

A Critical Historical Evaluation of the Formation of the Anglican Province of Zimbabwe (APZ) by Bishop Nolbert Kunonga

Graham A Duncan

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2583-1914>

University of Pretoria

graham.duncan@up.ac.za

Farai Mutmiri

University of Pretoria

Abstract

The continued appointments of white expatriate priests as rectors of Zimbabwean parishes constituted a challenge to the *Quest for Belonging* in the post-independence period in Zimbabwe. A substantial challenge to the status quo came from Bishop Nolbert Kunonga with the formation of the Anglican Province of Zimbabwe in his apparent attempt at “belonging” and indigenisation. However, subsequent developments testify to Kunonga’s domineering leadership style, his disregard for the doctrines, laws and traditions of the denomination.

Keywords: Anglican Province of Zimbabwe (APZ); Bishop Nolbert Kunonga; Church of the Province of Central Africa (CPCA); M. L. Daneel; *Quest for Belonging*

Introduction

The Anglican Diocese of Harare found itself being dragged through a decade of turmoil which ran from 2002 to 2012, by actions of its sitting bishop, Bishop Nolbert Kunonga, who became bent on severing ties with the Church of the Province of Central Africa (CPCA). In the process Bishop Nolbert Kunonga formed his own province called the Anglican Province of Zimbabwe (APZ) but, notwithstanding this, was determined to hold on to the properties that belonged to the CPCA. This unusual development did not conform to the notion of *Quest for Belonging* as propounded by Daneel (1987) and discussed below.

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The Quest for Belonging

Daneel (1987) developed a theory, *Quest for Belonging*, after observing that the African Independent Churches were driven by a desire to feel at home within their own contexts as they worship God. Proponents of the African Independent Churches felt and experienced that this quality of belonging was missing from the so-called mainline churches. Daneel contended that:

... in the disruption of social structures caused by the accelerated processes of acculturation and industrialization thousands of alienated individuals have found in the Independent Churches “homes” of spiritual, mental and even material security, truly African havens of belonging. (Daneel 1987, 18)

As one makes a critical historical evaluation of the formation of the Anglican Province of Zimbabwe (APZ) by Bishop Nolbert Kunonga, it will be prudent to put this theory to the test, with the view of checking whether the formation of the province conforms to the theory.

The Anglican Church’s Response to Political Independence

One of Bishop Kunonga’s reasons for justifying the severing of ties with the CPCA was that he wanted to indigenise the Anglican Church. This justifies the need to investigate the Anglican Church’s response to political independence. When political independence was achieved on 18 April 1980, the church was expected to play a pivotal role in leading and shaping the way forward, unifying the nation and bridging the social-economic-racial gap that had existed for almost a century. The church found itself faced with a twofold task: first, to serve the black congregations without reserve; and second, “to carry the white parishes with it” (Hallencreutz and Moyo 1988, 335). The idea of the indigenisation of the church was paramount and its driving motto was to do away with the colonial legacy. However, the leadership remained predominantly white and European laws and traditions remained in force, which became a challenge to the church. A point to bear in mind was raised by Michael Lapsley (1988) when he observed that “whilst more Rhodesian whites belonged to the Anglican Church than to any other, the majority of Anglicans in the then Rhodesia, were blacks. Until after independence, almost the entire hierarchy of the church was white” (Hallencreutz and Moyo 1988, 115).

It can also be noted with concern that the process of indigenisation and, in particular, of entrusting the local people (blacks) with positions of leadership took a very long time to come to fruition. A black priest would remain an assistant to a white priest for a very long time before he could be considered for the position of rector. Musodza argued that “this even meant that young European clergy who had very little experience ended up being rectors of quite huge parishes, with some elderly indigenous clergy ministering under them” (Musodza 2008, 191). The election of Bishop P Hatendi in 1980 would have come as a double blow to the Europeans, considering that on the political field a black prime minister had been elected as well. However, on the surface everything seemed to be perfect, as John Weller observed that “there was never any doubt that the authority of the new Bishops would be accepted by the white clergy and congregations in their Dioceses” (Hallencreutz and Moyo 1988, 336).

On the contrary, actions taken by some whites who were in authority suggested otherwise. There was, according to Bishop P. Hatendi, “an outright resistance of his leadership from the European parishes as well as European staff working in the Diocesan office” (Hatendi Interview 9 November 2015). This resistance was to be designed and packaged in such a way that it would not raise eyebrows; hence predominantly white parishes continued to insist on engaging European expatriates as their rectors. They continued to resist the appointment of a black priest from the bishop even up to the time of his retirement. On this point, Bishop Hatendi admits that he failed to change the *status quo* (Hatendi Interview 9 November 2015). Hence it can be noted that even after 20 years of political independence, some predominantly white parishes continued to enjoy the services of white rectors. Examples of this can be seen in parishes like, Christchurch Borrowdale, whose rector Fr David Betram only retired in 2001; All Souls Mount Pleasant, that had Fr Chris Dobson as its rector 20 years after political independence; St Mary Magdalene Avondale, which had Fr Nick Crawley who left in 1999; and St Luke’s Greendale, which had Fr Timothy Neil as its rector, who only resigned in 2001 (Dzawo 2017).

The Election of Rev. Kunonga as Bishop of Harare

In the year 2000, the See of Harare fell vacant after the retirement of Bishop Jonathan Siyachitema. Rev. Tim Neil, who was the vicar-general, then took charge of the diocese as well as overseeing the process of electing a new bishop as per Canon 14.1. The little known Rev. Nolbert Kunonga went on to be elected Bishop of Harare (Nhema Interview 14 March 2016).

When and Where We Enter: Bishop Nolbert Kunonga’s charge

At his consecration, Bishop Kunonga preached a sermon which he titled *When and Where We Enter*. The sermon was a scathing attack on white people, while at the same time endorsing the black majority rule of the ruling party ZANU PF. This came some 20 months after the formation of a strong opposition party called the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in 1999.

In his sermon Bishop Kunonga argued: “It is a disgrace and shame to Christ and the world for the children of God to subsist in twoness. We are not two churches. We are one church with one Bishop” (Kunonga 2001). One would wonder whether Bishop Kunonga was sincere in his endeavour to create one united church. The events would show a totally different story in which, like a pendulum, the bishop only helped the church in swinging from one extreme end of racism to the other with different players taking the lead. Some of the events that took place in the diocese were to expose Bishop Kunonga’s attitude towards whites. One such incident had to do with the memorial plaques found in the Cathedral of St Mary and All Saints.

Debate on the Memorial Plaques in the Cathedral

The Cathedral of St Mary and All Saints in Harare is a monumental structure which had many colonial-historical plaques and artefacts that commemorated dogs, horses and white soldiers killed in the Chimurenga wars. The Union Jack and the pioneer flags were still flying in the St George’s Chapel of the Cathedral 20 years after independence.

The election of the first indigenous black bishop of the diocese of Harare in May 1981 brought with it a sense of “belonging” to the church for the black majority. Hence they began to question the existence and meaning of the plaques. It was in response to these voices of reason that, in 1982, during Bishop Peter Hatendi’s time and that of his dean—the very Rev. Joseph Chipudhla—a compromise was reached by council to erect a plaque which would commemorate the indigenous black freedom fighters who had lost their lives in the liberation struggle. This stop-gap measure did not silence advocates of the removal of the plaques. On 13 December 2001 the plaques were finally removed from the cathedral precinct, without the knowledge or approval of the Cathedral Council (Nyamupingidza Interview 22 April 2016). This lack of consultation was seen as demeaning the office and role of Cathedral Council as well as the Cathedral Chapter. It subsequently led to confrontation between Dean Tawonezwi and the Cathedral Council.

According to Pauline Makoni (Interview 3 November 2015), the Cathedral Council met on Tuesday 11 December 2001 and resolved not to remove the plaques, since these were consecrated and were part of the cathedral’s history. However, because the bishop himself was also agitating for the destruction of any relics that had any European connotations—as deduced from his bishop’s charge mentioned earlier—he did not see the need to preserve the monumental history of either the Anglican Church in Zimbabwe, or that of Zimbabwe as a nation.

Bob Stumbles, who was the diocesan chancellor, in his request for proof of the existence of approved faculties from Bishop Kunonga, wrote:

During one of our meetings you indicated to me and subsequently repeated the same at the meeting on the 17th September with Churchwardens present that, contrary to allegations being made, the previous Bishop, Rt Rev Jonathan Siyachitema, had instigated the matter of the memorabilia. (Stumbles 2003, 6)

Asked to produce evidence to support this assertion, Bishop Kunonga became elusive and never submitted the purported resolutions, which led to an assumed conclusion that these resolutions never existed. This incident of the plaques was to open a Pandora’s Box, as other issues relating to governance began to manifest in the Anglican Diocese of Harare.

Autocratic Leadership: Rules and Regulations Are Flouted

Signs showing that all was not well in the Diocese of Harare were beginning to manifest in the calling of the two diocesan synods in less than a year; the first one being held from 12–13 April 2002, with the second being called for 22 February 2003. A number of other concerns were noted, all of which hinged on the need to adhere to the Acts and Canons which were being flouted by the administrators, chiefly Bishop Kunonga himself.

Demonstrations at Bernard Mzeki Shrine

Pursuant to their struggle to bring the diocesan crisis to the fore, the councillors of the Cathedral of St Mary and All Saints, in collaboration with like-minded people in the Diocese of Harare,

organised a demonstration during the 2002 and 2003 Bernard Mzeki annual festivals. According to Canon Sekai Chibaya (Interview 26 April 2016), the 2002 demonstration was not as large as the one they organised in 2003; the reason being that at the time very few Anglicans would have understood what was going on.

On 16 June 2003 this group of disgruntled parishioners continued to stage a demonstration at the shrine in Marondera by holding up placards denouncing Bishop Nolbert Kunonga and his style of leadership. Asked as to the objective of the demonstration, Dr Nhamo simply admitted that it was to raise awareness of the situation in the diocese (Nhamo Interview 2016). Awareness was indeed achieved, for in the *Daily News Online*, an article appeared with the heading *Anglican Flock stages Demo against Kunonga*. The article stated that “disgruntled Anglican church parishioners last Saturday held demonstrations at the Bernard Mzeki shrine in Marondera against one of the church’s senior bishops, Nolbert Kunonga, whom they accused of politicising the ministry and neglecting his pastoral duties” (Shumba 2003).

The 38 Charges Levelled against Bishop Nolbert Kunonga

As the crisis intensified within the Anglican Diocese of Harare, a 38-point charge sheet was compiled to advocate for an ecclesiastical court against Bishop Kunonga. According to Stumbles (2004): “On or about 21st October 2003 a Complaint and Charge Sheet alleging that the Bishop of Harare had committed one or more or all 38 offences was signed.” A summary of the charges follows:

We, the undersigned, do hereby bring against NOLBERT KUNONGA, Bishop of the Diocese of Harare in the Church in the Province of Central Africa (the Province) the charge that he has committed one or more or all of the following offences set out in Section 1 of Canon 24 of the Province, namely:

- 1) He has publicly and deliberately maintained doctrines contrary to the teaching of the Church and continues so to do; and/or
- 2) His acts, omissions and words reflect an apostasy from the Christian faith; and/or
- 3) He has contravened and continues wilfully to contravene enactments of the Provincial Synod and/or of the synod of the Diocese of Harare and/or refuses to obey the lawful commands of his Superior; and/or
- 4) He has refused, without good or sufficient reason, to perform for communicant members of the Church in the Diocese of Harare and not under censure of the Church, acts pertaining to the Ministerial office; and/or
- 5) He has conducted himself and continues to conduct himself in a manner which gives just cause for scandal or offence, and/or has behaved and continues to behave in a manner unbecoming to a bishop or clergyman. (Stumbles 2004)

This charge sheet was subsequently sent to the Provincial Registrar of the Province of Central Africa on 3 November 2003. Upon receiving the charge sheet from the provincial registrar, the Archbishop of the Province of Central Africa, the most Rev Dr Bernard Malango, then wrote back to the registrar on or about 9 December 2003, arguing that he wanted to ascertain the facts to enable him to deal with some issues. In that light he proposed that he send the provincial secretary to Harare “to spend a few days meeting all those involved in the issue.” He requested the Bishop of Harare to arrange for the provincial secretary’s visit (Stumbles 2004).

This proposal was met with suspicion and raised the ire of those who had formulated the charges against Bishop Kunonga, querying the objective of the visit. Stumbles then raised a point of order and noted some observations for consideration, as listed below:

- a) There was no need for the provincial secretary or the archbishop to ascertain the facts behind the 38 charges/complaints that had been formally lodged. The facts will come to light when the court proceedings commence.
- b) There had to be a court hearing and the provincial registrar was the person who would be advising the archbishop on the procedure to be followed inter alia in terms of Canons 24 and 28 and the Rules of Practice, Procedure and Evidence.
- c) It was submitted that it is unheard of for a judge in any court of law, to seek facts in advance of a court case from those witnesses who are subsequently to appear before him. Yet this is precisely what the archbishop was proposing to do. This procedure was improper as it was tantamount to undue interference with witnesses by the court.
- d) It is improper to order a defendant to arrange a visit for and provide transport and accommodation for a person such as the provincial secretary in these circumstances, as the latter comes as the eyes and ears and spokesman of the archbishop.
- e) As most, if not all the witnesses who will be giving evidence are from Harare or its immediate surrounds, the court hearing from a logistical point of view, should be held in Harare (Stumbles 2004).

This advice of the Provincial Chancellor, Mr Bob Stumbles, appeared to have been snubbed by the archbishop who, like Bishop Kunonga, also accused him (Stumbles) of interfering and even coaching those who had raised the charges on how to proceed with the case. Stumbles refuted these allegations, which were raised in a letter written on 29 January 2004 to all the bishops in the province, advising them that:

... the situation in Harare has gone from bad to worse. I am sad to say that I have allowed the Bishop to appear before the Ecclesiastical Court because of the demand ... one disturbing factor is that Bob Stumbles is coaching [sic] those who signed for the allegations of how to go about the whole matter when they appear before the Court. (Stumbles 2004)

After some prevarication, the Ecclesiastical Court date and venue were finally announced and it was to be held on 25 August 2005 at the Royal Harare Club. A Malawian Judge, James Kalaile, sat as the Ecclesiastical Court Judge. However, to the dismay of many parishioners in the Diocese of Harare, the Ecclesiastical Court failed to sit in session. It was reported in the press that the “Malawian Judge James Kalaile quit, citing squabbles between the prosecution and the defence over procedure” (*The Zimbabwean* 1 January 2006). After making this pronouncement, Judge James Kalaile dismissed the court throwing the diocese into a quandary. *The Zimbabwean Paper* went on to report that “The complainants against Kunonga are having to endure deliberate gerrymandering tactics from church authorities. The Archbishop of Central Africa, Bernard Malango, who was supposed to appoint another judge, made a U-turn in December 2005 declaring he would “make a ruling on his own” (*The Zimbabwean* 16 March 2006).

A ruling was indeed pronounced, exonerating Bishop Kunonga from any wrongdoing. However, it was unfortunate that this pronouncement was never communicated to the complainants or their lawyers, who only heard of the judgement through the press. A report in the *Pravda* confirmed that “The Anglican Church has dropped charges of incitement to murder and besmirching the name of the church levelled against a Zimbabwe bishop” (*Pravda* 2005).

It was reported in the above article that the archbishop had declared that “the matter is closed and cannot be revived” (*Pravda* 2005). Archbishop Malango—in his letter to the provincial bishops—stated that “anyone seeking to bring charges against a bishop must not raise ‘purely administrative’ issues masked as canonical offences” (*The Zimbabwean* 16 March 2006). Stumbles reacted to this, arguing that “this veiled threat against the persons whose very complaints the archbishop once recognised as triable [sic] is ill-founded and misleading and the laws of the church province make no distinction between ‘canonical’ and ‘purely administrative’ offences” (*The Zimbabwean* 16 March 2006).

Be that as it may, the ruling from the archbishop drew the ire of Stumbles, who made it clear that “the archbishop’s unilateral ruling violated ‘the laws of evidence, the laws of the Church and natural justice.’ It is submitted that his ruling is null and void and that the archbishop has not fulfilled his lawful obligation as holder of that office” (*The Zimbabwean* 16 March 2006).

The attempt by the archbishop to suppress the court case was too glaring for everyone to fail to see. Commenting on the challenges that bedevilled the Diocese of Harare, Archbishop Bernard Malango conceded that there were challenges in the diocese emanating from the fact that Bishop Kunonga failed to adhere to the advice that he had given him, mainly not to make changes but just to observe (Malango Interview 16 October 2015).

With the issues piling up in the Diocese of Harare, the archbishop affirmed that “I tried my level best to defend him [Bishop Kunonga]; the duty of the archbishop is to defend his bishops and priests and so all the priests and bishops within my province were protected” (Malango Interview 16 October 2015).

It became apparent that, whatever Bishop Kunonga was doing, his actions hinged on the fact that he had backing from a higher authority. However, this is not to say the archbishop was in agreement with everything that was going on in the Anglican Diocese of Harare. The chances are very high that there was misrepresentation of facts regarding the situation on the ground.

On the other hand, the role played by the Diocesan Chancellor Mr Bob Stumbles, could also be questioned. He was also part of the system that was in leadership when Bishop Hatendi and black clergy were being subjected to all sorts of humiliation. The “white” administrators of the Diocese of Harare—prior to and during Bishop Hatendi’s tenure of office—presented a seemingly calm and civilised appearance but at the same time they were treating black people negatively. Moral chaos had existed before, but this was never attended to. While Bishop Kunonga was trying to redress the situation—that of empowering the black majority—he found

himself on the other extreme by failing to take on board the few remaining whites in the Anglican Diocese of Harare.

Bishop Kunonga's accusers vowed to pursue the matter through other means. Stumbles, a leading opponent of Bishop Kunonga, declared in one of his submissions that "the time has come to speak out against what is turning out to be a travesty of justice ... the Archbishop had no right under church laws to make this ruling and Kunonga's trial must resume" (*The Zimbabwean* 16 March 2006).

With the cloud of an ecclesiastical court hanging over Bishop Kunonga's head, one can only speculate that he could not have been at peace with himself and naturally had to think and act very quickly. It can also be speculated that, whatever decision he was going to make, it was largely informed and motivated by the pending resignation of Archbishop Bernard Malango.

The Pending Resignation of Archbishop Bernard Malango

The Archbishop of the Province of Central Africa, Archbishop Bernard Malango, was due to retire in January 2008. This was to create a major void in Bishop Kunonga's support base. One may wonder and ask how Bishop Kunonga was going to survive in the Province of Central Africa as Bishop of the Diocese of Harare without Archbishop Malango's support? A critical evaluation of the scenario reveals the possible options which Bishop Kunonga could have taken. The first option was for him to stand alone without the archbishop's support and simply resign to avoid being embarrassed in an Ecclesiastical Court. However, considering Bishop Kunonga's character and all the mayhem he had caused, and having tasted power and authority as well as the declaration he had made at his enthronement that "God is calling us to possess this Anglican Church, to own it on behalf of Christ" (Kunonga 2001), this option proved to be the least likely.

The second option was for him to be elected the successor to Archbishop Bernard Malango. This option was also very unlikely considering that Bishop Kunonga had made more enemies than friends during his short time as leader of the diocese, not to mention his track record which was being tarnished by all the pending legal cases.

The third option by default became the only plausible route to take and that was forming his own province, thereby becoming the head of his own church outside the pronounced provincial structures of the CPCA, thus taking possession of the church according to his perceived calling. To attain such a position would call for a great deal of strategic planning and manoeuvring, some of which can be microscopically sensed from various actions and accusations all pointing to the goal of possessing the church.

The Historic Diocese of Harare August 2007 Synod

On 4 August 2007 the 61st Diocesan Synod was held in Harare at the Cathedral of St Mary and All Saints. However, it can be assumed that this synod was to set in motion the plans by Bishop Kunonga and his team to cut ties with the Province of Central Africa. After a lengthy debate

on the issue of homosexuality, the delegates voted unanimously for an “Act” which was drafted as follows:

This Synod has unanimously agreed to make a Diocesan Act that from the 4th of August 2007, the Diocese of Harare disassociates itself and severs relationship with any individual, group of people, organisation, institution, Diocese, Province or otherwise, which indulges in, sympathies or compromises with homosexuality. The House of Bishops also consented. (Diocese of Harare 61st Synod 2007)

According to the Venerable Vincent Fenga:

It was glaringly obvious to all those who were level-headed that the Bishop had already made a decision which was to break away from the Province of Central Africa and all he wanted was support from members of the Diocese. (Fenga 2016)

This “Act” was then taken to the September 2007 Provincial Synod.

Provincial Synod Held in Malawi: September 2007

The 2007 Provincial Synod was held in Mangochi, Malawi, on 7 September and some non-delegates from the Diocese of Harare went there in full force on a hired bus, clearly to add support in an anti-homosexuality demonstration. The deliberations at the 2007 Provincial Synod could have been a smack in the face for those who had gone to Malawi anticipating a show-down. Be that as it may, the Harare delegates, with the support of those from the Diocese of Mutare, caused a scene when they demanded that the province pronounce its position on homosexuality; a development which the other delegates questioned. Just pronouncing a position on a matter which had not been on the agenda sounded illogical (Saruchera Interview 16 September 2015). Indications were made at the 2007 Provincial Synod by the two dioceses that they were contemplating severing ties with the province. This then prompted the production of a *Pastoral Letter* from the three Zimbabwean bishops.

It can be noted from the *Pastoral Letter* that the discussion on homosexuality was never at the centre of debate at the 2007 Provincial Synod. The *Pastoral Letter* explained as follows:

The Church of the Province of Central Africa condemns homosexuality. This has always been the position of the Province and continues to be so. At the just ended Provincial Synod, homosexuality was not part of Synod Agenda and no Bishop, Priest or lay person condoned homosexuality. No homosexuality lobby by anyone ever took place at the Provincial Synod. The Province upholds Christian teaching on marriage guided by Scripture and Canon 22 of the Church of the Province of Central Africa. (Tawonezvi, Sitshebo and Mukuwanda 2007)

“Homosexuality Breaks up Anglican Province” *The Herald*

The presence of a *Herald* reporter, Caesar Zvayi, in Mangochi, Malawi, as one of the delegates from Harare Diocese, could not have meant anything to the generality of delegates at the 2007 Provincial Synod. However, one began to question the logic and reasons for his presence and can be forgiven for assuming that he was supposed to make sure that events at the 2007 Provincial Synod were to be given all possible publicity. *The Herald* of 10 September 2007 carried an article with the headline “Homosexuality Breaks up Central Africa Anglican

Province” (Zvayi 2007). It can also be assumed that Bishop Kunonga wanted to use the publication of the article in *The Herald* back home in Harare as a spring-board for the justification of the withdrawal of the Diocese of Harare from the Province of Central Africa. The author of *The Herald* article, Caesar Zvayi, made some sensational remarks, claiming that “The Anglican Province of Central Africa broke up yesterday following the withdrawal of Harare Diocese and expressions of intent to pull out by other dioceses that accused the province of failing to censure some bishops dabbling in homosexuality” (Zvayi 2007).

One may wonder whether it was by design or not that the article by Zvayi would state that “according to the standing orders of the Province of Central Africa, once one Diocese withdraws, the province becomes null and void and will have to be reconstituted under a new name and structure” (Zvayi 2007). It appears as if this was meant to foretell the dissolution of the Province of Central Africa. Looking no further in the same article, Zvayi draws parallels by citing, though incorrectly, that:

... the withdrawal of Harare Diocese is the second time a diocese has severed ties with the province following what the now Archbishop of Nigeria, the Most Rev Peter Akinola, did years back when he dumped the Province, again over the issue of homosexuality. (Zvayi 2007)

What Zvayi did not state was that this had never happened previously in the Province of Central Africa. Archbishop Peter Akinola is from the Province of Nigeria, which is different from the Province of Central Africa, though the issues at stake were the same. With this information, it appears as if Bishop Kunonga had become obsessed with the idea of breaking away from the province and had just “cut and pasted” what Bishop Peter Akinola had done in Nigeria; thinking it would work out to be the same in Zimbabwe.

A critical analysis of the article by Zvayi (2007) would paint a gloomy picture with examples being proffered to try and tell a story that it was already a done deal that the Province of Central Africa had crumbled. In the article, one reads:

In highly charged presentations to the Provincial Synod that opened and ended here on Saturday, Bishop Elson Jakazi of Manicaland—who moved the motion for the dissolution of the province, and Vicar General of Harare Diocese Venerable Harry Mambo Rinashe, who seconded, took the outgoing Archbishop, the Right Reverend Dr Bernard Amos Malango, and the homosexual lobby within the province to task over the issue. (Zvayi 2007)

It can be deduced from this quotation that the real issue was calling for the “dissolution” of the province and the epitome of scheming was bringing up or smuggling those issues that supported the cause and at the same time appealed to the general laity—one such issue being homosexuality.

This report and the general style of reporting were castigated by the Rev Fr Eston Dickson Pembamoyo, who was the Provincial Secretary of CPCA. In his article, titled “Official Response to September 10 Article in *The Zimbabwe Herald*,” published in the *Anglican News Service*, he wrote:

I should first of all state that the Bishops of the Church of the Province of Central Africa at their recent Episcopal and Provincial Synod Meetings resolved to make it known to all and sundry that the Province stands by its previous statements, Lambeth Conference 1998 Resolution 1.10, which commend to the Church the subsection report on human sexuality which, whilst rejecting homosexuality practice as incompatible with Scripture, calls on our people to minister pastorally and sensitively to all irrespective of sexual orientation and to condemn irrational fear of homosexuals, violence within marriage and any trivialisation and commercialisation of sex; the Lambeth Resolution further states that it does not advise the legitimisation or blessing of same sex union nor ordaining those in same gender union; the Resolution also commits the Church to listen to the experience of baptised, believing and faithful persons, regardless of sexual orientation as full members of the Body of Christ. (Pembamoyo 2007)

However, it is this resolution which Bishop Kunonga in an interview with Zvayi dismissed and described as a “face-saving move, saying the province’s failure to discipline Bishop Mwamba and to resolve the Lake Malawi impasse proved that the cancer had spread in the province” (Zvayi 2007).

Bishop Kunonga Formally “Withdraws” the Diocese of Harare

Despite assurances from other bishops in Zimbabwe that there was never going to be a debate to lobby for, or to condone, homosexuality in the near future, on 21 September 2007 Bishop Kunonga formally wrote a letter of withdrawal from the Province of Central Africa. He wrote “by copy of this letter, the Diocese of Harare would like to formalise its exclusion from the Church of the Province of Central Africa as minuted in the records of the Provincial Synod of 2007 September the 8th which we trust you hold” (Kunonga 2007).

This letter was pregnant with accusations of purported acts and statements by some bishops of the province, chief among them being Bishop Trevor Mwamba of Botswana. One can only speculate that this frenzy emerged against a backdrop of the need to push for the desired goal to form a different province by Bishop Kunonga, who categorically stated in his letter of withdrawal that:

Consistent, therefore, with our 61st Session Diocesan Synod on the 4th of August 2007, in accordance with the Scriptures and the will of God, we were mandated by our Synod to disassociate and sever ties, with any individual, group of people, organisation, institution, Diocese, province which sympathies or compromises with homosexuality. We, the Diocese of Harare, would like it to be put on record that with effect from the 4th of August 2007 and as confirmed by the Provincial Synod, we are withdrawing from the Church of the Province of Central Africa. We have no hard feelings about our departure from the Province. (Kunonga 2007)

Of great concern is that the quoted synod session did not grant any mandate to the Bishop of Harare or anyone from the diocese to cause the withdrawal but to register its regrets at the proliferation of homosexual tendencies in the province.

Acceptance Letter from the Province of Central Africa

The provincial office, through Bishop Albert Chama who was the Dean of the Province of Central Africa, responded to the official withdrawal letter from Bishop Kunonga on 16 October 2007. In his response the dean gave a message which was loud and clear, in that there was no

way Bishop Kunonga could have withdrawn the diocese from the province, given the stipulated processes as outlined in the letter. The dean even refused to acknowledge the title of Kunonga's letter, regarding it as misleading and argued, rightly so, that:

Consequently the heading of your letter stating the "Formal Withdrawal of the Diocese of Harare from the Province of Central Africa" is unacceptable and misleading. We, however, as the Dean of the Province of Central Africa accept and acknowledge that you and some of your supporters have by notice of your letter severed relationship with the Province of Central Africa. (Chama 2007)

Bishop Kunonga Forms the Province of Zimbabwe

On 13 January 2008, the nation woke up to news of the formation of a new province of Zimbabwe by Bishop Kunonga, with *The Sunday Mail* newspaper headline proclaiming, "Kunonga forms Province of Zim." According to the reporter, Phyllis Kachere, "Anglican Church Harare Diocese Bishop Nolbert Kunonga, yesterday announced the formation of the Church of the Province of Zimbabwe, putting an end to speculation that the Harare Diocese planned to affiliate to the province of Kenya" (Kachere 2008).

This assertion in *The Sunday Mail* seemed to authenticate the view that Bishop Kunonga had been looking for a province to join and had failed in this regard, which then necessitated the formation of the Province of Zimbabwe. Kachere went on to quote Bishop Kunonga as saying that "the new Church of the Province of Zimbabwe would initially start with five dioceses namely Harare, Chitungwiza, Mashonaland East, Mashonaland Central and Mashonaland West" (Kachere 2008). Bishop Kunonga subsequently appointed vicars general to the four newly formed dioceses in the form of Rev Harry Rinashe, Rev Morris Brown Gwedengwe, Rev Alfred Munyanyi and Rev Caxton Mabhoi. The vicar generals were "charged with the task of forming Synods that were in turn expected to come up with elective assemblies that would elect bishops for the dioceses. The bishops would then be confirmed, consecrated and enthroned" (Kachere 2008).

It must be noted at this juncture that the formation of the new dioceses and the subsequent appointments of vicars general was done without any legal framework to guide and direct the proceedings. However, it can be assumed that Bishop Kunonga continued to use the *Constitution and Canons of the Province of Central Africa* (1969), which demand that a province can be instituted by at least five or more dioceses. By altering the boundaries of the Diocese of Harare and subsequently appointing vicars general, Bishop Kunonga had somehow assumed the roles of both provincial synod and archbishop as enshrined in the *Constitution and Canons of the Province of Central Africa*, Canon 34 (1969).

The Excommunication of Bishop Nolbert Kunonga

Following the heated exchange of words in the courts and in both the state-run and private media, the Dean of the Province of Central Africa, Rt. Rev. Albert Chama, announced a shocking decision when on 12 May 2008, he formally excommunicated Bishop Kunonga, together with all his followers. This was the first excommunication ever pronounced on a sitting bishop in the history of the Province of Central Africa and this shows how determined the Dean

of the Province of Central Africa was in highlighting the enormity of Bishop Kunonga's actions. By virtue of the excommunication, Bishop Kunonga's bishopric ceased to be recognised in the whole Anglican Communion.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the hypothesis put forward by Daneel, which he argued was meant to "portray the African Independent Churches as institutions in their own right, without having to keep qualifying them as movements originating and growing out of a reaction against missions or an oppressive colonial situation" (Daneel 1987, 18), was put to test in the establishment of the Province of Zimbabwe. In so far as Bishop Kunonga reacted to the oppressive colonial situation, he himself went on to create such oppression, though this time being perpetrated by those formally oppressed. Key point to Daneel's findings was that "to concentrate exclusively on the mistakes of missions implies a one-sided view which does not sufficiently acknowledge the creativity and originality to be found within these churches" (Daneel 1987, 19). However, the creativity and originality seemed to be lacking in the processes engaged before, during and after the creation of the Anglican Province of Zimbabwe. This is so in many aspects, for example holding on to the name "Anglican" by Bishop Kunonga signified that lack of creativity.

With this in mind one can conclude that the establishment of the Anglican Diocese of Harare in the Anglican Province of Zimbabwe by Bishop Kunonga was never based on the structure or format for the establishment of African Independent Churches (also known as African-Initiated Churches), as propounded by Marthinus Daneel, (1987), in his book the *Quest for Belonging*. This is in light of the theoretical framework developed from Daneel's definition of Independent Churches, which refers to "their independence in organisation, leadership and religious expression from Western-oriented historical [also called 'mainline'] or mission churches" (Daneel 1987, 17). The Anglican Province of Zimbabwe was created along the same organisational leadership structure and even religious expression as that of the Church of Province of Central Africa.

However, a point to note is that the debate on homosexuality in Zimbabwe and the region had evoked political, cultural, religious and social controversies over the past two decades prior to the severing of ties by Bishop Kunonga from CPCA. It can be asserted here that Bishop Kunonga joined this public debate in order to get sympathy, not only from the people of Zimbabwe, but primarily from President Robert Mugabe, whose antipathy towards homosexuality is well documented, and in the process further his (Bishop Kunonga) personal agenda.

The Anglican Province of Zimbabwe, led by Bishop Kunonga, was being forced upon those individuals on the peripheries of the diocese. This on its own proved to be a challenge for Bishop Kunonga; first in that it created discord amongst the parishioners, as many were not ready for the move and did not see the logic in moving out of the Province of Central Africa. This resulted in five years of struggle that ensued as parishioners resisted Bishop Kunonga's

church and wanted to claim their properties back. Many parishioners, even those who once joined Bishop Kunonga's church, had no kind words for him.

With the retirement of Archbishop Malango approaching, an assumption can be made that Bishop Kunonga thought he could capitalise on their friendship and become Archbishop Bernard Malango's successor. This assumption is as a result of his efforts to try and influence the College of Bishops to extend the term of the archbishop, so as to enable him (the archbishop) to oversee the election of the next Archbishop of the Province of Central Africa or the establishment of national provinces. The other bishops saw through this suggestion and rejected it.

From that time it became apparent that Bishop Kunonga was now driven by fear. This is when he started working on an alternative plan, which was to sever ties with the Province of Central Africa. He was afraid that the other bishops in the Province of Central Africa would take him to an Ecclesiastical Court to answer to the 38 charges levelled against him by the Diocese of Harare of the CPCA, which was convinced the retiring archbishop had avoided dealing with. Hence, he sought to break away from the province.

There was considerable mistiming and misjudgement and even treachery on the part of Bishop Kunonga. The bishop thought that the only way to break away would be on doctrinal issues. Accordingly, he falsely set about tarnishing the Province of Central Africa and made it look as if it condoned homosexuality—yet this was not the case. He manipulated the Diocesan Synod to “seemingly” approve of the breakaway on the false pretext that the province was infested with bishops who were condoning and even practising homosexuality. All his efforts failed to lure many congregants to his newly formed church, as people were not prepared to break away from the Province of Central Africa.

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