

CHAPTER 2

HISTORY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN ZIMBABWE

1. INTRODUCTION

An investigation of the history of Religious Education in Zimbabwe during the colonial era (1890-1979) as well as since independence in 1980 is an important part of this dissertation. An educational system is inexorably bound to its milieu and, similarly, the teaching of Religious Education as school subject do not develop *in vacuo*, but are in a mutually dialogical relationship with factors and forces which shape it. Thus, when regarding the theme of this dissertation, it is necessary to reflect and focus on the position and teaching of Religious Education in the colonial educational system (1890-1979) as well as the post-colonial educational system (1980-2003).

Hence, this chapter firstly, seeks to examine the character and relevance of the subject Religious Education during the colonial era. It was during this period that the subject was introduced and shaped. The colonial government was always a dominant force in the control and influence of African education, including Religious Education. The role of the Christian missionaries is, however, fundamental in understanding the introduction and subsequent development of Religious Education in Zimbabwe. The missionary activities centred on three main domains, namely, teaching, healing and preaching. As Siyakwazi (1983:43) puts it:

The promoters of Christian missionary work overseas, the mission Boards, did not hesitate to affirm that schools were established to serve as instruments of direct evangelism.

The Christian values and beliefs, which were propagated by the missionaries, were influential in as far as shaping the character of Religious Education in Zimbabwe. This section also intends to examine the problem of cultural alienation, and its harmful effects.

Secondly, the chapter seeks to show the ZANU (PF) government's post-independence educational reform programme with special reference to Religious Education. When Zimbabwe attained independence from Britain on 18 April 1980, the government initiated a programme of educational reform to reverse the harmful effects of many years of colonial rule. In this regard, Robert G Mugabe (1924 to present), President of Zimbabwe, has enunciated his government's educational policy as correcting the cultural alienation of the past creating a united nation, with all people on an equal basis and having equal opportunities (Herald (The) 30 December 1995:1). According to Zvobgo (1999:vi):

Throughout the many decades of colonial rule in Africa, a situation was created in which the colonialists exercised complete control over all aspects of Africa life. The demise of colonial rule meant that the nationalist movements had finally achieved their objective, which was to free the continent from imperial domination.

Ter Haar (1990:136) further states that:

Independence required national autonomy, also in education, and after its successful liberation struggle Zimbabwe was determined to combat any form of neo colonialism in any field. Rather than looking to the former colonial powers for its

orientation it would focus on the so-called Third World and learn from experiences gained there.

As the ZANU (PF) government felt that the colonial education curriculum was not relevant and did not address the socio-cultural context of the Zimbabwe learner, bold steps were taken to reform education and come up with a relevant and useful educational policy and system (ZANU (PF) 1980:12). This chapter will therefore also examine the changes in the character and relevance of the subject Religious Education since independence.

2. RELIGIOUS EDUCATION TEACHING DURING BRITISH COLONIAL RULE, 1870-1979

2.1 INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

While missionary activities preceded formal colonisation of Zimbabwe, the incorporation of the British South Africa Company (BSAC) under Royal Charter, and its subsequent occupation of this country has greater relevance to the establishment of Zimbabwe's education. Most sources note the unusual nature of Zimbabwe's colonisation. The occupation of Zimbabwe was organised by Cecil John Rhodes (1853-1902), a businessman, who persuaded the British government to grant a Royal Charter to his BSAC entitling it to govern and administer the territory (International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa 1977:5).

In the 1890s the area was thus colonised by Cecil John Rhodes and his British South Africa Company (BSAC). Logically, Rhodes was desirous of maintaining links with his

home country, Britain (Official Year Book of the Colony of Southern Rhodesia No. 2 1930:3). As Challiss (1980:vi) puts it:

... the system of schools in the territory generally reflected the notions of British Empire loyalty and adherence to British educational traditions.

It became a British colony in the 1920s and many Europeans settled there. This meant that Southern Rhodesia was a British colony, but the European settlers established their own government and were allowed to rule in any way they pleased. The settlers took the best land from the Africans and forced the peasants to become labourers for them. According to Frantz (as quoted in Farquhar 1960:53), to establish political ascendancy European settlers ignored the indigenous inhabitants as much as possible. This was also in keeping with the ideology of white supremacy.

From the beginning of European rule in 1890 the African was prevented from participating in the political process (Murphree, Dorsey, Cheater & Mothobi 1975:34). Although Britain retained veto power over legislation affecting Africans she never used that power and the white settler government was left very much to its own devices (Parker as quoted in Rose 1970:236). As the settlers were left to function with little external restraint, consequently, African rights and interests became largely unprotected (Zvobgo 1994:9). Yet, despite this, the ideas of African nationalism were slow to take off.

One of the reasons for this was that the British introduced a policy of stabilisation. What this meant, was that the government tried to improve conditions for the people so that

they would not be unhappy and resist British rule. Between 1944 and 1972 wages increased more than four times, while the cost of living increased by only one and a half times. Conditions for workers improved, and trade unions were recognised. In the 1950s the settler government also tried to create a class of wealthy African farmers in the rural areas who would be loyal to the government. They gave them more land to farm on, but this land was taken away from migrant labourers who were working in the towns at the time. Although this was good for a few farmers, it was not good for the migrant labourers who lost all their land (Rhodesia 1970a:151-152).

Many migrant labourers joined the (Southern Rhodesia) African National Congress, led by Joshua M. Nkomo (1918-1999), to protest their loss of land. The white settler governments systematically discriminated against and excluded the African people from the political process, though a measure of tokenism (tokenism involves placing a few token men and women in policy-making bodies and implementing agencies to “please” the disadvantaged and the international community) would be noted in later years (Rhodesia 1970a:153).

The Southern Rhodesia government banned all African political parties but this did not crush African nationalism. The African nationalists simply formed new political parties. The Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) led by Robert G. Mugabe was banned in 1964. Its leaders declared a policy of confrontation with the Southern Rhodesia government. The spotlight tends to fall on Ian D. Smith (1964–1979) whose Rhodesian Front government ushered in a new era through its Unilateral Declaration of

Independence from Britain on 11 November 1965 (Rhodesia 1970b:450). The then Rhodesian Prime Minister, thus, declared UDI (a Unilateral Declaration of Independence) from Britain in 1965, and in the same year he declared a state of emergency that lasted until independence. Smith's rule was extremely harsh. He gave the Rhodesian security forces many powers. This tactic worked, and there was almost no African nationalist political activity between 1964 and 1970. In 1972 ZANU began a campaign of guerrilla activity against the government (Dugmore, Mulholland, Nussey & Siëborger 1997:68-69). Against the above background the position of Religious Education as school subject during the colonial era (1890-1979) will be discussed.

2.2 ROLE OF THE MISSIONARIES IN INTRODUCING AND SHAPING RELIGIOUS EDUCATION TEACHING

2.2.1 Introductory remarks

This section seeks to firstly, outline the efforts of the missionaries in influencing policy and decisions in the education of the Africans, and, to secondly, outline the role of the missionaries in shaping Religious Education content. The section will thus trace all-important developments during the colonial period, which have a bearing on the role played by missionaries in the introduction, and subsequent, provision and development of Religious Education in Zimbabwe.

Christian missionaries played an important part in the development and history of southern Africa, including Southern Rhodesia, during the 19th century. The sending of British missionaries to Africa was an offshoot of a movement called the Evangelical

Revival. The latter swept Britain in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, gaining strong support amongst all classes of the population. The so-called Evangelicals believed strongly in the importance of trying to help others. They saw this as a way of putting into practice the Christian belief that in the eyes of God all men are equal. To them evangelism provided a religious answer to the godless belief that material progress was the answer to humankind's problems – a belief that was being encouraged at the time by Britain's Industrial Revolution (1750-1830). The so-called Evangelicals accepted the need for economic and social change in society, but insisted that it must be combined with the Christian ideas of individual salvation and individual worth (O'Callaghan 1997:68-70).

But, although the Evangelicals believed that human beings were equal worth, they did not think the same about human cultures and ways of life. Their missionaries came to Africa convinced that European culture was superior to African culture and that it was therefore desirable for Africans to become "Europeanised". However, different missionaries had different ideas about how far this Europeanisation of the African should go. Some aimed to "de-Africanise" their converts as fully as possible; while others were willing to adapt their ideas to the customs of the communities they wished to convert (Kapp & Mes 1998:89).

Robert Moffat (1795-1883), for example, was a political conservative who believed that Africans would benefit from being brought under European political control. The atrocities and mass killings of the *Mfecane/Difaquane* period (the *Mfecane/Difaquane*

refers to the large scale movement of peoples resulting from the wars of Shaka, king of the Zulu tribes, in southern Africa in the 19th century) confirmed Moffat in this belief. The atrocities made him feel that Africans would progress only if they could be persuaded, even forced if necessary, to accept strict European guidance. In later years Moffat went to preach Christianity amongst the Ndebele in what is now Zimbabwe (Kapp & Mes 1998:91-103).

Moffat's son-in-law was David Livingstone (1813-1873). Livingstone had more respect for African culture and traditions than did Moffat. Livingstone believed that one day an Africa of independent Christian nations would come into existence. But this new Africa, he believed lay far in the future. Years of guidance by Christian missionaries and settlers would be needed to bring it into being. It was this belief in Africa's need for European guidance that drove Livingstone to explore the interior of southern and central Africa. His explorations opened up new trade routes for Europeans and helped eventually to bring large new areas of the continent under their control (O'Callaghan 1997:254-256).

2.2.2 Missionary efforts in influencing policy and decisions in African education

The arrival of missionaries in Zimbabwe since 1859 is an important factor in understanding the character of education, and consequently Religious Education, in Zimbabwe prior to independence. Most missionaries originated from England, with a few from the United States of America; and they were predominantly Christian. The Christian missionaries distinguished themselves from the colonialists as their activities

centred on teaching, healing and preaching. The colonialists were the agents of the British government whose aim was exploitation and the pauperisation of the colonised (Memmi 1990:18). Of importance, too, was the way the colonialists conceived of themselves and the ideological stance they took.

Most scholars (Challis 1980:27; Chung & Ngara 1985:45; Farquhar 1960:53) observe that they portrayed themselves as superior in every respect and were thus fulfilling a divinely inspired mission as purveyors of civilisation. This self-conception by the colonialists would have serious implications for life in its entirety in the colony. For example, indigenous people were regarded as an inferior race, while white races were to maintain their distance ahead of the rest, and would require better preparation for the burdens and responsibilities of life. The notion of racial supremacy is according to Atkinson (1972:5) expressed by Cecil John Rhodes as follows:

I contend that we are the finest race in the world, and that the more of the world we inhabit the better it is for the human race. Just fancy those parts that are at present inhabited by the most despicable specimens of human beings. What alteration there would be in them if they were brought under Anglo-Saxon rule.

A dehumanizing and exploitative relationship existed between the coloniser and the colonised. The former was disfigured into:

an oppressor, an uncouth fragmented human being, a cheat, solely preoccupied with his privileges, the latter into a victim of oppression, dehumanized and broken in his development and accepting his own degradation (Memmi 1990:25).

On the other hand, Africans were taught how to read and write by the missionaries. This was according to the latter essential to enable the converts to be able to read and

understand the scriptures. Nevertheless, the missionary influence dominated all aspects of African life. According to Atkinson (1973:90), "the impact of missionary endeavour on life in Southern Rhodesia was probably proportionately greater than in the case of any other African colony". Missionaries thus also played an important role in education in Southern Rhodesia; and indeed influenced the school curriculum.

However, Atkinson (1973:96) further notes in this regard that "the primary business of missionaries was evangelism and most of them did not possess training or experience outside the field of theology". Emphasis was solely on Christian moral and religious instruction, which they saw as fundamental to the life of the Africans. They believed that the teaching of Africans should thus primarily include the teaching of dogma (Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland 1954:2).

The missionaries therefore believed that Religious Education should also be dogmatic and confessional. They argued that Religious Education was a means of promoting evangelism, and their aim was to change the Africans from the vestiges of traditional life and religion to Christianity (Methodist Church 1946:1). The missionary teaching during this period was thus important in shaping the character of Religious Education as subject.

However, according to Zvobgo (1994:12), "Rhodes (Cecil John Rhodes - founder of the former Southern Rhodesia:LN) believed that missionary religious influence would also provide an ideological aim for colonialism in African society", and that the use of the English language would in turn spread the Western values and beliefs to the African

people. Missionaries were thus better able to sell Western values and beliefs to the Africans. Consequently, all missionary endeavours were approved and promoted by the British authorities.

Therefore, Robert Moffat (1795-1883) of the London Missionary Society opened the first mission school for Africans in 1859 at Inyati in Matabeleland. It is interesting to note that the missionaries at that stage intended to pursue their own set objectives, specifically designed to promote their own interests (Zvobgo 1994:13).

By 1870 Moffat was able to secure permission and opened the second school for Africans at Hope Fountain in Matabeleland (British South Africa Company 1901:9). David Livingstone (1813-1873) was also among the most ardent Christian missionaries, who, like Moffat, carried out his missionary work under the sponsorship of the London Missionary Society. Livingstone was the pioneer of a widespread missionary school movement in Central Africa (Livingstone 1870:15). As from 1893 other Christian missionary societies, both Catholic and Protestant mainly from the United States of America, opened schools for Africans in various parts of Southern Rhodesia for the purpose of promoting Christianity (Huggins 1931:18).

Mungazi (1991:2) argues that the opening of the mission schools for Africans was among others also a product of the so-called Victorian enthusiasm among Western Christian missionaries to promote Christianity as the most important means of ensuring the

Africans' advancement. According to Mungazi (1991:2) the introduction of Western education to the Africans of Southern Rhodesia by Christian missionaries was:

poised to change permanently the way of life that Africans had known for hundreds of years. ... the education of Africans remained largely the responsibility of Christian organizations until the church crisis of 1969¹, it stressed the learning of moral and religious values as the most important objective.

When the British colonial government was established in 1890, the missionaries continued to argue that the education of Africans must primarily comprise literacy and religious instruction (see pp. 47-48 of this chapter). On the other hand, the colonial officials were only interested in education that would produce cheap labourers. The role of Christian missions in providing formal education has, however, always been subordinate to the overall plans and philosophy of the government. By 1899 the colonial government became aware of its advantage over the missionaries in this regard, and began to enact the first legislation for education (Education Ordinance 18 of 1899:2; Huggins 1939:16; Southern Rhodesia 1901:100). This gave the colonial government "power to formulate its philosophy of education based on its objective of training Africans to make a contribution to the economic development of the country by functioning as labourers"(Mungazi 1991:6).

Hence, from the beginning the settler government desired to provide industrial and agricultural education to Africans. This intention was spelt out in education ordinances

¹ In 1969 the churches protested the government's new policy in the funding of African education: that 95% will be provided for teachers' salaries in primary schools and the remainder being paid by churches. Churches saw this as an attempt to oust them from African education. As a result of this crisis the churches relinquished 2308 schools out of 3116 by the end of 1970 (Mungazi 1991:12).

passed between 1899 and 1910. The 1899 Education Ordinance directed that industrial training be offered, for example, plain needlework and domestic economy as far as may be practical; the 1903 Education Ordinance required that it be systematically taught; and, the 1907 Education Ordinance prescribed industrial training to include farming, brick making, road making, building, carpentry, and iron work for boys, and domestic work for girls (Southern Rhodesia 1901:99; Parker as quoted in Rose 1970:250). In addition, the 1910 Education Ordinance made specific grants to European teachers who taught industrial and agricultural work (Parker as quoted in Rose 1970:253). These ordinances introduced thus among other things industrial and agricultural training for Africans (Commission of Inquiry into Industrial Development of Natives 1920:7).

The Christian missionaries criticised these developments in African education severely, and this eventually culminated in the formation of the Southern Rhodesia Christian Conference in 1906. This Conference was a “threat” to the colonial government as it questioned the latter’s educational policy towards the Africans and re-opened the debate between church and state regarding the control of African education (Southern Rhodesia 1960:11).

In its first annual report in 1907 the Southern Rhodesia Christian Conference, for example, criticised the government’s pursuit of an educational policy that was having “negative effects” on the education of Africans. As a result the government initiated a process of redefining its policy in a way that seemed to address the concerns of the missionaries (Southern Rhodesia 1927:48).

According to Mungazi (1991:9), one such action was the naming of the Graham Commission in 1910 to investigate the character of African education. The Commission was to assist with policy formulation in matters dealing with African education. The Commission found among others that churches were underfunded and that there was a lack of clear policies regarding the operations of churches in African education. The Commission indicated that the best policy was to foster and encourage mission activities by increasing aid. The government thus welcomed church involvement in African education, as evidenced by the following statement of the Graham Commission:

There is ample reason for encouragement of missionary bodies. We desire, moreover to place on record our appreciation of the excellent work done by them in the past and our conviction of the still greater assistance which they may be called upon to render the state in future (Report of the Graham Commission into Native Affairs 1911:13).

The Commission made the following recommendations: more emphasis should be placed on the teaching of literacy and numeracy; increased government control should be placed over mission schools; all African schools should be placed under the supervision of European missionaries; and external supervision of mission schools should be done by government inspectors. In sum, the Commission recommended that African education should follow three basic lines – literacy, religion and practical training. Despite the recommendations of the Graham Commission (1910), it was in the years prior to the 1920s still not clear who should control African education or what kind of curriculum must be taught in African schools (Southern Rhodesia 1924-1954:21).

In light of the church's historical involvement in African education, in 1925 the colonial government created an Advisory Board of Education comprising members of various denominations with a primary function in all educational matters (Southern Rhodesia 1929:5). Even before the formation of the Advisory Board of Education the churches increasingly played a major role in influencing legislation on African education because as noted by Siyakwazi (1995:325):

The creation of the Advisory Board legitimised the co-option of the churches into the status quo and they were accorded a place of influence. It might be a fair statement to say that churches in Zimbabwe throughout the years have had some influence on educational policy.

New socio-economic needs emerged during and after World War II (1939–1945). Under these circumstances, a commission was appointed under the chairmanship of A Kerr to undertake an enquiry into Native education. Referring to the religious content of African education, the Kerr Commission in 1951 reported in the following manner in this regard:

For today the African child is expected to fashion his life, his behaviour to the needs of a huge complicated industrial organization and to the marvels of modern science. He must obey laws and observe social obligations of which the ancient tribal sanctions and rules of conduct are but a crude beginning. He is invited to embrace a religion and follow an ethical code which his parents may have had a faint understanding or no understanding at all. He has before him examples of European behaviour that are bad as well as good. It is no wonder that in a mere sixty years the education we have been able to offer has failed to generate a race (Report of the Kerr Commission 1951:66).

2.2.3 Role of missionaries in shaping Religious Education

The role of missionaries in shaping Religious Education during the colonial period (1890-1979) emerges as follows: Firstly, the missionaries played an important role in the

education for Africans, particularly in introducing the subject Religious Education, then known as Scripture or Religious and Moral Instruction. Secondly, the missionaries influenced and shaped the content and character of the subject. They were convinced that any future development in African education was to be built on a Christian foundation. The Secretary of the Missionary Conference in 1925 confirmed this view and put the aim of Religious Education teaching as:

We are not dealing with Europeans but with natives. When you educate the native you weaken tribal customs and in consequence, unless we are careful to instil religion into the mind, as well as educating him, we are taking away something without putting anything in its place (Report of the Hadfield Commission 1925:59).

According to Maravanyika (1981:17), education in Zimbabwe owes its existence to various missionary groups whose main aim was to proselytize the African, and hence were concerned in teaching the African to read so that he/she could read the Bible for himself/herself. The missionaries thus introduced Scripture or Religious and Moral Instruction as a platform to teach biblical truths or to communicate the Christian faith (Moyo 1983:101). Ubah (1988:82) writes the following about the Christian missionaries, Religious Education and the school curriculum in Africa:

Up to date of independence ... the school curricula of the various missions were deliberately worked out in a way, which ensured that religious instruction occupied a prominent place. From the point of view of the missionaries, religious knowledge was the major aspect of educational training. Religious instruction exposed children to elements of the Christian doctrine, daily prayers, bible stories and so on. At the same time fierce attacks were mounted on traditional religious beliefs, and efforts were made to subject them systematically to criticism and ridicule.

The subject Religious Education was also seen as an important tool towards achieving the “desired outcome”, that is to christianise and to bring “enlightment” and “civilization”.

As noted by Makuvaza (1996:66), nearly all scholars (Atkinson 1972; Crowder 1968; Mungazi 1991; Ramose 1986) on missionary provision of education to Africans agree that the main objectives of this type of education (Religious Education) were to Christianise and to bring “enlightment” and “civilization” to the Dark Continent. Makuvaza (1996:66) further argues, that the underlying assumption was that “Africa had no education, religion, and civilization, and, hence, was a ‘Dark Continent’”. The missionary endeavour in the provision of education, especially Religious Education, to Africans in colonial Zimbabwe should be seen in this context.

In the early years (1890–1930) there was no clear government policy on what was supposed to be taught in mission schools. It was up to the individual church denominations to design their own curricula (Department of Education 1940:1). The missionaries took advantage of this situation to influence what was taught in the mission schools. They concentrated heavily on their denominational dogma (Siyakwazi 1995:323). Since there were no textbooks available in the schools, most missionaries used the Bible to teach literacy skills. Religious Education was introduced at an early stage and tended to be confessional and dogmatic in character. Emphasis was on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ and some Old Testament Scripture passages. The aim in teaching Africans to read was to enable them to read and understand the word of God as contained in the Bible. Mathematics was also included in the school curriculum and

learners were taught simple mathematical skills such as addition, subtraction and multiplication (Sowing and Reaping 1948:15).

Between 1930 and 1940 there was still no official Religious Education syllabus for use in secondary schools, and as a result it was up to the clergy to design their own curricula. Missionaries were thus able to influence the content of Religious Education and determine their own methodology (Sowing and Reaping 1948:16).

The first official suggested Scripture Syllabus for mission schools was proposed by the then Secretary of Education J. Cowie in 1949. However, mission schools that offered Ordinary Level, used the Cambridge School Certificate syllabus in form three and four beginning in 1942. The lack of policy during the period prior to 1949 enabled the Christian missionaries to spread the Christian values and beliefs as they saw it fit. During this period, according to Circular No. 1 of 1949, children who belonged to among others the Roman Catholic Church and Jewish faith continued as in the past to receive their sole Religious Education lessons during school time from members of their own faiths (Department of Education 1949:1-2). This meant that each denomination was free to influence the Religious Education content in accordance with its own doctrines (Department of Education 1949:1).

Missionaries thus had a strong influence in shaping Religious Education subject content, character and methodology in this period. As the emphasis in this dissertation is on secondary education, which only began officially in 1942 following the introduction of

the Cambridge School Certificate syllabus, the developments in secondary education will be discussed in detail in the following section.

2.3 CHARACTER OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AS SCHOOL SUBJECT DURING THE COLONIAL PERIOD, 1890-1979

2.3.1 Introductory remarks

As pointed out in the previous section (see pp. 54-58 of this chapter), Religious Education was initiated and started by the clergy. However, for the colonial government the teaching of Religious Education was primarily a strategy to “wipe out” all African values and beliefs, and to inculcate Christian values and beliefs to the African in order to among others bring ‘enlightment’ and “civilization” to the dark continent (Makuvaza 1996:66).

In the early years, 1899 to 1942, African learners were taught what was known as Scripture or Religious and Moral Instruction. These were biblical scriptures with a lot of emphasis on the Old Testament. Religious Education during these years did not provide for an open and academic exploration of religion. The subject remained dogmatic, confessional and biblical as it aimed at promoting Christian values and beliefs only. The fundamental aim of the subject was therefore to convert as many Africans as possible to Christianity. Anyone taking the subject Religious Education was thus seen as preparing himself or herself for a pastoral role within the church. The majority of Religious Education teachers during this period were consequently church ministers and the subject was largely taught in state-aided mission schools (Makuvaza 1996:67).

From 1942 to 1980, the greater part of the colonial period, Religious Education at Ordinary Level was known as Bible Knowledge or Religious Knowledge. At primary level it was known as Scripture. The content was thus still heavily concentrated on the Bible and aimed at promoting Christian values and beliefs only (Makuvaza 1996:68-69). This situation created a number of problems.

- Firstly, it restricted the inquiry into religion as a human phenomenon. The non-Christian religions were considered irrelevant; yet, the majority of the learners were from an African traditional religion background (Ndlovu 1993b:3).
- Secondly, Bible Knowledge or Religious Knowledge as subject was dogmatic and confessional in nature. It was dogmatic in the sense that it started from a given premise, namely, the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Consequently, it was also bibliocentric as candidates were restricted to interpretations that are found in the Bible. Religious and ethical questions raised in the learners' community were consequently ignored in favour of biblical questions (Education Department 1948:1-2).

The subject was therefore used by the colonial government to “indoctrinate” the learners with Christian values and beliefs. The sole aim of the teacher was to foster and develop Christian Bible knowledge. It was felt that in order for the Africans to be strong believers they needed to effectively study and understand the scriptures (Ndlovu 1993b:2).

As the emphasis of this dissertation is on the introduction, development and provision of Religious Education in secondary schools, it is necessary to draw the attention to the fact that secondary school education in Zimbabwe was only introduced after the introduction of Ordinary Level teaching using the Cambridge School Certificate syllabus in 1942. During this period secondary education was a preserve of the few European learners. African learners who were interested to obtain secondary school education went to the Union of South Africa (Department of Education 1942:6). As the latter falls outside the scope of this dissertation, for the remaining part of this section the emphasis will thus only be on Religious Education teaching in Zimbabwe secondary schools between 1942 to 1979.

2.3.2. Character of Religious Education as secondary school subject, 1942-1979

2.3.2.1 Aims of Religious Education

Formal Religious Education teaching and examining in secondary schools in Southern Rhodesia started in 1942 with respect to the Ordinary Level (following the Cambridge School Certificate syllabus), and in 1956 with respect to the Junior Certificate of Education (following the syllabus proposed by Cowie in 1949; see pp. 65-71 of this chapter). Ordinary Level Religious Education was then known as Bible Knowledge or Religious Knowledge (also offered by the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate).

However, most secondary schools did not offer the University of Cambridge Ordinary Level Religious Education syllabus as this was largely preserve for the European schools. Although a few African candidates entered for the above examination beginning 1951 (Education Department 1949:20-22). The Native Education Department since 1942 had to come up with its own Religious Education syllabus starting from standard four up to secondary school level (Education Department 1949:18-19). From 1942 Scripture teaching at secondary school level as prescribed by the colonial government's Department of Native Education was aimed at:

- imparting Christian values and beliefs to nurture and stabilise the faith of the Christian converts.
- laying the foundation of conduct. It is to implant in the children of the colony habits of industry and self-control and to encourage perseverance in the face of difficulties.
- fostering a strong sense of duty and instil in them consideration and respect for others which must be the foundation of usefulness and the true basis of all good manners.

In order to carry out such a worthy and desirable policy, the value of a full measure of Religious Education in the public schools for Natives could not be overstated (Department of Education 1942:1).

The Director of Native Education from 1927 to 1934, Mr H. Jowitt (Jowitt 1927-1934:20) makes the following comments regarding the aims of the subject Religious Education prior to 1942:

The experience of the Church in Rhodesia as elsewhere was that in order to stabilise the faith of converts and to assist in character development it was necessary that they should be able to read the Scriptures or other books of Religious Instruction

translated by missionaries. Hence was introduced the teaching of the three R's with the curricula requirement that in 88% of the schools in the country the pupils are taught to read in the Native language with elements of writing and arithmetic.

The aims of Religious Education were stated as follows in the 1942 Cambridge School Certificate syllabus:

- To develop an inquiring and critical approach to the study of biblical texts and the ideas they contain.
- To introduce candidates to the variety of interpretation found in biblical scholarship.
- To help the candidates to identify and explore the religious and ethical questions raised in the texts they have studied (University of Cambridge 1942:1).

In 1949 the Secretary of Education J. Cowie proposed a Scripture Syllabus covering the six years of the secondary school course. The following aims were contained in this syllabus:

- To build up a basis of knowledge about God and religious faith in an atmosphere of reverence, so that the child may be enabled to build up a philosophy of life which help him to recognise right and choose it and which will inspire him to face life with a Christian outlook.
- To relate Christianity to life and thought of today and thereby to present the Christian standard of ethics and belief as a solution for problems of today (Education Department 1949:2).

The aims of Religious Education were stated as follows in the 1957 Junior Certificate of Education syllabus:

- To help the learner develop an awareness of God and how he reveals Himself.
- To help the learner see that Jesus was specifically sent by God to show what God the Father is like and to give men power through the holy Spirit to do what He requires of them.
- To help the learner recognise God as the Lord who loves and cares for all people and expects each one to live according to His will.
- To help the learner gain a knowledge and understanding of the Bible.
- To help the learner develop the habit of worship, prayer and Bible reading.
- To help the learner realise his/her need to decide for himself/herself how he will respond to the love of God in Christ (Education Department 1957:1).

In 1957 the colonial government declared that all European and state-aided schools should follow the Cambridge School Certificate syllabus. The aims of the Cambridge School Certificate syllabus for Religious Education remained largely "unchanged" from 1942 to 1979 in Rhodesia. There were no major changes in the aims and the content of the syllabus; hence, the syllabus remained christocentric. The only changes were in the assessment structure and specification grid, for example, the weighting of the cognitive levels varied in the different years. In some examinations more marks were allocated for higher cognitive levels such as analysis and evaluation. Whilst previous specifications tended to give more marks for simple recall questions (see pp. 72-73 of this chapter).

2.3.2.2 Content and structure of the course

In 1942, Ordinary Level Religious Education teaching, according to the Cambridge School Certificate syllabus, was still christocentric. It was centred on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. The gospels thus provided much of the content at this level (University of Cambridge 1944:9-10).

The Ordinary Level Religious Education course comprised two syllabuses. The first was Syllabus A. It included one component, namely, The Life and Teachings of Christ as contained in the synoptic gospels - Matthew, Mark and Luke. The approach in teaching this syllabus was textual and thematic. Teachers taught the whole synoptic text focusing on various themes and stories. Learners read stories from the gospels and then analysed or interpreted them in order to gain full understanding of that particular story (University of Cambridge 1944:10-11).

For example, in Luke 2:41-52: *The Boy Jesus at the Temple*, we find Mary looking for the child Jesus and very anxious to find him. Suddenly, she finds Jesus in the temple courts sitting among the teachers listening to them and asking them questions. In this story, learners will interrogate the text and answer questions such as: Why was Mary anxious and what had caused her to be anxious? Learners will also comment on Jesus's reply: "Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know that I had to be in my Father's house?" (Luke 2:49). Some learners will obviously raise the question of obedience to his parents, while others will defend Jesus as an obedient son. Mary's reaction to Jesus's reply will also be subject of discussion. The Syllabus A thus required

learners to interact with the text in order to gain better or full understanding (University of Cambridge 1944:20-21).

Syllabus B included two components, namely, The Life and Teachings of Christ as contained in the Gospel of Luke, and Acts of the Apostles. The approach in teaching this syllabus was the same as in syllabus A (see p. 64 of this chapter; University of Cambridge 1944:10-21).

In the 1949 proposed Scripture syllabus covering the six years of the secondary school course, the following content and structure were proposed: If the need of enquiring minds (secondary school learners) is followed, there will always emerge the same pattern programme, covering the teachings of the revelation of God, of Jesus Christ and of the Holy Spirit together with the bearing of these doctrines on practical details of everyday life – personal, social, national, international (Education Department 1949:3-4).

The Scripture teaching therefore gave knowledge of the Bible which showed the conception of God held by the Hebrew nation at different times and by individual prophets leading up to the highest conception of God which is given by a study of the life of Jesus Christ in its uniqueness – the crucifixion, resurrection and coming of the Holy Spirit. The history of the Christian church was shown to depend on the former so there was a place for the history and growth of the Christian church in the widest sense from Pentecost to present-day (1949). Two lessons per week were devoted to the above. A Bible was also provided for each learner (Education Department 1949:5-6).

- a) For the 12+ years learners, Religion expressed in service was a topic. The latter was illustrated by means of practical examples from the lives of men and women of all ages whose religious zeal inspired their work, such as teachers, writers, social reformers, explorers, pioneers of science, missionaries, etc. Teachers felt at liberty to make their own selection of “heroes of the Kingdom” and examples included:

St Columba, St Cuthbert, St Francis of Assisi, Wycliffe, Tyndale, Bunyan, Fox, the Wesleys, Arnold of Rugby, Kingsley, Wilberforce, Shaftesbury, Elizabeth Fry, Florence Nightingale, Abraham Lincoln, William Booth, William Penn, Aggrey, Grenfell, Mary Slessor, Father Damien, Kagawa, Schweitzer, Gandhi, Wilson of the Antarctic, Louis Pasteur, Mme Curie, Lord Lister (Education Department 1949:7).

Teachers emphasised that the secret of their lives lay not merely in the fact that they were good people but that they were co-operating with God (Education Department 1949:8).

Some biblical heroes from the Acts were also a topic taught to the 12+ years learners. The stories of Peter, John, Stephen, and Paul served as examples. The background information of Jewish life and ideas in the First Century A.D. seen from the boy Jesus’s point of view to explain the significance of among others the publicans, Pharisees, Roman centurions, Roman occupation of Palestine, synagogue and temple, Samaritans, Sanhedrin, and three Jewish feasts were also included in the lessons (Education Department 1949:8-9).

- b) For the 13+ years learners the following content was appropriate: From the New Testament, the Gospels – written after years of oral tradition of the life and teachings

of Jesus Christ. A brief explanation of the origin of the first three gospels, the term “synoptic”, and the date and authorship of the latter. Eventually, a study of the second or third gospel, however, not verse by verse.

From the Old Testament, the stories of the patriarchs, leaders, judges and kings, showing the part each played in the growth of the Hebrew nation, “called” for a great purpose by God. It was important for Religious Education teachers to remember that the Old Testament is essentially the story of the relationship between God and a community to whom He progressively revealed His nature and character. From Abraham to the division of the Kingdom formed a convenient section in this phase (Education Department 1949:10).

- c) For the 14+ years learners the following was appropriate: The history before the birth of Christ (B.C.). It entailed the 8th and 7th Century Hebrew history. The latter centred on the great prophets of these centuries with a clear simple explanation of the political background. The meaning of the word “prophet”, his function, and a discussion of the modern prophets introduced this section of the content. It was important to show the learners that all prophets were intimately concerned with history and that they interpreted the vicissitudes of their own and other nations in terms of the purpose of God.

With regard to the New Testament it was either a revision of the previous year’s work on the synoptic gospels and a study of the second or third gospel; or the life and

teachings of Jesus Christ using a composite narrative. The topic “Man Born to be King” was used here (Education Department 1949:11).

d) For the 15+ years learners the following was included: A study of the 6th Century prophets. The shadow of the exile was also included in the study material. With regard to the Old Testament, the nation in exile, the influence of the Babylonian civilization and its advantages and disadvantages was focused on. Teachers also included the writing of the Psalms in exile and the re-writing of past history, etc. To the above the following themes were added:

- The return from exile with special reference to the work of Ezra (Chapter 2) and Nehemiah (Chapter 1) in the reconstruction endeavours.
- The Book of Jonah as the most sublime revelation of truth expressed in allegory. The latter was compared with allegories from Southern Rhodesia's own literature.

With regard to the New Testament, teachers emphasised the parables. The following sub-themes were taught to the learners:

- What is a parable?
- Examples of pre-Old Testament, Old Testament and modern parables.
- Why did Jesus teach in parables?
- A comparison of parables in the different gospels.
- From a study of certain parables, what is the meaning of the phrase “Kingdom of Heaven”?

- An analysis of the parables illustrating great truths expressed in the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-11) so that the learner's knowledge of the New Testament is not mere superficial familiarity with works, but rather that there may be some understanding of the inner meaning of the teaching; it is to get the learners to see the teaching from different view points, such as those of the Galilean peasant Pharisees, Doctor of Law, Pilate, woman of Samaria, etc.

Instead of the above the learners also studied the following topics: If work on composite narrative was not done previously, the teachings of Jesus Christ in the synoptic gospels were included, namely, teachings about God; man's duty to God; man's duty to man; and the social implications of Jesus's teachings (Education Department 1949:11-12).

- e) For the 16+ years learners the following was included: A course on the topic "Concerning the Bible" based on the content of Conrad Skinner's² book entitled "Concerning the Bible". Learners understood that the Bible is not a book but a "library" compiled and written by many different people over a period of 1000 years. They also understood that a gradual process of selection was involved. The reason for and explanation of the canon and "Apocrypha" was emphasised. The following themes were also taught:
- The Scriptures of the Jews.
 - The Law, the Prophets, and the Writings.

² Conrad Skinner was a renowned 18th Century theologian and writer.

- A simple explanation of “J” “E” “D” “P” documents in the law.
- The writings of the new community³.
- The Epistles of Paul.
- The Synoptic Gospels.
- The Acts of the Apostles.
- The other Epistles.
- The Johannine writings; namely, the Gospel of John, the Epistles of John, and the Revelation.

In the study of the literary evolution of the Bible, naturally a discussion on the early stories of the book of Genesis was included (Education Department 1949:13).

After the study of the formation of the New Testament Canon, an outline of the history of the translation of the New Testament followed and was brought up to date with reference to the work of the British and Foreign Bible Society. Group work was also done on either the purpose and content of some of Paul’s epistles using translations into modern speech and paraphrases, or the writings, the third section of the Jewish Scriptures:

- The Poetical books such as Psalms, Proverbs, Job.
- Ruth, Esther, Lamentations and Ecclesiastes.
- Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Chronicles. The emphasis was on their content, significance, and importance.

³ New community refers to the Christian believers after Christ’s death.

In addition to the above, the literary comparison of some Hebrew genres with English, Greek or Roman examples were studied, for example, Ballads, Fables, Legends, Myths, Religious and secular poetry, History, and Narrative (Education Department 1949:14-15).

In 1956, the colonial government of Southern Rhodesia introduced the formal teaching and examining of Religious Education at the Junior Certificate of Education Level following the so-called J. Cowie syllabus proposed in 1949 and approved in 1950 (see p. 60 of this chapter). The Junior Certificate of Education level syllabus continued with the former christocentric and pastoral content and structure; and at the same time still perpetuating Christian values and beliefs only (Education Department 1957:2).

The Junior Certificate of Education Level syllabus selected, for example, texts from both the Old Testament and the New Testament. In the Old Testament section, the Israelite history was studied in great detail as recorded in the first five books of the Bible. Learners were required to recall and narrate biblical stories. In the New Testament section, the life and history of Jesus Christ formed the core of the syllabus. Learners were expected to understand and recall the teachings of Jesus Christ; and, apply them in their everyday living (Education Department 1957:3).

The Religious Education courses for both the 1942 Cambridge Ordinary Level syllabus and the 1957 Junior Certificate of Education Level syllabus remained very rigid without changes in the content. The 1957 Cambridge Ordinary Level syllabus followed on the 1942 syllabus which was centred on either a detailed study of the synoptic gospels or a

detailed study of two books, namely, Luke and Acts of the Apostles. The 1957 Cambridge Ordinary Level syllabus required learners to exercise the skill of analysis as opposed to mere regurgitation of biblical stories (Education Department 1957:3).

An example of an essay-type assignment requiring learners to analyse is given below:

1. (a) Narrate:
 - i. the parable of the rich fool (Luke 12:16-21), and (6)
 - ii. Jesus's conversation with the young ruler he instructed to sell his property (Matthew 19:16-30). (6)
- (b) From this incident, comment on Jesus's attitude towards riches. (4)
- (c) Do you agree with Jesus's views on riches? Support your answer. (2)

(Ndlovu 2000:5)

From 1957 onwards, credit was also given for critical thought and analysis. An example of an essay-type assignment requiring learners to display critical thought and analysis is given below:

1. (a) Retell the parable of the wicked tenants (Luke 20:9-18). 10
- (b) Give the allegorical meaning of the parable (Luke 20:9-18). (6)
- (c) Did any one disciple behave like the wicked tenants? Support your answer. (2)

In the 1970s emphasis shifted, as noted in subsequent sections of this dissertation (see pp. 76-77 of this dissertation). Emphasis was now put on the higher levels of Bloom's

cognitive domain, namely application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation of biblical stories (Department of Education 1991:3-4).

2.3.2.3 Examinations

Between 1940 and 1942 there were no public examinations in Southern Rhodesia, and the different missionary bodies, such as the Methodist Church in Rhodesia, the Brethren in Christ Church, and the Roman Catholic Church, compiled the examination papers and did the certification for the basic primary education levels, including industrial and teacher training (Sowing and Reaping 1948:7).

With the introduction of Ordinary Level Religious Education teaching in 1942, following the Cambridge School Certificate syllabus, for Syllabus A (see pp. 64-65 of this chapter): The Life and Teachings of Christ as contained in the synoptic gospels – Matthew, Mark, Luke, one paper was set. Question one consisted of nine short questions (6 marks each) and questions two to ten consisted of nine short essay-type questions.

For Syllabus B, (see p. 65 of this chapter) two papers were set: one paper for the Gospel of Luke and the other for the Acts of the Apostles. Six context questions (7 marks each) were set in question one, and for questions two to eight, short essay-type questions were set (Department of Education 1949:9). In question one the paper included thus what is commonly referred to as context questions. The candidate was, for example, given a passage from the Bible, and was then asked two or three questions about the passage context. Candidates should be able to identify the context. The above question was

therefore testing whether the learner was able to understand the prescribed biblical texts or content. An example of a context question would be the following:

Truly, I say to you, it will be hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 19:23).

- i. Describe and explain the reaction of Jesus's disciples to this saying. (4)
- ii. What did Jesus go on to say? (2)

(Ndlovu 2000:1-2)

The examination at this level tested recall, evaluation and analysis only (Ndlovu 2000:3). In the short essay-type questions, i.e. questions two to eight, the examination was textual; candidates were supposed to demonstrate textual knowledge and the ability to analyse the text. An example of an essay-type question would be the following:

1. Describe in detail the occasion when Simeon saw the child Jesus in the temple (*Luke 2:25-35*). Comment on Simeon's words. (18) (Ndlovu 2000:3-4).

During the period 1942 to 1965 there were some noticeable changes in the assessment structure of Religious Education for the Cambridge Ordinary Level School Certificate. The 1949 Religious Education examination for the Cambridge Ordinary Level School Certificate was still christocentric, and learners were expected to recall or regurgitate biblical stories without subjecting them to criticism, analysis or evaluation. In 1949 candidates studying the synoptic gospels were expected to study in detail one of the three synoptic books. In one year the book meant for detailed study would be Luke, and in the following year Matthew, and in the next year Mark. Books for detailed study would thus

rotate. All six context questions would come from the book set for detailed study, and then the two to eight short essay-type questions would come from all the three books (Department of Education 1949:10-11).

In 1965 the assessment scheme was for example changed again; since then there was no book meant for detailed study. Candidates studied all three synoptic gospels in detail and the six context questions and the ten short essay-type questions were all drawn from the three gospels. In the 1965 assessment scheme, questions were also set that required learners to highlight the differences and similarities in content between the individual gospel writers, for example, the differences and similarities in Matthew and Luke's infancy narratives (University of Cambridge 1965:45).

With regard to the Junior Certificate of Education Level offered by the Native Education Department since 1956, one paper was set which included both essay-type questions and structured questions. Candidates were required to display knowledge and analytical skills on both the Old Testament and the New Testament. An example of an essay-type question in the 1956 and beyond examination papers would be the following:

1. (a) Narrate the conversation between Ahab and Naboth (I Kings 21:1-4). (8)
- (b) Which prophet intervened in the story of Naboth's vineyard? (1)
- (c) Which character in the story of Naboth's vineyard suffered from a sense of guilt? (1)

(Ndlovu 2000:4)

An example of a structured question in the 1956 and beyond examination papers would be the following:

Answer the following questions on the prophets of the Old Testament.

1. (a) What is a prophet? (2)
- (b) Give **two** functions of prophets in the Old Testament. (2)
- (c) Who is regarded as the greatest prophet in the Old Testament?
Support your answer. (3)

(Ndlovu 2000:5)

As from 1970 the Cambridge Ordinary Level syllabus for Religious Education required learners to exercise the cognitive skill of analysis also with regard to the examination paper. Learners were required not only to recall the biblical stories but also to analyse and subject them to criticism. Learners would, for example, be asked to describe a particular occasion or event in the synoptic gospels such as the baptism of Jesus (Matthew 3:13-17). After describing the occasion or event, the learners would be asked to comment on certain aspects of the incidents. This was either spoken words or actions performed by a particular character. The following is a typical example of an essay-type question taken from a 1970 to 1979 examination paper:

1. (a) Describe in detail the occasion when Simeon saw the child Jesus in the Temple? (12)
- (b) Comment on Simeon's words. (6)

(Ndlovu 2000:5)

Approximately sixty percent of the marks were allocated for mere recall of facts, thirty five percent for analysis and five percent for evaluation. In making a comment, the learner would be required to make an analysis of the incident, and perhaps come up with an independent judgement or viewpoint. Credit would be given for any reasonable and accurate comment covered by the marking scheme (Ndlovu 2000:6).

2.4 RELEVANCE OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION TEACHING DURING THE COLONIAL PERIOD, 1890-1979

The arrival of the missionaries in Zimbabwe was a major threat to the African traditional beliefs and traditions as the missionary aim (see pp. 55-56 of this chapter) was among others to alienate the Africans from the vestiges of African traditional religion and culture and to promote Christianity as the most important means of ensuring their salvation and advancement. The missionaries consequently exercised total control and authority over all aspects of African life. According to Brand (1977:72):

The authority of missionaries, however, often extended to the details of personal dress and demeanor, not to mention the prohibition of objectionable ritual practices, certain marriage customs, and the consumption of native beer, both on the mission compound and in the rural villages within their immediate sphere of influence. Missionaries, therefore, commanded considerable material resources and temporal power and were often able to establish little theocratic 'empires' within the colonial state, encompassing their flocks, pupils and the surrounding rural population.

This would eventually result in the problem of cultural alienation. The first step, thus, taken by the missionaries to alienate the Africans from their traditional beliefs and traditions was evident in their condemnation of African traditional practices. One of the

traditional rituals among the Shona people in Zimbabwe condemned by the missionaries was the *kurova guva* ceremony. This is a ceremony performed after a burial and is practised to enable the spirit of the dead person to rise from the grave as a re-vivified being and to their return peacefully to protect its living descendants (Kumbirai 1977:123).

The *kurova guva* ceremony is of great social significance to the Shona people and is central to traditional beliefs about the influence of spirit elders on the living community. The missionaries condemned the ceremony as a sin. Kumbirai (1977:127) notes in this regard:

The early missionaries, on the one hand, taught that to take part in the ceremony was a sin against faith; the Shona Christians, on the other hand, found this teaching challenging the very essence of their understanding of the spiritual world.

The missionaries in Zimbabwe also condemned the traditional medical beliefs and practices of the native inhabitants. Christianity had a major impact on Shona and Ndebele traditional medical beliefs and practices. As stated by Chavunduka (1977:131), missionaries attempted for many years to discourage the use of traditional medicine. The main reason why traditional medicine was condemned was that it was felt that traditional healers encouraged the belief in witchcraft.

Witchcraft is believed in all over the African continent. A witch is defined as someone who can change himself/herself into other forms, especially birds and bats. Witches prey on the bodies and souls of other people. Witches are also accused of turning people into

zombies and killing people with lightning, poison, and cannibalism. Witchcraft is different from magic and sorcery, two other common practices in Africa. Magic is the art of making charms to help, or sometimes, to harm people. Sorcery is the practice of “bad” magic. Witches are feared because they are believed to eat people’s souls. Africans take great care to protect themselves from the wrongdoings of witches. Protection can be sought by eating a mixture of oil and dambachiera tree seeds; burning the shadow of the stone fern; placing the branches of a mutarara tree on graves; driving wooden pegs into the ground around one’s house; making charms from dambachiera wood; or protection can be sought from one’s ancestors. Witchdoctors are the best combatants against witches and their mischief (Slovak 1997:7).

The missionaries thought that the belief in witchcraft was one of the greatest hindrances and stumbling blocks in the way of promoting Christian missionary work. According to Chavunduka (1977:132), the traditional witchdoctor was conceived of by the missionaries as:

a death – dealing charlatan, a rogue and a deceiver preventing patients, who would otherwise be treated effectively with scientific drugs and surgery, from reaching mission hospitals.

From the above examples it is apparent that Religious Education teaching done by the missionaries contributed in alienating the Africans from their own traditional religion and culture. Christianity and Western culture were glorified while African traditional religion and culture were despised. The missionary efforts in teaching the subject were thus geared at weakening the African traditional ties. Religious Education remained as part of

promoting evangelism in the classrooms as Christian teachings could neither tolerate nor incorporate African cultural elements (Siyakwazi 1983:41).

The colonial government also contributed to the problem of cultural alienation, particularly in formulating policy regarding the teaching of Religious Education as a school subject. For example, a 1948 circular from the Department of Education instructed heads of schools that “the Clergy, assisted by the lay teachers, will continue to exercise the ‘right of entry’ for at least one period per week” (Department of Education 1949:1). This gave the clergy ample opportunity to spread their Christian propaganda. The government thus enabled and assisted the clergy in their quest to alienate Africans from their traditional religion and culture.

The Department of Education also engaged the National Christian Council and the Christian Education Movement in the production of all national syllabuses. Representatives of the National Christian Council and Christian Education Movement participated actively in syllabus development. The National Christian Council and the Christian Education Movement were an amalgamation of different denominations which had come together to form a united front mainly to lobby the government on all educational and policy issues affecting churches (Department of Education 1948:1). The 1948 circular of 24 December further stated that the above Religious Education syllabuses would be used by all school staff, and that “the right of entry periods will be used by visiting Protestant clergy for instruction in denominational practice and dogma” (Department of Education 1948:1-2). Such a situation further worsened the plight of the

Africans as the government through state instruments promoted the spread of Christian values and beliefs (see p. 59 of this chapter).

The period 1948 to 1979 was characterised by significant changes in the educational system. First, in 1948 the government realised the need to regulate the educational system and bring about some order in the way education was being administered. A regulation in this regard was consequently issued, however, its implementation was difficult as there was no control and standard monitoring mechanism in place (Department of Education 1948:3). In 1957 the government thus declared that all schools should follow the same syllabus at Ordinary Level – the Cambridge School Certificate Syllabus (see p. 63 of this chapter). As noted previously, most institutions or missionary bodies used home-grown, and hence different syllabus documents and carried out their own local examinations (see p. 56 of this chapter). Despite the introduction of the above-mentioned regulations, Religious Education teaching remained in the hands of the missionaries who were determined to continue with pastoral work in “indoctrinating” and christianising all learners (see pp. 54-55 of this chapter). Second, the declaration by the government in 1957 that all schools should follow the Cambridge School Certificate syllabus and examination was an attempt to bring “sanity” and control in the educational system (see p. 63 of this chapter).

Hence, the colonial government continuously supported the christocentric or bibliocentric Religious Education syllabus used in Zimbabwe secondary schools. According to

Siyakwazi (1995:1), there existed a partnership between the colonial government and the various missionary bodies in this regard (see p. 54 of this chapter).

3. RELIGIOUS EDUCATION TEACHING IN ZIMBABWE SINCE INDEPENDENCE FROM BRITAIN IN 1980

3.1 INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Zimbabwe achieved its independence in comparison to the other African countries very late. For example, Zambia and Malawi already attained independence in 1964, and Angola in 1975 (Needham 1981:176-177). It was one of the last African countries to be freed from colonial rule, gaining its independence after a long guerrilla war. The guerrilla war proved very costly for the then Smith regime, and in 1979 they finally agreed to negotiations. In December 1979 they agreed to a cease-fire and free democratic elections. After a protracted-armed struggle, free and fair elections were conducted in February 1980 and Independence Day was set at 18 April 1980. The Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU (PF) or simply ZANU) emerged victorious and this ushered in new governance. Finally, in 1980, Zimbabwe gained its independence. Robert G. Mugabe (1980 to present) became the first prime minister. The position of the prime minister later became ceremonial and the executive presidency was created (Dugmore *et al* 1997:68-69).

The war of liberation in Zimbabwe was fought mainly to achieve recognition and respect of people's rights with regard to culture, land, education, conditions of work, etc. Robert

G. Mugabe (1983:41) makes the following observations regarding the causes of the war of liberation:

It was in the context of these ravages upon the fundamental rights of the people, upon their economic resources and their political and social order that the war of liberation was fought.

Attainment of independence meant self-rule, an opportunity for political control and organisation; and school programmes to promote national unity, a non-racial egalitarian society, and a productive and thinking citizenry. The people of Zimbabwe had become aware of the oppressive education system of the Smith regime, which had established institutions within an unjust colonial system (Mugabe 1983:46).

3.2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION TO ZIMBABWE'S POST-INDEPENDENCE EDUCATIONAL REFORM

The end of colonial rule (1890-1979) in Zimbabwe in 1980 marked the transition from "servitude and domination of the black people by a white minority ruling class to independence" (Zvobgo 1999:vi). Independence in 1980 thus opened up new opportunities for the people of Zimbabwe to govern themselves and re-organise their social and economic environment (Zvobgo 1999:vii).

During colonial rule (1890-1979) education was used to create a subservient people as the colonial education system was characterized by racial segregation, repression and exploitation. The Education Ordinance of 1899 introduced two systems of education, one for the Europeans and one for the Africans. Education for the latter became later known

as “African education” and was mainly entrusted to the Christian missionaries who received a small grant from the government in this regard. The 1899 Education Ordinance also made provision for grants to mission schools on condition that they devote at least two out of every four-hour school day to elementary industrial and agricultural training (see pp. 51-52 of this chapter).

This Ordinance (1899) clearly stated the principles on which the racially differentiated education system would be established. Whereas the Education Ordinance (1899) provided African children with elementary industrial and agricultural training, it provided European children with skilled industrial training necessary for artisans or skilled workers. The schools in Southern Rhodesia were further categorised as: native schools (Africans only schools), public voluntary schools (mission and independent schools), and undenominational public schools (Europeans only schools). Financial provisions differed according to these categories with native schools getting less than the public voluntary schools and the undenominational public schools (Education Ordinance of 1899 1899:i).

The Education Ordinance of 1903 was a long standing order, which prescribed changes to African education from time to time. At that time (1903) the aim of African education was to teach the Africans to read, write and speak English so that they would be able to communicate with their employers when they leave school (Education Ordinance of 1903 1903:iii-vii). Ter Haar (1990:134) comments as follows on the stipulations of the Education Ordinance of 1903:

The educational system merely reflected the economic and political structures of colonial society where education was seen as an instrument of control and manipulation.

The following recommendations and developments regarding education took place between 1908 and 1951 and illustrates the imbalances and inequities regarding European and African education that serves as prompt for post-independence educational reform:

- In 1908 the Hole Commission recommended safeguarding of the educational interests of the Europeans.
- In 1911 the Graham Commission recommended religious, industrial and moral education for the major thrust in the education of the Africans.
- In 1916 the Russel Commission recommended that education for the Europeans be made compulsory and free. This recommendation was only implemented in 1935.
- In 1920 the Keigwin Commission recommended that a small number of mission schools for Africans be developed to provide better training than was being given at that time and that industrial and practical training form the backbone of their education. Domboshawa (1920) and Tsholotsho (1920) industrial and agricultural schools for Africans were founded along the lines of the recommendations of the Keigwin Commission Report.
- In 1925 the Hadfield Commission recommended that education for Africans remain in the hands of Christian missionaries, and remain voluntary. State-aid will, however, be granted to the mission schools.
- In 1935 free and compulsory education for Europeans was introduced in accordance with the recommendations of the Russel Commission of 1916.

- In 1936 the Fox Commission recommended that education should prepare the different racial groups (European and African) to live in and contribute to the development of their own communities.
- In 1939 the first secondary school opened for Africans at St. Augustines near Penhalonga.
- In 1945 the Asquith Commission recommended that university education be considered as the best means of preparing the Africans, both men and women for national service. In the same year (1945), African leaders met in London to plan their strategy of dealing with the problems caused by the colonial conditions and to respond to the conclusion of the Second World War (1939-1945), marking the beginning of the rise of African nationalism.
- In 1946 the colonial government opened the first primary school for Africans at Chitsere (in Harare) and the first secondary school at Goromonzi.
- In 1951 the Kerr Commission recommended that partnership between church organisations and the government be entered to in order to develop adequate educational programs for Africans (Makotose 2001:39-62; Mungazi 1992:142-147; Report of the Hadfield Commission 1925:1; Report of the Kerr Commission 1951:2).

With the formation of the Central Africa federation in 1953 the division between European and African education became even wider. In 1953 the European settlers of the British colonies of Northern and Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland proposed that the three countries be joined together into the Central African Federation. The European settlers in the region believed that this would enable them to become politically and

economically strong and therefore prevent the introduction of African majority rule. When the Central African Federation was created there was an immediate increase in racial discrimination in settler Rhodesia (Dugmore *et al* 1997:62-63).

The then Rhodesian Prime Minister, Ian Douglas Smith (1964-1978), declared UDI (a Unilateral Declaration of Independence) from Britain in 1965, the education system from then up to 1980, when Zimbabwe gained its independence, was thus also characterised by racial segregation. Restrictions were put in place to deter Africans in accessing further education. According to Zvobgo (1986:14):

The aim was to limit the number of educated Africans who could qualify for the franchise and to prevent their influx into the labour market, as this would put pressure on the government and employers to offer occupation to Africans generally held by Europeans, or they feared that the large reservoir of trained but unemployed Africans could lead to political unrest.

When Zimbabwe attained independence from Britain in 1980, there was thus a strong need for educational reform mainly to correct the imbalances and inequities of the past as Zvobgo (1986:120) notes:

On attaining independence, most African countries found themselves loaded with an education system that needed extensive surgery in order to turn it into a tool that serves the needs and aspirations of the majority of the people. For most, the operation has been a traumatic one, bedevilled with sometimes conflicting demands of politics and economics.

Colonialism in Zimbabwe left a legacy of cultural alienation, underdevelopment and socio-economic imbalances and inequities, which became the focus of the government's reform policies and programmes on attainment of independence in 1980. It thus became

necessary to demolish the colonial structures and policies in order to align them with the objectives of the new political dispensation (Zvobgo 1986:120-121).

The ZANU (PF) government made it clear from the beginning that socialism would be its guiding principle. Socialism is a mode of production, which is characterised by the social ownership of the means of production and a classless society (Gwarinda 1985:125). In addition, man is believed to be capable of creating and changing his/her social environment through praxis; marrying theory and practice, mental and manual work (Gwarinda 1985:92). Thus, all people would be able to do productive work, plan and control production (Gillespie & Collins 1986:66). According to Chung & Ngara (1985:3), goals of socialism include equitable distribution of wealth; upholding of principles of independence; social justice and democracy; and promotion of prosperity and progress for all by removing the social roots of poverty, ignorance and backwardness. This promotes self-reliance (ZANU (PF) 1980:3).

To achieve this, education was provided on the basis of the theoretical underpinnings of Marxism-Leninism (Gillespie & Collins 1986:66). As a crucial factor in the social transformation of Zimbabwe, education was declared a basic human right and racial-oriented education had to be abolished (ZANU (PF) 1980:12). In the new Zimbabwe, education was to be used to develop the inherent talents of the people and engender a common national identity in them and enable them to live a "fuller" life (ZANU (PF) 1980:13). In keeping with socialist thinking, school programmes were designed to promote national unity; establish a non-racial egalitarian society; and produce a

productive and thinking citizenry (Farman 1991:9). What colonial educational policy was like becomes clear from the following words of Zvobgo (1999:112):

Educational policy in Zimbabwe was deeply rooted in the history of colonialism and black oppression, the basic elements of which were racial segregation, brutal economic exploitation and political repression.

Educational transformation in Zimbabwe was thus an important strategy for the government in addressing the social, economic and political problems of the colonial era.

3.3 POST-INDEPENDENCE EDUCATIONAL REFORM PROGRAMME WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

3.3.1 Introductory remarks

Since 1980, when Zimbabwe achieved its independence and came into being as an independent state, there have been considerable educational changes and curriculum reform in response to national needs, goals and aspirations (Dugmore *et al* 1997:68-69; Zvobgo 1986:120-122). The government immediately democratised education opportunities by making both primary and secondary education available to almost all learners of school going age (Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training 1999:10). The whole country, rural areas in particular, witnessed phenomenal expansion in education provision between 1980 and 1990 as a result of a combination of government and community efforts (Farman 1991:9). The expansion of educational infrastructure was achieved through reopening of schools closed down during the war period, expanding existing facilities and constructing new schools. Enrolment soared as education became more democratised and accessible (Farman 1991:10).

In addition, the government of Zimbabwe also found it necessary to initiate curriculum reform in order to:

- incorporate within the educational system values that are consistent with the social and political aspirations of the Zimbabwe people, such as the inculcation of a work ethic, productivity, patriotism, and co-operation; and an understanding of Zimbabwean regional and world history, culture, politics and ideology.
- provide the many who are not likely to go to higher learning institutions with an education which will be functionally useful in the world of work. The integration into the curriculum of the theory of education with production aimed at helping learners to relate knowledge and theory to their practical application in production within the Zimbabwe context.
- incorporate social, scientific and technological content and concepts where ever possible across the curriculum so that this essential knowledge is accessible to as many people as possible (Zimbabwe School Examinations Council 1991:1).

3.3.2 Religious Education Consultative Conference, 1981

Soon after independence the government of Zimbabwe thus began to reform most subject curricula. The aim was to come up with subject curricula relevant to the needs of the Zimbabwean learner and demands of the post-colonial Zimbabwean society (Zvobgo 1986:120). Religious Education was no exception. In response to the various problems encountered in Religious Education teaching in Zimbabwe secondary schools at independence, a Religious Education Consultative Conference was held as early as

December 1981 (Zvobgo 1986:121). The following aims of teaching Religious Education were agreed upon at the closing of the conference. To help learners to:

- develop an awareness of a supreme being.
- understand their own religion and tradition, and, by searching and discovery, develop their faith.
- know about and appreciate all other religions which they are likely to encounter in Zimbabwe.
- respect people whose beliefs differ from their own, thus developing a spirit of tolerance.
- see the relevance of faith to daily life.
- work out their belief systems in moral behaviour.

(Religious Education Consultative Conference 1981:13).

The above-stated aims clearly expressed the need for a more relevant, viable, and representative Religious Education curriculum. Participants agreed among others that: Religious Education should incorporate the teaching of other religions beside Christianity; a confessional and dogmatic exploration in the teaching of Religious Education was no longer acceptable; and religion or faith should relate to the daily life of the learner (Religious Education Consultative Conference 1981:14).

3.3.3 Syllabus, aims, structure, content and examinations

The government was primarily concerned about the relevance and usefulness of the subject content of Religious Education to the Zimbabwean situation. Consequently, the

government was interested in introducing multi-faith Religious Education, which would rid the subject of its mainly Christian orientation. However, curriculum developers and educational administrators accepted the life experience approach to Religious Education teaching instead of the multi-faith approach. As the afore-mentioned was more acceptable to both government and the various stakeholders, this approach would also enable Religious Education educators to relate the subject content to the local context and make it relevant (Department of Education 1991:3). In the following sections the post-independence Religious Education reform programme will be briefly discussed.

3.3.3.1 Zimbabwe Junior Certificate Level

Initially the focus was on the Zimbabwe Junior Certificate Level (Grades 8 and 9). The latter post-independence syllabus document made provision for:

- a two year course in Religious and Moral Education, building on the syllabus in use in primary schools.
- an examination open to candidates of any religious orientation or persuasion who are studying in either the formal or the non-formal sector.
- the right grounding for learners who wanted to study this subject further, and offer it in the so-called “O” Level examination.
- the teaching of two sections: a compulsory Section 1, which was attempted by all candidates, and a choice or optional section 2; so candidates selected the options best suited to their needs (Zimbabwe Junior Certificate Level Syllabus Document 1987:2-3).

In the new Religious and Moral Education syllabus document for the Zimbabwe Junior Certificate Level, it was further pointed out: Firstly, that the examination will be open to candidates belonging to any religious orientation or persuasion. This was the first major step in introducing a so-called life experience approach to the teaching of the subject Religious Education. Secondly, the subject in future was to be known as Religious and Moral Education as opposed to Religious Knowledge or Bible Knowledge during the colonial era. The focus was on developing morals, but the learner was also expected to gain religious knowledge or content (Religious and Moral Education syllabus document 1987:1-2). The syllabus document further stated that:

This syllabus offers the schools the best of both the old and the new in Religious Education: It offers a section, which follows the traditional approach of the past with a study of the Old Testament passages and a gospel. It also offers the life approach in which themes, applicable to all students, whatever their religious background, are studied. Biblical passages are referred to in an open way so that students find their cognitive perspective widened and deepened (Religious and Moral Education syllabus document 1987:1).

The “old” or colonial syllabus at the Zimbabwe Junior Certificate Level was mainly centred on the Old Testament and a gospel (see pp. 71-72 of this chapter). In the new post-colonial Zimbabwe Junior Certificate Level syllabus, however, a blending of the Old and New Testaments occurred, such as a combination of Old Testament passages and a gospel (such as The Gospel according to Mark). However, in the new syllabus, the life experience approach was also introduced. Despite the above contextualisation of Religious and Moral Education, the content of the subject still remained primarily biblical. However, learners were permitted to refer to their life experience, such as

illustrating their answers by giving examples from African traditional religion (Ndlovu 1993b:10-12).

The aims of the new Zimbabwe Junior Certificate Level syllabus were explicitly stated as follows:

- understand themselves, their hopes, desires and struggles in the light of faith in God.
- respect people whose beliefs differ from their own, hence, developing a spirit of tolerance and co-operation among various religious groups.
- study key events in the biblical story and be able to make a reasoned comment on the texts studied (Religious and Moral Education Syllabus Document 1987:5).

The new Zimbabwe Junior Certificate Level syllabus thus acknowledged the presence of members of other religions besides Christianity in Zimbabwean society. This recognition was important in light of the multi-faith debate which was still raging on at that stage.

Another important development by the government at the time of independence was the introduction of life themes, such as “My responsibility in the community”, “My search for values”, etc. in Religious and Moral Education teaching. Though this was a welcome move, references enunciated in the syllabus document were all biblical. The secondary schools taught the new Zimbabwe Junior Certificate Level syllabi (including the Religious Education syllabus) with effect from January 1986 (Religious and Moral Education Syllabus Document 1987:14-16).

With regard to examinations, two papers were set. Paper one was a multiple-choice paper and paper two consisted of both structured (short answer) and essay-type questions. In paper two, question one was a compulsory structured (short answer) question and the test items were set from a short passage. However, some structured (short answer) questions would be set without reference to passages. An example of a structured (short answer) question without a passage typically was as follows:

1. (a) Name **two** religions that believe in prophets. (2)
- (b) Which religion believes in the resurrection? (1)
- (c) Name **four** religions that believe in life after death. (4)
- (d) Explain how people in African traditional religion communicate with God. (6)

(Ndlovu 2000:1-2)

An example of an essay-type question typically was as follows:

Answer the following questions on the baptism of Jesus.

1. (a) Narrate the Baptism of Jesus. (20)
- (b) Give **two** reasons why people are baptised in society. (5)

(Ndlovu 2000:3-4)

Test items used since independence thus required Religious Education teachers to use the life experience approach, and learners had to study all religions in their locality. Hence, questions were set on African traditional religion; but in most cases the information required in this regard was basic. Candidates were also required to exercise their analytical skills in making judgement, for example, in giving reasons why people are

baptised, learners would interrogate the baptism ceremony and understand its importance in society before coming up with reasons why people are baptised. On the same note, learners would be applying knowledge learnt in the classroom about baptism to their daily experiences (Ndlovu 1993b:3-4). The examinations as implemented at this level after independence will be described more comprehensively under section 3.3.4 (see pp. 100-103 of this chapter).

3.3.3.2 Ordinary Level

The government also revamped and localised the Ordinary Level Religious Education syllabus. Since the examination and syllabus at that stage was still foreign, an attempt was made in 1984 to develop a “homegrown” examination and syllabus. Prior to 1984, the subject at Ordinary Level was referred to as Religious Knowledge or Bible Knowledge. The government in 1984 thus also made an attempt to broaden the scope and content of the subject at this level. In using the life experience approach learners were expected to study beyond the Bible and interrogate religious concepts in their own community. For example, if they studied the concept healing in the Bible, learners would examine the same concept in their own community. A good example of a healing miracle in the gospels is the healing of the blind man at Bethsaida (Mark 8:22-26). Learners would examine the different aspects of the miracle, such as the method of healing. Learners would then compare the latter with the different types of healing in their own community. It will be noted by the learners that Jesus used saliva to heal whereas in their community herbs are often used; or otherwise simple prayer may lead to the recovery of sight (the so-called faith healing). By interrogating the healing genre in this manner,

learners might acquire a broader perception of healing in terms of scope and content. The main objective was to rid Religious Education of its mainly biblical or Christian orientation. The subject also became known as Religious Studies (Ndlovu 1993a:13).

The Ordinary Level Religious Studies syllabus's revised preamble, aims and assessment criteria are presented below:

“Subjects 2042, 2043 Religious Studies

1.0 Preamble

The Religious Studies syllabus is intended to develop pupils' awareness of the religious and spiritual experience of people, both in history and today. By searching and discovery pupils should be enabled to grow in their own faith and to reason why they believe or act as they do. The aims as expressed in this syllabus, indicate a broader scope to the study of religion than was offered in the past and teachers should approach all content with these aims in mind.

2.0 Aims

To help the pupils develop:

- 2.1 an inquiring, critical and sympathetic approach to the study of religion, especially in its individual and corporate expression in the modern world.
- 2.2 an insight into the religious and spiritual areas of experience, particularly the African and Christian traditions which have profoundly affected their culture.
- 2.3 a respect for people whose beliefs differ from their own, and an increasing spirit of tolerance and co-operation among the various religious groups.

- 2.4 an awareness of the contribution of religion in the formation of the patterns of belief and behaviour which may enhance or hinder development.
- 2.5 a consistent set of beliefs, attitudes and practices which are the result of a personal process of growth, search and discovery.
- 2.6 the ability to investigate, analyse facts and draw conclusions on religious issues.

3.0 Assessment criteria

The examination will test the extent to which the candidates are able to:

- 3.1 recall, select and present relevant factual information in an organised manner.
- 3.2 show an understanding of the:
 - 3.2.1 language, terms and concepts used in Religious Studies.
 - 3.2.2 role and importance in religion of special people, writings and traditions.
 - 3.2.3 principal beliefs of the religions being studied and the ways in which these beliefs are related to the personal and corporate expression of religion.
 - 3.2.4 religious and, where appropriate, non-religious responses to moral issues in the pupils' own context.
 - 3.2.5 questions about the meaning of life and the variety of faith responses, which may be given to them.
 - 3.2.6 evaluation, on the basis of evidence and argument, of issues of belief and practice arising from Religious Studies” (Religious Studies Syllabus 1991:2).

The examination system as implemented at this level after independence will be described more comprehensively under section 3.3.4 (see pp. 100-103 of this chapter).

The aims (see p. 97 of this chapter), as expressed in this syllabus, indicate a broader scope to the study of religion than was offered in the past, (i.e. the immediate post-colonial period) as teachers were now compelled by the new syllabus to:

- develop and nurture a critical and objective approach amongst their learners as opposed to a confessional approach.
- impart knowledge of different value and belief systems, including African traditional religion.
- cultivate the spirit of tolerance and cooperation amongst the learners.

The Ordinary Level Religious Studies syllabus also introduced the life experience approach to Religious Education teaching. Learners were allowed to explore religious phenomena within their own context or frame of reference. The syllabus referred particularly to the African and Christian traditions. For the first time open and academic exploration of religion was envisaged, “the ability to investigate, analyse facts and draw conclusions on religious issues” (Ndlovu 1993b:14; Religious Studies Syllabus 1991:2). Learners were free to adopt or formulate their own views about religious aspects or issues. The post-colonial Ordinary Level Religious Studies syllabus was designed to make the subject relevant, viable and representative to the Zimbabwean learners, as all role-players endeavoured and believed that Religious Education in future should be relevant to the socio-cultural context of the Zimbabwean learner. The new Ordinary Level Religious Studies syllabus was taught from 1990 (Ndlovu 1993b:15).

The Ordinary Level Religious Studies course content comprised of two syllabuses. The first is Syllabus A. It has only one component, namely, The Life and Teachings of Christ as contained in the synoptic gospels - Matthew, Mark and Luke. Syllabus B comprised of two components, namely, The Life and Teachings of Christ as contained in the Gospel of Luke and Acts of the Apostles. The structure of the course follows the so-called textual and thematic approaches. In the textual approach teachers simply follow the layout of topics as is in the text (the Bible), whereas in the thematic approach teachers teach the whole synoptic text focusing on various themes and stories. Learners read stories from the gospels and then analyse or interpret them in order to gain full understanding of that particular story. Learners would also apply biblical stories to real life situations, for example, after studying baptism in Matthew 3:13-17, learners would study and examine different types of baptism ceremonies in their community, including the meaning attached to baptism by various believers (see pp. 95-96 of this chapter; Ndlovu 1993b:6-7).

3.3.4 Examinations

Regarding the Religious Education examinations, there was also a shift in emphasis in the post-independence educational reform programme. Religious Education examinations during the colonial period (1944–1979; secondary schools) tested the candidate's ability to recall facts, and analyse and evaluate a given text. After independence with the advent of the so-called life experience approach to Religious Education teaching, examinations from then on also tested the application of acquired religious concepts and beliefs (Ndlovu 2000:28).

After a detailed study of biblical texts, candidates apply what has been learnt to their life situations, for example, in teaching the parable of the rich fool (Luke 18:18-30), learners will discuss how the teaching applies to their everyday lives. They may even analyse, whether it is possible for rich believers to adhere to the teaching. An examination question in this paradigm at Ordinary Level is likely to be set in the following manner:

Read the following extract and answer the questions that follow:

a) *“Do not lay up for yourselves treasure on earth, where moth and rust consume ...”*

(Matthew 6:19).

- i. Complete the above saying by Jesus. (2)
- ii. What was the meaning of this instruction? (2)
- iii. Are people today following this teaching on riches? Support your answer. (2)

(Ndlovu 2000:29)

At Zimbabwe Junior Certificate Level, an examination question in this paradigm is likely to be set in the following manner:

Read the following carefully and answer the questions in the spaces provided on the answer sheet:

- a) In which land was Abraham when he received a call from God? (2)
- b) Why was Abraham saved by God? (6)
- c) State **two** forms of freedom the people in Zimbabwe still fight to get. (2)

(Ndlovu 2000:30).

The Zimbabwe Junior Certificate Level examination also included objective test items, such as multiple-choice questions. The following are examples of a multiple-choice question:

1. The story of the Good Samaritan encourages us to help ...
 - A our friends only.
 - B everyone who is in need.
 - C our family members.
 - D our school mates.

2. A true prophet is someone who ...
 - A brings problems to the people who worship God.
 - B fearlessly tells people what God is saying.
 - C heals and forgives sin.
 - D gives people rain.

(Ndlovu 2000:31)

From the above free-response and objective test items it is apparent that the post-independent Zimbabwe Junior Certificate Level examination questions tended to reflect the implementation of the life experience approach. Candidates were asked to relate the biblical text (stories and teachings) to their own life situation or context (Ndlovu 1996:8-10; Ndlovu 2000:31).

Despite the introduction of the life experience approach to Religious Education teaching in 1986, the content still remained primarily biblical. Learners were, however, allowed to refer to local examples where appropriate when writing examination papers. This development in Religious Education teaching was encouraging and demonstrated government's commitment to a relevant and meaningful curriculum. Despite deliberations on multi-faith Religious Education (i.e. conference held at the University of Zimbabwe in December 1989), the past twenty-four years in the development of Education in Zimbabwe has been a monolithic block of development that did not undergo and substantive changes.

3.4 RELEVANCE OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION TEACHING DURING THE POST-COLONIAL PERIOD, 1980-2003

Despite the above innovations, as described in section 3.3 (see pp. 89-103 of this chapter), in December 1989, a workshop was organised at the University of Zimbabwe to re-examine the persistent problem regarding Religious Education teaching in Zimbabwe, namely: In what manner must the different religions be approached and taught in Zimbabwe secondary schools in order to make Religious Education relevant to all?

The aims of the workshop were therefore set as follows:

- to examine multi-faith approaches and experiences in Religious Education from Europe and other regions and to assess the lessons to be learnt from them.

- to facilitate an open discussion on multi-faith issues and approaches in Religious Education by Zimbabwean and other participants drawn from different religions and faiths, disciplines and professions.
- to examine the interplay and relationship between Christian mainline churches and African traditional religion.
- to examine the place of the African traditional religious heritage in Religious and Moral Education in secondary school curricula.
- to examine curricula changes in Religious Education and the relationship of these to other developments in education.
- to examine pedagogical issues that relate to multi-faith approaches in Religious Education in secondary school teacher colleges.
- to examine ways and means of integrating some elements of African traditional religion through multi-faith approaches to Religious Education (Nondo 1991:1).

At the end of the conference, delegates agreed among others on the following:

- To engage the government through the Curriculum Development Unit in developing a relevant and viable Religious Education curriculum for Zimbabwe.
- To use expertise from the universities in developing relevant and effective instructional materials.
- To form partnerships with members of other value and belief systems in curriculum development (Nondo 1991:2).

Hence, the quest for relevance in Religious Education teaching continued in post-independence Zimbabwe. As a result of the influence of Christian missions, colonialism and Western education, many people in Zimbabwe are still ashamed of revealing their connection with African traditional beliefs and practices (Nondo 1991:4). Ndlovu (1993a:18) points out that a significant number of Africans are exhibiting two faiths (Christianity and African traditional Religion) in one mind. However, some Africans have severed their connection with African traditional beliefs and practices in favour of Western practices and Christianity.

The subject Religious Education is currently viewed as promoting Western culture and influence only; hence, it is under heavy criticism (Ndlovu 1993a:19). Machokoto (1983:29) makes the following remarks regarding the teaching of Religious Education as subject shortly after independence:

In the absence of an agreed national Religious Education syllabus, the teaching of Religious Education in our primary schools is not very satisfactory. Some teachers still teach as if they were teaching scripture or Bible Knowledge, the teacher would be concerned mainly with the children's accumulation of Bible Knowledge and just possibly with the understanding of Christian principles and doctrine. This approach is more historical than religious.

Further, Machokoto (1983:29), notes that the colonial Religious Education syllabus was irrelevant as it was primarily christocentric and biblical. He argues, however, that:

The approach to teaching Religious Education should be child-centred, having something to do with the child's experiences. The teacher should try to sensitise the child's attitudes and values so that he becomes an acceptable and useful member of society.

Despite the introduction of the life experience approach with independence making Religious Education teaching child-centred, addressing the learner's experiences, and sensitising his/her attitudes and values so that he/she becomes an acceptable and useful member of society; Religious Education teaching, however, remained irrelevant to the needs and aspirations of Zimbabwean learners (Ndlovu 1993b:21-22).

In 1999 the Report of the Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training under the chairmanship of Dr C.T. Nziramasanga noted that the current school curriculum, including Religious Education is still irrelevant to the needs and aspirations of Zimbabwean learners (Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training 1999:243). According to the Report:

The school curriculum was said to be irrelevant to the country's developmental needs because it offers very little to develop children's natural talents that are useful in the local context (Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training 1999:242).

In the Report the subject Religious Education came under serious criticism for ignoring African traditional religion and for being centred on the Bible only. According to the Report, during the colonial period (1890-1979), Religious Knowledge or Bible Knowledge was used as a platform to teach biblical truths or to communicate the Christian faith, and, it is noted with concern, that twenty years after independence the character and content of Religious Education is still the same (Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training 1999:101). The Report proposes in this regard:

Religious Education therefore must not aim at indoctrinating the students but at assisting them in their quest for value, for religious truth, and for faith. It must provide the individual the

opportunity to discover for themselves those things, which make life meaningful and purposeful; help them discover for themselves the relevance of religious faith for their lives. It must be education for living and not education for the sake of education. This means that Religious Education has to be relevant. It has to deal with issues that affect the child in his/her day-to-day activity; it must help the child to answer questions raised by their existence, and assisting in providing answers that satisfy the human predicament. This then raises the question of the content of religious education in our schools (Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training 1999:102).

According to an article in *The Herald* of 6 October 2000, the then Minister of Education in Zimbabwe, Dr S. Mumbengegwi is reported to have argued for a new look education system for Zimbabwe, including Religious Education. The Minister argues that:

Our education system is at a crossroads. We have to strive to develop a sense of identity within the system. We have to find ways of incorporating our culture into the education system (Herald (The) 2000a:2).

In *The Chronicle* of 1 September 2000 a member of the African Apostles Church of Johane Marange called for the inclusion of independent “churches” (religions: LN) in the Religious Education curriculum. He argued that such development will free Zimbabweans from alienation and acculturation (Chronicle (The) 2000a:5).

In *The Herald* of 26 November 2000, the then Deputy Minister of Education, Mr A. Chigwedere stated that his ministry was considering replacing Religious Education with a new subject called Moral Education as part of Social Studies (Herald (The) 2000b:13). Chigwedere argued that Religious Education teaching was used to transmit Western culture and values at the expense of local culture and values. He argued that schools

should teach Zimbabwean history and elements of local culture. This was proposed as the core of the Social Studies syllabus.

Chigwedere who is now (2004) the Minister of Education, pushed for the development of a Social Studies syllabus which would replace the current Religious Education syllabus at Grade 7 level. This new syllabus has gone through the National Syllabus Panel, and the government is now consulting stakeholders. This move has been under heavy criticism from predominantly Christian groups and the Ministry issued a press statement in *The Herald* of 3 December 2000 in this regard clarifying its position on the matter (Herald (The) 2000c:8). In the press statement the then Permanent Secretary for Education, Sport and Culture, Mr S. Chifunyise states:

The permanent secretary for Education, Sport and Culture would like to clarify that under the ongoing curriculum review exercise by the Ministry, Bible Knowledge and Moral Education are still considered relevant aspects of the curriculum. The Ministry has no plans to scrap Bible Knowledge and replace it with any other subject (Herald (The) 3 December 2000c:8).

Despite heavy criticism the government is committed to introducing the new integrated Social Studies syllabus. The government claims that Zimbabwean learners are ignorant of their own history, liberation war, and independence. For this reason, the learners should be taught elements of history. Religious Education, it is envisaged, would only be a topic within the above new syllabus. This development attracts heavy criticism from especially the Christians and the National Traditional Healers Association (Herald (The) 2001:6).

In August 2001 the government convened a syllabus panel meeting where among others the Social Studies syllabus was formulated and brainstormed. This concept syllabus has since been criticised, as all stakeholders were not consulted during the formulation stage. The Curriculum Development Unit hence convened a series of meetings to discuss the new proposed Social Studies syllabus together with other stakeholders, mainly teachers from the regional offices (Ndlovu 2001: Personal Experience).

In 2002 there emerged a new view from the educators and parliamentarians, that instead of Social Studies, the ministry should offer Parliamentary Studies instead. There was a lot of debate on this issue. However, the Ministers of Education and Justice agreed that Parliamentary Studies should be offered as a section within the Social Studies syllabus. In August 2002, the Curriculum Development Unit was still waiting for a policy document from the Minister of Education to state clearly the way forward (Curriculum Development Unit 2002:1).

In June 2003, the Muslim community in Zimbabwe threatened to take the government of Zimbabwe to the Supreme Court of Zimbabwe for failing to develop a multi-faith Religious Education syllabus. The Muslims argued against the present Religious Education curriculum and the future integrated studies curriculum and indicated that Muslim candidates were indoctrinated and fed with Christian teachings and were influenced contrary to teachings in the Holy Quran (Daily News (The) 25 June 2003:2).

In August 2003, a Muslim group of believers (the Islamic Convent of the Strict Observance) gave the government of Zimbabwe 60 days to rectify Zimbabwe's Christian biased school curriculum or face an urgent application in the Supreme Court for an order declaring unconstitutional the teaching of Christian subjects and the reciting of the Lord's Prayer at public schools. The Muslim group argued that the Religious Education curriculum contravened section 19 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe. The constitution provides for protection of freedom of worship and/or conscience (Daily News (The) 6 August 2003:1).

The quest for a multi-faith approach to Religious Education teaching in Zimbabwe secondary schools is relevant today (2004) as it was in 1980 after independence from Britain.

4. CONCLUSION

This chapter was primarily concerned with the history of Religious Education in Zimbabwe, before and after independence. As it is important to put the current educational developments in Zimbabwe, particularly the quest for a multi-faith approach to Religious Education as school subject into historical context.

The colonial history (1890-1979) of Zimbabwe is significant in order to understand the character and relevance of Religious Education as school subject. It is also essential to trace the role and efforts of the missionaries in shaping the character of Religious Education. This chapter also includes a historical survey of all post-independence

developments regarding Religious Education as school subject which influenced the current character and content of Religious Education in Zimbabwe secondary schools.

Chapter 3 will seek to interrogate the various approaches being used or to be used in teaching Religious Education in Zimbabwe secondary schools. The chapter will look at how the life experience approach evolved amid calls for radical changes, among others implementing the multi-faith approach to Religious Education teaching. The origin, rationale, characteristics, advantages and disadvantages of the life experience and multi-faith approaches will be discussed in greater detail.