political History of Munhumutapa c1400-1902, Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1988

Mugambi, J.N.K., African Christian Theology, Nairobi: Heinemann Kenya Ltd, 1989

Mugambi, J.N.K., The African Heritage and Contemporary Christianity, Nairobi: Heinemann Kenya Ltd, 1989

Mukonyora, I., Cox,J.L., & Verstraelen, F.J., (eds) Rewriting the Bible: The real issues, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1993

Mulago, V., "Vital Participation," in K.Dickson & P. Ellingworth (eds) Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs, London: Lutterworth Press, 1972

Murphree, M.W., Christianity and the Shona, London: The Athlone Press, 1969

Muzorewa, G.H., The Origins and Development of African Theology, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1985.

Muzorewa, G.H., An African Theology of Mission, New York: The Edwin Mullen Press, 1990

Navone, J., Towards a Theology of Story, Slough, Gt. Britain: St Paul Publications, 1977

Ndeti, K., Elements of Akamba Life, Nairobi: East Africa Publishing House, 1972

Neill, S., Colonialism and Christian Missions, London: Lutterworth Press, 1966

Niebuhr, R., The Nature and Destiny of Man, London: Nisbet & Co, 1941

Niebuhr, R., Christ and Culture, New Yorker: Harper & Row, 1951

Nyamiti, C., Christ as our Ancestor, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1984

Nyamiti, C., The Way to Christian Theology in Africa, Eldoret, Kenya: Gaba Publications, (*date of publication not given.*)

Obelkovich, J., Religion and Rural Society: Southern Lindsay 1825-1875, London: Oxford University Press, 1976

O'Callaghan, M., Southern Rhodesia: the effects of a conquest society on education, culture and information, UK: Unesco, 1977

Palley, C., The Constitutional History and Law of Southern Rhodesia 1888-1965, Oxford: OUP, 1966

Parratt, J., (ed) A Reader in African Christian Theology, London: SPCK, 1987

Parratt, J., Reinventing Christianity: African Theology Today, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eedmans Publishing Co, 1995

Parrinder, E.J., African Traditional Religion, London: SPCK, 1968

Partridge, N., Not Alone: A Story for the Future of Rhodesia, London: SCM Press, 1972

Pascoe, C.F., Two Hundred Years of the SPG: A Historical Account of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreighn parts 1701-1900, London: SPG Office, 1901

Pattison, S., A Critique of Pastoral Care, London: SCM Press Ltd, 1988

Peaden, W.R., Missionary Attitudes to Shona Culture, Salisbury: The Central Africa Historical Association, 1970

Pearson, A., Creative Methods in Counselling: Facilitating the healing Process, London: Marshall Pickering, 1997

Peel, J.D.Y., & Ranger, T.O., (eds) Past and Present in Zimbabwe, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983

Perham, M., The Colonial Reckoning, London: Collins, 1962

Perham, M., African Outline, London: Oxford University Press, 1966

Phillips, E. M. & Pugh, D.S., (2nd edition) How to get a PhD: A handbook for Students and their Supervisors, Buckingham. Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1994

Pobee, J., Toward an African Theology, Abingdon/Nashville: Parthenon Press, 1979

Race, A., (2nd edition) Christians and Religious Pluralism, London: SCM Press, 1993

Rahner, K., On the Theology of Death, London: Burns & Oats, 1964

Ranger, T.O., Revolt in Southern Rhodesia 1896-7: A Study in African Resistance, London: Heinemann, 1967

Ranger, T.O. The African Voice in Southern Rhodesia 1898-1930, Heinemann, London. Ibadan. Nairobi: East African Publishing House., 1972

Ranger, T.O. & Kimambo, I.N., (eds) The Historical Study of African Religion, with special reference to East and Central Africa, London: Heinemann,1972

Ranger, T.O., & Weller, J., (eds) Themes in the Christian History of Central Africa, London, Nairobi, Ibadan, Lusaka: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd, 1975

Ranger, T.O.,. Peasant Consciousness and Guerrilla War in Zimbabwe: A Comparative Study, London: James Currey, 1985

Rawlings, M.S., Before Death Comes, London: Sheldon Press, 1980

Read, S., Thinking About Logic: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Logic, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995

Reventlow, H.G., The Authority of the Bible and the Rise of the Modern World, London: SCM Press, 1980

Ringgren, H., Israelite Religion, (translated by D.E. Green) London: SPCK, 1966

Robinson, J., In the End God, London: James Clark & Co, 1958

Rodd, C.S., Thinking Things Through Series 5. Is There Life after Death? Peterborough: Epworth Press, 1998

Rodney, W., How Europe Underdeveloped Africa, Washington DC: Howard University Press, 1982

Roebuck, J., The Making of Modern English Society from 1850, London: Routlegde & Kegan Paul, 1973

Rowell,G., The Liturgy of Christian Burial: An Introductory Survey of the Historical Development Of Christian Burial Rite, London: SPCK, 1977

Richardson, A. & Bowden, J., (eds) A New Dictionary of Christian Theology, London: SCM Press, 1983

Rupp, G., Christologies and Cultures: Toward a typology of religious worldviews, Mouton, The Hague: Mouton & Co, 1974

Russel, A., The Clerical Profession, London: SPCK, 1980

Samkange, S., Origins of Rhodesia, London: Heinemann, 1968

Sanders, E.P. The Historical Figure of Jesus, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books Ltd, 1993

Sango, P., "Some Important Shona Customs and Ceremonies," in Clive and Peggy Kilef (eds) Shona Customs, Gweru: Mambo press, 1970

Sarpong, P.K., African Theology: A simple description, Accra, Ghana: Catholic Press, 1988

Sayce, K., (ed) Tabex Encyclopedia Zimbabwe, Harare: Quest Publishing (Pvt) Ltd, 1987

Schillebeekx, E., Jesus: An Experiment in Christology (translated by Hubert Hoskins) London: William Collins Son & Co Ltd, 1979

Schreiter, R.J., Constructing Local Theologies, London: SCM Press, 1985

Schreiter, R., "Jesus Christ in Africa Today," in R.Schreiter (ed) Faces of Jesus in Africa, SCM Press, 1991

Schwarz, H., On the way to the future: A Christian view of Eschatology, Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1972

Selby, P., Grace and Mortgage: The Language of faith and the debt of the world, London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1997

Setiloane, G., "How the Traditional World-view persists in the Christianity of the Sotho-Tswana," in E.Fachole-Luke, R. Gray, A.Hastings & G. Tasie (eds) Christianity in Independent Africa, London: Rex Collins, 1978

Setiloane, G., African Theology: An Introduction, Johannesburg: Skotaville Publishers, 1986

Seymour, J.J., The Changing Trends of the Shona Family in Zimbabwe - How the Church can Help, SLSA, Doctoral Thesis, Harare Zimbabwe, 1990

Shorter, A., African Christian Theology: Adaptation or Inculturation, London: Macmillan Publishers, 1975

Shorter, A., African Christian Spirituality, London: Cassell Ltd, 1978

Shorter, A., Toward a Theology of Inculturation, Maryknoll New York: Orbis Books, 1988

Shorter, A., Evangelization an Culture, London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1994

Shropshire, D.W.T., The Church and Primitive Peoples: The Religious Institutions of the Bantu and their Bearing on the Problems of the Christian Missionary, London: SPCK, 1938

Sidhom, S., "The Theological Estimate of Man," in K. Dickson & P. Ellingworth (eds) Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs, London: Lutterworth Press, 1972

Sithole,N., African Nationalism, London: Oxford University Press, 1959

Sithole, N., Obed Mutezo: The Mudzimu Christian Nationalist, Nairobi, Kenya: Oxford University Press, 1970

Sitshebo, W.T. "How African Anglicans deal with death, funerals and bereavement," in Wingate, A., Ward, K., Pemberton, C., and Sitshebo, W., (eds) Anglicanism: A Global Communion, London: Mowbray, 1998

Smith, D.W., Transforming the World: The Social Impact of British Evangelism, Cumbria,UK: Paternoster Press, 1998

Smith, E.W., Robert Moffat, London: SCM Press, 1912

Smith, E.W., The Religion of Lower Races as Illustrated by the African Bantu, New York: Macmillan Company, 1923

Smith, E.W., The Christian Mission in Africa: A Study based on the work of the International Conference at Le Zoute, Belgium, Sept 14th to 21st, 1926, London: Edinburgh House, 1926

Smith, E.W., The way of the White Fields in Rhodesia: A Survey of Christian enterprise in Northern and Southern Rhodesia, London: World Dominion Press, 1928

Smith, E.W., The Secret of the African, London: United Society for Christian Literature,1929

Smith, E, W., African Beliefs and Christian Faith: An Introduction to Theology for African Students, Evangelists and Pastors, London: United Society for Christian Literature, 1936

Sobrino, J., & Ellacuria, I., (eds) Systematic Theology: Perspectives from Liberation Theology, London: SCM Press, 1996

Song, C., Doing Theology Today, Madras: The Christian Literature Society, 1976

Stanley, B., The Bible and the Flag: Protestant missions and British imperialism in the 19th and 20th centuries, Leicester: Apollos, 1990

Steere, D.V., God's Irregular Arthur Shearly Cripps: A Rhodesian Epic, London: SPCK, 1973

Stephenson, A.M.G. The First Lambeth Conference 1867, London: SPCK, 1967

Stone,H.W. & Duke, J.O. How to think Theologically, Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1996

Sugirtharajah, R.S., (ed) Voices from the margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World, London: SPCK/ Maryknoll New York: Orbis Books, 1995

Swete, H., The Life of the world to come, London: SPCK, 1918

Tanser, G.H., Founders of Rhodesia, Cape Town, Salisbury, London: OUP,1950

Taylor, J.V., The Primal Vision: Christian Presence Amid African Religion, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963

Taylor, J.B., Primal World Views: Christian Dialogue with Traditional thought Forms, Ibadan, Nigeria: Daystar Press, 1976

Tempels, P., Bantu Philosophy, Paris: Presence Africaine, 1959

Thomas, D.W., (ed) Documents from Old Testament Times, London: Thomas Nelson & Sons Ltd, 1958

Torres, S. & Fabella, V., (eds) The Emergent Gospel: Theology from the Third World, London: Cassell Ltd, 1978

Toynbee, A., "Traditional Attitudes Towards Death," in A. Toynbee (et. al.) Man's Concern with Death, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1968

Tracy, D., On Naming the Present: Reflections on God, Hermeneutics, and Church, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books and London: SCM Press, 1994

Travis, S.H., Christian Hope and the Future of Man, Leicester, England: IVP, 1980

Turkson, P. & Wijsen, F., (eds) Inculturation: Abiding by the otherness of Africa and the Africans. Papers from a Congress, October 21-22, 1993, Heerlen, The Netherlands: Kampen, 1994

Tutu, D.M., "Whiter African Theology," in E. Fashole-Luke, R.Gray, A.Hastings & G.Tasie (eds) Christianity in Independent Africa, London: Collins, 1978

Tutu, D.M., "Black theology and African Theology - Soulmates or Antagonists?" in J. Parratt (ed) A Reader in African Christian Theology, London: SPCK (revised edition) 1997

Vambe, L., The Ill-fated People: Zimbabwe Before and After Rhodes, London, Ibadan, Nairobi: Heinemann, 1972

van Gennep, A., The Rites of Passage, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960 (translated by Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee)

Vera, Y., Nehenda, Harare: Baobab Books, 1993

Vestraelen, F.J., (et al) Missiology: An Ecumenical introduction, texts and contexts of Global Christianity, Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995

von Hugel, F., Eternal Life - A study, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1913

Waliggo, J.M. "African Christology in a Situation of Suffering," in J.N.K. Mugambi & L. Magesa (eds) Jesus in African Christianity: Experimentation and Diversity in African Christology, Nairobi: Initiatives Publishers, 1989

Walter, T., The Revival of Death, London: Routledge, 1994

Wand, J.W.C., The Anglican Communion: A Survey, London: Oxford University Press, 1948

Wand, J.W.C., A History of the Early church to AD 500, London: Methuen & Co Ltd, 1937

Weller, J.C., A Centre of Healing in Zimbabwe: An account of St. Agnes' Mission, Gokwe 1972-1980 and its priest Fr. Lazarus Muyambi, (Unpublished paper found in the Harold Turner collection, Selly Oak) 1980.

Weller, J. & Linden,J., Mainstream Christianity to 1980 in Malawi, Zambia and

Zimbabwe, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1984

Westerlund, D., African Religion in African Scholarship, Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1985

White, R.E.O., A Guide to Pastoral Care, Glasgow: Pickering and Inglis Ltd, 1976

Wiles, M., The Making of Christian Doctrine, Cambridge: CUP, 1967

Williams, H., The Last Four things, London: Mowbray & Co, 1960

Williams, N.P., Ideas of the Fall and Original Sin, London: Longman, Green & Co, 1927

Wilmer, S.E. Zimbabwe Now, London: Rex Collins, 1972

Winick, C., (ed) Dictionary of Anthropology, Totowa, New Jersey: Littlefield Adam & Co, 1977

Winter, M., Problems in Theology: The Atonement, London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1995

Wright, C.J.H. Interpreting the Bible Among the World Religions, Henry Martyn Lecture, November, 1998

Yang, G. S., Korean Biblical Hermeneutics Old and New: A Criticism of Korean Reading Practices, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Birmingham, 1997

Young, J.U., Black and African Theology, Siblings or Distant Cousins, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1986

Young, T.C., Contemporary Ancestors: A Beginner's Anthropology for District Officers and Missionaries in Africa, London: Lutterworth Press (Undated)

Zvobgo, C.J.M., A History of Christian Missions in Zimbabwe 1890-1939, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1996

Zwana, S., Tombstone Unveiling: Significance and Theological Implications, Unpublished paper

Journal Articles

Ada, S., "Christ's Mission and Human Societies," in International Review of Mission, Vol. LXXXIV, No.335, October 1995, pp.395-405

Bourdillon, M.F.C., "Themes in the understanding of Traditional African Religion," in Journal of Theology for Southern Africa, No.10, March 1975, pp.35-49

Briernen, F., "A Listening Heart: Reflections on Crosscultural Evangelism," in International Review of Mission, Vol. LXXXIV, No.335, October 1995, pp.379-385

Bujo, B., "The two sources of life, the Eucharist and the cult of the ancestors in Africa," in African Christian Studies, Vol. 2, No. 1, July 1986, pp. 67-83

Cobbing, J., "The absent priesthood: Another look at the Rhodesian risings of 1896-1897," in Journal of African History, Vol. XVIII, No.I, 1977, pp.61-84

Conway, M., "A Universal Faith in a Thousand and One Contexts," in International Review of Mission, Vol. LXXXIV, No.332/333, Jan/April 1995, pp.133-148

Cox, J.L., "Faith and Faiths: The significance of A G Hogg's missionary thought for a theology of dialogue," in Scottish Journal of Theology, Vol.32, No.3, 1979, pp.241-256

Durand, J.F., "Life and Death as a Theological Problem," in Journal of Theology for Southern Africa, No.36, September 1981, pp.18-36

Ezeogu, E.M., "Bible and Culture in African Christianity," in International Review of Mission,Vol. LXXXVII No.344, January 1998, pp.25-38

Geffre, C., "Christianity and Culture," in International Review of Mission, Vol. LXXXIV, No.332/333, Jan/April 1995, pp.17-31

Gehman, R.J., "Guidelines in Contextualization," in East African Journal of Evangelical Theology, Vol.2, No.1, 1983, pp. 24-36

Hastings, A., "On African Theology," in Scottish Journal of Theology, Vol.37, No.3, 1984, pp.359-374

Hawkes, G., "Education for Pastoral Care," in Journal of Theology for Southern Africa, No.28, September1979, pp.37-49

Healey, J.G., "A Fifth Gospel: The Experience of Black Values," the article is reviewed by James Mnahela, in African Theological Journal, Vol.12, No.1, 1983, pp.45-51

Hodgson, J., "African and Anglican," in USPG Thinking Mission, Issue 24, October 1995

Imasogie, D., "Contextualization: Constructive interaction between culture, people, church, and the theological programme," in East African Journal of Evangelical Theology, Vol.2, No.1, 1983, pp.19-23

Kretschmar, G., "The Early Church and Hellenistic Culture," in International Review of Mission, Vol. LXXXIV, No.332/333, Jan/April 1995, pp.33-46

Kurewa, J.W.Z., "The Meaning of African Theology," in Journal of Theology for Southern Africa, No.11, June 1995, pp. 32-42

Lipner, J., "Being One, Let Me Be Many: Facets of the Relationship between the Gospel and Culture," in International Review of Mission, Vol.LXXIV, No 294, April 1985, pp.158-168

Marimazhira, X., "Acculturation in Rhodesia," in African Ecclesial Review, Vol. XV, No.2, 1973, pp.130-133

McGhee, M., "The Locations of the Soul," in Religious Studies: An international journal for the Philosophy of religion, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Vol.32 No.2, June 1996, pp. 205-221

Moyo, A.M., "The Quest for African Christian Theology and the Problem of the relationship between Faith and Culture: The Hermeneutical perspective," in African Theological Journal, Vol.12, No.2, 1983, pp.95-107

Newbigin, L., "Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture," in Scottish Journal of Theology, Vol.31, No.1, 1978, pp.1-22

Nxumalo, J., "Pastoral Ministry and African World Views," in Journal of Theology for Southern Africa, Vol.28, September1979, pp.27-36

Oduyoye, M.A., "Christianity and African Culture," in International Review of Mission, Vol. LXXXIV, No.332/333, Jan/April 1995, pp.77-90

Oleska, M., "Evangelism and Culture," in International Review of Mission, Vol. LXXXIV, No. 335, October 1995, pp.387-393

Ortega, O., "Space.... Even for the Dead, at the kitchen table: A testimony to a dynamic encounter between Gospel and Culture," in International Review of Mission, Vol. LXXXIV, No.335, October 1995, pp.433-439

Parratt, J.K., "African Theology and Biblical Hermeneutics," in African Theological Journal, Vol.12, No.2, 1983, pp.89-94

Pobee, J., "The Skenosis of Christian Worship in Africa," in Studia Liturgica, 14, 1980

Pobee, J., "Exploring Together from Diverse Cultures the One Gospel of Hope," in International Review of Mission, Vol. LXXXIV, No.334, July 1995, pp. 259-272

Sanneh, L., "The Gospel, Language and Culture: The theological method in Cultural Analysis," in International Review of Mission, Vol. LXXXIV, No.332/333, Jan/April 1995, pp.47-64

Sanneh, L., "Christian Mission in the Pluralistic Milieu: The African experience," in International Review of Mission, Vol. LXXIV, No.294, April, 1985, pp199-211

Schoher, H., "Concepts of Salvation in Christianity," in African Theological Journal, Vol.12, No.3, 1983, pp. 159-165

Stauffer, S.A., "Culture and Christian Worship in Intersection," in International Review of Mission, Vol. LXXXIV, No. 332/333, Jan/April 1995, pp. 65-76

Stevenson, L., "Religion and Cultural Identity," in Theology, May/June 1998, pp. 171-179

Suggit, J., "Pastoral Discipline in the Church Today: The evidence of the New Testament," in Journal of Theology for Southern Africa, pp. 53-59

Tesfai, Y., "Ecumenism, Culture and Syncretism," in International Review of Mission, Vol.LXXXIV, No.332/333, Jan/April 1995, pp.7-16

Thewlis, J., "The Difficult Funeral - Sensitive Issues in Liturgy: A Personal View," in ____ Theology, January/February 1997, pp.2-8

Thorogood, B., "Gospel and Culture - Finding the balance," in International Review of Mission, Vol. LXXXIV, No.335, October 1995, pp.407-412

Turner, H.W., "Shona And/or Christian?," in Missionalia, Vol.11, No.3, 1983, pp. 11-16

van der Bent, A., "The Gracious God in Human Cultures," in International Review of Mission, Vol. LXXXIV, No.334, July 1995, pp.245-258

Vincent, J., "The Challenges and Responsibilities of Contextual Theology," a review article in Reviews in Religion and Theology, 1997/1 February, pp.7-13

Whidborne, V., "Africanization of Christianity in Zimbabwe," in Religion in Southern Africa, Vol.4, No.1, January 1983, pp31-50

Wingate, A., "A Woman of Faith Dies: Death of a Champion of Buddhism," in Theology, May/June 1997, pp.171-178

Zvarevashe, I., "Shona (Bantu) Traditional Religion," in African Ecclesial Review, Vol.22, No.5, 1980, pp.294-303

Zvobgo, C.M. "Shona and Ndebele responses to Christianity in Southern Rhodesia," in Journal of Religion in Africa, Vol. VIII, Fascicule 1, 1976, pp. 41-51

Additional Literature

A Call to Prophetic Action: Towards the Jubilee 2000, For a socially just, democratic and prosperous Zimbabwe, Zimbabwe Kairos Document: Monday Printers, Nov 1998

Doctrine of the Church of England, London: SPCK, 1957

Digest of SPG Records 1701-1892, London: Spottiswoode and Co, 1893

Diocese of Harare, Kurova Guva Commission, Unpublished minutes, 1993-4

Diocese of Mashonaland, Pastoral Regulations: issued by the Bishops for the guidance clergy, 1978

Report on the All-Africa Seminar on The Christian Home and Family, (17th Feb- 10th April 1963), Kitwe, Zambia

Rhodesia Now: The Liberation of Zimbabwe, London: British Council of Churches, 1977

Rwendo rwomuKristu, (revised edition) Printed in Shona, London: SPCK, 1969

Shona: Prayer and Hymns (Minamato/Ndwiyo) C P C A 1963, Gweru: Mambo Press, reprinted 1983

Welcome to Zimbabwe, Turn to God: Rejoice in Hope, Geneva:WCC Publications for the 8th Assembly, Harare, Zimbabwe

USPG ARCHIVES AT RHODES HOUSE LIBRARY, OXFORD.

CLR VOLUMES

142	Copies and Letters received July 1892 - July 1927

D VOLUMES

106a	Letters and Papers received from abroad, 1893
110	Letters and Papers received from abroad, 1894
114	Letters and Papers received from abroad, 1895

E Volumes

48b	Missionary Reports, 1893
49c	Missionary Reports, 1894
50c	Missionary Reports, 1895
51b	Missionary Reports, 1896
52b	Missionary Reports, 1897
53b	Missionary Reports, 1898
54a	Missionary Reports, 1899
55a	Missionary Reports, 1900

56a	Missionary Reports, 1901
57a	Missionary Reports, 1902
58b	Missionary Reports, 1903
59a	Missionary Reports, 1904
60a	Missionary Reports, 1905
61b	Missionary Reports, 1906
62b	Missionary Reports, 1907
63b	Missionary Reports, 1908
64b	Missionary Reports, 1909
65b	Missionary Reports, 1910
66b	Missionary Reports, 1911
67b	Missionary Reports, 1912
68b	Missionary Reports, 1913
69b	Missionary Reports, 1914