

ESSAY REVIEW

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND ZIMBABWE

IN 1877 THE FIRST JESUITS trekked up through the Mangwe Pass, and on into the south-western corner of the Zimbabwean plateau, with the hope of establishing in the Ndebele heartland the first station of their Zambesi Mission. Ten years later the last of them withdrew defeated by fever and the almost complete indifference of the Ndebele to their teachings. In 1890 two of those priests rode back north of the Limpopo with the Pioneers of Rhodes's British South Africa Company and a year later they were followed by the first nuns in the country, Dominicans, who had come to work initially as nurses to Rhodes's men.

This early identification of the Church with the invaders of Mashonaland might well be expected to have prevented it from establishing a significant presence among the country's people but this has not been the case. In 1980 the Catholic Church is the largest single denomination in Zimbabwe; it managed to keep a presence in most areas of the country throughout the liberation struggle and at the independence ceremonies the Catholic Archbishop of Salisbury blessed the flag of the new nation while a few months later his vicar-general officiated at the reburial of two military leaders of the nationalist parties in the shrine that has been created to honour the heroes of that war. Clearly then the engagement of the Catholic Church with the people of Zimbabwe has been a complex interaction out of which the Church has emerged with an established Zimbabwean identity.

The early failure of the Zambesi Mission is only one aspect of that process, although it is an instructive one. Few modern missionary societies proposed for themselves more grandiose objectives than did the planners of the mission. The station at Gubuluwayo was to be little more than a rest stop on the way to the interior, one of many that would allow penetration into Africa as far north as the equator and subsequently span the continent from east to west. When the mission was temporarily abandoned in 1887 all that the Jesuits had to show for ten years' labour and many deaths were the ruins of their station at Pandamatenga and Old Bulawayo and the hardly thriving mission at Empandeni. Two sorties across the Zambezi and one into eastern Zimbabwe had been disasters and Depelchin was lucky that any of his men survived these ill-advised expeditions. But the reason for the failure of the mission was more fundamental than the accidents and sickness which pursued it. With hindsight we now realize that no modern Christian mission has succeeded unless the commerce or administration of some Western power had profoundly affected the people to whom it was directed. Their religious and social institutions had to be severely disrupted—to have suffered perhaps a crisis of confidence—before people would turn in any numbers to Christianity as a more appropriate spiritual expression of the new order than the old institutions had proved to be. In the 1880s the Ndebele state was still intact and although the Rozvi state had collapsed, it had been an Nguni rather than a European hegemony that was responsible for the end of the Mambo's power. The Jesuit mission could hope to succeed only when the power of the Ndebele king was finally broken by a European invasion.

The near coincidence in time of the centenary of the Church with the closing period of the war that brought legal independence has produced a crop of books that illustrate many aspects of this process. The centenary of the Zambesi Mission has been marked by *Journey to Gubuluwayo*, a handsome edition of Lloyd's translation of *Trois Ans dans L'Afrique australe*, under which title first appeared the letters and journals of Frs Henri Depelchin and Charles Croonenberghs, respectively the superior and one of the first Jesuits at

Lobengula's capital;¹ and by the Church's own factual publication, *Centenary of the Catholic Church in Zimbabwe*;² and by Dachs and Rea's sponsored but not official history, *The Catholic Church in Zimbabwe*.³

Journey to Gubuluwayo is edited by R.S. Roberts and makes available in English material not included in Gelfand's *Gubuluwayo and beyond* published in 1968, which is a collection of the manuscript material on the mission held by the Jesuit Archives in Salisbury.⁴ The publication of any new material on the Ndebele state written by contemporary observers is to be welcomed but the letters in *Journey to Gubuluwayo* lose something of their value when the original editing of *Trois Ans* is taken into account. As Roberts explains in his introduction, the originals of the Croonenberghs letters, often personal letters to relatives, are not available and the only other versions of them that he was able to see were those published in *Précis historiques* and 'Letters and Notices', which were presumably included for a Catholic audience. The Depelchin papers, on the other hand, are semi-official reports but they too were subject to editing—erasures and additions—before publication. Although Roberts's footnotes indicate variations and even discrepancies between *Trois Ans* and the source material we are left with letters and journals which were doctored to give the image of the mission which the Catholic editors felt to be appropriate.

The effect of this is a volume of letters and journals designed to satisfy European Catholic expectations of what missionaries in Africa should do and think. They form a continuous narrative suggesting men firmly in control of the situation: the style is bland; the Ndebele are nearly always regarded with paternal compassion; other members of the party are observed with fraternal concern. The more private letters in Gelfand's volume, on the other hand, show men whom the depressions of malaria, uncongenial companions and the growing realization of the futility of their task had pushed near the threshold of endurance. In *Gubuluwayo and beyond* a substantial section is taken up with De Wit's visitation which was made necessary by accusations of incompetence and despotism levelled against Depelchin. In *Journey to Gubuluwayo* Depelchin merely observes that the Visitor had received orders 'to proceed as speedily as possible to Kimberley' before going on to Tati,⁵ as though such a visitation was a normal procedure in Jesuit communities. Just how unusual it was, is revealed in *Gubuluwayo and beyond*. Depelchin's grief at the insult he felt the visitation implied about his leadership is expressed forcibly: 'I hear . . . that Father Dewit has been appointed visitor of the mission! Oh my God! My God! What have I done to be put to such a trial? Such a severe measure is a perfect mystification to me.'⁶ A similar discrepancy can be seen when Croonenberghs observes in *Journey to Gubuluwayo* 'how the fatherly Providence of God has made use of the White people, the missionaries of the "Independent Church", the English traders . . . to help us to get settled down and to give assistance in those indispensable preliminaries for our apostolic mission.'⁷ In Gelfand's volume

¹ R.S. Roberts (ed.) and M. Lloyd (trans.), *Journey to Gubuluwayo: Letters of Frs H. Depelchin and C. Croonenberghs, S.J., 1879, 1880, 1881* (Bulawayo, Books of Rhodesia, 1979), xl, xi, 375 pp., Z\$18.00.

² *Centenary of the Catholic Church in Zimbabwe (1879-1979)* (Salisbury, Catholic Bishops' Conference, 1979), 80pp., Z\$0.35.

³ A. Dachs and W. Rea, *The Catholic Church and Zimbabwe (1879-1979)* (Gwelo, Mambo Press, 1979), xiii, 262pp., Z\$9.45.

⁴ M. Gelfand, *Gubuluwayo and beyond: Letters and Journals of Early Jesuit Missionaries to Zambezia (1879-1887)* (London, G. Chapman, 1968).

⁵ Roberts, *Journey to Gubuluwayo*, 284.

⁶ Gelfand, *Gubuluwayo and beyond*, 203.

⁷ Roberts, *Journey to Gubuluwayo*, 251.

Depelchin shows little agreement on this subject with his confrères. He characterizes the Whites around Lobengula's capital as 'generally speaking of a low and unscrupulous character' and observes that 'we cannot avoid being cheated and after having been cheated we must still show a friendly face'.⁸

Material which was written with an eye on the supporters of the mission at home and then edited to make it even more acceptable is unlikely to convey an accurate account of either the Ndebele or the mission. *Journey to Gubuluwayo* is valuable, however, in showing the particular sort of rhetoric missionaries adopted for European audiences,⁹ and it is interesting to note that within that parameter the routine racism of colonialism could be shared by the missionaries without any sense of incongruity. Croonenberghs, for example, notes 'the sort of revulsion between Black and White' which strikes the European as soon as he arrives in Africa—an attitude with which he easily identifies. He admits to never having 'felt the slightest affinity with a native of the country' and rather dispiritedly explains that 'any feelings of affection for the Blacks can only have their foundation in supernatural motives . . . quite frankly, I can only love them in Jesus Christ'.¹⁰

The exception to this general aversion to the African character was Lobengula himself whom the Jesuits usually treated with the respect and admiration which almost all the Whites who had any contact with the King showed at some stage. Depelchin, however, was capable of writing of the 'repulsive sight' of 'the barbarous and savage state of this terrible monarch in all its hideousness',¹¹ but observations like that do not appear in the letters published at the time. In these Croonenberghs thanks God for letting the missionaries 'remain in the good graces of King Lobengula . . . May this royal goodwill help us to promote the evangelization of the Matabele'.¹² After a visit by Lobengula to the Jesuit house, Croonenberghs recalls telling the king 'we know that the property, with all the buildings you have allowed us to erect belongs to the king. It is for him to dispose of as he will'.¹³ The reticence which the published letters show about Lobengula's character may well have been caused by an episode at the beginning of the Jesuits' stay in Matabeleland. A letter to the Mother Superior in Grahamstown was published in the Cape papers and as it 'pitched into Lobengula', in Law's phrase, it could have caused the Jesuits grave embarrassment had its contents been reported back to the king.¹⁴ They knew as well as any other men in Matabeleland that it was absolutely necessary for their mission to get into and remain in the favour of the king.

In the event, although Lobengula never showed any hostility to the missionaries, he never encouraged his people to become their proselytes. It is not, therefore, surprising that as soon as Prestage, by then the superior at Empandeni, heard of the Royal Charter granted to Rhodes's Company he decided to abandon the mission and return north of the Limpopo with the Pioneers. As Fr Rea observes, 'the presence of the Company in Mashonaland, even if it did not amount to formal occupation, would lessen the chief's effective authority. The missionaries found comfort and encouragement in the proposed White entry into Rhodesia'.¹⁵ Rea is certainly correct in his assessment. Unfortunately, however,

⁸ Gelfand, *Gubuluwayo and beyond*, 191.

⁹ For a more lengthy discussion of this aspect of the various Ndebele mission records see A. Chennells, 'The image of the Ndebele and the nineteenth century missionary tradition', in M. Bourdillon (ed.), *Christianity South of the Zambezi: II* (Gwelo, Mambo Press, 1977), 43–68.

¹⁰ Roberts, *Journey to Gubuluwayo*, 362.

¹¹ Gelfand, *Gubuluwayo and beyond*, 138–9.

¹² Roberts, *Journey to Gubuluwayo*, 271.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 333.

¹⁴ Gelfand, *Gubuluwayo and beyond*, 194–7.

¹⁵ Dachs and Rea, *The Catholic Church and Zimbabwe*, 28. The early chapters dealing with the Zambesi Mission are Rea's work; see xii.

we have no documentary evidence to show how far the Jesuits at Empandeni were aware of the chicanery being employed to get the Charter. Remote as they were from Bulawayo, they did not play the active role of the L.M.S. missionaries in persuading the king to sign; but, when Hartmann in 1893 rode with the bunch of freebooters that invaded Matabeleland, he can hardly have been unaware that the incident that justified the invasion had been drummed up by Jameson, who hoped to lay the Company's hands on Matabeleland's supposed wealth. Certainly Lobengula received little thanks for a decade of tolerance of the Jesuit presence.

The second of the anniversary publications, *Centenary of the Catholic Church in Zimbabwe*, is more of a factual record, although, as will be seen, such factual résumés are important and sometimes neglected in theorizing about the Church. The third of the centenary publications is a general history of the Church's progress in Colonial Zimbabwe by Dachs and Rea, in their *The Catholic Church and Zimbabwe 1879-1979*; published very soon afterwards was Linden's book, *The Catholic Church and The Struggle for Zimbabwe*,¹⁶ which is primarily concerned with the Church's response to African nationalism which through the African National Congress began to provoke a unified and national feeling among the people only during the 1950s. Dachs and Rea are more interested in detailing the growth of the Church from the Jesuits of the Pioneer Column to the five dioceses and one vicariate apostolic that organize the many institutions of the modern Church in Zimbabwe. They see the Church's success in the growth of these institutions and through them they show the varied response of the Church to the changing needs of the society. Linden, on the other hand, is suspicious of institutions which can only too often become an end in themselves, distracting the Church from its witness. He sees the Church as slowly moving from its ready identification with the settler élite to a gradual awareness that such an alliance meant an identification with racism and the economic exploitation that accompanied it. In Linden's analysis the Church's effective origins with the Pioneer Column meant that 'The Catholic Church did not stand outside settler society . . . they shared in the authority of white rule, and to a great extent in its values and ideas. With ultimately over 180,000 acres of mission land to farm, they became settlers like the rest.'¹⁷

That this is an oversimplification is demonstrated within Linden's own argument. Two pages before that remark he quotes from a *Rhodesia Herald* editorial of 1896 which pointed out that Africans could never be other than morally, socially and mentally inferior to the whites; Linden comments: 'The missionaries *did* wish their converts to be "otherwise" and in this they differed from most other Rhodesians'.¹⁸ On the next page he observes that as 'an international Religious Society, [the Jesuits] never demonstrated the virulent racialism that was prevalent in Rhodesian white society at this time'.¹⁹ This sort of inconsistency is typical of the earlier parts of Linden's book where, in order to establish his thesis that the Church sold out on principle in order to remain hand-in-glove with the settler administration, he indulges in generalizations ill-supported and even contradicted by his evidence.

The mission lands—Linden's 180,000 acres—were of course seized with the same insensitivity to the rights of their owners as was shown by any of the Pioneers. It is ingenuous of Fr Rea to state blandly that, in staking a claim for the Jesuit Farm in the Chishawasha Valley, 'The missionaries dispossessed no-one' because when Prestage first saw the valley inter-village fighting and a veld fire had

¹⁶ I. Linden, *The Catholic Church and the Struggle for Zimbabwe* (London, Longman, 1980), x, 310pp., £3.95 (s/c).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 15.

left it depopulated.²⁰ Vambe's *An Ill-Fated People*, which Rea cites as authority in another context, shows that for the vaWasha people, there was no question of deserting for any length of time their ancestral lands.²¹ More important, however, is to distinguish between settler and missionary motives in the grabbing of huge tracts of land, which was a feature of the first decade of the Occupation. Much of the land went to speculative companies which hoped to make substantial profits when the land was cut up and resold to subsequent settlers; smaller acreages went to individual settlers who trusted that their newly acquired estates would give them a wealth and status denied them in England. The missionaries were concerned with neither profit nor prestige except in so far as the farm at Chishawasha provided, as Rea says, a 'model of beneficial Victorian expansion and guaranteed the Jesuits' status with the Company.'²² A successfully farmed central station provided funds for the expansion of schools and other facilities at out-stations.²³ So far were the Jesuits from behaving like other settlers that especially in the early days of the Zambezi Mission the concept of Reductions was never far from their planning. These States within States, which the Jesuits had developed in seventeenth-century Paraguay, became in the Rhodesian context Christian villages that cut the faithful off from the insidious influences of their pagan brethren and at the same time protected them from the depredations of the settlers themselves. Fr Loubière, their most earnest advocate, who had first-hand experience of the horrors of the Zambezi *prazos* was as conscious of the second need as he was of the first.²⁴

These attempts at Christian villages were, of course, both in design and effect likely to be even more disruptive of African cultural traditions and values than the settler presence itself. They demanded of their inhabitants that they should, like the Jews of old, be a people set apart for God²⁵ and a stern watch was maintained lest any lapse back into the ways of their forefathers. The settlers on the other hand were hugely indifferent as to what Africans did when they were not working. Settler novels show that they derived some consolation if their stereotypes of Africans were satisfied when a man resolutely clung to old beliefs that could be characterized as absurd and irrational.

The Christian villages outlived their purpose in a remarkably short time. As Rea points out, by the 1920s they had helped to encourage and stimulate a habit of urban living: 'The villages around the mission stations reproduced urban conditions on a small scale, ushered the African adherent gently into a new life and whetted his appetite for consumer goods and self-reliance in the cities'.²⁶

One of the chief merits of Dachs and Rea's book is to show that generalizations about the Church at any time during its history in Zimbabwe are bound to be oversimplifications. Even over the Christian villages, for example, there were sharp divisions of opinion among the missionaries themselves. One objected precisely because they distanced new converts from their heathen families and gave them an inappropriate sense of superiority; others believed that centralization prevented the spread of Christianity into areas beyond the immediate precincts of the mission: converts living in their old villages would, it was claimed, by their example attract others to the faith.²⁷ In view of Linden's claims, this particular dispute is interesting because it shows that even in the 1920s not all Jesuits clung to their institutions as the only valid expression of a Catholic presence in Zimbabwe and not all saw the unconverted Shona as contemptible.

²⁰ Dachs and Rea, *The Catholic Church and Zimbabwe*, 47.

²¹ L. Vambe, *An Ill-Fated People* (London, Heinemann, 1972).

²² Dachs and Rea, *The Catholic Church and Zimbabwe*, 49.

²³ *Ibid.*, 55-6.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 79.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 80.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 83.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 80-1.

But the principal discouragement against over-generalization is Dachs and Rea's strong awareness of the differences in missiology that existed between the various orders and missionary congregations and subsequently in the dioceses and vicariates of which these assumed control.²⁸ The Jesuits, who, as the Society responsible for the Zambesi Mission, had been given nearly an eighth of Africa to evangelize, had over the years consolidated themselves in the north-east corner of Zimbabwe, leaving other orders to develop their pioneering work in the rest of the country. Even in the Jesuit quarter, men from a German province worked in the far north—an area that subsequently became the vicariate of Sinoia—while the English Jesuits developed what was to become the archdiocese of Salisbury. Men from different nationalities even though they belonged to the same Society brought different expectations and methods to the areas that they controlled, and the Sinoia missions were and are different from the missions in the Archdiocese. Forty years before the Sinoia Jesuits arrived, the Zambesi Mission Jesuits had been joined by the Mariannhill Missionaries, originally a Trappist foundation in Natal, whose members had found it impossible to reconcile the strict, monastic Trappist rule with missionary work. With a predominantly German membership, a mother-house in South Africa and the elements of the Trappist rule that had been retained in the new Congregation, the Mariannhill Missionaries had little in common with the English Province of the Society of Jesus whose public schools and Mayfair church and provincialate had placed them near the sources of British secular power. The Mariannhill priests were to exchange their large and thriving missions in the Eastern Districts for the Jesuit establishments at Empandeni and it was from this congregation that the first Vicar Apostolic of Bulawayo was chosen. Further divisions in later years saw Manicaland being put in the charge of the Irish Carmelites, the huge and heavily populated Midlands and Karangaland being entrusted to the Swiss Bethlehem Missionary Society, and the desolate and thinly populated north-western corner of the country being released by the Mariannhill fathers to priests of the Spanish Missionary Institute. Germans, Swiss, Irish, Spaniards and Britons thus gave the missionary church in Zimbabwe an extraordinarily cosmopolitan character.

The Catholic Church in Zimbabwe shows how each of these congregations, orders and institutes gave to their diocese a particular flavour; Catholicism was at its least monolithic in Zimbabwe. Bishop Prieto of Wankie, for example, laid particular emphasis on the training of catechists, something which the Jesuits many years before had resisted. Prieto's aim was "1. a self-ministering local church; 2. a self-propagating local church; 3. a self-supporting local church."²⁹ The fruits of his policy were shown when by 1974 much of the work of the Teaching Church in Wankie was being done by men trained at the National Catechetical School at Matetsi. In the Gwelo diocese, the astonishing energy of the Bethlehem Missionaries created between 1950 and 1975 twenty-four new mission stations invariably associated with a school, hospital or other institution to serve the secular needs of the people. At the same time their awareness of the need for Prieto's self-generating local church manifested itself in Fr Lenherr's

²⁸ Perhaps the best arguments against thinking of the Zimbabwe Church as an Anglo-Jesuit institution can be seen in *Centenary of the Catholic Church in Zimbabwe (1879-1979)*, which gives an account of all the religious orders that have worked in Zimbabwe. Apart from the dioceses and the prefecture apostolic of Sinoia which are variously in the hands of Zimbabwean priests, German Mariannhill Missionaries, Irish Carmelites, Spanish priests of the Spanish Missionary Institute, Swiss and other European nationalities who are attached to the Bethlehem Missionary Society and German Jesuits, the vast majority of the expatriate nuns have always been of Irish or German origin. Only two orders of nuns who have worked in Zimbabwe have come from the English Province of their order. Since the influence of nuns on a missionary Church is enormous, one simply cannot deny their existence, as Linden appears to do unless they are explicitly political.

²⁹ Dachs and Rea, *The Catholic Church and Zimbabwe*, 168.

encouragement of hymnology based on Shona music and Fr Groeber's magnificent church at Serima, one of the great buildings of Zimbabwe, which is decorated with carvings and other designs that owe little to European influences.³⁰ In Gwelo itself, Mambo Press sought in various publications and at various intellectual levels to explore the Zimbabwean experience—politically, sociologically, historically—partly for its own sake but also to define the society with which the Church was engaged in order to make its mission more appropriate. In Bulawayo Bishop Schmitt and his Mariannhill Missionaries began to develop an urban apostolate because they realized that as more people moved into wage employment in the cities the rural mission had no means of confirming their faith in this totally alien environment.

These differences between the dioceses and the men who staff them give to the Church in Zimbabwe its peculiar eclecticism, although the point can be made even more strongly than it is by Rea and Dachs. Roberts has shown that in its origins the Zambesi Mission was an initiative of Propaganda Fidei using the Society of Jesus as an instrument. In Southern Africa the Zambesi Mission was simply one of several ventures on behalf of the Catholic Church in which Oblates, the Society for African Missions and the Holy Ghost Fathers played their parts in the specific areas Rome assigned to them. In Africa as a whole the Zambesi Mission filled the gap that the White Fathers, the Verona Fathers and the Holy Ghost Fathers, all working to the north, had left open. Roberts is quite correct in emphasizing that the Zambesi Mission 'was not unique and certainly not particularly British or Rhodesian in its origin; it was but part of a general missionary expansion of the Catholic Church which English-speaking historians, even Catholic ones, have tended to underestimate'.³¹ How pervasive is this idea of an Anglo-Jesuit Church only recently disturbed by the advent of non-English orders and societies is shown when Énda McDonagh writes that by 1957 the Church had become 'dominated by blacks and whites who had not the same close and confusing ties with the colonial administration. Many of its missionaries were recent, not of British background and working far from the inevitable colusive atmosphere of Salisbury'.³² Given that as early as 1920 the majority of Jesuits were not of British origin, by 1931 a third of the country was under the control of the Mariannhill Missionaries, and that in 1938 the Bethlehem Missionaries had started to take over the Jesuit missions in Karangaland, it is simply not true to see the Church as Jesuit in its theology and English in its loyalties until the 1950s. Certainly Chichester and the Superiors of the Zambesi Mission who preceded him worked hand-in-glove with the colonial authorities, but as Linden and McDonagh would be the first to argue the Church is very much more than its superiors and bishops.

Linden's book fails to take this into account—which is the more surprising because he briefly acknowledges differences in the national temperaments of the men working for the Church in the country and the different expectations that these varied groups had for the Church.³³ What Linden does is largely to concentrate on the official hierarchical and other statements issuing from the Catholic secretariat in Salisbury, and for much of the book to use these as representing the consistent thinking of the local Church. Linden's book has a

³⁰ For an account of the Serima Church and the growth of Serima as an art centre, see A. Plangger and M. Diethelm, *Serima* (Gwelo, Mambo Press, 1974).

³¹ Roberts, *Journey to Gubukwayo*, xxv; the historical background to the mission is discussed at xvi–xxvi.

³² E. McDonagh, *The Demands of Simple Justice: A Study of the Church, Politics and Violence with Special Reference to Zimbabwe* (Dublin, Gill and Macmillan, 1980), 177pp., £5.50; see p.97. This book is discussed below; see ??.

³³ Linden, *The Catholic Church and the Struggle for Zimbabwe*, 31–3, 43–4.

hero, Bishop Lamont of Umtali, who was responsible until his deportation for drafting the more outspoken criticisms of the ideology and legislation of the settler régimes which his fellow bishops more or less willingly signed. Linden's villains are the English Jesuits and Mariannhill missionaries, although he ignores the mistrust and resentment by the latter for the former, which goes back at least to the inequitable exchange in the 1930s of Triashill and Monte Casino for the drought-stricken missions at Empandeni. Among the English Jesuits Linden singles out for particular obloquy the community at St George's whom he represents as opposing every progressive move that Lamont tried to set in motion. Some of this is true enough. In the early 1960s Lamont was certainly alone among the Bishops in realizing the need for detailed and public criticism of the drift of Government policies. Some members of the Jesuit community at St George's were certainly cut off from the people. They were unaware of the enthusiasm with which most Africans embraced nationalism and were susceptible to the propaganda of press and radio—censorship of the former and direct control of the latter made these, after U.D.I., even more singularly unreliable channels of information about African opinion than they had been before. In their remoteness from the majority of the people they were therefore no different from the Whites who were blissfully unaware of the forces at large around them except as a mad mythology of Communist plots and Kremlin agents. Older Jesuits at St George's also recalled the easy access that English Jesuits had had to Government during Chichester's episcopacy and probably had difficulty in realizing that this informal relationship had gone for ever. But then I can also think of some of Lamont's fellow Carmelites, for example, who would have outplayed any St George's Jesuit in their enthusiastic espousal of the cause of the Rhodesian Front. And members of St George's community come to mind who loathed the policies of the Smith régime as racist and essentially unchristian which leaves us where we started—except that one is bound to add that the majority of Jesuits in Zimbabwe regarded their more reactionary confrères with irritation, although their irritation unlike Linden's was tempered with compassion because they understood how cut off they were from the life of the country.

That point having been made, the peculiar merits of Linden's book must be acknowledged. He does, for example, briefly mention the Jesuit, Fr Burbridge, who in the 1920s added his voice to those of the more famous Anglican Cripps and Methodist White to argue against policies that consistently denied African advancement,³⁴ although Burbridge's role is more efficiently dealt with by Rea and Dachs. Linden, correctly, I think, identifies 'class' rather than 'race' as the concept that blinkered Chichester when it was necessary for him to see the growing influences of African nationalism. Belonging to the class that had traditionally ruled the Empire, Chichester was unlikely to feel ill at ease with the White establishment of the Salisbury Club. Confrontation with the Government was quite unnecessary, when points at issue could be settled by informal meetings with the rulers of the country. More significantly, although he was alert to any overt ill-treatment of Africans, he was unlikely to question the very basis on which the establishment had consolidated its power. Rea and Dachs write of Chichester's delight when his seminarians could handle knives, forks and small-talk with the aplomb of English gentlemen.³⁵ It is Linden, however, who recognizes in this delight a satisfaction that his priests were taking their appropriate place among the ruling classes, for he could not conceive of a society in which some form of paternalism did not operate. Chichester's reflections more in sorrow than in anger at the failure of responsibility of both Black and White working classes would not

³⁴ Linden by very selective quotation suggests that Burbridge actually inhibited the work of White and Cripps; see, for example, *ibid.*, 21-2.

³⁵ Dachs and Rea, *The Catholic Church and Zimbabwe*, 138.

have been inappropriate in England a century before. 'Blotting out workers' sweat and investors' greed', writes Linden, 'the stale air of Beaumont and Stonyhurst still wafted through the sharp atmosphere of Rhodesian political life'.³⁶

It was precisely because this was the code of relations between Church and Government, established by Chichester's long years of rule, that only someone like Lamont was in a position to criticize it. The extraordinary influence that he came to exercise within the Zimbabwean Church was because as an Irishman he had, as Linden says, 'a firm and critical grasp of British culture' which at once enabled him to flourish within yet distance himself from the 'framework of English Jesuit hegemony'.³⁷ He had a perspective on the Church within a colonial society which was not available to the other Bishops from continental Europe.

Lamont's first criticism of the prevailing policies of the Rhodesian Government came as early as 1959 with *Purchased People*, originally intended as a pastoral letter to be issued by all the hierarchy, but which, when they rejected it, was issued as a diocesan instruction. *Purchased People* is an extraordinary document and Linden's analysis of it is masterly. It recognized nationalism not as something induced from abroad into a hitherto contented people but as an assertion of national identity, a demand for a rightful place within the structure of the State. These valid aspirations the Church had a duty to support. If this went further than any churchman had gone before, Lamont was willing to go much further. He outlined the conditions which traditional Catholic theology had seen as justifying armed rebellion against a properly constituted Government. But having made those gestures towards the sort of thinking of many nationalists at the time, Lamont found himself caught up in the dualism between Church and State that was so characteristic a part of pre-conciliar theology: 'the State being the highest natural good of mankind . . . the Church, its supernatural and eternal good'.³⁸ The Church was thus left like the apostles after the Ascension, looking heavenwards, and if it did criticize the State it did so in obedience to its divine mandate, not with the real authority it had acquired in the Zimbabwean situation: as a spokesman for the poor and the deprived with whom it was in daily contact. In his early writings Lamont's insistence—and to outsiders it often appeared arrogant insistence—that he and his Church were the sole repositories of truth, often had the ironic effect of distancing him from the very people whose cause he articulated. Taking a phrase from the fiery Jesuit Pichon, who worked briefly in Zimbabwe before being deported, Linden asks, 'In short was Bishop Lamont to be the last prophet of the Constantinian Church or the first King of the Church of the Poor?'³⁹

Lamont was feeling his way, trying to reconcile an inherited theology, which had so frequently put the Church on the side of oppressive establishments, with the grave injustices directed towards the African in the society around him. In 1959 the Bishops refused to collaborate with Lamont on *Purchased People*. Two years later, in their pastoral letter *Peace through Justice*,⁴⁰ they not only adopted phrases from Lamont's earlier document but began to move away from the awkward dualism that marked Lamont's theology. Now the Church is seen as addressing itself to the problems of Zimbabwe from a recognition that the unity of mankind in Christ is its central preoccupation. More forcibly than Lamont had

³⁶ Linden, *The Catholic Church and the Struggle for Zimbabwe*, 42.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 43–4.

³⁸ 'Purchased People', in A. Plangger (ed.), *Rhodesia: The Moral Issue: Pastoral Letters of the Catholic Bishops* (Gwelo, Mambo Press, 1968), 15–52; 45.

³⁹ R. Pichon, 'Rhodésie: Une Eglise Constantinienne' (MS report sent to the Superior General of the Society of Jesus, 1973), cited in Linden, *The Catholic Church and the Struggle for Zimbabwe*, 56.

⁴⁰ Plangger *Rhodesia: The Moral Issue*, 55–75.

done, *Peace through Justice* detailed the abuses in the conditions of both industrial and domestic workers. These, the Bishops maintained, cried 'to heaven for vengeance' and could 'only breed crime and chaos'.⁴¹ The Bishops were still, however, determinedly unpartisan. They would not acknowledge that only African nationalism, as yet unified under the leadership of Nkomo, had the means to redress these wrongs. It was hardly helpful for Africans to be reminded that the State 'has full authority to maintain peace within its frontiers',⁴² and that that authority, as part of the natural order, comes from God Himself. Since the very basis of the State was laid on a foundation that assured the economic privileges of a racial elite, Africans were not likely to derive much consolation nor the Church to appear particularly consistent in such a teaching. What, of course, inhibited the Bishops was their own deep rooting in natural-law theology, the ideological framework with which their training had provided them.

Linden sees the agreement of the hierarchy on the contents of *Peace through Justice* being made possible because the new Bishop of Wankie, Ignatius Prieto, and Bishop Haene joined forces with Lamont to oppose the Salisbury Jesuit establishment and their Mariannhill allies. Inconsistently he also claims a paragraph before that 'the Jesuits changed their mind'—African distress at current events having 'at last got through to the town sacristy'—and two pages further on that the lukewarm attitude of the pastoral to nationalism was because the Bishops sensed in it 'a rival to the Church'.⁴³ In the absence of any documentation (Linden provides none), one can only speculate on why the Bishops did in fact sign a pastoral so obviously written by Lamont. In 1961 it had become obvious to anyone who was not firmly enclosed within the White ghetto (and *pace* Linden none of the Bishops was so cut off) that nationalism was a force to be reckoned with in the life of the country. To anyone whose secular ideology was an inadequate liberalism—and this was true of all the Bishops including Lamont—it was clear that unless the more glaring injustices were removed from Rhodesian life the nationalists could go only from strength to strength and some of that strength could well derive from Marxist Leninism. Behind this letter then there lies a firm commitment to an African middle-class on whom it was hoped that the leadership of the African masses would devolve. Such a group, conservative bourgeois, Western in outlook and European in tastes, would certainly offer no threat to the Church. *Peace through Justice*, radical though it seemed to many Whites at the time, was a grave warning that, unless the Whites admitted Blacks to a sharing of power, the political initiatives in the country would be taken from White hands altogether. Linden does make some of these points—he is particularly good in showing how a fear of communism limited the Bishops' analysis of the situation.⁴⁴ He also recognizes that in *Peace through Justice* an institutional church was protecting those institutions which seemed to give it its particular identity. What Linden fails to understand is the sort of moral courage that was needed to break with the attitudes of mutual respect that had marked relations between the settler Government and the Church for seventy years. It was not easy for the Bishops to find themselves reviled in Parliament and in letters to the press. Only those priests whose pastoral work was among Africans were able to bask in the warmth of popular acclamation. In a pre-conciliar church, the Bishops had no access to a theology that would deal with liberation movements in the modern world and the Bishops had little to fall back on to challenge a legally constituted Government. Even Lamont, after all, was feeling his way cautiously. It does not require any complex analysis of collusion between Anglo-Jesuits and

⁴¹ Ibid., 62.

⁴² Ibid., 68.

⁴³ Linden, *The Catholic Church and the Struggle for Zimbabwe*, 62–5.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 85.

Settlers to explain why in 1961 the Church leaders could see wrongs but propose only inadequate solutions.

U.D.I. in 1965 should paradoxically have had the effect of liberating the Church from any unease that its leaders might have felt at challenging the decisions of a legal and sovereign Government. As Linden notes, 'rebellion against the Crown was clearly taking place for immoral motives', and claims made by certain of the clergy that the previous Governments had not interfered with the teaching role of the Church was given the lie direct when a pastoral letter⁴⁵ commenting on Smith's reckless act had to be submitted to the censors who removed passages from the Shona and Ndebele versions. The censorship board was aware of something that the Bishops were slow to realize: the Rhodesian Front, throughout the long years of U.D.I., could always command greater attention and obedience from most White Catholics than could the hierarchy itself. When the Bishops wrote in *A Plea for Peace* that 'vast numbers of the people of Rhodesia are bitterly opposed to the unilateral declaration of independence' and 'It is simply untrue to say that the masses are content with this recent decision or that they have consented with their silence . . . the silence of fear, of disappointments, of hopelessness', 'most White Catholics simply ignored the Bishops' warning that out of this silence would grow 'a massive resentment . . . at the grave provocation that has been given to very many people'.⁴⁷ Together with passages like this, however, there is still a command for the people to abstain from violence. There had been no liberation of the Bishops in this respect. It is perhaps the greatest fault of their teaching before 1969 that they never even suggested that, in its attitude to the African people, the State had from 1890 represented institutional violence. Linden notes this and also complains at the failure of the pastoral to call for police action by Britain, which he believes would have brought the rebellion to a speedy end. The pastoral, he argues, steered clear of recommending specific courses of action which would have involved overt violence and in this there was a profound failure of moral responsibility. Because 'the Rhodesian Front had made all peaceful change impossible', to denounce all use of violence reduced the pastoral to mere rhetoric.⁴⁸ Of course, Linden is correct in that British intervention would have ended U.D.I. What his analysis ignores, however, is the confusion that the Bishops shared with most people over what was happening in November 1965. Britain had after all made it perfectly clear that she wasn't going to intervene militarily and to demand that she should would have been as rhetorical as to recommend nothing specific. What Britain had promised were economic embargoes and these seemed at the time to be a potent weapon. It is hardly surprising that the Bishops counselled restraint when a non-violent option was available. The situation was further obscured by instructions from the British Government for civil servants to go about their jobs as if nothing had happened—an instruction which was made possible by the absurd fiction that Whitehall had assumed control of the country which they were exercising through Government House. The question of sovereignty thus remained as complicated as it had been before. Much more important than British reactions to the rebellion, however, was the split in the nationalist parties. Again and again Linden speaks about nationalism as if it manifested itself in a single movement to which the Bishops should have given unequivocal support. Of course, the vast majority of the people were nationalist, but with the fighting that followed the split between ZANU and ZAPU and preceded U.D.I., with the nationalist leaders in detention and a substantial rural following for Nkomo

⁴⁵ 'A Plea for Peace' in Plangger, *Rhodesia: The Moral Issue*, 90-8.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 91.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 97.

⁴⁸ Linden, *The Catholic Church and the Struggle for Zimbabwe*, 91.

throughout the country, it was not really clear what the British would do even if they had been willing to come in. They certainly could have had little to offer that would have satisfied the just expectations of either nationalist party if their proposals from *Tiger*, *Fearless* and in 1972 are accurate reflections of British constitutional thinking during the first six years of U.D.I. Political stability and the promise of justice were achieved only by eight years of war which brought the majority of the people behind a single party. Even Linden does not suggest that the Bishops should have advised that a full-scale war was needed to achieve peace.

The nearest that the Bishops came to countenancing violence because it had been made available was in their pastoral *A Call to Christians*, issued in response to the 1969 constitutional proposals.⁴⁹ Looking at the details of the constitution which sought to prevent majority rule for ever, the Bishops observed that, 'it will be extremely difficult to counsel moderation' to a people who had been patient for so long and were now so sorely provoked.⁵⁰

If one looks back on the Church's role in the years immediately after U.D.I., there is an eerie normality about it. White parishes performed parish functions, the missions continued to expand as if nothing had happened to affect the work of eighty years. The most important change—and this was perhaps as much a function of the Council as of U.D.I.—was that within the Church a far wider range of opinions were being expressed about what the Church's role in Zimbabwe should be. Of these the most important—because they represented what the majority of Catholics were thinking—were to be found in *Moto*, the national weekly, produced from the Gwelo diocese, which with the banning of the *African Daily News* in 1964 had become the only paper likely to interpret events from an African perspective. Linden says of *Moto* that its 'importance . . . cannot be overstated'.⁵¹ It is a serious flaw in Dachs and Rea's book that the paper is mentioned only in passing. *Moto* was probably the first sign in the country of a 'listening' as opposed to a 'teaching' church and, until its banning in 1974, it demonstrated in issue after issue how the repository of truth about the local situation could be found in the laity and not in the more traditional centres of authority in a hierarchical church. When *Moto* was banned, *Mambo Magazine* took its place, and when this too was banned, *Kristo* followed although these successor publications were limited in what they could say by a Government order that no publication of the Mambo Press could comment on current political issues. By 1974 the Government had drawn to a conclusion the long debate on whether the Bishops had a right to speak out on Government actions by decreeing that the Church's kingdom was not of this world. *Moto* was harassed from U.D.I. until its banning. Fr M. Traber, who directed its editorial board, was tried and found guilty of subversion in 1969, although the Appellate Division overturned this conviction on a technicality. The following year he and Antony Schmitz, the lay manager of Mambo Press in Salisbury, were deported. Traber's place was taken by Fr Albert Plangger who despite several arrests and with a suspended sentence hanging over his head managed to sail his various publications close to the wind and under a heavy cover of church news and theology offer some sort of comment on the progress of the revolution. When the British Government assumed control of the country after the Lancaster House talks, *Moto* triumphantly resumed publication. An indication of its importance was given when, in an attempt to discredit both Mambo Press and ZANU (PF),

⁴⁹ Rhodesian Catholic Bishops, *A Call to Christians* ([Salisbury, Bishops' Conference, 1969]), no pagination.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Linden, *The Catholic Church and the Struggle for Zimbabwe*, 163.

a forged variant of a previous issue was used to print a scurrilous attack on Mugabe and circulated as a current number throughout the townships. Shortly before the elections Mambo Press was bombed—both actions apparently being the responsibility of a dirty-tricks brigade of a Government department loyal to Smith and Muzorewa.

The other institution that commented more freely on the régime's activities than the Bishops ever allowed themselves to do was the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission. The Commission was founded in 1971 in response to Pope Paul's directive that:

Laymen should take up as their proper task the renewal of the temporal order . . . It is not enough to recall principles, state intentions, point to crying injustices and utter prophetic denunciations; these words will lack real weight unless they are accompanied for each individual by a livelier awareness of personal responsibility and by effective action.³³

Backed by this papal injunction the hierarchy might well have felt released from any lingering inhibitions that it may have had about dabbling in the temporal order and in proposing courses of action that would change that order.

The Justice and Peace Commission represented, in Linden's words, 'a turning point for the Rhodesian Church . . . It was the first formal structural commitment to social justice made by the hierarchy'.³⁴ Certainly it very quickly became the channel which enabled the Church to become truly a listening Church. The contacts which the Commission rapidly established with the majority of Catholics in the country gave the Bishops access to opinions of which they could only become casually aware before. It is not therefore surprising that the Bishops quickly realized that the 1972 constitutional proposals were unacceptable. These, they observed, did not promote the common good but rather preserved 'at least for the foreseeable future, the privileged position of one section of the population, in the political, social, economic and cultural affairs of the country'.³⁵ It was also symptomatic of a listening Church that the Bishops should single out as particularly objectionable the failure of both British and Rhodesian Governments to consult Africans about the terms of the agreement.

The war of words over principles and the morality of various political possibilities was near its end. With the first ZANLA attacks on White farmsteads in December 1972, the political initiative had demonstrably been removed from the Smith régime. The possibility of armed resistance which the Bishops had anticipated for nearly a decade was now a reality; violence was no longer something to be discussed at a theoretical level. Action was needed and initially this was provided by the Justice and Peace Commission. A meeting with Ian Smith was arranged to express concern at what the Commission called the 'counter-terrorism' employed by the security forces in the Mount Darwin area.³⁶ The evidence was ignored and its accusations denied. Throughout 1973, however, more and more evidence accumulated at the Commission's offices of the activities of the security forces and this bore little relationship to the official account of the progress of the war carried in the newspapers and on radio. When the Commission's request for an investigation into alleged atrocities by the security forces met with no response, it was forced to resort in March 1974 to an advertisement in *The Rhodesia Herald* calling for a commission of enquiry to investigate the allegations that had been made to it. This was a direct challenge to the State and Lardner-Burke, the Minister of Justice, responded with vigour. The Commission, he claimed in the Senate, was a tool of the Bishops who wished to

³³ Cited, *ibid.*, 163.

³⁴ Cited, *ibid.*, 167.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 163.

³⁶ Cited, *ibid.*, 163.

provoke a confrontation between Church and State in order to undermine the lawful authority of the latter as the Church had done in Moçambique⁵⁶—a doubly misleading reference in view of the craven identification of the Moçambique hierarchy with the colonial representatives of the Salazar State.⁵⁷ No commission of enquiry was forthcoming, of course, and the Justice and Peace Commission, as more and more evidence of brutality continued to flow into its offices, decided to initiate charges against the Minister of Justice on behalf of nine people who had suffered at the hands of the servants of the State. While the lengthy legal processes necessary for this were being set in motion, the Catholic Institute for International Relations in London published under the title *The Man in the Middle* some of the evidence that had been made available to the Commission in Salisbury. This was the first of several publications put out by the C.I.I.R. on behalf of the Commission which provided perspectives of the war to which the British national press either had no access or chose to ignore. As Linden remarks of the C.I.I.R.'s publications, 'the voice of the rural African was being broadcast far and wide through the bonds forged by the listening Church'.⁵⁸ In Rhodesia, Parliament responded to the Commission's legal processes by rushing through both Houses an Indemnity and Compensation Bill which, when it became law on 3 October 1975, gave the cabinet the right to stop litigation against a servant of the State who had acted 'in good faith' to suppress terrorism. The work of the legal commission which had attempted to use the courts to prevent the worst excesses of the war was effectively ended.

The Church, however, was not silenced. The commission continued to speak out and the C.I.I.R. in London gave international publicity to their findings; Kristo managed to publish oblique criticisms of legislation and security force activities that weighed on the rural people—not oblique enough, however, for the editor was fined for his pains; and Bishop Lamont, sometimes with the hierarchy and sometimes on his own, continued to speak out until, finally in August 1977, he was brought to trial for failing to report the presence of terrorists and inciting others to do the same.

Lamont made use of his trial, which ended in his imprisonment and subsequent deportation, not only to provide an *apologia pro vita sua* but also, by describing the conditions under which the missionaries lived, to give some indication of the real state of affairs in the rural areas. If a missionary reported the presence of guerrillas, he would become a 'willing accomplice in the bombing and destroying of villages and in the killing of innocent women and children'. Not only his sincerity but that of his whole Church would be called into question.⁵⁹ Lamont is a man of remarkable courage and unswerving principle and yet in the arguments that he used in his trial as much as in everything he had ever written, the ecclesio-centricity that characterizes his thinking is revealed. Linden calls his position one of 'profound orthodoxy'⁶⁰ but does not comment on what this entailed. I believe that Lamont's theology, throughout the long debate about the respective rights of Church and State, smacked more than a little of triumphalism. Often his position seemed to be no more complicated than that a Bishop of a divinely inspired church saw issues with greater clarity than the State was capable of doing. His outrage against the lot that Africans endured in the settler State stemmed from a recognition that in detail after detail of their daily

⁵⁶ Ibid., 194.

⁵⁷ The outstanding exception was the Bishop of Nampula who was accused of sympathizing with Frelimo and was driven from his diocese in 1974 by outraged settlers.

⁵⁸ Linden, *The Catholic Church and the Struggle for Zimbabwe*, 209.

⁵⁹ D. Lamont, *Speech from the Dock* (Leigh-on-Sea, Keven Mayhew, 1977), 143pp., £0.90; see 60–1.

⁶⁰ Linden, *The Catholic Church and the Struggle for Zimbabwe*, 228.

lives they were being denied the love and justice that the gospels see as characterizing a Christian society. His concept of the Church as the divinely inspired teacher of men gave him the courage to speak out when others, paradoxically more theologically progressive, sank into the silence born of doubt. The Church in Rhodesia needed a man like Lamont; the Church in Zimbabwe will perhaps have greater need of men like Traber or Plangger or Scholz who gladly threw the weight of the Church behind those secular powers that, in their belief, were striving towards justice. I wonder whether Lamont could conceive of the Church as simply working to give greater emphasis to those aspects of secular programmes that most nearly accord with the vision of a Christian society. This was the task that Mambo Press proposed for itself and the role that many clergy and religious throughout the country have slowly begun to see as their vocation in the Zimbabwean Church.

The issue of 'failing to report the presence of terrorists', which brought Lamont to trial and other nuns and priests to arrest, interrogation and, in some cases, imprisonment, was merely one among many issues that missionaries away from the towns had increasingly to confront. Towards the end of the war it was certainly one of the less important, for the guerrillas were everywhere in the rural areas and to report their presence would have been to state the obvious. Much more to the point was to establish a *modus vivendi* and to do this in a manner that would not attract the attention of the security forces. It was not enough to sympathize with the ends of nationalism—which the majority of missionaries were probably inclined to do by the time the war started. The missionaries had to attend meetings at night, provide food, clothing, money and above all medical care to wounded men. Guerrillas who had been in the bush for months, their nerves stretched to breaking point, were bound to be mistrustful of any Whites. The difficulties of the missionaries were compounded when a particular group was hostile to the Church or saw a mission's institutions as so many agencies of the Government. Sometimes missionaries felt bound to intervene to save the life of someone whom malicious neighbours had reported as a 'sell-out'. The situation was further confused when members of the security forces pretended to be guerrillas in order to test an individual's loyalty. What in the end is remarkable is not that missionaries were killed but that anyone who remained in the bush survived at all. Given the racial complexion of the war, it is extraordinary that unarmed Whites remained alive while living in areas that, during the night at any rate, were effectively controlled by ZANLA or ZIPRA. It is a striking testimony to the idealism of the liberation armies that thousands of men in the field could set aside their own racial prejudices and see the missionaries as one with the people. Even when the missions were destroyed, as they were in the Wankie diocese and Sinoia vicariate, the missionaries themselves were often given safe conduct out of the area. Of the missionaries that were murdered, some were certainly killed by guerrillas; Fr Rubio, for example, preached against nationalism and had been warned by the Sisters on his mission to leave. In other cases, such as the killings at Musami, local people have never believed that guerrillas were responsible and have always blamed units of the security forces. On the other hand, given the extraordinary brutality with which people who were accused of being informers or of owing loyalty to other parties were killed, it is improbable that some of the mission murders were not the responsibility of guerrillas or of the teenagers who never left the country but whom the guerrillas had armed. Those who indignantly deny that the security forces could ever have had a hand in the killings conveniently forget the bombing of churches in Salisbury and of Mambo Press in Gwelo which was evidently the work of the Government agents, and ignore the propaganda value of missionary deaths and the ferocity with which the war was frequently conducted by the Rhodesians. They also forget the hatred with which the missionaries were regarded by many Whites.

At the beginning of this essay I remarked that the relationship between the Catholic Church and Zimbabwe had been one of complex interaction. It is symptomatic of that complexity that Dachs and Rea and Linden should have produced two such very different books on what appears to be the same subject. The reason for the differences is, of course, that the authors are asking very different questions about their material. Linden's question is provided by himself in his final chapter: 'To what extent did the different racial and class forces acting within the Church both locally and internationally, succeed in modifying the Christian Gospel to serve the hegemony of the dominant minority in Rhodesia?'⁶¹ Rea and Dachs trace the steps by which the Church moved from being a missionary Church to a Church that in its maturity will be African, specifically Zimbabwean, the local manifestation of the Universal Church. It is not surprising that the answer to Linden's question on the evidence of his book is 'extensively'. There is not a country in the world where the Catholic Church between the Vatican Councils did not modify the Gospels to serve the interests of the ruling class. What Rea and Dachs show, however, is that, misguided though it frequently was, mistaken in its emphasis though it can easily be shown to have been, ignorant though it was for many years of what it destroyed, the Church did succeed in serving the mass of the people. Linden's Church is full of documents; Rea and Dachs's of individual priests and buildings. I wonder whether perhaps in twenty years' time most of Linden's documents will be forgotten and Zimbabwe will be grateful for the infrastructure of social services in the missions, the schools and hospitals, those sacramental expressions of a concern for man which were erected by the creative faith of Rea and Dachs's missionaries.⁶²

Throughout the war local and hostile Whites often accused the Justice and Peace Commission of being nothing more than a front-organization for ZANU. That this was a gross oversimplification can be shown by the requests made by the Commission for some authoritative theological examination of the Church's attitude to violence especially as it was manifesting itself in Rhodesia.⁶³ Through the good offices of the C.I.R. in London Enda McDonagh, a leading Irish theologian, was secured for the task. The result is *The Demands of Simple Justice* in which McDonagh explores the different rights of State and society, of the Church in history and the Church of the parousia and then goes on to examine the Zimbabwean situation in the light of his general conclusions.

All this may seem abstract and remote from the men and women of the Zimbabwean Church, many of whom had to make agonizing moral decisions almost daily. McDonagh never loses sight of his responsibility to these people, unlike Linden who gives evidence of the missionaries' collaboration with guerrillas which could easily have endangered the lives of both. Linden's book was written and set up before anyone could have anticipated the success of Lancaster House and when there seemed every likelihood of the war's dragging on through 1980. McDonagh, on the other hand, notes how easily theologians can become fascinated with the debate over the merits of just war theory and those of non-violence. He adds, however: 'It becomes a matter of life and death for the politically and pastorally engaged in a situation like Rhodesia'.⁶⁴ He is aware that

⁶¹ Ibid., 296.

⁶² Some of the variety of the Church's witness even during the years of the war can be seen in R. Randolph, *Report to Rome: A Report on the Activities of the Catholic Church in Zimbabwe (Rhodesia) for the Five Years 1972-1976* (Gwelo, Mambo Press, Missio-Pastoral 10, 1975), 127pp., Z\$1.40. Together with an account of protests to the Government and the people at the conduct of the war and the inequities that continued to dominate Rhodesian life, the book shows how the Church's institutions and social projects continued to function and in some cases even expanded during these difficult years.

⁶³ Ibid. The problem was not, in fact, shelved as Linden claims.

⁶⁴ McDonagh, *The Demands of Simple Justice*, 10.

the theologian 'as systematic analyst and expositor' can lose sight of the realities of any actual situation and yet if he is to write intelligibly he can 'at least hope to experience and appropriate (too crudely) some of the mood, movement and more significant features which dominate a situation for some observable time'.⁶⁵

It is absolutely necessary for the theologian to do this because given the changing historical character of both institutions, Church and State, 'no final and universally acceptable resolution' is possible.⁶⁶ Not that McDonagh denies the existence of an absolute truth. Throughout *The Demands of Simple Justice* he is concerned to point out that 'The tension between historical achievement of the kingdom and eschatological fulfilment is central to any deeper understanding of the Church's in history and society' [sic]. In a marvellous passage that denies the whole tradition of triumphalism that still lingers on in some Church circles he notes that 'The church is not the kingdom then. It is the herald of the kingdom—and being a herald does not mean that a Christian has automatic moral insights 'into the extended and complex range of social structures, relationships, attitudes and activities which constitute the life of a particular society at a particular time'.⁶⁷ He wryly adds that 'history abundantly illustrates' how slow a learner the Church is in these matters.⁶⁸

McDonagh then moves on to analyse why to the Christian conscience the exclusion of any group of people from a position where they can influence the decisions of the State, or where they become a pool of cheap labour for those who control the economic life of a society, must be objectionable. 'Such enslavement may so marginalise people that they become total objects, non-persons, really absent from history . . . Becoming an object in history able to participate and choose one's way of life, forms no more than a fresh expression of the traditional Church understanding of the human person'.⁶⁹ It is because he believes that it was precisely this status of a person excluded from history that the Rhodesian State saw as desirable for the African majority that McDonagh is able to realize the justification of the liberation war:

Their human and Christian dignity was impaired, ignored and at times totally denied . . . Consciousness of their African dignity had to be reawakened and restored and not without peril for them and their white neighbours. Some of the peril of that reawakening is now being expressed in armed struggle. But the reawakening and restoration were essential to their healing and saving. They too have salvific dimensions.⁷⁰

And lest this seem too theoretic and rhetorical, McDonagh is concerned again and again to look at the actual structures in Rhodesia against which the armed struggle was being waged. Having established that in many societies, including Rhodesia, 'The rule of law so beloved of the defenders of politics against men of violence depends on the sanctions of physical force and its ability to inflict injury or cause damage', he then goes on to state the questions Church and moralists must face: 'How is force or the threat of force being used to establish and maintain a certain political order? What kind of political order is being established or maintained?'⁷¹ The answers to these questions as far as the Rhodesian State was concerned justify in McDonagh's terms the resort to arms. With the marvellous clarity that characterizes his whole work, he shows that no side was the sole instrument of violence but that for the Christian it should not have been difficult to see where his sympathies should lie. 'The victims of human oppression were, by the standards of the cross, the undeniable locus of divine presence.'⁷² Not that he

⁶⁵ Ibid., 18.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 34–5.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 49.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 115.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 29.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 41.

⁷¹ Ibid., 109.

⁷² Ibid., 108.

is in any way utopian. He realizes that the 'salvation made available through Calvary may not reach completion in history but it challenges and seeks to overcome sin in history, including the social sins of exclusion, discrimination and oppression of the powerless by the powerful'.⁷³ If twenty years ago the hierarchy had had the benefit of McDonagh's insights they may well have been able to give a far clearer leadership than they did during the long painful years of Rhodesian Front rule. As it was, it was the people and many of the clergy who, in fact, gave the theological lead through the actions they chose to undertake.

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⁷³ *Ibid.*, 109.