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ASPECTS OF THE CHURCH AND ITS POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT IN SOUTHERN RHODESIA, 1959-1972

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THE TRIAL IN 1978 of Bishop Lamont and criticism of the Roman Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Rhodesia made it clear that there was something of a crisis in relations between Church and State.¹ On the other hand, academic work on the subject, especially that of Dr Kapungu, tended to condemn the churches in Rhodesia for their lack of solidarity with Africans.²

I have some sympathy with Kapungu's point of view, because during my sixteen years in Rhodesia (1957-73), I too was often irritated by the conservative approach of some churches who seemed more concerned with maintaining the peace of mind of their White members than in making a stand for justice.

However, in criticizing the churches, it is unfair to select only the evidence which points to their failure and to suppress contrary evidence, as Kapungu tends to do. Also he seems to be unaware that within the Church there have been many sincere members of both races working for full racial justice. Nor does he allow for the process of evolution in thinking which characterizes all human institutions and is certainly true of the Rhodesian churches.

A few examples will suffice to show this. Kapungu reminds us that Africans had a doctrine of God and an ethical code before the missionaries arrived in the country, although the missionaries did not recognize the fact. 'It would', he says, 'have been easy for the churches to convert the Africans to Christianity had they only treated them as people with a developed culture'.³ On the contrary, he continues, they attacked many aspects of African culture including the ancestor cult. These criticisms are true of many of the first generation of missionaries, but as early as 1902 the Revd A. S. Cripps saw that the Shona 'held firmly the belief that the spirits of the dead watch over

¹ See D. Lamont, *Speech from the Dock* (Leigh-on-Sea, K. Mayhew in association with Catholic Institute for International Relations, 1977); Rhodesia, *Parliamentary Debates*... 1975 (Salisbury, Govt Printer, 1976), XCI, 28 Aug., 1437; *The Sunday Mail*, 18 June and 21 Sept. 1975.

² L. T. Kapungu, *Rhodesia: The Struggle for Freedom* (Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis, 1974), 81-105; M. O'Callaghan, *Southern Rhodesia, The Effects of a Conquest Society on Education, Culture and Information* (Paris, UNESCO, 1977), 145-6.

³ Kapungu, *Rhodesia: The Struggle for Freedom*, 82-3.

the living. It should be possible by the grace of God to build upon these Mashona convictions a magnificent faith in the Communion of Saints.⁴

When we look at the present we see that considerable debate and adaptation is taking place in the Church. The Roman Catholics are ahead of the other churches in this matter because the Bishops' Conference in 1966 accepted a new burial rite which goes a long way towards accommodating the Shona view of the ancestors.⁵ When we look at the churches' views on African customary marriage there is similar progress. A few years ago a working party was established by the heads of churches to study the relation between Christian and African customary marriage.⁶ The Methodist Church Synod has an African Customs and Beliefs Committee to advise the Church on all matters relating to Christianity and traditional culture. These and other features at least show that progress is being made towards understanding African culture. It should also be remembered that African culture is not static but is changing all the time, and that when people talk about their traditions it is often mere nostalgia. People tend to project into the past an idealized picture of what society was like which is largely wish-fulfilment and bears little relation to actuality.

In dealing with the contribution of the churches to African education, Kapungu focuses very little on the achievement in educational development and more on the way the churches have used education to recruit pupils into church membership. The churches in the past have indeed used the offer of education to exert pressure on pupils to become members but with the growth of the ecumenical movement there has been increasing co-operation between most churches and less of a desire to proselytize the members of other churches. The churches would, however, be surely failing in their duty if they made no attempt to bring people into membership. The progress of African education has been spectacular, and especially so when one remembers how limited Government aid has been over the years. It has been achieved largely by strenuous efforts on the part of local communities themselves who have built schools and equipped them. This represented an enormous spirit of goodwill and co-operation between the churches and communities. Doubtless there was friction from time to time, but that happens in every situation where human beings meet.

Kapungu then turns to the churches' attitude to the settler Government. He says that 'The Rhodesian Churches did not protest against the government's racist policies until the Rhodesian Front was elected to power in December 1962.'⁷ There is no space to deal with this in detail, but, if Kapungu had done research in Rhodesia, he would have known this to be incorrect. There are volumes of correspondence and reports in the archives of

⁴ *Mashonaland Quarterly Paper* (Feb. 1902), XXXIX, 7.

⁵ Quoted in M. L. Daneel, *Old and New in Shona Independent Churches* (The Hague, Mouton, 2 vols to date, 1971-), I, 270ff.

⁶ The writer was a member of it until 1973.

⁷ Kapungu, *Rhodesia: The Struggle for Freedom*, 90.

both Government and churches to show that representations about racism have been made year after year, ever since White settlement began.⁸ What is true is that few missionaries until the 1950s questioned the right of the colonists to govern, or considered that majority Black rule was more than a distant possibility. The churches may have been mistaken in believing that one can protest against racism without questioning the validity of the power structures that perpetuate the system. That, however, is different from saying that they never protested against racism. In fact the Church leaders as a body have always been to the left of the generality of European political opinion in Rhodesia.⁹

Nevertheless, Kapungu's basic idea has some validity. Fr Plangger in his introduction to a collection of pastoral letters by the Catholic Bishops of Rhodesia on various matters of race relations during the period 1959-67 has said that, 'Up to the late forties few people were aware that there was anything wrong with the colonial situation in most parts of Africa. The right of the white man to rule, and the duty of the non-white to be ruled, were simply taken for granted.'¹⁰ This statement could, of course, apply equally well to the Protestant churches as to the Catholic Church. In fact many missionaries until the late 1950s took a paternalistic view of their African flock. Colonial rule might have its faults and it was conceivable that the African population might be fit to rule themselves at some far distant date, but in the meantime the missionaries in general were content that Africans should develop at a leisurely pace. For it seemed as if there was plenty of time for African development, because, as Plangger says, it was only in the mid-1950s that there was a 'real awakening of the African's political consciousness'.¹¹ There had, of course, been a national organization of Africans since c.1936, the African National Congress (A.N.C.). But according to Aaron Jacha, a founder member, the A.N.C. was elitist and moderate in its intentions, working for African amelioration within existing structures; only after the Second World War did it become more radical¹² and gain the popular support of the mass of the population in the 1950s after it had been reformed under the leadership of Joshua Nkomo, then a Methodist local preacher.

As is well known, the rise of African nationalism was then rapid, spurred on by dislike of Federation north of the Zambezi. Between 1959 and 1964 the nationalist movement in Southern Rhodesia went through a series of

⁸ See for example, National Archives of Rhodesia, Salisbury, S138/17 (Chief Native Commissioner, Numerical Series: Schools and Missions, 1924/33) where, among much else, correspondence between the Southern Rhodesia Missionaries' Conference and the Government is lodged. The Minutes of the Methodist Church Synod in Methodist House, Salisbury, contain numerous resolutions over the years on racial issues. Many other sources could be quoted.

⁹ I hope to deal with this subject more fully in a later article on Church and State in Rhodesia in the period 1890-1930.

¹⁰ A. Plangger (ed.), *Rhodesia: The Moral Issue* (Gwelo, Mambo Press, 1968), 7-8.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹² Personal communication from Mr A. Jacha, M.B.E., 14 Nov. 1971.

bannings and some internal dissensions in face of the determined resistance of the Government, first of Whitehead and then of the Rhodesian Front.

The churches were largely overtaken by these events. Bishop Lamont's pastoral letter of 1959, for example, allowed that Africans had legitimate nationalist aspirations, but said that these must be channelled through lawful means; at the same time it accepted that colonialism was legitimate where it meant the acquisition of land which was uninhabited or sparsely populated so that full use could be made of it. The Bishop also said that colonial administration could be beneficial to the indigenous people when laws are introduced to raise the standards of the people, particularly as 'The African . . . is as yet equipped neither academically nor technically nor economically, to assume complete control of . . . a highly complex and industrialized country'. The real desire of Africans, he considered, lay not in the acquisition of the franchise but in the basic requirements for an adequate life: land, better education, and recognition of his human dignity. The pastoral concluded by pleading for a massive advance in African education as a means of bridging the gap between the races.¹³ At a later stage Lamont was to become a radical campaigner for justice for Africans but here his arguments corresponded almost exactly with middle-of-the-road White Rhodesians. Like them he underestimated the strength of African anger against the repressive effects of colonial rule, and of their desire to acquire not just the vote but the total control of their country because only then would they feel free to be themselves and to develop in their own way. Lamont also avoided thorny questions likely to irritate the Whites, such as job opportunities for Africans and reduction in wage differentials between Whites and Blacks.

The next pastoral letter written by all the Catholic bishops of Rhodesia in 1961 shows that the thinking of the bishops had moved forward to some extent; and it is this movement over time, before the election of the Rhodesian Front, that Kapungu ignores. This pastoral letter condemned the many disadvantages suffered by Africans: poor wages, housing conditions, terms of employment, separation of families, insecurity of jobs and several others — an injustice, the bishops said, which 'cries to heaven for vengeance'. They accepted that the form of government may be changed, but warned African Christians that they should use only lawful means to change it: 'only an insupportable tyranny, or flagrant violation of the most obvious essential rights of the citizens, can give, after every other means of redress has failed, the right to revolt'. Again the concept of legitimate colonialism was stressed provided that it did not lead to 'exclusive privileges for the colonisers'.¹⁴

The Methodist Synod in 1959 was dominated by European missionaries many of whom had been twenty or more years in the country. Their attitudes were similar to that shown in Lamont's first pastoral letter and were typical of the liberal European settler. Colonization was legitimate and had, among

¹³ Plangger, *Rhodesia: The Moral Issue*, 28-41, quotation at 32.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 61-72, quotations at 62, 69, 72.

other things, been of benefit to African society. The African people, on the other hand, had legitimate aspirations and ultimately would control the country. For the present, however, they were immature and unequipped educationally and technically to do so. There was also a small number of recently appointed missionaries, notably the Revd Whitfield Foy, who were more sensitive both to the racial injustices of colonialism and to African nationalist aspirations. African leaders in the Church, both ministerial and lay, were becoming increasingly influenced by the rising tide of nationalistic feeling and irritated by the lack of direction given by the Synod. Matters were brought to a head towards the close of 1959. Whitfield Foy had been rejected by his European circuit in Salisbury and its leaders were preparing to go to Synod in January 1960 to demand his transfer elsewhere. Their reason for rejection was Foy's active identification with African political aspirations and his criticisms of White attitudes towards Africans. African leaders in the Harare African Circuit responded by rejecting their missionary superintendent minister. The 1960 Synod was marked by an acrimonious debate during which African delegates strongly pressed for the removal of their superintendent. The result was that he was transferred (which to his credit he accepted graciously) and that Foy returned to England. One of Foy's notable achievements, however, was to convince the White congregations of Trinity Circuit to accept the need for Africans living in European areas to be able to worship in White churches. In principle all Methodist churches had been open to members of all races, but in practice this had rarely been followed. Vernacular services were begun in the Circuit and in 1961 an African minister was appointed to the Circuit for the first time.

At the 1960 Synod another radical change was made. Previously, no European minister had worked under the supervision of an African minister, but that year a junior missionary was appointed to a circuit under the superintendence of an African minister. Further opportunities for African leadership were provided in 1963 when the organization of the Church was regionalized and four Area Councils were established; of the first four area chairmen elected, two were Africans. Nevertheless, despite these changes, the European viewpoint continued to dominate much of the Synod debate.

In 1964 the Methodist Missionary Society in London, mindful of the rapid political changes taking place elsewhere in Africa decided to anticipate similar change in Rhodesia by appointing an African chairman of the Synod. The Southern Rhodesian Synod was not consulted in advance about the matter. The Revd Andrew Ndhlela was nominated by London and the appointment was to be effective from January 1965. The appointment of a chairman from London caused no small resentment in the Church in Rhodesia, and the Bulawayo Area Council meeting in August 1964 passed a resolution deploring the lack of consultation although pledging loyalty to the person of the Revd A. Ndhlela.¹⁵

¹⁵ Bulawayo Area Council of the Methodist Church, Minutes, August 1964.

According to Clutton-Brock the conservative element was also the dominant force in the Anglican Church in 1959. Clutton-Brock had been responsible for starting a multiracial farming co-operative at St Faith's Mission in 1950. Over the years the enterprise had caused a division of opinion in the Diocesan Standing Committee, and following the detention of a number of members of the co-operative in the 1959 Emergency, Church authorities decided to close it down.¹⁶ In 1962 the Matabeleland Diocese appointed a new bishop, Kenneth Skelton, and he adopted a radical stance on the question of racial justice. His views were often regarded as controversial by the European members of the Anglican Church, who at one stage reacted by reducing their contributions to the missionary activity of the Church.

Other major denominations in Rhodesia included the Dutch Reformed Church and the American missions, notably the Methodist Church.¹⁷ The Dutch Reformed Church officially adopted a neutral stance on all political matters, although its silence, according to Daneel, has often been interpreted by its African members as support for Government policies.¹⁸ In practice it has encouraged segregation of the races in its congregations and so given tacit support to Afrikaner political philosophy. The American missionaries of the United Methodist Church and other missions for a time maintained that they were unqualified to speak on political matters because they were aliens. In 1956, however, the Revd Ralph Dodge was appointed Bishop of the United Methodist Diocese of Rhodesia, Angola, Moçambique and the Transvaal. His views on racial justice became increasingly radical. Unlike the other major denominations, the United Methodist Church did not have a large European membership in Southern Rhodesia and this allowed the African viewpoint to become dominant; the church authorities in the 1960s made preparation for the Africanization of their church by sending promising young members to America for higher education, so that they could return to Southern Rhodesia and take over the leadership of the Church. In 1964 Bishop Dodge was declared a prohibited immigrant by the Rhodesian authorities and deported. Dodge was given no reasons for his deportation but he believed that the sending of young people for higher education was wrongly interpreted by the Government who claimed that they had gone for training in subversion.¹⁹

The main vehicle for ecumenical consultation among Protestant denominations was the Southern Rhodesia Christian Conference. The Conference met in plenary session every two years and included in its purview all

¹⁶ G. and M. Clutton-Brock, *Cold Comfort Confronted* (London, Mowbrays, 1972), 96-7.

¹⁷ Known before 1939 as the Methodist Episcopal Church; in 1968 it became the United Methodist Church and this designation will be used throughout this article to avoid any confusion with the British-based Methodist Church.

¹⁸ Daneel, *Old and New in Shona Independent Churches*, I, 240-1.

¹⁹ [*The*] *Rhod[esia] Herald*, 24 Mar. 1971.

aspects of missionary enterprise. It was open to all who were engaged in missionary work. It was, however, dominated by White missionaries and was not well-adapted for political comment. In the first instance it was hampered by the infrequency of its meetings whereas the political scene was changing so rapidly. Secondly, and of more importance, it contained within its membership representatives of widely differing viewpoints and there could be little unanimity on contentious issues.

It was partly to meet this difficulty, but also to have closer association with the wider ecumenical movement, notably the World Council of Churches, that the Christian Council of Rhodesia was formed in 1964. This was a parallel organization to the Christian Conference but with some differences. It was to meet twice a year and its membership was restricted to a small number of nominated representatives of member societies. It was also to be the official vehicle through which the World Council of Churches could channel grants to Rhodesia. Above all it had a mandate to speak on national issues. Most of the major denominations joined the Christian Council of Rhodesia, but notable exceptions were the Dutch Reformed Church and some minor churches which also adopted a neutral stance in political matters; the Roman Catholics also felt unable to become members because of the link with the World Council of Churches. From the beginning the Christian Council of Rhodesia had more African weight and the general secretary was an African.

There was also a number of local councils of churches which met from time to time for fellowship and action.²⁰ One other small but notable ecumenical organization was the Salisbury Christian Action Group, formed in 1956 by a group of churchmen of both races to demonstrate in practice the Christian calling to 'love their neighbours as themselves'; the Group believed that 'Christians should work to bring about truly representative government' and 'seek the repeal of legislation . . . which would discriminate against men on the grounds of race, colour, creed or nationality'.²¹ The group, though relatively small and unrepresentative of the main body of the churches, had considerable influence. It applied itself to study and action on current issues and spearheaded the formation of other groups such as Citizens Against the Colour Bar, and Christian Care which looked after the welfare of political detainees and their families.

The period 1959 to 1964 then saw tremendous changes not only in the political life of Southern Rhodesia but in the churches themselves. The missionaries' paternalistic complacency had been shattered; and they had been increasingly forced to look at the racial injustices of Rhodesian society

²⁰ See N. E. Thomas, 'Inter-Church co-operation in Rhodesia's towns 1962-72', in T. O. Ranger and J. Weller (eds), *Themes in the Christian History of Central Africa* (London, Heinemann, 1975), 238-55.

²¹ From the 'Constitution of the Christian Action Group'.

and also to give way to African aspirations to share the leadership within the churches. At the same time a wide gulf was opening between European and African members within the denominations because the political expectations of the European Christians were widely divergent from those of their African co-religionists.

The next few years were to witness a heightening of political tensions and fears, as the Rhodesian Front Government, failing to obtain independence from Britain, prepared for U.D.I. A state of emergency was declared to combat African unrest and sanctions were to make for a laager mentality among Europeans. Against this background, the non-Roman churches, through the newly constituted Christian Council, were taking more active interest in national affairs. In 1964 an ecumenical consultation on 'Christian and Desirable Action in Social Change and Race Relations in Southern Africa' took place in Zambia; and the Christian Council of Rhodesia was asked by the Southern Rhodesia Christian Conference to organize a conference on this subject in Rhodesia.²² Preparations were made for a conference involving both Protestants and Roman Catholics to be held in 1965. Meanwhile in April 1965 the British Council of Churches, concerned at the possibility of a unilateral declaration of independence, sent a message to the churches in Rhodesia endorsing the views of the British Government concerning the consequences of any U.D.I., and saying that the Council regarded as inequitable 'any grant of independence which does not involve much greater representation of Africans in Parliament'.²³

The conference, called the Consultation on the Church and Human Relations, took place in August 1965, and most of the major denominations and a number of representatives of African independent churches took part. The Dutch Reformed Church, however, and a number of smaller churches who adopted a neutral attitude to politics were not represented. The Consultation reviewed almost every aspect of Rhodesian social and political structures and their effect on African life. A report of the findings shows that church leadership in Rhodesia had now moved a long way to accommodating the African viewpoint on the political situation in the country.

The authority of the State, it said, is derived from God through the consent of the governed. Without the consent of the governed it has no valid authority. The 1961 Constitution was regarded as unsatisfactory because, among other things, it left power in the hands of the minority for an indefinite period without the consent of the majority. It was also felt that the franchise provisions were too high and had not been accepted by the

²² The Christian Council of Rhodesia, *The Church and Human Relations: [Report of] A Consultation Held at the University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, 24th-29th August, 1965* ([Salisbury, the Council, 1965]), 5.

²³ Resolution of the British Council of Churches, 27 Apr., *The Times*, 28 Apr. 1965.

majority.²⁴ Recent legislation was said to erode civil rights and when certain laws 'offend against human rights . . . [they] do not merit obedience', and it might be a Christian duty to disobey legislation which, for example, prevented persons of different races from meeting and sharing hospitality. Even on the question of the use of violence to promote social change, views had been modified. Whereas it was preferable to effect social change by peaceful means, it was recognized that Christians have always had sincere disagreement 'as to whether or not there are human situations in which Christian people are left no alternative but to resort to violence in order to achieve justice'.²⁵ Both positions must be respected and Christians must be free to follow their consciences in this matter. On the question of U.D.I. it was felt that such a declaration would be an immoral act which would cause Rhodesians an acute conflict of loyalties.²⁶

All this shows just how far the thinking had moved away from the traditional thinking of the liberal White settler. This Consultation marks the watershed in Church and State relations in the colony. The censorship authorities prevented the circulation of the report in Rhodesia after it was published.²⁷

After the declaration of independence, the Christian Council met and condemned the action of the Rhodesian regime, affirmed its continuing loyalty to the Queen and called on those Christians who opposed the U.D.I. to make their views public.²⁸ The Catholic bishops hurried back from the Vatican Council in Rome and their joint pastoral letter, issued on 28 November, had a stormy passage. The English version passed the censors, but when it was read in Gwelo Cathedral the C.I.D. intervened and confiscated copies. Parts of the Shona and Ndebele versions were unacceptable to the censors and were not printed. The pastoral called attention to the fact that many Catholics were very perplexed by U.D.I. and that it could have appalling repercussions. It called upon all concerned to come together as quickly as possible to try and resolve their differences. Vast numbers of people, it said, have been angered that U.D.I. was taken in the name of preserving Christian civilization, whereas they considered that it was a travesty of Christianity.²⁹

A number of individual church leaders also made known their opposition to U.D.I. and pledged their loyalty to the Queen of England. When it came to the churches' decision-making bodies, however, it was another matter; for most major denominations still had a considerable European lobby, largely lay, but supported by some missionaries also. Thus when the Methodist Church Synod, for example, debated the constitutional position, in January

²⁴ The Christian Council of Rhodesia, *The Church and Human Relations*, 19.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 20.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 21.

²⁷ *Methodist Recorder*, 18 Nov. 1965, 3.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 9 Dec. 1965, 5.

²⁹ Plangger, *Rhodesia: The Moral Issue*, 90-2.

1966, the determined opposition of some European representatives prevented any vote being taken which would indicate that the church condemned U.D.I. A similar thing happened in the Synod of January 1967.³⁰

At the same time the major churches refused to recognize the independence of Rhodesia. When the first anniversary of U.D.I. approached, the Government declared that 11 November would be a public holiday and that the morning should be observed as a 'time of thanksgiving for the divine guidance which has enabled us to overcome the difficulties of the past year and to give prayer for continued guidance during the years which lie ahead'.³¹ The major denominations, apart from the D.R.C., refused to recognize officially any special arrangements for that day although some European congregations on their own initiative did hold services.

In the period following U.D.I. it soon became clear that, contrary to the expectations of the British Government, Rhodesia was not going to be brought to heel by sanctions. Constitutional discussions were therefore resumed and a draft agreement reached on board H.M.S. *Tiger* in October 1966.³² These proposals did not nearly meet the Six Principles but in the event were rejected by the Rhodesian Government. Nevertheless this episode marked another step in the hardening of the attitude of the churches. The British Council of Churches had criticized the proposals because 'the control of access to voting rights remained with the white minority' and the Land Apportionment Act, one of the principal instruments of racial discrimination, did not have to be speedily amended; and it now emphasized that Britain still had a moral responsibility towards Rhodesia: 'if sterner measures requiring international action have now to be taken, our readiness to apply them will be felt by the world to be a test of our sincerity'.³³

Rhodesia began to make plans of her own for a new constitution by appointing a Constitutional Commission in 1967 to receive evidence as to what would be a suitable constitution for Rhodesia. Numerous bodies, including the Roman Catholic bishops, gave evidence on proposals designed to ensure that a new constitution should 'promote the common good, guarantee the dignity and freedom of every individual, build up a true social order, bring about the unity of the nation and establish concord with other nations'.³⁴ In April 1968 the Constitutional Commission made proposals for the ultimate parity of representation of Blacks and Whites in Parliament, while

³⁰ The writer was present at both Synods.

³¹ Rhodesia, *Parliamentary Debates, Second Session, Eleventh Parliament . . . 1966* (Salisbury, Govt Printer [1967]), LXV, 15 Sept., 1267, Prime Minister.

³² Great Britain, *Rhodesia: Documents Relating to Proposals for a Settlement 1966* [Cmnd 3171].

³³ British Council of Churches, *Rhodesia and Ourselves* (London, The Council, 1967), 11, 12.

³⁴ Rhodesia Catholic Bishops' Conference, *The Land Tenure Act and the Church* (Gwelo, Mambo Press, 1970), 48.

rejecting outright majority rule.³⁵ Settlement with Britain, however, remained the great aim and in November 1968 there were further negotiations between the British and Rhodesian Governments, this time on H.M.S. *Fearless*. The proposals put forward on *Fearless* in some ways further eroded the Six Principles of the British Government, and no mention was made in them of the additional principle, NIBMAR. A major new feature, however, was the offer by the British Government of considerable aid to African education in order to speed the advancement of Africans.³⁶ The proposals were also rejected by the Rhodesian Government.

The British Council of Churches found the *Fearless* proposals also unsatisfactory: 'Progress towards majority rule is not assured or even probable'.³⁷ African leaders had not been consulted in drafting the proposals, and the test of acceptability 'asks us to take a great deal on trust'. Also criticized was the absence of arrangements to remove existing discriminatory legislation.³⁸ The Council felt that as no agreement had been reached there was no alternative but to continue existing policies and more effective sanctions.

Meanwhile there had been the beginning of guerilla activity in the border areas of Rhodesia. In this situation the rift between European and African church members widened, because to a large extent the European churchmen accepted U.D.I. whereas the African churchmen did not. There were some churches where the European members walked out of services when their ministers made their stand clear on U.D.I. In March 1966 a visiting clergyman from England, Fr Hugh Bishop, head of the Community of the Resurrection, had preached in Salisbury Cathedral, and, when in the course of his sermon he mentioned police brutality, a large number of the predominantly White congregation walked out. A minor crisis had occurred in the Methodist Church Synod in 1967 when the question of making appointment of a full-time chaplain to the Rhodesia forces was discussed. A number of European clergymen were already acting as part-time chaplains. During the Synod debate it was made clear that a proportion of Synod members were opposed to the appointment of a chaplain on the grounds that Rhodesia was in rebellion against the Queen and that to appoint a chaplain would be tantamount to recognizing U.D.I. No appointment was made.

There were, during the period, changes in the leadership of some churches. After Bishop Dodge's deportation in 1964, he remained for a time bishop in exile over the United Methodist Church members in Rhodesia. Eventually it was decided to create a separate diocese of Rhodesia and elect a new bishop. The Revd Abel Muzorewa was elected

³⁵ Rhodesia, *Report of the Constitutional Commission, 1968* (Salisbury, Govt Printer, 1968); *The Times*, 11 Apr. 1968.

³⁶ Great Britain, *Rhodesia: Documents Relating to Proposals for a Settlement 1968* [Cmund 3793]; *The Times*, 16 Nov. 1968.

³⁷ British Council of Churches, *Rhodesia: A Commentary on the Fearless Negotiations* (London, The Council, 1968), 3.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

and installed in August 1968. In the Anglican diocese of Mashonaland, a new bishop, the Revd Paul Burrough was appointed in 1968; the fact that a European was appointed shows the continued dominance of the European members of that Church.

The Rhodesian Government was increasingly confident that it could ride out sanctions and so proceeded with plans to introduce its own republican constitution. It was announced that a referendum of the predominantly White electorate would be held on 20 June 1969 to test the acceptability of new constitutional proposals; the Constitutional Bill came out at the beginning of June, and the Land Tenure Bill, which was to be part of the constitution, came out later still.

In the midst of speculation as to what the actual provisions of the constitution would be, a consultative committee of the World Council of Churches was meeting in London during May to consider the question of racism. The committee decided to ask the executive of the Council to recommend that Britain should re-affirm that independence would not be granted to Rhodesia until after majority rule, that sanctions be intensified, and, significantly, that Britain should 'withdraw her earlier assurance that force would not be used in resolving the Rhodesian conflict'.³⁹ The recommendation that force might be used was denounced by many Rhodesian church leaders including the Anglican Bishop of Mashonaland and the head of the Methodist Church, the Revd A. M. Ndhlela. The secretariat of the Catholic bishops pointed out that the Roman Catholic Church was not a member of the World Council of Churches but thought that the use of force was not morally justified at that time in Rhodesia.⁴⁰

When the constitutional bill was published most Church leaders were extremely critical of the proposals. The Catholic bishops on 7 June issued a pastoral letter condemning the proposals because they had been drafted with 'the deliberate intention of ensuring the permanent domination of one section of the population over another' and because 'racial discrimination shall be intensified'.⁴¹ The Protestant church leaders issued a separate statement on the following day which was endorsed also by the Catholic bishops: 'These proposals to entrench separation and discrimination are a direct contradiction of the New Testament teaching that race, like all other human discriminations, has lost all divisive significance, and should not be used to regulate relationship between man and God and between man and man.'⁴²

Specific criticisms of the proposals were made. The European population, although consisting of less than 6 per cent of the total population, would

³⁹ *Christian Council Newsletter* (June 1969), 8.

⁴⁰ *Rhod. Her.*, 28 May 1969.

⁴¹ 'A Call to Christians', *The Sunday Mail*, 8 June 1969 (reprinted in Rhodesia Catholic Bishops' Conference. *The Land Tenure Act and the Church*, 49).

⁴² *A Message and Appeal from Church Leaders to the Christian People of Rhodesia* (Salisbury, Unitas Press, 1969), 4.

initially have 67 per cent of the seats in the Senate and House of Assembly. The qualified franchise and separate voters rolls were disadvantageous to Africans and entrenched racial division. The proposed Declaration of Rights would offer little protection to the population. No court would have power to pronounce on it and its provisions could be set aside if the President considered this to be 'in the national interest'. The distribution of land by which approximately half was set aside for European occupation and half for African occupation was inequitable and furthermore enforced racial segregation.⁴³

Radical though these criticisms were, they represented a modification of the view expressed in the draft statement presented to the church leaders for discussion. In the original draft, after stating that in every age safeguards against tyranny have to be discovered, this sentence followed: 'We believe that universal adult suffrage, though not itself a Biblical concept is in our time, the best safeguard, and the best expression of the Christian ideals of justice, brotherhood and responsible love'.⁴⁴ In the final draft the sentence was removed and in its place was substituted: 'A broad based adult suffrage is necessary for this.' The concept of 'one man, one vote' did not have unanimous acceptance even among the heads of churches. The D.R.C. was not represented at the meeting of the heads of churches when the message was approved, and later officials of the D.R.C. dissociated themselves from the other church leaders' views. This caused some division of opinion within the D.R.C. ranks and some members of the African Reformed Church, which is the African branch of the D.R.C., claimed that Africans supported the petition of the other churches.⁴⁵

The messages received headline treatment in the Rhodesian press and played a significant part in the referendum campaign. The British Prime Minister condemned the proposed constitution, but paid tribute to the courage of the Christian churches in Rhodesia (other than the D.R.C.) for their stand against the proposals.⁴⁶ The leader of the Centre Party, the main White opposition party to the Rhodesian Front, supported the church leaders' views and called on the Rhodesian electorate to vote against the proposals. There was considerable correspondence in the newspapers, mainly, but not entirely, in opposition to the Church leaders' views. The Officer Administering the Government, himself a member of the Rhodesian Front, attempted to direct attention from the message of the church leaders by calling upon the electorate to seek divine guidance as to how to vote. During the Sunday before the election the full text of the church leaders' message was read out in the

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Proposed draft 'Message from Church Leaders to the Christian People of Rhodesia', 1.

⁴⁵ *The Sunday Mail*, 15 June 1969.

⁴⁶ Reported in *Rhod. Her.*, 11 June 1969.

Anglican Cathedral in Bulawayo, and as a result walkouts were staged at both the morning services by White members of the congregations.⁴⁷ Predictably, the predominantly White electorate ignored the church leaders' appeal and gave a resounding 'yes' vote to the proposed constitution which became effective in March 1970 (Constitution of Rhodesia (Act No. 54 of 1969)).

The second part of the constitution, the Land Tenure Act (No. 55 of 1969), which became effective at the same time, had far-reaching implications for the Churches. The principal objectives of the Act were to divide Rhodesia into roughly equal racial areas, and to ensure that the interests of Europeans were paramount in the European areas and the interests of Africans were paramount in the African areas.⁴⁸ Subject to certain provisions, a European could not own, lease or occupy land in the African area, and an African could not do so in the European area. The term 'occupation' was deemed to include attendance for a specified purpose at premises to which the public are admitted.⁴⁹ Apart from entrenching racial segregation, this had far-reaching implications for the churches themselves. Many church buildings and educational and medical establishments belonging to the churches were placed into the category of European areas although the establishments catered for both races. In terms of the Land Tenure Act the church who owned these premises was required to get written permission from the appropriate authority for permission for Africans to 'occupy' them even if the purpose was worship.⁵⁰ A permit might be granted or withheld on the authority of the appropriate minister. Furthermore a permit even if it were granted could subsequently be withdrawn. A similar provision applied for Europeans who wished to occupy premises belonging to churches in African areas. It was a requirement that a European priest or church worker should apply for written permission to 'occupy' the premises where he lived and worked if these were in African areas. Since members of one race could not ordinarily own land in another racial area, it was necessary to determine the race of all land-owners. The churches and other non-statutory land-holding bodies were therefore required to register as 'voluntary associations', and in registering it would be determined which race had the controlling interest in the association.⁵¹

The major churches, except the D.R.C., were horrified at these provisions of the Act which they interpreted as opening the way for State control as to who should worship in their churches and attend their educational and other welfare establishments. The church leaders met in conference in April and roundly condemned the Act in general because it opened the way for

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 16 June 1969.

⁴⁸ Rhodesia, *Debates of the Legislative Assembly, Fifth Session, Eleventh Parliament* . . . 1969, LXXV, 15 Oct., 1478.

⁴⁹ Land Tenure Act, Preliminary section, Sub-section 3 (1) and (2).

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, Part II, para 11(1), and para 17(1).

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

apartheid laws and in particular because of the effect it could have on the work and witness of the Church. They decided that their churches would refuse to comply with the requirement of the Act to register as 'voluntary associations' on the grounds that they were non-racial organizations. It was also decided that they would refuse to apply for permits for members of one race to 'occupy' church premises in another racial area. As the Catholic Bishops put in the pastoral letter afterwards:

We are now compelled to declare, 'We must obey God rather than man (Acts 5.29). We cannot in conscience and will not in practice accept any limitation of our freedom to deal with all people irrespective of race, as members of the human family.'⁵²

Other churches also published their views individually. The United Methodist Church in its Annual Conference in January 1970 declared that the church is one:

we cannot tolerate divisions into African and European congregations. Every individual must be free to worship in the place of his choice . . . The right to choose a home, enter a school, secure employment, vote and have access to public accommodation should be guaranteed to all, regardless of race.⁵³

In its views on the franchise and public accommodation the U.M.C. seems to have been in advance of other denominations. The leaders of the Methodist Church (Synod) in a pastoral letter to members, considered that the Act 'denies the Church the freedom to organize its own life and worship' and so showed the worthlessness of the Declaration of Rights in the Constitution which said that 'no person shall be hindered in the enjoyment of the freedom of his conscience, that is to say, freedom of thought and religion and to manifest and propagate his religion or belief through worship, teaching, practice and observance'.⁵⁴ Bishop Skelton in a sermon in Salisbury said, 'If our nation's rulers pursue a policy which is at variance with our belief in God we have no choice but to resist.'⁵⁵ The Christian Council of Rhodesia in a unanimous resolution deplored the Act as being 'based on racial separate development which not only is incompatible with Christian commitment to non-racial free development but also permits interference with the free worship and witness of the Church'.⁵⁶ Bishop Lamont now radically committed to the African cause, in an obvious reference to African guerilla movements, described as 'the real terrorists' the people who framed the new constitution.⁵⁷

⁵² Rhodesia Catholic Bishops' Conference, *The Land Tenure Act and the Church*, 55-6.

⁵³ *Umbowo* [The Journal of the U.M.C. in Rhodesia] (Feb. 1970).

⁵⁴ 'The Methodist Church and the Land Tenure Act', May 1970 (quotation from Para 8(1) of the Declaration of Rights in the 1969 Constitution).

⁵⁵ Reported in *Christian Mirror* (March 1970), 6.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

The Afrikaans newspaper *Die Rhodesiër*, on the other hand, reported on the attitude of the D.R.C. towards the Land Tenure Act. The D.R.C. felt that the other churches were making a mountain out of a molehill: 'Nowhere in the legislation they disapprove of so vehemently is the church denied any privileges and rights to continue preaching of the Gospel to all peoples.' The legislation in question does not take away this right, the statement continued, but regulates the orderly execution of this work within the context of the State. But whereas the other churches contended that the unity of Christians can only be in common assembly and worship, the D.R.C. denied this claim: 'We do not deny for a moment that this unity can be achieved in common assembly but we strongly challenge the validity of any claim that it is the only way in which it can be achieved.'⁵⁸

Amid widespread publicity in the national press the church leaders (excluding, of course, the D.R.C.) pressed for an interview with the Prime Minister and put their objections to him. This was granted but the church leaders received little satisfaction from their discussions. As the September deadline for registration came near, the Government apparently wishing to end the confrontation with the Church, decided that churches need not register as voluntary associations. Instead they would be 'deemed' to have registered. A slight amendment to the Act was made in October 1970 (the Land Tenure Amendment Act, No. 42 of 1970). This deemed that permits had been issued to all establishments to carry on their work on mission lands which were now in the European area. The concession also accepted the right of missions to own or lease land in these areas.⁵⁹

Another major dispute between Church and State which came to a head in 1970 concerned African primary schools for which mission churches were the responsible authority. About 85 per cent of African education was in the hands of the missionaries. The position was that with some exceptions the Government provided for education in urban areas while the missions, with some Government grants-in-aid, provided the education in the rural areas.

The partnership between Church and State in African education had for some years been subject to a certain amount of strain. In 1963 the Government had announced plans to promote community development schemes in the rural areas. To provide structures for policy, Africans in rural areas were encouraged to form local councils and community boards. It was envisaged that public services and amenities, including primary education, should eventually come under the control of these councils and community boards. The proposals caused some concern among the churches, particularly as they seemed to imply that church schools would be taken over. The

⁵⁸ Quoted in *Rhod. Her.*, 15 June 1970.

⁵⁹ R. H. Randolph, *Church and State in Rhodesia 1969-1971: A Catholic View* (Gwelo, Mambo Press, 1971), 43-4.

Catholic Bishops issued a pastoral letter following the announcement of the plans for community development. The Bishops hoped that there would be no attempt to take over church property, including schools, or to interfere in any way with the Church's education programme.⁶⁰

The African rural communities were very reluctant to form councils and community boards and in some areas pressure was applied by the Government, by giving instructions that new primary schools and other facilities would only be opened if the councils were in existence to assume the responsible authority for them. Pressure also began to be applied by Government on mission authorities to consider handing over their primary schools to African councils. It was also Government policy that all new primary schools from 1968 would be under local councils, and suggestions were made to missions that an increase in the level of school fees paid by parents would be necessary. There were also proposals to limit the amount of expansion possible in existing mission primary schools. The missions resisted both the increase of fees and the possibility of handing over their primary schools to local authorities.

During 1967 the Methodist Church (Synod) conducted a survey among its own primary schools (about 280 in number) to ascertain the feelings of local communities about handing over to local councils. The majority were in favour of the Church continuing to be the responsible authority. This did not mean that communities were concerned to preserve the authority of the Church for religious reasons; rather it stemmed from distrust of African councils which were themselves not free from Government control.

During 1969, however, the Government announced that it would be reducing its grant towards the salaries of teachers in African primary schools by five per cent, the balance to be made up by the parents of primary school children. For the majority of missions this was unacceptable. They had for years been pressing for increased grants to African education because African children only received per capita a small fraction of the amount that European children received. This reduction in grants to African primary education alone seemed racialistic to the church leaders. The halting of development in mission schools was also seen to be a grave disability.

After a meeting with the Prime Minister that produced no results, most church leaders decided that they could no longer, in all conscience, be the responsible authorities for African primary schools and implement a policy with which they were in radical disagreement. Thus, under protest, preparations were made for handing over primary schools to African councils and local boards of parents. On 31 December 1970, most major denominations, apart from the D.R.C., the Salvation Army, and the Mashonaland diocese of the Anglican Church, ceased to be the responsible authorities for primary education.

⁶⁰ Plangger, *Rhodesia : The Moral Issue*, 80-2.

In this dispute with the Government in 1970 over the five per cent reduction in primary teachers' salary grants, the United Methodist Church adopted a radical attitude. The Church authorities decided that they would neither collect the deficit from parents nor hand over their schools to local authorities, even if it meant that their primary schools would close. Local communities in the area where they had schools supported them in this stand. The United Methodist Church leaders hoped that other churches would join them in this stand, and that this would cause the Government to have second thoughts about making the reductions in grants. The leaders of the other churches, however, would not risk jeopardizing the future of African education by taking this step and eventually the United Methodist Church had to climb down and agree to hand over their schools to local authorities. During August, while the controversy was at its height, the head of the United Methodist Church, Bishop Abel Muzorewa, was issued with an order banning him from entering Tribal Trust Lands where three-quarters of the 55 000 members of the Church lived. No reason was given for the banning but Muzorewa, asked to comment, said that if it had anything to do with his Church's dispute over the reductions in grants for primary teachers' salaries, then he thought the ban was unfair.⁶¹

The hand-over of schools was conducted fairly smoothly in the end. Most African parents, while resenting deeply the imposition of an extra fee, and regretting the severing of the ties of the churches with primary education, nevertheless felt that the education of their children had to continue.

Meanwhile yet another controversy involving the churches developed from the decision of the World Council of Churches in August 1969 to establish a fund to combat racism. Early in September 1970 the news broke that grants would be given for educational, medical and welfare purposes to a number of guerilla organizations operating in Central Africa which, of course, included the banned ZAPU and ZANU.⁶² There was immediate condemnation by Government officials and many European churchmen including some White missionaries. At a meeting in November, the African-dominated Christian Council of Rhodesia, however, endorsed (although with four dissenting votes) the action of the World Council of Churches.⁶³ At the Anglican Synod of Mashonaland an attempt was made by White representatives to present a resolution condemning the grants; but in the event the Synod accepted an amendment from the chair which 'asked for no positive action and alluded to the violence inherent in the policy of apartheid'.⁶⁴ In August 1970 Bishop Skelton of Matabeleland returned to Britain and Bishop Wood was appointed in his place. The two Anglican bishops, however, later

⁶¹ *Rhod. Her.*, 15 Aug. 1970.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 12 Sept. 1970.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 11 Dec. 1970.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 23 Sept. 1970.

came out in protest against the grants. The Methodist Church Synod was also thrown into a state of confusion. A European congregation at Greendale gave grants for welfare purposes to the Rhodesian security forces to 'express in tangible form our strong condemnation of the recent action of the World Council of Churches in donating funds to terrorist organizations'.⁶⁵ Rumours reached the press that some White Methodist congregations were contemplating secession from the parent body if the Synod meeting in January 1971 endorsed the action of the World Council of Churches. To test opinion the chairman of the Synod, the Revd A. M. Ndhlela, called together all the clergy into retreat for some days. During the discussions the clergy of each race was deeply divided, for and against the grants. The chairman himself was determined to avoid any breach, and, both at the retreat and later in Synod, non-committal statements were made which condemned violence of any form to obtain a political solution to problems and called upon the races to seek mutual reconciliation.

The United Methodist Church, with its very few European members, supported the World Council of Churches' programme. The General Synod of the D.R.C. meeting in Cape Town, however, charged that the action of the World Council of Churches 'conflicted with the call of obedience found in the Bible, and Christ's admonition to suffer rather than use violent action and resistance'.⁶⁶

The Roman Catholic Church was once again thankful to report that it was not associated with the World Council of Churches; and a spokesman commented: 'It would seem to be much too early to abandon hopes of success in negotiations and to have recourse to a modern holy war or crusade'.⁶⁷

Then, of course, views on the issue depended largely upon whether or not a particular denomination had a large White lobby. If the White members were strong the Church was more likely to be cautious or condemnatory in its attitude to the World Council of Churches.

After the Conservative Party regained power in Britain in 1970 it was decided to make another attempt to bring about a settlement of the Rhodesian problem. A series of talks was held between the two Governments culminating in negotiations in November 1971 between the British Foreign Secretary, Sir Alec Douglas Home, and the Rhodesian Prime Minister. Agreement was reached and the proposals were signed on 24 November.⁶⁸

When the proposals were published the African population, whose political voice had been stifled for some years, was re-awakened through the formation and mushroom growth of the African National Council. In

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 12 Sept. 1970.

⁶⁶ *Christian Mirror* (December 1970), 2.

⁶⁷ *Rhod. Her.*, 30 Oct. 1970.

⁶⁸ Rhodesia, *Anglo-Rhodesian Relations: Proposals for a Settlement...* [Cmd R.R. 46, 1971].

December 1971 leading African clergymen combined with nationalist leaders in forming an organization to fight the proposals which had been formulated without first consulting African opinion and which offered only marginal political advance. True, eventual majority rule was envisaged, but only about sixty-five years later. African development would be helped by British aid for a period of ten years. Racially discriminatory legislation would be reviewed after independence had been achieved, but there were no cast-iron guarantees for its repeal.

The next step was to test the acceptability of the proposals to Rhodesian opinion as a whole and the Pearce Commission was established by the British Government to go to Rhodesia for this purpose. Before the Pearce Commission arrived in February 1972, many Church leaders were critical of the proposals. The Catholic bishops said that there were some aspects of the proposals that were 'morally objectionable'.⁶⁹ The Christian Council of Rhodesia was scathing about the proposals and decided to publish a guide to them, printed in the three main languages of the country. The *Guide* was a step by step commentary on the proposals pointing out the disadvantages for the African people. In particular the high qualifications necessary for Africans to be able to register for the Higher Roll and the smallness of the immediate representation of Africans in Parliament were criticized.⁷⁰

The African National Council helped to distribute the Christian Council of Rhodesia's *Guide* and used it as part of its publicity in fighting the proposals. When the Pearce Commission arrived it received a 'yes' vote from the Europeans and a resounding 'no' from Africans of all sections of the community.⁷¹ The constitutional problem remained unresolved.

After Pearce, the African National Council remained in existence as a residual political voice of the African people. African political views which had for some years been suppressed were heard again. During these years the church leaders, despite a sometimes uncertain voice, had been the main voice in the country for African social and political justice.

⁶⁹ *Rhod. Her.*, 27 Jan. 1972.

⁷⁰ Christian Council of Rhodesia, *A Guide to the Proposals for a Settlement* (Gwelo, Mambo Press, 1971).

⁷¹ Great Britain, *Rhodesia: Report of the Commission on Rhodesian Opinion . . . 1972* [Cmd 4964].