

**THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN ZIMBABWE'S INPUT IN  
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY OF THE ELCZ'S INPUT IN  
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN THE WESTERN DEANERY IN  
MATABELELAND SOUTHERN PROVINCE IN ZIMBABWE SINCE THE 1960s.**

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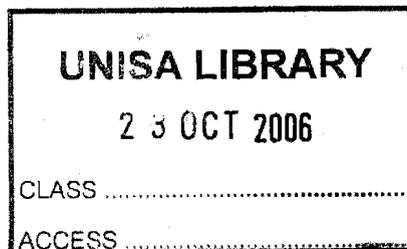
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b> .....	1
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b> .....	3
<b>SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH STUDY</b> .....	5
<b>THE KEY WORDS</b> .....	6
<b>ABBREVIATIONS</b> .....	7
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION</b> .....	8
1:1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION TO THE STUDY.....	8
1:2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY.....	10
1:3 PROBLEM STATEMENT.....	10
1:4 RELEVANCE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY.....	12
1:5 AREA OF INVESTIGATION.....	12
1:6 METHODOLOGY-QUALITATIVE RESEARCH.....	13
1:6.1 RESEARCH METHODS IN DETAIL.....	14
<i>The historical Method</i> .....	14
1:6.2 DATA TECHNIQUES.....	14
<i>Key Informant interviews</i> .....	14
<i>Secondary data</i> .....	15
1:7 LITERATURE REVIEW.....	15
1:8 CHAPTER DIVISIONS.....	16
<b>CHAPTER 2: CHURCH- STATE RELATIONS</b> .....	18
2:1 INTRODUCTION.....	18
2:2 HANDOVER OF ALL ELC SCHOOLS TO LOCAL COUNCILS.....	23
2:3 NATIONALISTS AND CHRISTIANITY.....	26
2:4 GUERRILLA WARFARE AND THE REVIVAL OF AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION (ATR).....	28
2:5 CHRISTIANITY AND AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION.....	30
2:6 THE PLACE OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AT ELCZ SCHOOLS.....	31
2:7 CONCLUSION.....	32
<b>CHAPTER 3: THE INTENSIFICATION OF GUERRILLA WARFARE IN THE WESTERN DEANERY IN THE 1970S AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE TEACHING OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION</b> .....	33
3:1 INTRODUCTION.....	33
3:2 THE ABDUCTION OF STUDENTS FROM MANAMA AND ITS EFFECTS ON RE IN THE 1970s.....	34
3:3 THE OPENING OF NEW MANAMA SECONDARY SCHOOL IN BULAWAYO.....	38
3:4 THE CLOSURE OF SCHOOLS IN THE WESTERN DEANERY.....	39
3:5 CLOSURE OF SOME ELCZ PARISHES.....	40
3:6 CONCLUSION.....	41
<b>CHAPTER 4: THE NEW GOVERNMENT AND ITS CHALLENGES TO THE CHURCH'S EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME IN THE 1980S</b> .....	43
4:1 INTRODUCTION.....	43
4:2 THE NEW SYLLABUS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION.....	44
4.2.1 DEVELOPING IN CHRIST SYLLABUS.....	46
4.2.2 BIBLE KNOWLEDGE AND DIVINITY AT ORDINARY AND ADVANCED LEVELS RESPECTIVELY.....	48
4:3 TEACHING OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AT MANAMA SECONDARY SCHOOL IN 1980S.....	50

<u>4:4 THE ROLE OF ATR IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION</u> .....	51
<u>4:5 THE INCLUSION OF MORAL EDUCATION IN THE R.E SYLLABUS</u> .....	53
<u>4:6 DISSIDENTS ATTITUDE TOWARDS BOTH RELIGIOUS AND SECULAR EDUCATION</u> .....	54
<u>4:7 DISSIDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS TEACHERS</u> .....	56
<u>4:8 DISSIDENTS HARASSMENT OF CIVILIANS</u> .....	58
<u>4:9 THE UNITY ACCORD AND ITS IMPACT ON RE</u> .....	59
<u>4:10 CONCLUSION</u> .....	60
<b><u>CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION</u></b> .....	<b>62</b>
<u>5:1 INTRODUCTION</u> .....	62
<u>5:2 PROBLEMS FACING RELIGIOUS EDUCATION TEACHERS:</u> .....	62
<u>5:3 TEACHERS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS RELIGIOUS EDUCATION</u> .....	64
<u>5:4 RECOMMENDATIONS</u> .....	67
<u>5:5 EVALUATION</u> .....	69
<b><u>BIBLIOGRAPHY</u></b> .....	<b>73</b>



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### **Summary of the research study**

The objective of the dissertation is to prove that ELCZ contributed religious education in the Western Deanery. It is also to assess the interaction between Christianity and African Traditional Religion, since they are the major religions in the Western Deanery they should be taught at schools. Prior to independence religion meant Christianity. Missionaries and a few chosen local teachers taught it. The aim was to Christianize as many students as possible. The abduction of students at Manama Mission in 1970 disturbed the teaching of religious and secular education. A new Manama was set up in Bulawayo but was not a success in reviving the teaching of religious education. There were numerous problems which hindered progress. After independence religious education was based on the child's personal experience not only Christianity. It accommodated all religions. Dissident disturbance interfered with the teaching of religious and secular education. Religious education gained momentum after signing of the Unity Accord in 1987.

**(156 words)**

## **The key words**

ELCZ Church in Zimbabwe (ELCZ)

Western Deanery

Secular Education

Religious Education

The Inclusion of Moral Education In RE Syllabus

The importance of ATR

Multi-faith Approach

Interaction between ATR and Christianity

Dissidents' Attitude Towards religion

Problems in RE Syllabus

## **Abbreviations**

ATR	African Traditional Religion
CC	Church Council
CCJPZ	Catholic Commission For Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe
Cde	Comrade
CID	Criminal Investigation Department
CSM	Church of Sweden Mission
EB	Educational Board
ELCZ	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe
HOD	Head Of Department
LMS	London Missionary Society
LWF	Lutheran World Federation
(PF) ZAPU	(Patriotic Front) Zimbabwe African People's Union
RC	Roman Catholic Church
RE	Religious Education
UZ	University of Zimbabwe
UNISA	University Of South Africa
WD	Western Deanery
ZANU (PF)	Zimbabwe African National Union (Patriotic Front)
ZINTEC	Zimbabwe In Service Teacher's College
ZIPRA	Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army
ZNA	Zimbabwe National Army

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **1:1 Background Information to the study**

When the Church of Sweden Mission came to Rhodesia in the 20th century, it constructed a network of schools in the whole Deanery, especially in Gwanda and Beitbridge Districts. Most of its schools were in the rural areas because it is where the church initially started. The majority of the schools provided lower primary education with emphasis on religion. There were a handful of schools, which offered upper primary education. Zezani, Gungwe and a few others, were some of such schools. In the 1960s Manama, the only boarding school was the only secondary school in the Western Deanery. The reason for having boarding schools seems to have been a deliberate move to alienate students from their African traditional way of living in order to introduce them to Christianity so that they could abstain from their traditional type of life which was described as pagan and uncivilized. Soderstrom (1984: 92) says that,

Better opportunity to give the students a Christian education existed when the students lived at the school during the terms. Morning and evening prayers were held during the weekdays.

Boarding schools made students embrace Christianity as their religion and look down at African Traditional Religion as inferior. They targeted the young because they had failed to convert adults. The curriculum at ELCZ schools emphasized reading and writing and had a religious education bias. The aim was to have members who could read the Bible on their own.

Old women were surprising missionaries asking them to explain certain passages in the Bible which they read very well but could not comprehend. Moreover the questions asked at Biblical classes indicated beyond doubt that Bibles were being read (Bhebe 1979:148).

The colonial government did not show concern for African education which they left exclusively in the hands of missionaries. Schools were therefore an engine of christianization.

Whatever way one looks at it, missionary influence has been of vital importance in the history of education in sub-Saharan Africa even more so since the colonialists originally left education almost exclusively in the hands of the missionary agencies who first and foremost used it as an instrument for propagating the Christian faith (ter Haar et al 1990:36).

Through schools, missionaries in the Western Deanery increased church membership by leaps and bounds, because every student at their schools who could read and write was obliged to be a member of the ELCZ. This saw the emergence of a middle class, a new group of Africans which was socio-economically and professionally distinct from others. From this group of the elite, the church harvested its evangelists who were quite useful in the propagation of the gospel in rural areas. There was therefore no longer need to import evangelists from elsewhere. Clearly, education was a vehicle for the propagation of religion in the Western Deanery. The spreading of the gospel was the work of the evangelists who were able to speak the vernacular language of the area, and were used to the people's custom or culture. Bhebe (1979:130) says evangelists were easy to maintain because "their needs were simple".

Despite an emphasis on religious education, schools also offered secular education. Classrooms doubled as venues for Sunday services and also for educational purposes, because there were no chapels. They did not have the type of chapels we have. African evangelists of the day also doubled as religious education teachers even though they had no training in teaching. Christianity was known as the only religion which could be taught at schools. As Soderstrom (1984: 78) notes,

The evangelists did not hold a trained teacher's certificate. But they were capable of teaching children to read, write and use the elements of Christian faith and the history of the church

## 1.2 Objectives of the study

The objective of this research study is to assess the ELCZ's contribution towards religious education in the Western Deanery.

## 1:3 Problem Statement

This research study seeks to answer the question, what was the ELCZ's contribution towards religious education in the Western Deanery?

In religious education we know that Africans are basically religious people. Their religion offered them a way of dealing with their social and natural environment. Hence, religious beliefs were at the centre of life and local practices. Hence ter Haar (1990) argues

... apart from that many Africans consider the religious factor an essential heritage and will maintain that Africans are basically religious people. (ter Haar at al 1990:56)

This means that the Christian beliefs introduced by Lutheran missionaries in the Western Deanery sought to displace beliefs which already existed. It seems this religion was looked down upon and was regarded as no religion especially by Christians. Scholars such as Dr. J. Ndlovu and many others, refer to this religion as African Traditional Religion (ATR). This is a broad reference to religious practices of people of Africa. It is part of African culture and heritage. In ATR there is no difference between believers and non-believers.

In fact such a distinction is inconceivable since everyone in that society is born into his or her religion as sure as one is born into one's family and culture. (ter Haar 1990:21)

In ATR there are no atheists. All children are socialized into the religion. It is therefore difficult to remove the religious beliefs from people because people internalize them as they grow older. It is therefore difficult to eradicate these beliefs from within individuals of communities. However it is possible to suppress the religious practices like what happened during the colonial rule. This religion is what the Western World refers to as paganism or false religion.

It follows that paganism is not a neutral state, a lack to be made up. It is a state of guilt of rebellion against God and of fall beneath threshold of humanity (Boulaga 1984:19).

Because the ELCZ was the first denomination to introduce Christianity in the Western Deanery, its adherents say it is fitting that the denomination is dominant here. When the Church of Sweden Mission, (CSM) came to Rhodesia in 1903, it found locals already occupying the area. The people were the Ndebele culture under the leadership of Mzilikazi on their Northward movement in 1940s.

In 1940s Mzilikazi saw his tribe threatened by so many enemies that he decided to move North of the Limpopo River. The Ndebele tribe settled at a place they called Bulawayo (Soderstrom 1984:9).

Based on Soderstrom's argument it is clear that the Ndebele occupied the area in question before the arrival of the Lutheran Missionaries into Zimbabwe. Despite this fact the Lutherans see their denomination as a pioneer in bringing religion. In addition, Lutherans are proud their denomination initiated Western education. This cannot be disputed by anyone. Education and Christianity were carried in one basket, and could not be separated.

The paramount aim of the missionaries was, of course, to instill Christian moral principles into the minds of the Africans. In order to establish Christianity on a firm and permanent basis the missions combined their evangelical activities with programs of transferring the physical and intellectual life of their converts. Because of this comprehensive approach it is difficult to separate their spiritual from their secular education (Bhebe 1979:129).

It is however important to define religion and to assess whether it includes Islam, ATR and other religions.

#### 1:4 Relevance of The research Study

This research study seeks to explore the interaction between Christianity and African Traditional Religion in the Western Deanery. The history of religious education in the Western Deanery can be divided into two periods namely the pre-and post-Independence. The pre-independence period was influenced by the missionaries who were solely responsible for education provision for blacks. They denigrated other religions and deliberately discouraged their teaching in schools under their control. They wanted to have as many converts as possible so competition was not tolerated. Christianity therefore enjoyed a monopoly in the school religious system.

The post-independence period saw the use of a broader definition of religion. All religions were taken as equal and could to be taught in schools. Religious education was taught like any other subject and not for conversion purposes.

#### 1.5 Area of investigation

The research study was carried out in the ELCZ in the Western Deanery, in Matabeleland South Province in Zimbabwe. The province stretches for approximately 758 kilometers from Limpopo River in the South, to the Zambezi River in the North. There are altogether fifteen parishes, which make up the Western Deanery. All of them that lie on the western side of the main road and railway line which connect Beitbridge and Victoria

Falls. People who live in the Western Deanery are Sothos, Vendas, Ndebeles and Shanganis. The Western Deanery is headquartered at Manama Mission. A Dean, head the Deanery, and lives at Manama Mission.

Given the size of the Western Deanery and time constraints, the researcher will not be able to cover the whole Deanery. He confined himself to places where ELCZ missionaries were actively involved in the construction of schools. Thus the study focused on Manama, Beitbridge and Zezani and their environs. In these places Lutheran missionaries spent time building schools and teaching religious education in a bid to convert locals.

When the Swedish Missionaries started schools in Zimbabwe their main motivation was Evangelization (Soderstrom 1984:52).

#### 1:6 Methodology-Qualitative Research

According to Peltó and Peltó (1978: 1) methodology concerns itself with how one understands phenomena under study. It is not about methods and techniques of research *per se* but about research questions and the *kind of data* needed to answer them which therefore determines the methods and techniques to be used. This study sought to investigate the role of the ELC in religious education in the Western Deanery and therefore based on qualitative research. Babbie (1986: 246) says that qualitative methods are important for *inter alia*, understanding meanings, practices, roles, relationships, groups, and organizations. Silverman (1993: 30) says that qualitative research is characterized by observation, description and flexibility. Strauss (1987: 10) says that the challenge with qualitative research is “...to capture the complexity of the reality we study and how to make convincing sense of it.”

### 1:6.1 Research methods in detail

#### *The historical Method*

A historical research methodology is used in this study. Professor Carl Hallencruetz (1986:28) describes it as a method which allows one to relate events chronologically.

Hallencruetz (1986:28) goes on to say that;

Indeed it critically assesses how documents from different periods reflect the social realities and hierarchical patterns of these periods. Its basic objective is to assess the value of different tests as basis for information on conditions and developments in the past. In a more technical language we can say that historical text analysis is qualified by source - criticism and tendency- analysis. (Hallencruetz 1986: 28)

This method enables an analysis of events and debates which affect past and present realities. The research also determines the sequence of chapters.

### 1:6.2 Data Techniques

#### *Key Informant interviews*

This technique makes use of people who are well versed on phenomena under research.

Given the need for recalling past events, the key informants used here were people well versed in church history because they were part of its historical development. These include people such as former Bishop Shiri; elderly church laity such as Mr. M Noko, Mr. Sifelani Nyembezi and Mr. Paulos Matjaka Nare. The key informant interviews were based on a checklist of issues pertinent to this research. The researcher worked on his own because he is fluent in all the languages spoken in the Western Deanery and also because of lack of resources to engage research assistants. Working alone helped to reduce distortion.

### *Secondary data*

The researcher heavily relied on secondary information in the form of books and other publications. This entailed extended library research. The researcher also used circulars from the Ministry of Education Sports and Culture and ELCZ Church Council minutes. As a member of the ELCZ Education Board (EB), the researcher has access to church minutes circulars from the Ministry of Education Sports and Culture and letters from the Church of Sweden Mission.

### **1:7 Literature Review**

There is a paucity of literature on the history of the Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe and key players in the past. One such player was pastor Harold Von Sicard who wrote a Shona book in 1972 entitled, "*Zvaitika Kare Zvekereke yemaLuthere*", (the history of the Lutheran Church). The book was a narration of what the Lutheran church did. He looked at the entire Lutheran Church and did not deliberate on religious education in the Western Deanery. He was not interested in using education as a means of evangelization. He was quite different from the rest of the Lutheran Missionaries in that respect. He preferred preaching better than the use of education in gaining membership. Von Sicard was not only after membership. He preferred having committed members and hence he was against the instrumental approach of using education to spread religion. As a result he played no part in the building of schools.

The instrumental approach was not always successful. Ngwabi Bhebe (1979) shows that the Christianization process encountered resistance because of Traditional Religion in Western Zimbabwe. Although Bhebe deals at length with early Christianization in

Western Zimbabwe, he looks at the arrival of CSM only in passing and is silent on the ELCZ's work. In other cases of early Christianization, resistance was also recorded because Christianity sidelined and denigrated existing practices (see Schmidt 1992: 40-41). However this resistance was not a refusal of Western education per se (Zvobgo 1994: 52-53).

Dr Hugo Soderstrom (1984) looks at the history of the entire ELC before and after independence. He touched on topics such as the coming of CSM into Zimbabwe, the training of African pastors and evangelists and in brief touches on the arrest of some ELC pastors during the war. He looks at events, which took part in the ELC from 1903 to 1980. Because of its time of publication, there are many events which took place in the ELCZ from 1980 up to-date which Soderstrom's does not deal with. His book merely shows how the church grew and some of the problems it encountered in the process. Soderstrom does not deliberate on this topic on the church's input in religious education in the Western Deanery.

### 1:8 Chapter divisions

This research study has five chapters. The first chapter sought to introduce the study by giving a brief account of background information on ELC schools in the Western Deanery and explaining why churches decided to embark on education.

Chapter 2 looks at church and state relationships. It is an attempt to examine how the church and the state worked together in the field of both secular and religious education.

It will be shown how Christianity and African Religion interacted in the Western Deanery and the impact of nationalism. Nationalism and liberation armies decried Christianity as a means used to acquiesce Africans. Guerrillas were completely against Christianity as a religion for Africans. They contributed to the revivalism of ATR. In addition, the chapter will show how the ELCZ schools were being run and methods used in religious education.

Chapter 3 basically looks at the intensification of the armed struggle in 1970s in the Western Deanery, a time when recruitment of guerrillas was at its highest peak. It will look at the impact of student and teacher abductions in schools such as Manama Secondary School for military training in Zambia.

Chapter 4 looks at the post independence government and its challenges in educational programs and implications for religious education in the Western Deanery in the 1980s. The researcher will also examine the relevance of African Traditional Religion in the religious education syllabus. The chapter defines Religion and also examines the impact of dissident disturbances on religious education in the Western Deanery. The chapter also looks at the importance of the unity accord of 1987 between ZANU (PF) and (PF) ZAPU for Religious Education.

Chapter 5 is the conclusion of the research study. It deals with problems facing teachers in trying to implement the new syllabus in religious education, and the need to have many teachers' colleges which offer religious education.

## **Chapter 2: Church- state relations**

### **2:1 Introduction**

Before 1960s the relationship between the church and the state could be described as harmonious. The church was responsible for the recruitment of teachers at its schools. The teachers were people of little education who could not read fluently. Some of them had attained lower primary school education.

These men who were given such enormous responsibility of taking the Gospel to their fellow men were certainly barely trained. One missionary describes a typical evangelist as a convert of some ten years' standing, placed at the head of station because he showed a desire to preach endowed with sufficient ability to read, write and to speak a certain amount of English (Bhebe 1979:146).

This shows the emphasis on religious conversion and not academic achievement. Beyond evangelization, the education had effect the of 'de-Africanizing' locals and introducing new cultures. ter Haar (1990: 41) describes Western type of education,

as an instrument of alienation, a vehicle for exploitation and realization of cultural imperialism which together form part of the process of de-Africanization of the African.

If academic achievement was an issue, the teachers recruited would have been of a different calibre. This was not unique to the ELC only, as Schmidt (1992) also reports a similar approach was adopted by the Jesuits in Chishawasha. The clergy were seen as the most enlightened people (see also Ranger 1995).

The organization of education was racial. Missionaries occupied higher positions. They worked as superintendent and were a buffer between the black teachers and students and colonial administration which was white dominated. They supervised and visited schools at least four times a year and made reports to the colonial administrators. It was

essentially not possible to separate colonial administrators and missionaries (see also Schmidt 1992). At the end of the missionaries visit there was Holy Communion (Soderstrom 1984: 53). Colonialists and missionaries came from the same background and had one mission in Africa that of de-Africanizing Africans and introducing them to the Western Culture. The fact that missionaries were in charge of schools shows that the emphasis was Christianization.

The close relationship between the state and missionaries is seen in the fact that missionaries travel expenses were paid by the state. In addition missionaries received grants from the state. The relationship was therefore symbiotic. Schmidt (1992) elaborates on this by saying that missionaries taught basic literacy, obedience to authority, hard work and orderliness. All these were values of great use to colonial administrators. They made blacks more amenable to subjugation even though education later made them more critical of their situation as seen in the formation of nationalist movements (see Zvobgo 1995).

With time, church schools were compelled to use trained teachers especially if they wanted to qualify for a government grant. Unfortunately there were no training facilities in the Western Deanery. The rest of the mainstream churches had their own teacher training schools where their church doctrines were taught. For instance London Mission Society (LMS) had its training school at Hope Fountain and Brethren in Christ had its training school at Mtshabezi. For the Western Deanery to have trained teachers, it had to send its

candidates to Mnene and later to Msume in the Eastern Deanery or to any the of training schools, such as Mtshabezi.

To start seminaries for teachers was an urgent necessity. The first proper seminary for teachers was opened at Mnene in 1940. Pastor Erik Sundgren, and Mrs. Marta Dahl taught one female and twelve male students in the first class. The proposal to start a seminary at Mnene was originally brought up at the African Synods' second assembly in 1938. Pastor J.B Hove argued that students who were sent to non-Lutheran seminaries very easily became eliminated from their Lutheran heritage (Soderstrom 1984:50).

Why the Western Deanery was not provided with such facilities like its counter part in the East is a matter for specialization. Some think it was because Lutheran Missionaries did not have an interest in the Western Deanery. Others say it was because the Lutheran Missionary did not fund the Western Deanery. According to Mr. M. Noko, a respondent for this study at first the Western Deanery was under the jurisdiction of the Dutch Reformed Church. It became difficult for the Dutch Reformed Church with its Headquarters at Morgenster Mission near Masvingo, to run a Congregation which was so far away. Mr. M. Noko was a church elder for the Dutch Reformed Church in early 1910. The Dutch Reformed Church then gave its congregation to the Lutheran missionaries who had their headquarters in Mberengwa which was not as far away as Morgenster. Mr. M. Noko's views are echoed by Soderstrom (1984:50) when he says,

...the DRC Mission at Morgenster had in 1920 begun working at a place South of Gwanda which they called Bethel. Some of their indigenous members settled there and urged the mission to open a preaching centre. The distance between Morgenster and Bethel is about 300 kilometres which made it difficult for missionaries at Morgenster to be responsible for the workers at Bethel. The DRC missionaries got to know their Swedish colleagues when the latter came to Morgenster for language studies... they requested the Lutheran missionaries to take over Bethel.

The Western Deanery therefore was to the CSM a surrogate area of operation. That was why the Lutheran Missionaries had comparatively less interest in developing the Western Deanery.

Access to better education was a rallying cry of early nationalist movements and it became a source of friction in state-church relations (Zvobgo 1995: 55). By 1962, the nationalist movements were defining education as a right, Zvobgo (1995: 57). Although details of the political debates cannot be debated here because of limitation of space, it is important to highlight that state-church relations were most strained once the armed liberation struggle started. The state realized that the church had some deals with the guerrillas who were hell bent on unseating it. Soderstrom (1984: 182) observes that missionaries supplied guerrillas with food and medical care. The colonial state saw this stance by missionaries as a challenge to their existence. They reacted by being tough on missionaries. Prior to the armed struggle there were differences about the treatment of blacks, some missionaries thought that the colonialists were too harsh while the colonialist saw missionaries as too lenient. (see Schmidt 1992)

ELC's missionaries were rather reluctant to take an active part in politics. It would have been contrary to their teachings which emphasized spirituality and obeying authority. That teaching seems to have made it impossible for missionaries to betray their own converts and contradict themselves. They stood aloof, a position which made the colonial government suspicious of them. They were not confident that their being aloof meant neutrality but were confident that missionaries had deals with Africans. People on both sides of the war killed a lot of missionaries – although in some instances the real murderers are not known.

But a number of missionaries belonging to various denominations were killed during the war. The first three missionaries to be killed were shot in December 1976 on the main road between Victoria Falls and Bulawayo by ZAPU guerrillas. In February 1977 seven Catholic (RC) missionaries were shot at St Paul's Mission. In June British Missionaries and their children who

worked at Elim Pentecostal Mission were killed. About forty missionaries including their relatives lost their lives from 1976-1980s. Who were the murderers? (Soderstrom 1984:182-183).

It is important to highlight that, although nationalists were products of missionaries because they all learnt at mission schools, they were not happy with missionaries. They referred to them as racists, oppressors and exploiters whose main aim or assignment was to “de Africanize” Zimbabweans and to make them more amenable to colonial administration, manipulation and exploitation. Hastings (1979:142) says that,

The mission churches had bred the nationalists leaders here as everywhere in Southern Rhodesia Nkomo had been a Methodist lay preacher, Sithole a Methodist Pastor, Nyandoro an Anglican, Chikerema and Mugabe Catholics. Many of these men started their adult lives as enthusiastic church members but these links were either weakened or wholly broken because of a simple change of concerns in their lives but partly because the mission churches showed themselves for the most of the part intensely suspicious of black political activity as being ungrateful, dangerous and unnecessary response to the white man’s tutelage.

The other group that shared the same sentiments with nationalists on the issue of missionaries in Zimbabwe were guerrillas – who of course were an off-shoot of nationalist mobilization. It became quite clear that the missionaries’ life was in great danger. Everyone was suspicious of them. They were no longer as safe as they used to be. To protect themselves against the impending danger, they evacuated the country. As a result in 1970s there was an exodus of Lutheran Missionaries to their home country, Sweden. Soderstrom (1984:18) says that,

The local Christians advised the Swedish Missionaries in May 1976 to leave the country and return when the war was over. The members of the church felt that they could not take responsibility for the lives of the missionaries. Swedes followed the advised of their African friends.

They left the administration of the ELCZ, in the hands of Rev. J.C. Shiri. He is from the Eastern Deanery and became the first African Bishop. He was keen to have better

educated blacks teaching at ELCZ secondary schools. The black teachers would replace the missionaries. He wanted the school system to complement and not supplant the family in religious education. Both institutions should be responsible for religious education. Pastors persuaded parents to bring their children to Sunday Schools at a tender age in order to provide them with a sound foundation in religious education.

It looks like the Lutheran missionaries were rather coward or were not courageous enough to confront the colonialists and challenge them as a way of directing them like what was done by the Roman Catholic and the United Methodists. The ELC missionaries lacked a prophetic voice as a church. The stand taken by missionaries was not taken as a solution to the problem at stake. It was tantamount to deserting their converts under oppression and torture by the colonial government. Their hurried departure for Sweden disrupted the teaching of religious education in ELC schools in the Western Deanery until a huge pool of African pastors was trained to be teachers. The process took some time because religious education had been treated as a special subject, which was taught by missionaries only.

## **2:2 Handover Of All ELC Schools To Local Councils**

In 1970s the colonial government of Rhodesia decided that churches had to contribute ten per cent of teachers remuneration. This meant a closer collaboration between the state and the church. ELC refused to collude with the colonial government and the African local councils which also collected taxes for the colonial state. Since tax collection was a well-tried colonial instrument of subjugation the church was afraid that it would be

perceived as cooperation with the tax collectors. They argued that they had not come to Rhodesia to assist in colonial administration. The colonial government did not take kindly to the ELC stance. It took stern measures against the ELC in a bid to punish it. The colonial government declared that all schools had to be handed over to the African Native local councils and no compensation was given to the church for the building and furniture while European education was catered for by the central government. These local councils could levy taxes to raise resources for education provision (Zvobgo 1995: 58). However given the general impoverishment of rural areas, those taxes were very limited and hence the quality of education remained low. This affected the church's membership which had been instrumental.

For the ELC, this policy reform marked a watershed for its policy of education as a means of conversion.

The transfer of the primary schools to the community boards meant that a very important period of the church's educational work had come to an end. (Soderstrom 1984:137)

Some teachers who previously were considered as active members of ELC backslid. Some went to the extent of claiming that the ELC had been oppressing them and exploiting them. Religious education was no longer taken seriously at schools. Teachers openly reverted back to practicing traditional ways of living which were not allowed by ELC. A group of them became polygamists and others started drinking beer while others became traditional healers. All these practices were abhorred by missionaries and would have been openly practiced when the schools were under missionary control. This shows that traditional religion was still alive. Perhaps it had been suppressed by missionary stances. The teachers were keen to work for the council. Perhaps this shows that they

were not genuinely committed to the cause of Lutheran missionaries. They had pretended to be Christians in order to get jobs at ELC schools. They could be said to have been rendering lip service to the ELC, only to please missionaries for them to be given some gifts by missionaries. However there were complaints registered by some parents. Some parents were not happy with the handover of the church schools to the local councils. They were not satisfied with the type of education offered by local councils.

Normally the parents disapproved of the change. Their confidence in the church was rather strong. But they could not possibly trust a government which spent ten times as much money on European students as on African students (Soderstrom 1984:136).

They regarded the type of education which was offered by the church to be of a higher quality than that offered by the local council. Local council did not take Religious Education seriously. As a result some parents sent their children either to Beitbridge Mission or Manama the only two remaining church schools in the Western Deanery in 1970s. The two still seriously taught religious education. Parents liked this type of education because of the moral values it imparted to children. On the other hand, the local council had its own problems. It had no budget for and no knowledge and experience in running schools. To this day some people are applying for permission for council schools to be returned to the church. In January 1999, West Nicholson Primary School was granted permission to return to the church. It is now one of ELCZ schools. People still like the type of education which was offered by the church. Many reminisce about the luminaries produced by Manama. While people complained about Christian dominance and its sidelining of other religions, they came to accept that other religions can be practiced at home and in private but have no place in the curriculum.

In order for people to accept the equality of religions, all regions have to be included in the curriculum.

### 2:3 Nationalists And Christianity

Missionaries had stated that Christianity was the only true religion. Lutherans went a step further saying that the Lutheran denomination was the only denomination, which was a true divine revelation of the Almighty. This implied that other denominations were inferior and less authentic. ELC students were discouraged from attending Sunday Services conducted by other denominations. People were taught to look down not only on other religions but other denominations. ATR was described as devilish and dangerous. Missionaries were therefore instrumental in removing Africans from their own world of beliefs to a foreign world, whose religion they were compelled to accept although they did not understand its philosophy. As noted by Kruger (1995:241) with reference to South Africa, colonizing western country compelled the conquered country to accept the rulers' religion and culture. He says,

There was also the unquestioned underlying assumption of the cultural superiority of the colonizing Western countries, the acceptance of the ruler's religion by the colonized, and the identification of Christianity with Western Cultures.

Through that exercise of de-Africanizing Africans, missionaries somewhat succeeded in getting followers who were proud of foreign religions, philosophies and culture. They produced followers who looked down upon their own African Traditional Religion as inferior and uncivilized. By doing so missionaries made Africans more 'open' to oppression and exploitation because of the self-doubt and even hatred which they planted in Africa. It was therefore not possible to distinguish missionaries from settlers. As a result

they were lumped together. This is why scholars say politics and religion go together and cannot be separated.

The inferiority of African religions is seen in the fact that they were only included in academic research work later. Previously they were portrayed as fetishism.... (see J.S Mbiti and Idowu). Zvabvah at the time reacted against presentation of religion as made by sociologists and anthropologists.

In the same vein some sociologists and anthropologists characterized African Religion as primitive, native, tribal, savage animalistic and fetish (ter Haar 1990:73).

Africans had their own way of organizing life buttressed by their religions. These distinctions gave people a sense of 'nationhood'. Smart (1986:153) notes

Nationalism from one point of view can be defined as the theory that each nation should have its nation - state Patriotism is devotion to my one's nation-state and incorporates the view that any nation should have its rightful place in the world.

Nationalist sentiments in the Western Deanery expressed that people wanted local cultures respected. Nationalists influenced people to admire and cherish their own tradition, culture and religion. They encouraged people to be proud of it. This saw the revival of the open practice of ATR side-by-side with Christianity sometimes instead of the latter. ELC membership in the Western Deanery dropped as many Africans proudly professed their African religion and played down Christianity. Others joined independent African churches which are synchronic – they mix indigenous beliefs with Christianity as taught by missionaries was an imposition and colluded with colonial exploiters.

For many Africans in the Western Deanery being a member of a nationalist group, it was a sign of heroism. They designed a special hat made out of animal skin and they had a

slogan (*mntwana wenhlabathi*) 'child of the soil'. This united Africans in the Western Deanery under the banner of nationalism. People were mobilized to join the liberation struggle. Christianity was at loggerheads with the mood of the day. It was a betrayal. This was quite unfortunate. Some of them took advantage of nationalism and secretly visited herbalists and traditional diviners to help them deal with persistent misfortunes. This means that there were some people who publicly professed Christianity but practiced ATR in secret.

Nationalists can be said to have played a pivotal role in creating African awareness. They succeeded in mobilizing people together in their fight against exploitation and oppression. They also succeeded in making people realize that there is nothing wrong with ATR and that locals should embrace it as their religion.

## 2:4 Guerrilla Warfare and the revival of African Traditional Religion (ATR)

Guerrillas worshipped God (*Unkulunkulu*) through the intercession of ancestral spirits.

They relied on ancestral spirits for protection, guidance and survival during the war.

Weeds carefully shook some snuff into his palm. A quick sniff and a whiff of dark powder drifting to the cell floor and he would be conversing with the ancestors... I thank you for your stories. They guided me at the front. Your dream visits kept me vigilant, alive ...(Gumbo 1995:22).

Considering Gumbo's statement he seems to have believed that they could defeat their enemies, the colonialists, through the assistance of their ancestral spirits. They strongly discouraged Christianity and referred to it as a religion of the whites who were their oppressors and exploiters. They argued that the whites had imposed that religion upon them. The religion had neither connection to nor relevance for Africans. African

Traditional songs were sung all over the country to placate the ancestors. Those who worshipped the Christian God were labeled as sell-outs and some of them were killed. A good example of such people who were killed was that of Evangelist Masilo Makhurane who was shot to death by guerrillas in 1977 because of his strong faith in God.

On a night in February 1977, some people generally believed to be security forces knocked at the door of Evangelist Masilo Makhurane, who was an evangelist at Gungwe. When Mr. Makhurane was told to come, he stepped out in the darkness and his family inside heard three shots (Soderstrom 1984:181).

His death frightened people in his area so much that they found themselves compelled to accept everything said by guerrillas in order not to die. Since guerrillas were against Christianity, a lot of people who, initially were Christians, backslid and reverted to traditional religion. A lot of people claimed to be mediums of certain spirits. To be a medium of a spirit was a very important thing. Such people were regarded as custodians of African Traditional Religion and culture. They were highly respected and were addressed as grandfather or grandmother respectively (*Ubabamkhulu or ugogo*).

Mr. Sifelani Nyembezi, a former guerrilla who operated in the Western Deanery, during the struggle, recalls that most of guerrillas were supporters of ATR. They were convinced that they could communicate with their god through the use of ancestral spirits. Guerrillas at times used force to discourage Christianity.

Bhebe observes that people's persistent adherence to ATR made it possible for them to resist Christianity in the Western Deanery.

The religious clash between the missionaries and Ndebele became increasingly apparent when the former started preaching in the country

Although ATR was for sometime submerged, during the time of guerrillas and nationalists, it became a religion to reckon with. It was a religion to be included in the religious education syllabus in schools in the Western Deanery.

## 2:5 Christianity And African Traditional Religion

Christianity which once enjoyed the monopoly of being regarded as the only religion in the Western Deanery and elsewhere especially within the continent of Africa, suffered defeat and reduction. Many people who were known as strong and active Christians, backslid, some remained in church but practiced the traditional way of living. This points to the fact that all along they practiced both religions albeit practicing ATR in secret. Now they could criticize Christianity openly. Such people could be described as rendering lip services to missionaries. Although they were Christians, African beliefs still lingered. The expectation that true Christians must abandon African customs and tradition might became unrealistic. The problem was that Christianity despised all African customs and substituted them with foreign customs which made it difficult for an African to become a true Christian, like his counterpart in the Western World, whose culture and tradition go together with the Christian faith. With the revival of ATR, membership in the ELCZ, especially in the Western Deanery dropped drastically. This clearly shows that in the Western Deanery there were two religions, which had to learn to live together harmoniously in order to establish stability in the Deanery. ATR is known for not being aggressive and qualifies to be a religion like other religions of the world.

## 2:6 The Place Of Religious Education At ELCZ Schools

The term “religious education” as was used at ELC schools before independence, was referred to as the Christian faith. RE was also called Scripture or Bible Knowledge. Students were encouraged to commit into memory prescribed verses of the Bible. The Bible was the only recommended textbook for the subject. In addition to learning prescribed verses by heart, students were also taught some church history, liturgy and church doctrine. The subjects were taught by missionaries only to avoid distortion which they thought Africans would likely do. Only a few indigenous teachers, who were *trusted* by missionaries, could teach religious education. To such African teachers, it was an honor to teach such a subject and were proud of it. In the Western Deanery there were students who came from various religious backgrounds and some from a syncretistic background. Here I am deliberately referring to those children whose parents were both Christians and traditionalists at the same time. The teaching of religious education was described by some students as boring and not challenging at all. It was boring especially to those who were not Christians and because it had no meaning in their lives. They were unhappy with rote learning and with the fact that no comparison with other religions was done. In addition the child’s personal experience was not brought into the picture. The child was taken as a *tabula-rasa* or an empty vessel. He was taken as someone who knew nothing and had come to be filled with information by the teacher who was perceived to be full of knowledge. Such an approach can be described as teacher centred rather than child centred learning. It left the child idling and concentrated on the teacher’s input. There was no room for dialogue among children, which was a big mistake. In order to pass at

the end of the year students were encouraged to reproduce what they were taught by the teacher. The colonial government designed the curriculum but the church had an input as well. This allowed the ELC a chance to teach its doctrines, church history and its belief that Christianity was the only true religion.

## 2:7 Conclusion

Christianity, which was the religion allowed by missionaries in the Western Deanery, was bitterly challenged by both guerrillas and nationalists who wanted people in the Western Deanery to accept ATR as their religion. Both guerrillas and nationalists were concerned that the missionaries were de-Africanizing Africans making them look down on their own and culture as inferior and uncivilized. For guerrillas and nationalists, Christianity was irrelevant to people in Western Zimbabwe. In response to the nationalist mood of the day and through coercion, people accepted ATR and began practicing it openly. Others practiced both religions.

### **Chapter 3: The intensification of guerrilla warfare in the Western Deanery in the 1970s and its effects on the teaching of religious education**

#### **3:1 Introduction**

In 1970s guerrilla warfare was at its highest peak in the Western Deanery. In order to defeat the Smith regime forces that had gone to the extent of employing mercenaries or from other countries to assist in the war, guerrillas found it necessary to recruit more personnel to expand their operations. Those recruits were mostly students or school leavers. Inevitably this interfered with the education system in the Western Deanery. The recruits were part of the Zimbabwe Peoples' Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA), which was loyal to Zimbabwe African Peoples' Union (ZAPU) under Comrade Joshua Nkomo. They operated in the North, South and South Western part of Zimbabwe which also included the Western Deanery. Their activities are associated with the disturbances in the teaching of religious education in the Western Deanery as will be elaborated below.

In their recruitment exercise they used many different methods. After being mobilized some people left on their own for Botswana *en route* to Zambia for military training. This researcher falls into this category. Others were abducted at different gatherings including churches, schools etc. The abduction of students at Manama school on 30 January 1977 is of great interest here. It is important to examine the effects of these abductions on the church's educational programmes especially on the teaching of religious education at Manama, and in other schools in the Western Deanery in the 1970s.

### 3:2 The abduction of students from Manama and its effects on RE in the 1970s

Manama in 1970s was the only secondary school in the Western Deanery, which belonged to the ELC.

All secondary schools were boarding schools. Better opportunity to give the students a Christian education existed when the students lived at the school during the terms. On Sundays all students came to church service. The first residence for the students was built at Mnene in 1930-1. Thereafter the turn came to Masase, Manama etc. (Soderstrom 1984:92).

The school curriculum at Manama was quite unique in the sense that it emphasized on the teaching of religious education. Religious education was therefore compulsory to every student in the Western Deanery. At the time religion referred to the Christian faith only, and the Bible was the only textbook used.

The subject matter of religion has almost exclusively been the Bible and History of Christianity so far (ter Haar 1990:13).

As far as the curriculum was concerned, religious education meant the teaching of what was referred to as “scripture”, “Bible knowledge” or “Divinity”. The main aim was to make new converts from among the students and to provide them with a Christian nurturing. The Christian faith was therefore the only religion which had a monopoly at the school because it was the only religion taught at schools all over sub Saharan Africa (ter Haar 1990).

Whatever way one looks at it, missionary influence has been of vital importance in the history of education in sub- Saharan Africa even more so since the colonial government originally left education almost exclusively in the hands of the missionary agencies who first and for most used it as an instrument for propagating the Christian faith (ter Haar 1990:36).

The methodology used in the teaching of religious education was boring. Children were tired of constant repetition of familiar Bible stories and puzzled by theological statements dictated by teachers. There was not room to reflect and to question. Theirs was to receive what came from the teacher who was said to be full of knowledge and could not be

wrong. In that way children were regarded as a *tabula rasa* or empty vessels, which had to be filled up by the teacher. Children were also regarded as ignorant and their own experiences were not recognized at all. The method, which was mostly used in religious education, was the lecture method and notes taking. It encouraged rote learning. For one to pass at the end of the year, one was supposed to reproduce what he or she received from the teacher. Lecture method does not afford pupils the opportunity to interact actively in material being presented. Pupils receive knowledge passively without any participation. Interaction between teacher and pupils is very minimal. The lecture method is teacher centered and focuses on what is taught, rather than the child who is taught. Consequently students usually complained that the teaching of religious education was not challenging. Teachers in religious education lessons heavily relied on the Bible as the only test and reference book. Goldman (1965) wonders how adolescence could be expected to understand the Bible at that tender age. He goes on to explain that at that age children need something quite challenging. They need life themes. Reading the Bible from cover to cover was rather unfair and unrealistic for children at that tender age. Goldman (1965: 7) notes that

This unrealistic dominance of the Bible in teaching religion to the young is simply because when syllabuses were devised there was very little available about children's religious development. In the last ten years a considerable amount of data has been added to our knowledge in terms of the thought, attitudes and the behaviour of children. What it reveals is that the Bible is not a children's book that the teaching of large areas of it may do more damage than good to a child's religious understanding and that too much Biblical material is used too soon and too frequently. What it also confirms is that the context and methods used in religious education are out of step with educational practices in other subjects.

In religious education there was also room for church history. This gave ELCZ a chance to slot in its own church doctrine in the syllabus in religious education. Bible lessons started quite early in the morning, usually at assembly. The aim was to emphasize the

importance of Christianity as a religion and to demonstrate to people that Christianity was the only real religion. The implication was that other religions such as African Traditional Religion were not real religions. They were false religions. This portrays Christianity as an aggressive religion, which cannot core-exist with other religions harmoniously. Religion was the first subject to be taught in the timetable—it was taught in the morning. Weaknesses of this stance will be outlined in Chapter 5.

Many people liked the type of education offered by the ELCZ schools. They regarded it as inculcating high religious values among people in the Western Deanery and they regarded that type of education as important in shaping a more upright the society. As a result Manama became popular in the Western Deanery because of its unique type of education which had emphasis on religious education. Manama as a school produced teachers who showed interest and commitment in the teaching of religious education at schools where they taught. Some of those teachers taught Catechumen class which was another way of spreading Christianity. Religious education at ELC schools was highly rated and schools were used as means of increasing church school membership by recruiting students. The school enabled the church to increase its membership by leaps and bounds.

When the African churches were founded in the 19th and 20th century, education played a very important role. The school served as a main gate to their church (Soderstrom 1984:53).

As far as the ELC was concerned, Manama Secondary School stood as a model school in the Western Deanery as far as teaching of religious education was concerned. Many schools emulated Manama. Other schools envied Manama. Manama produced well-

behaved students who were liked by all people in the Deanery. As a result all members of ELC in the Western Deanery were proud of Manama's achievement in the field of education in general. Unfortunately all this was disrupted when Manama was visited by guerrillas on 30 January 1977. Cde Paulos Matjaka, who was a teacher at Manama then, says of a handful of guerrillas came to Manama Secondary School on the day. Their aim was to abduct Manama Secondary School students to Botswana *en route* to Zambia for military training. Mr. Paulos Matjaka says that three hundred students were abducted that evening. Mr. Paulos Matjaka was among them.

The liberation had in Rhodesia assumed a new character at the beginning of 1977. More and more young people started to leave the country to join the guerrillas. In January 1977 Manama Secondary School became one of the first schools to move *on* block out of the country - a move involving about 300 students, seven teachers, three nurses and a clergyman (Matjaka Nare 1995: 130).

The abduction of the Manama Secondary School led to the closure of the school. This had negative effects on religious and secular education at Manama Secondary School. This was a big loss to the entire church, which had used schools as recruitment centres in a bid to increase membership. From being a highly regarded school with a good reputation in the teaching of religious education, the school became a barracks for soldiers and a place where arrested people were tortured by the Criminal Investigation Department' officers (CID). The ELC could not bear it. At a church council meeting, the Bishop was requested to discuss the matter with the District Administrators (D.A).

The church council is shocked to hear that Manama Secondary is being used as barracks. The Bishop is being requested to discuss the matter with the District Administrator of Gwanda (CC 88:41).

Since the school was closed, the environment at Manama was no longer conducive for any form of education, let alone the teaching of religious education. Sunday services were no longer attended by many people, as was the case before. The presence of the Smith regime

forces at Manama frightened many people and barred them from attending Sunday services in their numbers. Religious education was thus negatively affected in the Deanery.

On security grounds senior members of the ELC who resided at Manama were compelled by circumstances to evacuate the place and go to Bulawayo. Among the group that went to Bulawayo were teachers of Manama Secondary School including, their religious education teacher Rev L.M. Dube. The Bishop and his council members were not impressed by the closure of Manama Secondary School. At a church council meeting which was held at Njube Youth Centre, they unanimously agreed that a new Manama Secondary School should be opened in Bulawayo. Its main aim would be to replace the old Manama Secondary School which was closed in 1977.

A new Manama Secondary School should be opened at Njube to accommodate the students who returned from Botswana and enroll new students. (CC 88:43).

### **3:3 The Opening Of New Manama Secondary School In Bulawayo**

The curriculum at new Manama Secondary School was not different from that of the old Manama Secondary School. It also had an emphasis on the teaching of religious education, which was characteristic of the curriculum of ELC schools. According to Bishop J.C Shiri, the first African Bishop of the ELCZ, the difference between the two schools was that the Manama Secondary School was a boarding school whereas the new Manama Secondary School was a day school. At a boarding school children were compelled to practice a Christian life whereas at a day school some people came from non-Christian homes. Such children did not have the chance of practicing a Christian life

at home. This shows that the new Manama Secondary School had a series of problems as far as the spreading of Christianity in the Western Deanery was concerned.

All secondary schools were boarding schools. Better opportunity to give students a Christian education existed when the students lived at school during the term. Morning and evening prayers were held during the week - days. On Sunday all students came to church services (Soderstrom 1984:92).

New Manama Secondary School did not become as popular as the old Manama Secondary School. Its students had problems of accommodation. The majority of them had no relatives in Bulawayo. As a result they were compelled by circumstances to terminate their studies. Only a handful remained and could not be any influential in the Deanery. Thus one can conclude that the closure of Manama dealt a body blow to the church especially in the Western Deanery.

### 3:4 The Closure Of Schools In the Western Deanery

After the abduction of Manama students in 1977, a number of schools in the Western Deanery were closed. The majority of them were closed by guerrillas in their attempt to have recruits. There were some schools which were closed by security forces too. Other schools closed for security reasons. Why guerrillas insisted that schools should be closed was because they were not interested in the type of education taught at schools especially the emphasis on the teaching of religious education. They took religious education to be a means of making them divorce their own culture and religion and embrace foreign religions. Since religious and secular education went together, in order to show that they had no interest in the type of religion taught at schools, they had to close schools.

The closure of schools enabled the guerrillas to get new recruits among former school children and teachers. It brought both religious and secular education to an end in the Deanery until after independence in April 1980. The closure of schools opened the way for ATR, which had been suppressed for a long time. ATR is not aggressive. It could co-exist with other religions harmoniously, but was denigrated by Christians and many Westerners. They described it as devilish and dangerous.

### 3:5 Closure Of Some ELCZ Parishes

Some ELCZ Pastors found it quite impossible to function during the struggle especially in rural parishes, because of the presence of guerrillas. Some of these pastors were arrested by security forces. These include as Rev. A.M.N.Vellah, Rev. Masiyane Rev. Ramakapola and the Youth Director, Albert Malala.

Pastor Elias Masiyane was arrested at the same time as Arote Vellah, was subjected to the same torture, and had to name at least ten people whom he had helped escape to Zambia. In his semi-conscious state of mind Masiyane named amongst others three names of his own children. Pastor Ramakapola and Albert Malala, Youth Secretary in the church were also arrested in June 1975 (Soderstrom 1984:175-176).

There was harassment of both pastors and parishioners in rural areas. Most people therefore ran away to urban parishes where there was protection. By so doing they left rural parishes unattended to. This was detrimental to the Christian faith in rural areas of the Western Deaneries. Since there were no pastors at some of the rural Parishes, ELC members lacked Christian nurturing and many members backslid. The majority of them opted for traditional religion because they understood its philosophy. Thus Christianity in the Western Deanery declined while traditional religion was revived and became more prominent than Christianity during the war of liberation. ATR became a religion to reckon

with in the entire Deanery. People in the Western Deanery were happy with it because it answered most of their problems. Unlike Christianity there were no atheists in traditional religion and there is no need for conversion. People are born into ATR. Even those who converted to Christianity know about ATR as the latter in part of their socialization.

### 3:6 Conclusion

Religion is so important that it cannot be separated from prevailing socio-cultural and political goings-on. As the political climate changed, so did religious practice. The intensification of the war of liberation is a case in point here. The closure of schools had negative effects on both religious and secular education. The closure of parishes weakened people's faith and gave room to the open practice of African Traditional Religion. Many people claimed to be mediums of one form or other of spirits. Beer was openly brewed to placate the spirits. Ancestral spirits emerged as guardians of family. This is why some scholars refer to ancestral spirits as guardians of the land. They are consulted on all key family functions and problems. Mbiti (1969) refers to them as the living-dead-to show that although departed they are in contact with the living and commune with them through rituals. Mbiti (1969:26) says,

But the living dead do not vanish out of existence they now enter into a state of *collective immortality*. This is the state of the spirits who are no longer formal members of human families. People lose personal contact with them. The departed in this state become members of the family as community of the spirits.

This turn of events plunged the Western Deanery into some confusion. It had boasted of large numbers of Christians but now the same people were jumping ship and openly practicing a religion which is antithetical to Christianity.

To declare oneself, as a Christian was tantamount to declaring that one is against the liberation struggle. One could be labeled a sellout or be killed for their faith. Under these circumstances even those who remained in the church practiced Christianity moderated by ATR. Clearly Christianity as taught by missionaries had lost its allure and hence a loss of membership. By the 1980s ATR was quite prominent in the Western Deanery.

## **Chapter 4: The new government and its challenges to the church's educational programme in the 1980s**

### **4:1 Introduction**

1980 was a year which everyone in Zimbabwe was waiting for. It was a year of joy and excitement and great expectation, a year when Zimbabwe became independent. The new government brought with it a lot of changes in the educational sector and most of those changes had effects in the field of religious education in the Western Deanery.

The new government immediately took all responsibility for the provision of education. Under such circumstances one could conclude that perhaps the coming of independence in Zimbabwe usurped the church of its historical power in school education. With the advent of the new government, new disciplines were explored with a view to developing new forms of education which would be meaningful to people in new Zimbabwe. Secular and religious education would no longer be separated. It was hoped by some that the church's role in education in Zimbabwe would be through adult education, pre-school education and community development. The church's role in education had therefore taken a new twist. It would no longer be limited to schools but would be a life long affair. It was recognized that where as in the past education had been used as a means of exploitation and oppression it should now be turned into an instrument of liberation.

As a result the church in Zimbabwe (the ELCZ in particular) spent time discussing this new position in education and finding out how it should rethink and reorganize its educational activities, in view of the fact that the new post-independence government

would not let churches do as they please in the area of secular and religious education. The government defined parameters and the church had to operate within them. Although the church's role in education therefore underwent considerable changes religion still lay at its core. In terms of approach there was need to focus on the community.

In order to comprehensively discuss the changes brought about after independence, one has to discuss the following:

- a) The new religious education syllabus
- b) The teaching of religious education in the Western Deanery (namely in Manama and Zezani)
- c) The role of African Traditional Religion in the new syllabus in religious education and
- d) The inclusion of "moral education" in the RE syllabus.

#### 4:2 The New Syllabus In Religious Education

The title, religious education presupposes two things. The first is that the subject is educational and secondly that it is concerned with religion and not just a particular faith or aspect of faith but a lot of faiths. As such religious education is a branch of that field known as religious studies.

Religious education is an integral part of the curriculum with the comprehensive purpose to aid the growth of young people to maturity so that they can develop self-understanding,

good relationship with other people and the world around them and become capable in responding to what they believe to be divine. Commentators note thus

The new approach will have far reaching consequences. It will mean a new syllabus, new textbooks new methods, new examinations and a new type of teachers (ter Haar 1990:118).

The new syllabus has 3 distinct parts in secondary education - the Junior Certificate one also referred to as "Developing in Christ Syllabus" for Forms 1 and 2 (that is the first 2 years of secondary school). For the next 2 years, that is Forms 3 and 4 or Ordinary Level (O Level) the syllabus is called "Bible Knowledge" and the last 2 years, lower and upper 6<sup>th</sup> Forms (Advanced Level) it is called "Divinity". The latter two components are overtly about Christianity.

In order to handle the new syllabi teachers would need retraining in the form of in-service training, seminar and workshops. The syllabi used are common to all schools and cut across denominations. In fact the new syllabus accommodates all religions of the world including ATR. It uses a multi-faith approach in the teaching of religious education, with an emphasis on life themes.

Before discussing the secondary school syllabi it is important to note that there were changes introduced at primary school too. The Curriculum Development Unit (CDU) came out with a detailed syllabus known as "Faith in Action" for Grades 1 and 2. The syllabus consists of;

A teachers' book and pupils' book which is basically a picture book with brief tests in three languages; English, Ndebele and Shona (ter Haar 1990:144)

#### 4.2.1 Developing in Christ syllabus

It looks like arrangements are being made to come up with a similar syllabus in religious education for senior classes in secondary education.

As is stressed by Moyo amongst others, efforts are underway to develop multi-faith religious education syllabi in order to do justice to the situation of religious pluralism in the country (ter Haar 1990:194).

The aim of the new syllabus in religious education is to;

- a) Provide students with the opportunity to explore his experience and the experience of others.
- b) Examine relevant Biblical passages
- c) Decide how he will get new insight confirm, depend or challenge his experiences. (Geoffrey Chaplain 1983:1)

The syllabus emphasizes activities in which the student becomes aware of his/her uniqueness and of differences in others and grows in his/her ability to relate to them. Such a student develops the ability to formulate and apply universally accepted principles of conduct underlined by tolerance and to see these as a way of realizing relationships with others and with Christ (for those who are Christians). The teacher is only a facilitator of this process of self-discovery and self-awareness. The children's different experiences are taken seriously. The children are taken from the known to the unknown. This allows children to compare experiences. This calls for a lot of creative activity. It encourages dialogue between the teacher and children and among children. The approach of this syllabus is supported by Norma H. Thompson (1980:304) when she observes that

Dialogue may take many forms but common to all forms is the desire to relate to person of another religious group. Dialogue is a manner of acting an attitude as a spirit which guides one's conduct. It implies concerns respect and hospitality towards the other.

This tells children to value other people's religions and to see all religious as equal.

In this vein religious education is seen as having some contributions to the development of the entire person, seeing him/ her as a person in the community. As far as this new syllabus in religious education is concerned it encourages the facilitator to start from the known to the unknown.

That means starting where the students are with their own experience and the experience of people who matter to them (Chapman 1983:1).

The materials in this syllabus are designed to enable students to take culture and wisdom of their people seriously. The aim is to make students aware of other religions in Zimbabwe and beyond such as Judaism, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism. This is the same internationally. In the Western Deanery the major religions are Christianity and ATR. The emphasis of the new syllabus is that all religions are equally important and pupils' freedom of worship should be highly respected. The syllabus adopts a multi-faith approach.

The multi-faith approach as is reflected in broad terms of teaching religious education was agreed on during a conference in 1981. Its implications for the Western Deanery are that, religious education should help pupils to;

- a) Develop awareness of the supreme being
- b) Understand their own religion and tradition and by searching, discovery, develop their own belief system.
- c) Know about and appreciate all other religions, as they are likely to encounter them in Zimbabwe.
- d) Respect people whose beliefs differ from their own thus developing a spirit of tolerance and co-operation
- e) See the relationship between religion and morals
- f) Work out their belief system in moral behaviour. (Religious and Moral Education 1988:2)

The new syllabus in religious education is in line with the political ideology in Zimbabwe, which seeks to accommodate all cultures and traditions. In this syllabus there is emphasis

on sharing and dialogue among students and the teacher. The preferred teaching methods are child centred and allow a lot of activity and participation on the part of students. There is no room for conversion. The teacher learns together with pupils without judging and imposing on students.

Unfortunately this syllabus has been difficult to implement as will be shown later. In the meantime it is important to look at how Manama Secondary School responded to the new syllabus.

#### **4.2.2 Bible Knowledge and Divinity at Ordinary and Advanced levels respectively**

The two syllabi have a Christian content. Their emphases are to prove that Christianity is the only true religion because they do not accommodate other religions. Teachers are happy when teaching these syllabi because the position of a teacher is elevated. S/he is the knower as opposed to being a facilitator as is expected in the Junior Certificate level. The way the two syllabi are taught at Manama is such that there is no room for student activities. The student is the recipient of knowledge s/he take notes from the teacher. Some of the notes are recycled and are given without thorough explanation. The student is encouraged to memorize the notes and to reproduce them at the end of the course. This approach condones rote learning, which is monotonous and not challenging.

Megil (1996; 12) observes that the teacher

... must be able to arouse emotions and interest. If his lecture is flat and dull his listeners will react with boredom and apathy (Megil 1996:12).

The monotony might be a turn off for those students from non-Christian backgrounds. Such students do religious education not because they like it but because they are compelled to do it because at Manama and Zezani RE is not an optional subject. It is compulsory for 4 years of secondary school up to O Level. This is not a government regulation though. It is optional in the last two years of secondary school or Advanced Level (A Level), where children choose only three subjects preferably related ones; especially those with a bearing on an individual's anticipated post-secondary school training. A lot of Advanced Level students do Divinity because it is perceived to be easy to pass and therefore enhances one's chances of getting into University.

Religious education is also thought to be easy to teach by older trained teachers. They think it is a factual subject so their role is to give out the facts. Manama High School and Zezani High School have very good results in religious education. The church is very pleased as observed in Church Council meetings;

Manama and Zezani got 100 percent pass rate in Divinity each. The church is highly impressed by that excellent performance (CC 176:20).

One could therefore say that the two schools are model schools in the Western Deanery as far as teaching of religious education is concerned. Most students from the two schools who end up teaching, specialize in religious education. This shows that many of them appreciate the religious education they go from church schools. As a result, religious education currently is taught in all secondary schools in the Deanery.

#### 4:3 Teaching Of Religious Education At Manama Secondary School In 1980S

According to ex-Bishop Shiri, Manama Secondary School re-opened in 1980 because everybody was eager to see the school functioning again. Nostalgia for the type of education Manama Secondary School once offered was very strong. The school was valued by all in the church beyond the people of the Western Deanery.

Given the new syllabus and its multi-faith approach, teachers found it hard to implement. The approach means that there is no one best answer but many possibilities to suit the many realities of students. This is difficult for many teachers who may be of a particular faith themselves, or might not have been trained to deal with multiple religions in co-existence. This echoes ter Haar 's (1991: 48) sentiments

Religious education, the way it is taught in the new syllabus has open-ended answers.

This means that for the subject in question to be handled the way it deserves it needs a specialist classroom practitioner who has a sound knowledge in religions of the world and knowledge in religious hermeneutics would be an added advantage. As a result at both Manama and Zezani Secondary Schools, not all religious education teachers are able to handle the subject. Old trained teachers and temporary teachers are particularly affected. There are only a handful of teachers at either school who are able to handle the subject.

The new syllabus demands that in order to make it challenging, teachers use the thematic approach. There are certain themes, which are common in all religions. Such themes are

closely studied through comparison thereby enabling children to explain differences and/or similarities between religions under discussion. It prepares them to be tolerant and to co-exist, to appreciate, to co-operate and to love members of other religions regardless of their differences. This brings about social harmony in society. Otherwise, where religious differences are nurtured and become deeply entrenched, social tension and even war might be the end result. As a result, the new syllabus brings about more possibilities for peace and tranquility in the Western Deanery.

Manama Secondary School has produced the best results in the Western Deanery because the R.E teacher, Dean L.M Dube is well trained in the area. (He holds a Master's degree in R.E).

#### 4:4 The Role Of ATR in Religious Education

The decision to bring ATR into the new syllabus in religious education was not accepted by churches as a good development. Many churches including the ELCZ saw it as too radical and were perplexed by the move. Yet, from a government point of view, this was in recognition that ATR is an important aspect of the lives of students even for those who professed Christianity. ter Haar (1990: 101) see social change as the most propelling force behind these innovations. This change is characterized by rapidity and pluralism (ter Haar 1990:101). Children have to cope with fast changes and choose their way from a number of possibilities. These possibilities should be acknowledged and discussed in the school system. Shorter as cited in ter Haar (1990: 101) says in these circumstances

... the teacher of religious education must be a specialist in change and above all he has to be aware of change as an essential mark of religion.

Dialogue is very important. The onus for the dialogue lies with the religious education teacher who should facilitate the exploration, explanation and description of other religious experiences. For this to succeed the derogatory references and views of ATR have to stop and be replaced by views which are more respectful and accommodating. ATR should not be ridiculed and condemned. ATR should be acknowledged as indigenous people's heritage. The "insufficiency" approach, which merely shows that Christianity is superior to ATR and that the former completes and develops the latter at every point has to be done away with. It is ethnocentric and has an air of superiority which merely denigrates ATR.

It is clear that a dialogue between ATR and Christianity is desirable and that it might lead to an enrichment of Christianity. Shorter as quoted by ter Haar (1990:102) says that

to make such a dialogue successful all opprobrious terms when speaking about ATR such as witchcraft, witchdoctor, paganism, superstition, primitive religion etc must be deleted from all publications.

Names and labels people use are very telling of their views of the phenomena they are naming.

It is clear that ATR is important in Zimbabwe in general and in the Western Deanery in particular. According to the tenets of National Unity there is no room for religious or denominational division in schools. Various denominations were forced to work together in collaboration with the government in education provision. In order to adhere to the spirit of National Unity, traditional religion should be taken seriously because it represents quite a large population of Zimbabwe.

ATR is studied as a necessary background for understanding Christianity and understanding syncretic of Christianity. Traditional religion has many areas which are compatible with Christianity; for instance the areas of belief practices, religious objects and religious personages. In both traditional religion, and Christianity, beliefs in spirit is common. God is spirits so are the ancestors (the living dead). The inclusion of ATR in syllabi places ATR in Zimbabwe at par with other religions in the world. It is now necessary to examine the inclusion of moral education in religious education syllabus in the Western Deanery.

#### 4:5 The Inclusion Of Moral Education In The R.E Syllabus

Religious and Moral Education are regarded as two sides of the same coin, and hence the new syllabus in Religious education in Zimbabwe is known as Religious and Moral Education (RME).

Why Religious Education still enjoys government support is because of its supposed benefits to pupils' characters which in turn contributes to nation building (ter Haar 1990: 123).

So far people seem to be convinced that morality is rooted in religion; that both the content and authority of morality are derived from religion, which consequently helps to shape the moral values of all people.

Teachers must set a good example to students and be role models in addition to being academically qualified. The school too has to set good examples.

It goes without saying that for a better future we should take the social, emotional, moral and spiritual education of our pupils seriously. Religious education without moral education is not enough in moulding children's behaviour. The two should always go together. They should augment each other. This therefore means that Religious Education at school should include moral education. That is how religious education is taught at ELCZ schools in the Western Deanery. It includes moral education and that helps in reducing cases of indiscipline at school. That is why people still regard the type of education offered at ELCZ schools as of higher quality when compared to the type of education offered by council schools. It is because they take moral education seriously in their lessons in Religious Education.

Moral education should be given the place it deserves in religious education lessons or syllabus to enable religious education to achieve its aim of building a good nation. It should build a nation, which has, respect and loves its tradition. Religious education without moral education is not complete. We have seen that the teaching of RE was predicated on by prevailing socio-political processes. How then did the teaching of RE fare during the political upheavals in the years immediately after Independence (1980-1988)? These issues are explored in the next section.

#### **4:6 Dissidents Attitude towards Both Religious and Secular Education**

It has been noted that most dissidents who operated in the Western Deanery were former members of Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) despite the absence of support from the top leadership. Alexander, McGregor and Ranger say,

Dissidents had neither political leaders nor political support, but the majority nonetheless maintained their loyalty to ZAPU, and tenaciously clung to their Liberation War identity as ZIPRA, guerrillas (Alexander, McGregor and Ranger 2000:181).

During the war all guerrillas as previously stated resisted Christianity and regarded it as a foreign religion which had nothing to offer them as Africans. The only religion they appreciated and fought for its inclusion in the curriculum was ATR which upholds their identity. The dissidents continued in this vein.

Dissidents' understanding of religious education at schools in the Western Deanery was a carry over from the war. They were not aware of the post independence changes which took place in educational system in Zimbabwe. They did not realize that in fact their views of the need to change the education system and colonial type of religious education were also similar to those of the government. Zvobgo notes

The first black majority government declared its total abhorrence of the educational system Zimbabwe inherited from colonial Rhodesia and committed itself to implement sweeping reforms in state policy and the organization and administration of education. (Zvobgo 1987: 332)

As far as dissidents were concerned, teaching of Christianity in religious education was a waste of time, energy and resources. They saw it as a way of making people accept foreign ideologies. They mobilized people to turn against religious education. Teachers were in a dilemma; they had to follow set syllabi but had to safeguard themselves against harassment. Some teachers scrapped the subject from their timetables. Instead of teaching religious education, teachers taught other subjects in its place. Children also lost interest in the subject. Some parents went with dissidents' viewpoints on religious education. To make things worse, during that time, in primary education religious

education was not examined. This added a lot of weight to dissidents' claim that it was a useless subject, which could be removed.

Because dissidents were feared, their activities affected education in general but religious education in particular. Luckily, the ELCZ schools were not affected at all despite the huge effects on schools in the region. The dissidents' negative attitude towards religious education lowered the standard in the field of religious education in the Western Deanery. People at home were afraid of practicing Christianity. Ardent Christians practiced it underground, to avoid direct confrontation with dissidents.

#### 4:7 Dissidents' Attitude Towards Teachers

Dissidents disliked teachers. They harassed and humiliated them

Some teachers were mutilated. They had their limbs cut with a sharp instrument. (The Chronicle, 28 November 1985)

After recovery, most victims refused deployment in rural areas preferring to work in urban areas, where it was safer.

At times teachers were force-marched naked together with school children (The Chronicle, 30 April 1984).

Some schoolgirls were raped. Both dissidents and security forces raped women with impunity. Rape became a weapon of war.

The members of the Fifth Brigade would also say things like all Ndebeles are dissidents. "Rapes were seen as an attempt to create a generation of Shona babies (CC JPZ 1997:10).

Dissidents particularly hated teachers because they were seen as agents of oppressors as government employees and teachers of religious education. This affected the level of

commitment and the quality of teaching. Many teachers left schools in areas where dissidents operated. The Western Deanery was therefore affected by these developments.

Because most trained teachers left the Deanery remained in the hands of non-trained teachers who were natives of the Western Deanery. Non-trained teachers had their own problems. The most notable one being failure to implement the new syllabus in religious education because they were not used to it. The teachers also found it difficult to handle the subject in question. The majority used religious education periods on the timetable for something else. Religious education suffered during that time. Headmasters could not take action against such teachers despite being aware of what was happening. They too feared for their lives in the face of arbitrary and often brutal sanctions meted out by dissidents. Many were killed in cold blood. Media reports note,

Luke Khumalo, the Headmaster of Thekwani High School, and his wife were shot by dissidents, (The Chronicle, 27 November 1988)

Why dissidents killed Luke Khumalo remains a mystery. His death scared other headmasters in the Deanery to such an extent that they no longer performed their duties effectively. There was mutual distrust and suspicion between headmasters and teachers. Each individual feared being reported to the dissidents as a sellout. Headmasters' administrative roles and duties were compromised and hence temporary teachers lacked the necessary guidance and supervision. Consequently, high standards which were once attained in R.E were reversed. Once again people in the Western Deanery saw RE as a useless subject.

#### 4:8 Dissidents Harassment Of Civilians

Civilians in the Western Deanery suffered a lot. Like teachers they were harassed, tortured and killed.

Women were raped, some men were kidnapped in Matabeleland South Province. (The Chronicle, 30 April 1984).

It was not known who was responsible for raping people because at times security forces disguised themselves as dissidents and raped and kidnapped women. Civilians were fair game for abuse by those with guns on both sides of the conflict. Civilians responded by fleeing to neighbouring Botswana as refugees or going to towns.

As the security situation worsened the population felt insecure to remain in their area. As a result there was an influx of the population into the urban areas. Others particularly those along the borders sought refuge at Dukwe camp in Botswana (Banana 1989:238).

Those who became refugees in Botswana took their children with them. Most such children had limited access to Zimbabwe secular and religious education. Girls were particularly affected. In order to prevent their daughters from being raped, parents removed them from schools. Because of harassment on parents by dissidents some children did not have a chance of attending school.

This therefore means that during dissident era children's schooling was affected in many different ways. The children grew to become adults who are hostile to any form of education because of how they grew up. Religion has an important role to play for young people making them good citizens. Without religious education one wonders what type of citizens Zimbabwe would have. It would be a country with poor morals. Religious Education could not be taught thoroughly because of disturbances from dissidents who

harassed parents. That had serious effects on the teaching of religious and secular education in the Western Deanery during that time.

#### 4:9 The Unity Accord and its impact on RE

The dissident era marked a period of civil unrest in Zimbabwe especially in Matabeleland South, Matabeleland North and Midlands provinces. The civil unrest was sparked by differences between the two dominant parties of the day namely (PF) ZAPU and ZANU (PF). These political parties had previously been at the forefront of the nationalist struggle. The signing of the Unity Accord between (PF) ZAPU and ZANU (PF) in December 1987 marked a watershed in the socio-political history of the country and the two feuding parties but it was after the deaths of thousands. It brought peace and stability because the fighting stopped. Alexander, McGregor and Ranger (2000:232) observe that the Unity Accord removed doubt, bickering, suspicion mistrust and direct confrontation between (PF) ZAPU and ZANU (PF).

The unity agreement of December 1987 raised hopes for development within Matabeleland. Many in the region expected to be rewarded for accepting Unity and anticipated a programme of reconstruction to compensate for the years of violence (Alexander, McGregor, Ranger 2000: 232).

Mutasa (1989) sees the Unity Accord as a positive and constructive step forward for Zimbabwe. Since there was no longer fighting in the country, all people who had sought refuge in neighbouring countries such as Botswana and those who had run to urban areas for protection, returned to their places in rural areas. Mutasa observes that

The Unity Accord enabled Zimbabwe to make full use of the manpower resources of the two parties. In both (PF) ZAPU and ZANU (PF) were very talented, patriotic skilled and committed people who for a very longtime were not fully able to take part in national activities of the countries. The Unity Agreement therefore finally cleared the way for bringing in these talents for the service of the nation (Mutasa 1989:298).

Among those who returned there were qualified teachers who once more serviced the Deanery. This saw the teaching of RE resuming again without any external threats. RE was a subject like any. Headmasters could conduct demonstration lessons to equip their teachers with necessary skills in teaching RE. Workshops and seminars were also conducted.

RE gained the respect it deserved so that students who did the subject did so out of interest. A lot of students in A-level chose Divinity as part of their three-subject combination. This increased the number of people who enrolled for religious education at teachers' training colleges and at the University of Zimbabwe.

The atmosphere created was conducive for learning and religious education was taught at every school in the Western Deanery. The Unity Accord could be said to have encouraged the teaching of religious education and secular education in the Deanery and to have shown people that RE was a subject like any other subject in the school curriculum. It is currently offered up to A-Level in the Western Deanery.

#### **4:10 Conclusion**

The dissident era saw a lot of turmoil in the Western Deanery and beyond. Although the dissidents were supposedly supported in the affected areas, they also harassed and physically, mentally and otherwise tortured ordinary citizens in the affected regions. The dispatch of security agents to deal with the insurgents unfortunately saw the state agents

subjecting the locals to more brutality. The net effect saw the people of the affected regions being displaced within and without Zimbabwe. The impact on socio-economic development of the region was far-reaching and education was not spared as teachers ran away, were killed, maimed or lived in fear of their lives since they were suspected on being government collaborators. Parents too had withdrawn their children fearing for their safety. The teaching of RE suffered a reversal of post-independence gains. The civil strife ended when the feuding parties signed a peace agreement called the Unity Accord. The agreement is generally seen as a positive which brought in a breath of fresh air and hope among the people of affected regions. Indeed it saw the revival of the teaching in generally but also the teaching of RE without fear or favour. Students resumed their studies again. Headmasters could also discharge their responsibilities without fear of grievous reprisals from aggrieved teachers.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusion**

### **5:1 Introduction**

This chapter highlights problems encountered in primary and secondary school levels of Religious Education. The chapter also discusses recommendations which could improve the teaching of RE not only in the Western Deanery but in Zimbabwe as a whole. Finally, the role of the ELCZ in RE in the Western Deanery is evaluated.

### **5:2 Problems Facing Religious Education Teachers:**

It has been noted in this study that the teaching of RE is fraught with numerous problems including poor syllabus interpretation, lack of resource material and poor teaching methodologies as a result of inadequate training for older teachers or inexperience for untrained teachers.

The New Syllabus in religious education requires a teacher with a sound knowledge in the history of world religions, who is able to use a multi-faith approach in his/her lessons in religious education. This points to a need for in-service-training through workshops or seminars conducted either at local level or at district level depending on available resources. There is a need for refresher courses to continuously update teachers skills. This would hopefully equip teachers with all the necessary skills to cope with the subject.

Religious education teachers should be able to vary their teaching methods in order to make their lessons lively and interesting. It is therefore necessary for religious education

teachers to have a sound knowledge of recommended teaching methods in religious education. The methods are child centred rather than teacher centred. They provide the child with more room for participation while the teacher plays the role of facilitator. Instead of listening, the child is involved in activities. The teacher has to ask the child open-ended questions in order to make the child talk and to allow the child to analyze his/her situation. There is an emphasis on dialogue in the teaching of religious education. This syllabus needs teachers who specialized in the teaching of Religious Education.

The syllabus seems to have a problem of clarity because the content of two concepts is combined and there is no clear outline. This is more apparent in the primary school's religious education syllabus. Here teachers seem to have problems of grading the content. Under such circumstances chances of repeating a concept which was taught the previous year are there. This happens especially when teachers change classes each year. Complaints about lack of specificity were raised by RE teachers.

Scholars see lack of knowledge in religious education syllabus in both primary and secondary sectors as a cause of problems of poor performance in religious education. The advice given by such scholars is that religious education teachers should have a sound knowledge of the religious education syllabus and for adequate content and suitable stories in their teaching. Scholars also speak about the abstractness of the syllabus and the need for it to be known by all religious education teachers.

Teacher's attitude towards religious education in some cases is negative thereby contributing towards ineffectiveness in its teaching. As a result, some teachers go to the extent of neglecting the subject totally. Others speak ill about it in the presence of school going children. This contributes towards poor performance. Such attitudes destroy children's interest in the subject. This will be discussed in great details later on.

Another problem which seems to be contributing towards ineffectiveness in teaching of religious education seems to be connected to teachers who graduated before independence. Such teachers need a lot of assistance for them to accept change. They do not understand why the new syllabus in religious education was introduced in early 1980s. This is because they do not know how to handle it. The same problem applies to non-trained teachers. In-service training should target this group of teachers.

There is need for Headmasters to take a leading position in supporting the subject by meeting teachers' needs in religious education and encouraging their teachers to perform up to standard. Where possible the Headmaster should see to it that lesson demonstrations are held in the teaching of religious education at his/her school regularly. If these problems are dealt with the ineffectiveness in the teaching of RE in the Western Deanery will be minimized.

### **5:3 Teachers' Attitude Towards Religious Education**

In religious education there are two groups of teachers: those who are committed to their work in religious education who could be described as self-motivated and those teachers

who have a negative attitude towards religious education. Children always emulate their teachers. That is well reflected when we look at children taught by committed teachers. They have interest in the subject and always do well in their examinations. A good example of such students is students at ELCZ Church in Zimbabwe's schools. Their teacher have interest in the subject, they attend to individual problems and provide students with weaker grades with some remedial lessons in religious education. Once children realize that a teacher is committed in his/her work they become keen to learn and show interest in the subject in question.

At primary school teachers with a negative attitude towards religious education do not bother themselves to hang charts in religious education classrooms. Some of them have gone to the extent of completely neglecting the subject. Instead of teaching religious education they teach subjects of their own interest, such as English and Mathematics, to mention a few. They do not prepare their children for examinations although religious education in the Western Deanery is examined in both Primary and Secondary School levels. Students usually do badly in religious education. This shows that when pupils fail in religious education it does not mean that they are dull or they do not know. Their performance can be attributed to the teacher's attitude towards religious education and the methods s/he uses.

Most of such teachers who have negative attitude towards religious education have difficulties in interpreting the syllabus and are unable to use the recommended methodologies, leading to both teacher and pupils failing to understand the subject. For a

teacher in religious education to teach effectively, he should be able to use the life theme approach. As mentioned earlier on teachers who trained before 1982 and non-trained teachers are not used to the new syllabus, and they are the bulk of teachers with a negative attitude.

It has been noted by the researcher that some children who do RE have a Christian background and are therefore familiar with some Bible stories. Such students seem to be in need of only moral values so as to lay a proper foundation for learning of religious education morals. They can learn such morals only provided their teachers are committed to their work and do not have negative attitudes towards religious education. A teacher is there to shape or mould the child's moral values by being committed in his or her work as a teacher in religious education.

Teachers in religious education are urged to conduct lessons in religious education in such a manner that learners are respected as human beings. With emotional attachment to what they are taught. Therefore the duty of the teacher is to find out how he can teach to the interest of the pupils. Teachers, who are committed, usually do that. In such cases in religious education learning should involve all the senses. This type of learning remains in the student's memory for quite a long time. It creates interest in the child. This can be done provided teachers have interest in religious education. Teachers who have negative attitudes towards religious education need some assistance in the form of workshops, seminars and lesson demonstrations, for them to gain courage and confidence in their work as classroom practitioners in religious education. In the next paragraph the

researcher will endeavor to make a few recommendations, which might be of great help to teachers in religious education especially in the Western Deanery.

#### 5:4 Recommendations

From the foregoing, the problems in RE teaching are clear. Recommendations listed herein are based on the preceding debate.

1. There is need for teachers in religious education to vary their methods of teaching in religious education in order to make their lessons livelier. Children need to be given various written exercises that are more challenging. For instance using exercises on fill-in type of questions or multiple-choice questions or essay type of questions on different days.
2. Knowledge of the subject should not be gained through the use of forceful methods of teaching in religious education; otherwise children will hate the subject throughout their lives. RE is the foundation of religious education. It prepares children to responsible beings who can take charge of their lives later in life.
3. Teachers should be facilitators who should motivate children and create in them a desire to learn on their own without anyone pushing them. Motivated children usually learn better.
4. There is need for Headmasters to see to it that demonstration lessons in the teaching of RE are conducted at their schools so that everyone who teaches religious education is well equipped with necessary skills. Workshops and seminars are also essential.

Those teachers who have specialized in the teaching of religious education should conduct such workshops, and assist their colleagues.

5. Teachers should vary their teaching methods in religious education and they should see to it that the methods they use are child centred. Children's participation should be always given a lot of consideration in such lessons in religious education. There should be more challenging work instead of "recalling" or memorizing work. Children should learn to resolve problems through the use of discovery method. They must always be challenged in order to arouse their interest. The teacher should never bore children by using the lecture method, and giving children long notes. Children should learn from their own notes. They should be taught how to make their own notes. Children understand their even notes than long notes from the teacher.
6. Teachers should never put religious education lessons always in the first or last period in the timetable. If it is always the first lesson in the timetable, it means the children who always come to school late will miss religious education lessons. The idea for putting it as the last period has its weaknesses. By the time children come for religious education lessons, both the teacher and students will have been exhausted, and there are chances that such lessons may be neglected. There is an English saying, which says variety is the spice of life. In order for children to feel challenged, periods for religious education should vary instead of being fixed on their first period of the day or last period of the day. The use of charts is useful in the teaching of religious education at both Primary and Secondary level. They help children in understanding what they are learning. They make the lesson quite challenging and teachers in RE are encouraged to use them in their lessons.

7. There is need for the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture to increase the number of teacher training colleges which teach RE. The number of teachers who are qualified to teach RE at secondary school level is very small. This is caused by the fact that there are only two teachers' colleges, which train secondary school teachers in RE. They cannot meet demand.
8. Local universities should also introduce courses in Graduate Certificate in Education (GCE) in RE through distance education in order to provide schools with almost enough teachers.
9. Because of the new syllabus covers Junior Certificate only. Senior classes in secondary school level lose out on the multi-faith and life themes approach. This has to change so that students are continuously exposed to multiple faiths throughout secondary education.
10. The school administrations should see to it that there are enough resource materials to enable teachers to perform their duties effectively.

It is felt that once these recommendations are taken into consideration there is likely to be an improvement in the teaching of RE in the Western Deanery.

### **5:5 Evaluation**

In the foregoing, it is clear that the ELCZ played a vital role in the Western Deanery as far as religious education is concerned. What we are looking at now as far as RE is concerned should be understood as development in the field of religious education which was initially introduced by the ELCZ in the Western Deanery before the advent of

independence in Zimbabwe. As a church, they have been able to maintain their position that of treating RE as a very important subject even during the liberation struggle by transferring their model school, Manama to Bulawayo. Its influence spread far and wide across the Deanery and currently religious education in the Western Deanery like any other subject in the curriculum, is offered up to Advanced Level. People have interest in the type of education offered at ELCZ schools because of its great emphasis on the importance of religious education to the nation. People like the type of education, which provides religious morals and values.

Therefore at this juncture the researcher feels justified to pronounce that the ELCZ succeeded in its objective of contributing towards RE in the Western Deanery. It introduced the Christian faith, which once dominated over the indigenous religion, ATR, which for quite sometime was denigrated. Currently these two religions co-exist harmoniously in the Deanery. The ELCZ has eventually accepted that ATR should be taught at its schools.

Because of introducing a multi-faith or syllabus in religious education, people in the Western Deanery can appreciate what is done by other religions and there is peace and stability in the Deanery. Both Christianity and ATR are taught in the Deanery. ATR has no founder. Mbiti (1975:16) says

Some of the religions like Christianity, and Islam have founders who started them. This is not the case with African Traditional Religion. It started as people responded to the situation of their life and reflected upon their experiences.

That is why people in the Western Deanery were fond of it and would like to see it being taught at their schools together with other religions of the world such as Christianity and many others. Currently in the Western Deanery when they talk of religious education, they do not confine themselves to Christianity only, they are looking at all religions of the world including African Traditional Religions. People in the Western Deanery consider all religions as equally important.

So far the Western Deanery has many experts in RE. Most of whom are natives of the Deanery such as Dean L.M. Dube, a religious education teacher at Manama in RE and is now the Bishop elect for the ELCZ, Rev J.P. Mudau a lecturer in RE at a teachers' college and Dr Isaac Noko a former religious education teacher at Manama, also a former lecturer in religious education at the university of Botswana and currently a Director for Lutheran World Federation (LWF) in Geneva, and many others whose names are not mentioned in this research study.

Through the use of these people, this Deanery could be described as self-reliant in RE. It has men who are able to train its own people how the subject in question is to be handled in the classroom as per the requirements of the Ministry of Education, Sports and culture. Some of the students taught by these people after completing their studies are deployed at schools outside the Western Deanery in Zimbabwe and others work as teachers in neighbouring countries such as Botswana and many others.

For the Western Deanery to arrive the stage where it is now in R.E it is because of the ELCZ contribution towards RE which has been remarkable.

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