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From “White Fathers” to “Black Fathers” in Kasama and Mpika Dioceses in Zambia

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Employing the missiological theory of Henry Venn (1796-1873) and Rufus Anderson (1796-1880) on indigenisation of churches, this article explores the lived experiences of black Zambian Catholic clergymen, nuns, catechists and lay people at some of the mission stations that were once in the hands of Missionaries of Africa, popularly known as White Fathers, from 1891 to 1991 in the Archdiocese of Kasama and Diocese of Mpika. To write about the White Fathers from the point of view of our interviewees accords us an auspicious opportunity to pay tribute to Fr. Hugo Hinfelaar to whom this article and this particular issue of the Zambia Journal of Social Sciences is dedicated. Having arrived in Zambia as a young Dutch White Father missionary in 1958, Fr. Hinfelaar desired to understand the culture of the Bemba people among whom he was working. He, therefore, became a serious field worker – an anthropologist, historian and theologian. He retired and returned home in 2014, after having contributed to the efforts of indigenising the Catholic Church’s clergy and inculturation of the Catholic faith in the country. The article demonstrates that the indigenisation of Kasama and Mpika Dioceses was incomplete. This is because, of the “three selves”: self-propagating church, self-sustaining church and self-governing church in the indigenisation theory, the self-sustaining church has not been realised according to the respondents, although some of them spoke of the White Fathers having accomplished their mission. This article proposes a re-engagement with the discourse of ‘self-sustainability’ which has largely been abandoned by local Catholic theologians. However, it is now an issue which has become all too apparent to be ignored as the Catholic Church becomes more and more indigenised, at least in terms of its clergy. This article proposes a new theme in Church history in Zambia, namely, the localisation of the personnel and self-sustainability in the Catholic Church in Zambia.

Keywords:

Missionaries of Africa, White Fathers, local priests, dioceses, Fr. Hugo, mission station, parish, Mpika Diocese, Archdiocese of Kasama, Northern Province, Muchinga Province, missionary, indigenisation, sustainability

Introduction

In response to a call for papers in honour of Fr. Hugo Hinfelaar (henceforth, Fr. Hugo as he is popularly known in Zambia), this article's intention is to introduce a post White Fathers' history of their erstwhile mission stations in the hands of Zambian diocesan priests. Implicit in doing so is the question: What happens when parishes that were under an international Catholic congregation or society are placed in the full charge of local people? We do not claim to have exhaustively answered the question, but propose a new chapter in mission history in Zambia. The focus of this article is twofold: to understand how priests in Zambia perceived the White Fathers' withdrawal from the Archdiocese of Kasama and the Diocese of Mpika in Northern and Muchinga provinces respectively, and, secondly, the fiscal implications of that withdrawal.

The first part of the article is a note on the White Fathers' entry and establishment of mission stations in northern Zambia. The second explores lived perspectives of Zambian indigenous priests and other people (lay and religious) on the departure of the White Fathers from mission stations that had been oases of Catholicisation and Westernisation of the indigenous people of Northern and Muchinga provinces. Overall, the article accounts for the White Fathers' departure from the two dioceses, which began in 1991, from the point of view of those who participated in the study, and explores their responses relating to economic challenges resulting from the absence of the White Fathers.

In order to capture this theme of the special issue of the *Zambia Social Science Journal (ZSSJ)* in honour of Fr. Hugo, we are reminded of Fr. Agbonkhianmeghe Orobator (2008)'s book, entitled *Theology Brewed in An African Pot: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine from An African Perspective*. Fr. Orobator introduces the reader to two characters in Chinua Achebe's novel, *Things Fall Apart*, a literary account of an encounter between missionary Christianity and African traditional religious beliefs. Fr. Orobator argues that the character of the fictitious Mr. Brown who had led a small band of pioneer Christian missionaries to the village of Umuofia in Achebe's novel, is a clear depiction of early missionary encounters with African traditional religious beliefs. Mr. Brown is described as someone who used to dialogue with Chief Akunna about religion through an interpreter. According to Fr. Orobator, Achebe tells his reader that neither of them (Mr. Brown nor Chief Akunna) succeeded in converting the other. However, each learned more about their different beliefs and in the end, Mr. Brown earned the respect of the people for his restrained and sensible approach to the deep religious differences that divided members of his church and the people of Umuofia (Orobator, 2008, 13). In our article, we liken Fr. Hugo to Mr. Brown. Like Mr. Brown, Fr. Hugo did not convert to Bemba religion, but came to understand it through dialogue. The converts on their part mixed Catholicism

and their religion. Had discarding of existing indigenous religious beliefs been a requirement for conversion to the Catholic faith, Fr. Hugo would admit that it would have been a non-starter.

Methodology and Theory

Anthony Tambatamba's doctoral dissertation supervised by Austin Cheyeka and Tomaida Milingo provides the preliminary findings for this article which is based on interviews in ongoing fieldwork. Methodologically, the study employed a qualitative strategy of data generation and analysis. With regard to design, the study is an illustrative case study aimed at showing what participants in the study felt about the withdrawal of the White Fathers from Northern and Muchinga provinces and its implications. The article is based on fifteen (15) interviews of the thirty five (35) that will constitute the findings chapter in the doctoral dissertation.

The 'indigenous church mission theory' of Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson has been employed to make sense of what is clearly an episode in mission history, and the place of Fr. Hugo therein. Given the nature of the subject of the article, the theory is undoubtedly appropriate for two reasons. Firstly, it reflects the purpose of the White Fathers, which is to set up a local church (Hinfelaar, 2004). Secondly, the theory provides a lens to evaluate the success of the White Father's objective in mission in the two dioceses.

Venn was Secretary of the Church Missionary Society in the United Kingdom from 1841 to 1872, while Anderson was Secretary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission (Hastings, 1994). Their strategy for the indigenisation of churches is explained as follows:

For Anderson and Venn, it was becoming increasingly clear that the task of the missionary was not just to go abroad to preach and convert people or even to translate and spread afar the scriptures... The task of the foreign missionary is to go where there is no local church in order to establish one. Once a native church is functioning, he can and should move on. A self-governing church is to be followed by the 'euthanasia' of the mission (Hastings, 1994, 294).

To put it differently, the objective of foreign missionaries ought to be the creation of well-organised churches and then handing them over to local converts so that the foreign mission acts as a scaffolding, which must be removed once the community of believers is functioning properly. By then, missionaries would have provided education, pastoral care, sacraments, buildings, finances and trained local converts to take over these responsibilities so that the church becomes indigenous – self-supporting, self-propagating and self-governing. As

mentioned by Hastings above, Venn and Anderson were Protestant theoreticians, but *Propaganda Fide* (the department of the pontifical administration charged with the spread of Catholicism and with the regulation of ecclesiastical affairs in non-Catholic countries) has provided for the duo's theory in the Catholic Church by stressing the formation of a native priesthood (Hastings, 1994, 295). Indeed, in 1890, the founder of the society of the White Fathers, Charles Lavigerie, Archbishop of Algiers who later became Cardinal Lavigerie (July, 1882) even made a suggestion to the Pope to allow a married priesthood in Africa. The suggestion was rejected (Hastings, 1994, 297).

The White Fathers in the Context of Christianity in Zambia

In discussing a topic relating to Christian churches, it is important to place it in the broader context of Christianity in the country. As at mid-year 2019, of the 17.9 million people in Zambia, 95.5% was estimated to be Christian, 75.3% Protestant and 20.3% Catholic (US International Report for 2019, 2). Statistics of denominational affiliation are difficult to obtain from churches and government departments such as the Central Statistical Office. Given the period of time that Northern and Muchinga provinces have been evangelised by the White Fathers, it is possible to reason that the two provinces are likely to have more Catholics than any other provinces in Zambia, notwithstanding the fact that many would have migrated to urban areas.

As indicated already, this article is situated in mission history or missiology. From its inception, according to Robert Strayer (1976, 1), mission history was part of the metropolitan-ecclesiastical school of mission history, which focused on European strategies for the planting of Christianity in Africa and on the heroic missionary efforts to implement these plans. This literature hardly spoke to the theme of encounter of missionary Christianity and African Traditional Religions. In this respect, it resembled the early colonial history, which saw Africa as a stage on which Europeans of all kinds played out their interests and their fantasies (Strayer, 1976, 1).

Today, the history of missions is a special history and treated separately from secular history. More importantly, mission historians have given attention not only to what missionaries did, but also to the contribution of Africans to the evangelisation of their fellow Africans. To this end, Brian Garvey wrote *Bembaland Church; Religious and Social Change in South Central Africa, 1891-1964* from the backdrop of the new mission historiography. Garvey's first chapter describes Bembaland and its societies in terms of religion, politics and customs. The last chapter deals with the establishment of the structures of the Church, namely, an African clergy, mission education and teachers as well as catechists. In *History of the Catholic Church in Zambia* (2004), Fr. Hugo paid

particular attention to the local Zambians – priests, nuns, catechists, teachers, helpers and others – describing their role in evangelisation and the growth of the Church. In addition, in his seminal *Bemba-Speaking Women of Zambia in a Century of Religious Change (1892-1992)* published in 1994, Fr. Hugo describes most comprehensively the religious context of Bembaland and the religious roles of the Bemba woman. The White Fathers in Kasama and Mpika Dioceses became social anthropologists in their own right. Overall, they were sympathetic to the local culture, which made them forbearing and accommodating towards Bemba culture and religious beliefs (Udelhoven, 2017) because they adhered to their founder's instructions of respecting local cultures (Ceillier, 2011, 155-169).

The White Fathers and Fr. Hugo in Mission History

It is an all too familiar story: the beginning of Christianity in Zambia was aided by the Scottish missionary, Dr. David Livingstone, who died at Chitambo village in 1873 in what is now Chitambo District in Central Province. The coming of the White Fathers to Zambia was influenced by Livingstone's writings. Jean Claude Ceillier (2011, 18) states that Cardinal Lavigerie read with great interest Livingstone's reports to the British and American newspapers during his travels.

There is a wealth of documentation of the White Fathers' mission to Kasama and Mpika Dioceses, attributable to the society's own powerful intellectual tradition (Vaughan, 2013, 1; Hinfelaar and Macola, 2003). About the coming of the White Fathers in the two dioceses, we learn that some were active in eastern Africa from 1878 and made contact with the Bemba in 1891. After establishing a post in the area of the Mambwe, north of the Bemba boundary (Garvey, 1977) and until the arrival of the first Jesuits in 1905 in Southern Province, the White Fathers were the sole Catholics in the territory. From Mambwe-Mwela, they moved into Bembaland led by Bishop Joseph Dupont nicknamed *Moto Moto* (Fire Fire) (Hinfelaar, 2015, 19) because of the ferocity of his expression and his temper (Gordon, 2012, 52). The White Fathers' founder had encouraged his pioneer missionaries to seek out and convert important rulers (Garvey, 1977), a medieval throwback called the 'Clovis model', which was premised on the logic that once the king had converted, the subjects would follow suit, thereby establishing a Christian kingdom (Hastings, 1994). In 1895, Dupont established contact with Chief Makasa, who invited him to open a mission station at Kayambi (Hinfelaar, 2003, 367). Dupont later left Zambia in 1912 and died in Tunisia in 1930. He had become a legendary figure in Bembaland partly because of the popular belief that for a short period he had held the Mwamba chieftaincy (Hinfelaar, 2003, 365). In 2000, his bones were brought back to Zambia and reburied on 15 December in the old chapel at Chilubula Mission (Hinfelaar, 2003, 365), which had served as the Headquarters of the White Fathers for years.

After founding Chilubula Mission, the White Fathers became, as Fr. Charles Hannecart (2012) described them, “intrepid sowers” of the Gospel, opening up new mission stations in line with their founder’s pastoral action for the development of parishes, the formation of the clergy, provision of schools, and youth ministry (Ceillier, 2011). The term ‘mission station’ as Reinhard Henkel (1989, 24) suggests, is so frequently used in Zambia that its meaning seems to be too obvious to require any definition. However, in its original use, the term ‘mission station’, meant, ‘a place of residence for one or more missionaries from Christendom’ (Henkel, 1989, 24). This meant that a mission station could only be called so when there was a European, American, Canadian or British missionary in residence. A well-known example of this in Zambia is the Lubwa Mission of the Free Church of Scotland which was presided over by David Kaunda from Malawi, but only came to be called a mission station when in 1913 the first European missionary, Reverend Robert McMinn, settled there (Henkel, 1989, 25). In this article, we will use ‘mission station’ and ‘parish’ interchangeably, but, what is popularly used after the departure of the White Fathers is ‘parish’.

Clearly, the White Fathers had the resources and the personnel from overseas. They created several mission stations, which became oases of not only Western civilisation, but Christianisation as well. The school, chapel and clinic were the tools of evangelisation. From the early days, although not from the outset, the White Fathers attempted to establish Christian villages, which entailed basic education. As a result, it became important for a mission to have a “school” in as many areas as possible (Carmody, 2002). Nevertheless, the main concern of the White Fathers was conversion to Catholicism and the formation of a native clergy. The school became pivotal in achieving the latter and in promoting the growth of the local church to the extent that, in 1922, Pope Pius XI petitioned missionaries to build schools and hospitals instead of churches and episcopal palaces (Carmody, 2002, 784).

Enthroned in 1993, the late Archbishop, James Mwewa Spaita, the third indigenous Zambian Archbishop of Kasama witnessed the White Fathers’ withdrawal and wrote:

The missionaries, like the apostles, realised their duty to promote vocations to the priesthood and the religious life. When I was a boy, there was a prayer for vocations at the end of mass.... There were many sermons about the priesthood and the religious life (Spaita, 2012, 10).

Most of the current priests in Mpika and Kasama dioceses are from parishes that were created by the White Fathers (Spaita, 2012). Their formation was an undertaking that Fr. Hugo participated in as a lecturer at Mpima Major Seminary from 1989 to 1993 and it is not philosophy or church history that he taught, but

Social Anthropology and African Traditional Religion. Our assumption is that his objective in teaching these courses was to assist seminarians to understand their own cultures from which they had become uprooted and alienated as a result of rapid social change in a modernising and Christianised society, but more importantly, to help them present the gospel to their parishioners meaningfully in the vernacular. In assessing the formation of priests in Zambia, Fr. Hugo stated forthrightly that the training was, and is still solid and numbers of vocations were encouraging (Interview, 22 November 2017). To be sure, as far back as 1919, Pope Benedict XV had emphasised, “When speaking of a native clergy, the church intends to produce a clergy who would be equally well educated as those in Europe or America. There should be no question of a second-class clergy” (Carmody, 2002, 784). If the indigenous priests were to take eventual responsibility for running their own church, this was necessary (Carmody, 2020, 29).

Promoting vocations to the priesthood in Kasama and Mpika Dioceses started as far back as 1921 when the White Fathers opened the first seminary in Zambia at Chilubula Mission. However, it took many years before the first black priest, Fr. John Chali Lyamibaba was ordained as a diocesan priest in 1946 (Spaita, 2012, 11). At least, when gauged by the vocations to priesthood since 1946 as observed by Archbishop Spaita (2012), the evangelisation of the people of what are Kasama and Mpika Dioceses today, must be regarded as one of the greatest success stories in the history of the White Fathers. However, vocations to priesthood in the fold or society of the White Fathers itself appeared long after the White Fathers had established themselves. The reason, according to Fr. Hugo is that, “The White Fathers were not intent on perpetuating their society amongst the local Zambian population... Most of the young men were gently but firmly refused any access to their ranks” (Hinfelaar, 2004, 238). Even then, the number of indigenous diocesan priests remained small and the White Fathers themselves gradually became the leaders of the local Zambian church. They lost some of their missionary zeal, the will to go out to other regions and areas to announce the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The loyalty of a number of them was more to the local bishop, than to their own missionary society (Hinfelaar, 2004, 237). The first local (black) Zambian White Father priest was ordained on 25 August 1991 at Chilubula Mission together with nine diocesan priests on that particular day (Spaita, 2012) during the 100-year jubilee of the Church in Zambia.

Sadly, the jubilee and the departure of the White Fathers marked the beginning of a different departure – an unprecedented number of deaths of diocesan priests in the Archdiocese of Kasama. From 1991 to 2012, twenty-four (24) priests died (Spaita, 2012). Before his death in 2012, Fr. Joseph Mutashala composed a song about *ukushinshimuna imipashi* (venerating the spirits of

the dead) in memory of the deceased priests and reproduced it several times to add other deceased priests from other dioceses of the country. One of the priests of the Archdiocese informed us that on the eve of the departure of the White Fathers, there were about seventy-five diocesan priests (Interview by A. Tambatamba, 12 July 2020). Deaths and leaving the priesthood brought about a serious shortage of priests in parishes. While there were three to five White Fathers in a parish, currently, many parishes have only one or two priests in charge.

Fr. Hugo arrived at Mulanga Mission in 1958 and worked in several parishes. He once served as Rector of the Catechists' Training Centre at Mulilansolo. He ended up, figuratively speaking, being cooked in the Bemba pot. At Mulanga Mission, Fr. Hugo experienced the horror of the Lumpa Uprising that sent him into deeper reflection on the encounter of Christianity and African Traditional Religion. The Lumpa Uprising involved a clash between an African Independent Church under the leadership of a woman called Alice Lenshina and the colonial government soldiers just before Zambia's independence on 24 October 1964. The conflict resulted in the destruction of Lumpa villages and considerable loss of life. Fr. Hugo's research and publications, especially *Bemba-Speaking Women of Zambia in a Century of Religious Change (1892-1992)*, suggest that his missionary purpose was not primarily to reform or erase traditional religious Bemba beliefs in his parishes. He was sympathetic to the Bemba cultural beliefs that were at the same time religious, and made every effort to understand them. Because he had learned the CiBemba language, he was able to delve deep into 'the hearts of the people' (Ter Haar, 1996, 217). Fr. Hugo entered the world of the Bemba to see how their worldview had come to be. Consequently, while many of his contemporaries, particularly his superiors (and especially the bishops) treated Alice Lenshina's Lumpa Church and Emilio Mulolani's Church of the Sacred Heart as if they were a disease to be cured, Fr. Hugo set out to understand why these two Bembas founded their own churches. In so doing, he paid particular attention to the Bemba encounter with Christianity and in tandem therewith, their defensive reaction to Protestant and Catholic Christianity respectively.

Paying particular attention to the Bemba woman, Fr. Hugo studied her traditional religious roles and illustrated how modernity and Roman Catholicism had modified them. He developed his own anthropological framework with which to analyse Alice Lenshina's protest against Western Christianity. The three roles of the Bemba woman of *Chibinda wa Ng'anda* (Enabler of the Domestic Cult); *Kabumba wa Mapepo* (Initiator of Worship); and *NaChimbusa wa Chisungu* (Tutor of the Transcendent) had been, he argued, irrevocably disturbed. This was because the Bemba were socialised in the new cultural

matrix of modernity and the Christianity of the White Fathers – ordained male priests and Protestant clergymen of the United Church of Scotland at Lubwa. On Lenshina, Fr. Hugo remarked, “She pleaded for what later would be called: Inculturation (Hinfelaar, 1994, 99). About Mulolani, he opined, “It may be that if he had launched his movement a decade or more later, he would have been taken far more seriously by religious thinkers” (Hinfelaar, 1994, 125). Mulolani made a serious attempt to integrate traditional religion with the teaching of the Catholic Church in a way that was attractive to the Bemba speaking women as enablers of the domestic cult, initiators of worship and transmitter of the sacred heritage (Hinfelaar, 1994). Tarcicius Mukuka, who interviewed Mulolani in 2010, opined that Mulolani argued for Afro-centric Christianity, Zambian Catholicism, Christian egalitarianism and a Maria or Mary-centric Christianity, and because of the centrality of the woman in Bemba traditional cosmology Mulolani added *Namfumu Maria* (Mary, mother of Jesus) to the Trinity (Personal communication, 10 April 2021).

Above all, we argue, Fr. Hugo’s sourcing of funds from contacts back home to build Bauleni Parish and a Centre named Faith and Encounter Centre Zambia (FENZA) in Lusaka is a clear illustration of the profound influence that traditional Bemba religious beliefs had had on him and he on them. At FENZA Fr. Hugo was aiming to help Zambian Christians to speak of Christ in their own languages, using their own symbol systems.

The parishes that were established and remained under the White Fathers for many years were not exclusively manned by expatriate priests from Holland, France, Germany, Canada and England. Black Zambian diocesan priests also served in the White Fathers’ mission stations or parishes as diocesan priests and lived with their expatriate colleagues. In fact, before ordination, many seminarians from Kasama and Mpika Dioceses did their pastoral experience in the parishes of the White Fathers. However, we learned from a White Father that some black priests resisted appointments to the mission stations under the White Fathers because they felt that “they were done with formation and did not want to be subjected to the control of whites” (E-mail to A.Cheyeka, 8 January 2020). The point to repeat is Archbishop Spaita (2012)’s acknowledgement that, to date, nearly all the vocations in Kasama and Mpika Dioceses were nurtured at the White Fathers’ mission stations. The White Fathers were the only Catholic missionary society of priests in the two dioceses. The Zambian priests we interviewed had their vocations to the priesthood fostered by the White Fathers. They returned to the parishes that had been under the White Fathers for pastoral work and, as parish priests or assistant parish priests upon ordination. What we focus on here are their views rooted in their daily experiences of the absence of the White Fathers.

Reasons for the Departure of the White Fathers

Two research questions of the study were utilised for this article: How did Zambian priests explain the White Fathers’ withdraw from Kasama and Mpika Dioceses? What is the major challenge that the black priests are facing after the departure of the White Fathers? In our analysis of the data, two broad themes became evident: 1) Decreasing numbers of White Fathers, increasing numbers of diocesan priests and a belief in ‘mission accomplished’, and 2) Lack of money to carry out pastoral work effectively.

Decreasing Numbers of White Fathers, Increasing Numbers of Diocesan Priests and Accomplishment of Mission

From the White Fathers’ local leadership, we learned that the withdrawal, *...was not a deliberate withdrawal. It was observed that the number of missionaries started going down, and the missionaries thought of withdrawing and giving way to the diocesan priests whose number started increasing very fast, more especially after the centenary celebration, which was in 1991 when the Archdiocese of Kasama ordained nine diocesan priests while the White Fathers ordained the first ever black White Father by the name of Fr. Patrick Mumbi. It was in the same year that Mpika Diocese in Muchinga Province also ordained three priests. Looking at the difference and the number of years – after one hundred years of Christian faith, the White Fathers had the first black father in 1991. Therefore, it was good to start handing over to the diocesan priests whose number started increasing and it was symbolic.* (Interview by A. Tambatamba, 16 November 2019).

Our interviewees repeated this response in different ways. Fr. Mumbi added, “It was not just a process of handing over, but it was also Zambianisation [localisation], so that the church could become indigenous, grow and look after itself” (Interview by A. Tambatamba, 17 November 2019). In the light of Fr. Mumbi’s point, it can be said that the White Fathers being an international congregation, priests from Europe, England and North America would have been replaced with their fellow priests from Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The Zambian clergy expected and welcomed the development of a Zambian clergy, but they were not prepared for such a rapid reduction in the numbers of white missionaries.

A priest, who had been ordained seven years after the White Fathers had left, said that the White Fathers had completed their programme because:

... They came for their mission not actually to train indigenous Zambians to become White Fathers but rather that they become ministers to their

own people... They had actually done their mission, so they started to let go many of the parishes especially here in Northern Province in Kasama Archdiocese (Interview by A. Tambatamba, 23 August 2019).

Having had two pastoral experiences in a community of the White Fathers during his formation as a priest and full of praises for the White Fathers, another priest explained the withdrawal of the White Fathers as follows:

The reason they [White Fathers] came was to establish missions, but it seems that their founder told them not to stay in those missions for ever. Eventually, they were supposed to groom the local people who could take up those activities and the mission they were carrying out (Interview by A. Tambatamba, 10 August 2019).

In an interview with one retired bishop who had served as bishop of Mbala-Mpika Diocese from 1987 to 2004, we were told: "White Fathers are missionaries and everywhere missionaries go, they do not go there to stay, they go to evangelise people and after they have seen that there is enough evangelisation, they leave.... So, time had come for them to move on to some other places. They moved to Lusaka and opened a new mission field in Western province " (Interview by A. Tambatamba, 14 September 2020).

One achievement of the White Fathers in Zambia thirty-five years after they had arrived in Zambia is the founding, by Bishop Etienne-Benoît Larue, of a congregation of religious sisters called Sisters of the Child Jesus in 1926 at Chilubula. A sister there, with fifty-eight years of sisterhood behind her, narrated her understanding of the departure of the society of her founder as follows:

I would rather say that the White Fathers phased out from these two dioceses to obey the mandate of their founder, Cardinal Charles Lavigerie. He directed them to let Africans become apostles to their own people. As such, they were sent to establish local churches.... with this spirit of accomplishing their mission and move on. The presence of a local bishop, priests and religious and Catholic laity were signs of this achievement. That is why they delayed in recruiting priestly and religious vocations to their own society (Interview by A. Tambatamba, 2 June 2020).

This sister, being a product of the White Fathers, knew their history off-the-cuff. Her fellow sister who had served for sixty-seven years at the time of the interview had this to say:

They had started to become few in number and there were no others coming from Europe and America. They were also becoming old.... Additionally, their constitution stipulated that after evangelising people

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for a hundred years, they were mandated to go to another place. This is because they saw that people had become mature in faith and more especially that the two dioceses had their own bishops. So, from Kasama and Mpika Dioceses, they went to Mongu Diocese where they opened new mission stations (Interview by A. Tambatamba, 19 August 2019).

The third Sister who was interviewed from the Sisters of the Child Jesus had served for forty-one years. She volunteered the following explanation:

The main reason was that they were becoming fewer. Most of them were too old and there were no White Fathers coming any more. They would say, “Now it is up to you, we have done our best, you can now be on your own. It is one hundred years since we came (Interview by A. Tambatamba, 13 September 2019).

All the local priests interviewed, although not as detailed as the Sisters of the Child Jesus, who quite clearly had learned the history of Cardinal Lavigerie during their noviciate, mentioned ageing, no more vocations back home, appearance of local priests and marking of the centenary as reasons for the withdrawal of the White Fathers. At one parish, the priest in charge responded:

The reason they came was to establish the missions but it seems they were told by their founder not to stay in those missions forever. Eventually, they were supposed to groom the local people who could take up the mission stations.... That is why if you can remember in our archdiocese, the White Fathers were not very keen on making or grooming the local priests to be White Fathers. However, they were encouraging young boys to join the diocese by becoming priests so that they could take up that mission. The second is that they were growing old and some of them were dying while others were retiring and going back to their homes. Because of their age, they could not manage the many parishes hence, they began to think that their mission was done and they had groomed enough clergy, the local priests, who could run the parishes (Interview by A. Tambatamba, 19 August 2019).

All respondents explained the withdrawal of the White Fathers from Kasama and Mpika Dioceses in accordance with the first theme of “decreasing numbers of White Fathers, increasing numbers of local priests and mission accomplished”. A layperson who had worked for the White Fathers since 1959 stressed the “mission accomplished” explanation: “What I heard was that Father Superior told them to go back to their homeland and hand over the church to the locals because they were done with their work” (Interview by A. Tambatamba, 20 August 2019).

The respondents felt that the White Fathers had, in accordance with Venn and Anderson's theory, provided schooling, pastoral care, sacraments, buildings, finances and leadership, and nurtured vocations to the priesthood at different mission stations or parishes. When they proved that the dioceses of Kasama and Mpika were self-governing, and self-propagating although not, as evidence from our data suggests, fully self-supporting, they left. This was because, as Fr. Hugo had put it: "The grains of wheat had fallen into fertile soil and seed had given birth to a strong and vibrant Catholic Church in Zambia, ready to make history in the next century" (Hinfelaar, 2004, 432) under Black Fathers [*our addition*]. It is important to point out that, as far as self-governing is concerned, the Archdiocese of Kasama has been under local bishops since 1965 when Fr. Clement Chabukasansha (Diocesan priest) was consecrated bishop taking over from Bishop Marcel Daubechies. However, what is Mpika Diocese today in Muchinga Province only came to be under a black bishop when, in 1987, Bishop Teleshore Mpundu succeeded Bishop Adolf Fürstenberg of what was then known as Mbala-Mpika Diocese. In 2007 Mpika Diocese was created and Fr. Ignatius Chama became bishop of the new diocese.

One hypothetical question that would be interesting to answer is, would the White Fathers have remained in Kasama and Mpika Dioceses had they been receiving priests from their home countries? A concrete question would be: was, as David Bosch (2001, 5) calls it, a "certificate of maturity" granted too early to the black priests? While the local priests in this study praised the incredible work of the White Fathers, they felt that the White Fathers left too early. In the interviews, without exception, all the local priests bemoaned the situation of unpreparedness that they were left in by the White Fathers. In short, it would seem, from interviews, that, the black priests were not ready yet to continue the work of their missionary counterparts. At issue was the financial implications of the departure of the white missionaries.

Implications of the Departure of the White Fathers on the Dioceses

The local Zambian priests reported the implications of the departure of the White Fathers with a deep sense of concern. This is because, we think, it touched on their livelihoods and their relationship with their parishioners. One priest aptly expressed this: "Somehow, they [White Fathers] never prepared the Christians for their exit. They were also supposed to tell the Christians that they were phasing out and that the people who were taking over did not have money" (Interview by A. Tambatamba, 22 August 2019).

Challenge of Insufficient Money to Effectively Carry Out Pastoral Work

Preliminary data from the interviews indicates that the "Black Priests" are facing

financial challenges. The departure of the White Fathers has meant that the black bishops of Kasama Archdiocese and Mpika Diocese have to find resources to pay stipends for their priests and to fund developmental and pastoral projects. Sympathetic to the situation of the local bishops and their priests, one of the local Zambian White Fathers said, "Although the White Fathers have left, they should look at the Church of Africa and help financially.... It should not be a complete divorce (Interview by A. Tambatamba, 2 August 2019). Another black Zambian of the Missionaries of Africa was of the view that there was not enough preparation done for the diocesan priests (Interview by A. Tambatamba, 16 November 2019). We learned that there was not a considered handover of parishes to the diocesan priests because the White Fathers were simply taken out of the parishes and keys to their houses handed to the bishops (E-mail to Cheyeka, 8 January 2021).

The diocesan priests who came to occupy the mission stations did and do not have established resources (monetary or organisational) to carry out the work of evangelisation as did the priests they took over from. Father Hugo understood the situation this way: "While their priestly training is solid, they have the challenge of finances. While missionaries [White Fathers] used to write back home to ask for financial help, local priests do not have the resources – money, motor vehicles and material things to give to the poor" (Interview by A. Cheyeka, 22 November 2017). He went on to explain, "Africans saw us with money and thought that they would be like us. They might want to do something for the people, but they do not have the means. Unfortunately, back home [Europe] young people are not in church, so there is no collection of money" (Interview by A. Cheyeka, 22 November 2017). The significant point to make is that the sources drying up or which have dried up have tended to be those that could be used for specifically religious purposes.

The question of finances will be dealt with in two ways: the generation of money and fiscal discipline. All the priests interviewed complained about lack of money in their parishes, more so, those in the villages. In the Archdiocese of Kasama, a priest faulted the White Fathers for not having invested in real estate and companies. He complained that:

They [White Fathers] did not leave a lot of buildings. If they had invested some money in companies or estates like houses in town so that we could be getting rentals in order to run the diocese, that never happened. This has had a negative effect on us (Interview by A. Tambatamba, 22 August 2019).

The White Fathers were also accused by one priest of Kasama Archdiocese of having taken with them all the money from the treasury. He said:

The White Fathers have a religious approach where they have a common

coffer and they kept the money together which was used for pastoral purposes. And when they took the money and created their own treasury leaving the diocesans to stand on their own, I think they removed the scaffolds too quickly when the building was not completed (Interview by A. Tambatamba, 12 August 2019).

Clearly, there are two complaints against the White Fathers. First, they are accused of not having left money or money generating investments for the Zambian priests to run their parish houses and the parishes, and second, they did not prepare the parishioners to accept the poverty of the local priests. As regards the view that the White Fathers had taken with them the money instead of leaving it behind for the local priests to use, a sister contested this by arguing:

The White Fathers left a ranch with five hundred head of cattle, but there is no cattle any more. They left a garage with machinery, but there is no machinery because it has all been sold. The diocesan priests have failed to manage the fat account, which the White Fathers left with the diocesan treasury. In short, the diocesan priests depleted the account, which the White Fathers left. Maybe this is because the White Fathers did not train the diocesan priests how to manage resources (Interview by A. Tambatamba, 4 July 2020).

Interestingly, the priest who made the complaint that was challenged by the sister cited above, lamented, without any sense of contradiction, "I remember the White Fathers left a garage, trucks and a ranch full of cattle, but we have failed to sustain this so as to boost our coffers. We have become dependent on the Christians [parishioners]" (Interview by A. Tambatamba, 12 August 2019).

Another priest expressed his perspective on the local Zambian diocesan priests' situation after the departure of the White Fathers in the following statements:

The White Fathers had the resources and were highly supported especially because they had a common coffer, which was supported from abroad. To date, the White Fathers who have remained in Zambia are being supported. However, for us, we depend on the local people. If a vehicle breaks down, it is difficult to repair it and when it becomes a non-runner, buying a new one is almost impossible (Interview by A. Tambatamba, 10 August 2019).

Not aiming at a grand, large-scale survey, but with the intention to indicate responses across the country, Austin Cheyeka's (2012) survey on Zambian Catholic priests' economic situation disclosed that, overall, in many rural

parishes, it was dire. In addition, in answering the question, are the local priests enjoying the same deference as the European priests? Cheyeka found that parishioners tended to compare their current situation to the situation they were in when missionaries from overseas were present. In the present article, we note that participants believed that the local priest was not regarded in high esteem by the people who had become dependent, especially for material things, on the White Fathers. A catechist told us that, "There has been opposition and lack of confidence in the local priests. The local people are saying that the diocesan priests are young, have no money and are not doing a good job of leading the church" (Interview by A. Tambatamba, 17 August 2019). One parish priest who had been Rector of a major seminary shed more light on the observation of the Catechist by pointing out that:

The negatives [about the withdrawal of the White Fathers] are that, first of all, the handover was done too quickly in some parishes and some diocesan priests were not ready to assume responsibilities of those parishes, because they were still young and had no experience of running parishes. Worst of all, they did not have resources in terms of transport and for maintenance of buildings. It became very difficult to run parishes (Interview by A. Tambatamba, 23 August 2019).

The mentality of the parishioners especially in the remote rural areas was that they belonged to a rich church. It is not surprising that we learned that some parishioners were unsympathetic to the situation of their priests whom they branded as stingy (Interview by A. Tambatamba, 10 August 2019).

Is it tenable to argue that the White Fathers did not train the local priests how to run parishes? From the findings, it is clear that, missiologically, the White Fathers adhered to the objectives of their society. It was their unashamed aim to establish the Catholic Church in the Archdiocese of Kasama and Diocese of Mpika and move on. However, they did not do so until a century elapsed, when the flow of Western missionaries stopped and actually became a thing of the past. Black priests have no doubt found cosy parish houses to live in with modern Western conveniences. From the interviews, black priests are of the view that the White Fathers did not prepare the parishioners to be led by their local priests who would not meet their material needs. Additionally, blame has been put on the White Fathers for not having prepared black priests to live as black local Zambian priests without foreign aid. To this end, proud of his capabilities in pastoral work, one parish priest said, "When it comes to the spiritual needs of our parishioners, we have continued to do what the White Fathers did, but it is difficult for us to provide the material things" (Interview by A. Tambatamba, 19 August 2019).

The Withdrawal of the White Fathers in the Light of Venn and Anderson's Theory

In the final analysis, not all the “three selves” of self-propagating church, self-sustaining church and self-governing church in Venn and Anderson's theory of indigenisation have been achieved in the Mpika Diocese and Archdiocese of Kasama. There are two particular concerns of some black priests, namely, unpreparedness and the unavailability of finances to run the parishes. These translate into the absence of ‘self-sustainability’. The retired bishop we interviewed argued: “For me, it didn't come early enough [the withdrawal of the White Fathers]. When the White Fathers are not there any more, there is no one to look up to except yourself” (Interview by A. Tambatamba, 14 September 2020). In his book, *Facing the Challenge: Self-Sustainability for the Catholic Church in Zambia*, Fr. Marc Nsanzurwimo, an African priest of the Missionaries of Africa reminds us of the centenary in 1991 as having provided an opportunity for reflection about self-sustenance. In the pastoral letter, ‘You Shall Be My Witnesses’, the bishops asked the local church the following questions: Are we ready to accept greater responsibilities? Are missionaries themselves ready to take only a supportive role? What steps are we taking to increase the material self-reliance of our church (1991, 9-10)?

The study found that priests and their bishops have ideas on how they can raise funding to run their parishes. Farming is one of the ways that they mentioned. One ex-priest argued: “In fact the White Fathers had prepared the diocesan priests because they left land and farms on mission stations” (Interview by A. Cheyeka, 13 September 2020). The retired bishop argued: “We have vast pieces of land the parishes can utilise for agriculture. There is land on Kayambi, Chilubula, Mulanga and Chilonga because missionaries got a lot of land that would be used for agriculture but is underutilised and being taken up by squatters” (Interview by A. Tambatamba, 14 September 2020). If, as we have learned, local priests are having financial challenges, and if farming requires machinery and start-up capital, it is probably understandable that large pieces of land remain unutilised. Overall, farming requires reasonable investment, dedication and unflinching interest. It was established that there was no black priest doing farming. It was also learned that some priests had turned to teaching to draw a salary from the government in order to look after themselves, much to the disapproval of their bishops who have dismissed some of them from the priesthood. The late President of Zambia, Mr. Michael Sata, a staunch Catholic himself, had suggested to the bishops that priests should take certificates in pedagogy and be employed by the Ministry of Education as teachers so that they could sustain themselves (Cheyeka, 2012). The bishops were unenthusiastic.

From our interviews we learned that some black priests were convinced that the White Fathers had created a dependence syndrome among their parishioners. If this is the case, we argue that it was unintentional, because the White Fathers did not aim to create “Rice Christians”, dependant on the missionary and converting because of what they could get out of it, although this could have been the motive for some. Our argument is that the gospel of Jesus Christ includes clothing the naked, feeding the hungry, providing water to the thirsty, and so on. The wretched of Northern and Muchinga provinces where the two dioceses this article is dealing with are found, could not, to paraphrase Scripture, live by the Word of God alone because as Archbishop Spaita (2012, 83) pointed out: “Northern Province and Muchinga Province have no industries and poverty levels are very high.” This would explain the White Fathers’ handouts and after all, the poor will always be present together with the rich.

The impression must not be created that 1991 provided the first opportunity to the indigenous clergy to begin to reflect on self-sustenance. We note that Fr. Alex Chanda had in 1986 published a book on the subject, but after 1991, Fr. Ignatius Mwebwe, Secretary General of the Zambia Conference of Catholic Bishops (as it is known today), re-opened the debate particularly within the clergy and religious and later to the laity (Nsanzurwimo, 2003). In his writings in church periodicals, Fr. Mwebwe urged the church to initiate self-reliance projects and challenged missionary founding organisations to prioritise investment (Nsanzurwimo, 2003). It is a known fact that priests and their bishops in Zambia, all lament that resources are not as easily accessed as hitherto when the White Fathers were in the parishes or at the treasury of the dioceses. But as Paul Gifford (2015, 94) observes, this is not prompting a move to ‘self-reliance’ which has only become a mantra as nobody acts on it.

There is one more important issue that black priests have to address: competition from other churches and sects. The black priests are now in a competitive environment because they and their flock are facing Pentecostal Christianity, which is no longer an urban religion, but is spreading to rural areas with an appealing message of health and prosperity. Seventh Day Adventism is now in every part of the country due to internal migrations of people and Adventist government workers retiring and introducing Adventism among the people they choose to live with. The New Apostolic Church with massive funding from Germany is another growing church reaching out to rural areas. To use Ulric Luig’s words (1997, 231), it is a ‘free market of Christianity’ in Zambia today. In this regard, some Catholic vernacular songs warn Catholics not to fall prey to invitations from and visitations by Jehovah’s Witnesses, Pentecostals and others. One Namwanga song is entitled *Sichenjeleni* (Beware!). It explicitly mentions, “Visitors dressed in black suits with neck ties and carrying brief cases,

who come to ask Catholics about their church and try to convince them not to pray to Mary". The song goes on to explain the position of Mary in the Catholic faith.

Archbishop Spaita expressed the seriousness of this issue in the following statement: "The proliferation of churches has posed many problems in a dominantly Catholic area. Many of these churches such as the Seventh Day Adventists, Watchtowers [Jehovah's Witness] have an anti-Catholic attitude" (Spaita, 2012, 83). However, whenever the laity of his diocese approached the Archbishop to request that they 'retaliate' the newer churches' anti-Catholic oratory, he told them, "*Leave them alone. Our call is to be faithful followers of Jesus. Leave the rest to the Lord*" (Spaita, 2012, 83). While it is possible for the older people to remain faithful to the Catholic faith, it is very difficult for younger people to do so in a liberalised religious space. Historically, even the first White Fathers in the two dioceses had to compete for converts with the United Church of Scotland, in what is today Chinsali District in Muchinga Province (Oger, 1991). Moreover, because of quarrels over converts between missionaries, the British South African Company that administered the then North-Eastern Rhodesia created what became known as spheres of influence which Catholic missionary societies opposed and many a time circumvented (Carmody, 2020).

Conclusion

The White Fathers have been in Zambia since 1891 and they are still in Zambia. Currently, there are thirty-four of them in the country from within Africa and Europe, serving in the dioceses of Chipata and Kabwe and the Archdiocese of Kasama (at the formation house which has been maintained), and the Archdiocese of Lusaka. The oldest among them is 79 while the youngest is 31 years old. Also, worth noting is the fact that twenty-eight (28) black Zambian "White Fathers" are working in other countries – in Africa and Europe as missionaries.

This article has provided information, based on one-on-one interviews on the experiences of the transition that took place in 1991, from local Zambian diocesan priests, sisters, catechists and some lay Catholics. In the opinion of Zambian Catholics, the missiological theory of Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson on the indigenisation of churches has been confirmed only to an extent because not all the "three selves" of self-propagating church, self-sustaining church and self-governing church have been achieved. It can be concluded that 'self-sustenance' is a huge challenge especially in the village parishes. However, there is no doubt, as Hastings (1994, 298) argued, the founder of the White Father's lasting legacy in the dioceses of Kasama and Mpika lies in his general insistence upon establishing a viable church, upon assimilating oneself to Africa, upon

the learning of languages superlatively, and upon the re-establishment of a lengthy and structured catechumenate. The vernacularisation of the Catholic faith in Kasama and Mpika Dioceses by the White Fathers in itself symbolised commitment to inculturation (Stanley, 2007). Fr. Hugo, shaped by his Dutch culture, the Missionaries of Africa’s charisma, and Bemba culture, shared this commitment, thereby contributing quite significantly to the growth of the Catholic Church which is now in the hands of Zambians.

Emphasising that the Catholic Church had become well established in the two provinces, Fr. Hugo argued, “The Catholic Church in Zambia is well established. It was there before the nation of Zambia; it was there when the nation was born and it is part of the nation today” (Interview by A. Cheyeka, 22 November 2017). Fr. Hugo had captured the spirit of the Vatican II Council in 1964 and of the 1994 African Synod, which informed the Catholic Church’s policy on inculturation and in line with the policy, perhaps inevitably, as a White Father, he supported the indigenisation of the personnel running the Church in the land of his first encounter with African Traditional Religion. However, as indicated by respondents during the ongoing fieldwork, this turn of events has been driven, at least, in part, by the inexorable diminishing of European vocations, ageing, mission fatigue and increasing numbers of the diocesan black priests. The future of Catholicism in the Archdiocese of Kasama and Mpika dioceses is now in the hands of local priests and their bishops. The transition from Western missionaries to the local clergy is complete. The massive flow of Western missionaries into Zambia is in fact, now something of the past across missionary societies in Zambia (Lado, 2020).

How will the black priests address the economic challenges that were acknowledged in interviews? That is the question that bishops and their priests have to address. It is noteworthy, however, that, twenty-nine (29) years after the White Fathers left the two dioceses discussed in this article, no parish has been closed. However, sacraments central to the practice of the Catholic faith have not fully been administered to the faithful in outstations or centres due to limited numbers of priests and logistical challenges resulting from lack of money available from local priests’ resources and from impoverished parishioners of remote rural areas.

This article has proposed a new area of missiology specific to the Catholic Church in Zambia, namely, the departure of missionaries and the takeover by local priests. This new development requires more attention in the scholarship of Zambian and African Catholicism in general (Lado, 2020). The question that Zambian Church historians have to answer is the one asked by an English anthropologist who spent many years in Zambia teaching at a Catholic mission school for boys. Anthony Simpson (2003, 377) comments: “Many Catholics in

Europe and North America point to Africa as the place of growth and hope for the renewal of a western church which is embroiled in scandals and crises and whose numbers of clergy, religious and lay people continue to fall. But what kind of church will this be? And what implicit knowledge will guide those who lead it?"

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