Exploring the Dynamics of Leadership and Their Impact on the Anglican Schism in the Diocese of Harare in Zimbabwe

1Collen Tongowona, 2Dr Jain Mathews, 3Dr Never Pavari
1, 2 PhD candidate with Christ University Bangalore India
3 Harare Zimbabwe

Abstract: This paper examines the leadership controversy in the Anglican Church Diocese of Harare and evaluates the extent to which the exigencies of power impacted upon this conflict. This study is necessitated by the fact that the Anglican Church Province of Central Africa has been affected by an unprecedented conflict hinged on leadership wrangle and a crisis of legitimacy. This has resulted in the excommunication of Bishop Nolbert Kunonga who had deliberately withdrawn from the Anglican international communion to form the province of Zimbabwe. Key to this dispute was the allegation of gay marriages presumably blessed by the Church of the Province of Central Africa (CPCA) although it appears there were other multifarious factors behind the controversy. Given this background, this paper seeks to present a critical exploration of the cardinal factors at play within the context of the Episcopalian polity and try to link church governance and ecclesiology to the context of the Anglican conflict in Zimbabwe. It should be appreciated that, as the world is setting into the 21st Century and Globalisation becomes inescapable, a new breed of leaders and leadership paradigm is needed in Christian organisations. There is a general consensus among scholars that the term leadership can be defined from various vantage points. But for the purposes of this study, the term leadership designates the art of inducing competence, an instrument of goal achievement, a form of persuasion. Leadership is the most important factor determining the future of any organisation. The style of leadership in a religious organisation is a critical determinant in enhancing the stability and growth of the church. To this end, leadership has to do with the manner and approach of providing direction, implementing plans for institutional development, staff development progress in pursuit of organisational excellence. Suffice is to say that, the Anglican church faced an epoch where the Diocese of Harare turned to be a stadium of politics and “poli tricks” as the contestation for leadership legitimacy tellingly led to the shipwreck of the once robust diocese.

I. Introduction

This study proceeds from the premise that leadership challenges and complexities are directly linked to the Anglican saga in the Harare Diocese. The Anglican problems should not be limited to leadership alone, but also to the socio-economic and political factors affecting Zimbabwe and her erstwhile former coloniser-Britain. This becomes the holistic context of analysing the challenges bedevilling the Anglican Communion in the Diocese of Harare. According to McGregor cited in Barna (1997:20), “leadership is when persons with certain motives and purposes mobilize, in competition or conflict with others, institutional, political, psychological and other resources so as to arouse, engage and satisfy the motives of followers”. A leader is one who has an orientation in common with those who rely upon him for leadership and who has people willing to follow. This study explores the leadership styles employed in the Anglican Church and discuss whether there is a correlation between the split of the church and the style of leadership.

II. Research Philosophy

1.2.1 Phenomenology

This study is influenced by two research philosophies which are Phenomenology and Hermeneutics. These are not only critical in providing a background necessary in social science research but also are indispensable in providing a solid theoretical and conceptual framework.

This study has adopted the phenomenological approach because this is the relevant approach when dealing with case studies that are linked to religion (Mbhig 2013). This approach gives full recognition to the awareness of the phenomena within their immediate context. Phenomenology is thus the study of how phenomena are perceived within their immediate context. The term phenomenology has both philosophical and non-philosophical overtones (Ibid). It is both a method and a philosophical perspective. The phenomenological paradigm falls under the qualitative research classification.

The awareness of existence is the starting point of this approach. The phenomenological method is non-idealistic and accepts the phenomena they found in a particular context. The phenomena in any given context are treated and interpreted as the ground staff or basic material available. The phenomenological approach sees the world as “already” there before any reflection begins (Merleau-Ponty 1936: VII). It is
characterised by essentials descriptive of what is of essence. Faith and truth values must be bracketed in order to listen and learn from within the context itself. It is important that one describe and evaluate from within the awareness of particular contexts. Reductions and idealism must be avoided. This methodology is very critical in this study because there is need to listen to what all the factions within the Anglican Churches are saying with regards to the conflict i.e. the Kunonga and Gandiya arguments with regard to the conflict.

The phenomena must be allowed to speak for themselves as much as possible. According to Chernoff (1981:189), as the earliest phenomenologist used to say “You have no really understood another religion unless you have been tempted by the insights of this other religion”. This study is not carried to prove or disprove any performed theories”. It is a discovery process of the Anglican saga from within.

In adopting this method, we must see the Anglican leadership conflict from both angles of conflictants as always primary. The phenomenological philosophical paradigm helps the reader to understand the Anglican leadership schism within its total context without making prejudgements regarding its wars and public spats in the media. It is not possible to be absolutely unbiased, but it is necessary to allow the phenomena to speak for themselves as much as possible. The phenomenological approach lets people speak for themselves, thus allowing for honest research to take place.

The Anglican controversy is equally a theological controversy. In this kind of explosion of the Anglican dispute, the researcher intends to use Tillich’s method of correlation, because in this method theology is a ready responder for dialogue with the world (Tillich 1959). The starting point is human life and it is to that human experience that theology must respond. The Anglican leadership wrangle rooted in the Episcopalian polity and the Zimbabwean political dynamics is the first act upon which theology as a key variable must respond. The researcher is at an advantage of carrying out this research because he is a Christian who grew up in the Anglican Church apart from being a resident in the same diocese under contestation. Although the researcher rely more on literary resources, he is able to write about his experiences in the Anglican Church. During the era of the Anglican saga, the researcher has been a passive participant and observer of many Anglican worshipping services.

The researcher’s experience has helped to enter into dialogue with the two worlds of Kunonga faction and Gandiya faction represented by Anglicanism in the Harare Diocese. Both continue to influence the researcher’s perception of the Anglican leadership problem. The researcher is able to reflect and evaluate within the combination of analysis, exposition and application. By and large, this study is influenced by phenomenology as a research philosophical paradigm. It is the researcher’s contention that the aim of phenomenology is to produce an exhaustive description of the phenomena of every day experience, thus arriving at a fundamental understanding of the thing itself, the phenomenon. Phenomenology seeks to go beyond a natural attitude to a transcendental attitude that is the process of eidetic seeing by getting to the essence of things (Husserl 1960 cited in Mbigi 2013:40).

Such imaginative variation, involving seeing things from all angles, involved separating off those things, which were constant (the essence) (Ibid). The term epoch or phenomenological reduction was used to reflect the goal of reducing things to their essentials, peeling off the layers of assumptions and projections that obscure them.

Throughout the phenomenological process, the researcher should:

- Seek to develop an attitude of openness and wonderment in relation to the phenomenon
- Strive to bracket off assumptions phenomenological reduction
- Adhere to the principle of horizontality no one meaning is considered more important than the other
- Engage in imaginative variation what would need to change to make phenomenon different
- Enter and immerse selves in situation as lived with the subject
- Spend time lingering in the described situation
- Magnify, amplify and pay special attention to detail, allowing it to loom large
- Turn from subjects to immanent beings (Ibid).

For McLeod phenomenology represents a way of knowing that has always been crucial part of human culture. As a language-using and culture-building species we need to have a way of renewing and reconstructing our culture to keep it alive. Phenomenology seeks to set aside any assumptions about the object of inquiry, and build up a thorough and comprehensive knowledge about the thing itself. It is almost a meditative practice, and involves “in-dwelling” in the phenomenon until its essential features reveal themselves. Thus phenomenology assumes an active, intentional, construction of a social world and its meanings by reflexive human beings.

### 1.2.2 Hermeneutics

This study is also influenced by the hermeneutical philosophical paradigm. Hermeneutics is concerned with the interpretation of texts. According to Mbigi (2013:38), “In Greek Mythology Hermes was the messenger
of the gods. Originally established in the context of scriptural interpretation, in the twentieth century, it came to be seen as perhaps the method of the social sciences”. Hermeneutics is defined as an act of interpretation that brings to light an underlying coherence or sense with the actions, behaviour or utterances of a person in a group. It is an interpretive social science, taking as its goal the achievement of understanding.

According to McLeod cited in Mbigi (2013), what is properly meant by hermeneutics goes far beyond interpretation. There are too many ways in which a hermeneutic approach differs from an interpretive one. Firstly, hermeneutics is culturally and historically informed. Second, to work properly as a system for producing reliable and practical knowledge, hermeneutics requires access to publically accessible data. Gadamer cited in Mbigi, argues that a successful interpretation is from a perspective, taking place from a position within history, requiring sensitivity to the use of language, and leading to a shift (learning) in the person making the interpretation (Ibid). For Radnitzki (1970), the aim of hermeneutics is to mediate traditions so that the historical dialogue of mankind may be continued or resumed, and also deepened (Ibid). The argument here is that any text is created in a cultural-historical context, and then interpreted in a different context. It is the dislocation in time and place that makes interpretation necessary.

The main principles of hermeneutic inquiry are ontological hermeneutics and epistemological hermeneutics. Ontological hermeneutics is a way of understanding that views people as existing from multiple horizons of meaning, as striving to make sense of their experience, as constituted by their historical and cultural context, as engaged in dialogue. Epistemological hermeneutics examines the values and limitations of an interpretive approach to knowledge creation. Hermeneutics is a critical philosophy in this study because there is need to develop a personal sense of understanding of the emotional and interpersonal worlds of the feuding Anglican factions. Understanding of the Anglican conflict involves bringing forth new differentiations and interrelationships, extending meaning. Hermeneutics is tradition-informed understanding, and therefore there is need to understand the Anglican leadership saga from a historical perspective of Anglican polity and Canon law.

III. A Brief History of the Anglican Church in Zimbabwe

The Anglican Church came into being as part of the wider European Protestant reformation, which was religious and political movement that affected the practice of Christianity across Europe. Many factors, contributed to the process, that is, the decline of feudalism and the rise of nationalism, the rise of the common law, the invention of the printing press and increased circulation of the Bible, the transmission of new knowledge and ideas among scholars, the upper and middle classes and readers in general (http://en.wikipedia.org). However, the various phases of the English reformation, which also covered Wales and Ireland, were largely driven by changes in government policy, to which public opinion gradually accommodated itself (Ibid).

It is generally agreed among scholars that, it was based on Henry VIII desire for annulment of his marriage (first requested of Pope Clement VII in 1527), an English reformation was at the outset more of a political affair that a theological dispute (Ibid). According to Scruton (1996:470), “the realities of political differences between Rome and England allowed growing theological disputes to come to fore”. Immediately before the break with Rome, it was the Pope and general councils of the church that decided doctrine. Church law was governed by the code of canon law with final jurisdiction in Rome.

Church taxes were paid straight to Rome, and the Pope had final say over appointment of Bishops. The split from Rome made the English monarch the supreme governor of the English church by royal supremacy making the Church of England the established church of the nation (http://en.wikipedia.org). Doctrinal and legal disputes now rested with the monarch, and the papacy was deprived of revenue and the final say on the appointment of bishops. The structure and theology of the church was a matter of fierce dispute for generations.

The Anglican Church came into being when King Henry VIII was made supreme Head of the church by an Act of parliament in 1534. The country was still Catholic but the Pope’s power had been ended. The progress of the reformation was closely bound up with Henry’s personal affairs (cited in http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk). It is critical to note that Henry VIII’s break with Rome was an act of state, promptly primarily by political motives, but many of those who supported Henry were appalled at the corruption of the papacy, some of these went and sympathised with the growing protestant movement.

In Zimbabwe, the Anglican Church ministry was initiated by Bishop George Knight Bruce in 1981. According to Woller (1980:5), “His companions, some who did not arrive until the next day, were five catechists- Benard Mizeki, frank Ziqubu, Charles Makolami, Samuel Makosa and a man whose name was Tome”. With the arrival from Beira of these six exhausted men, the original Diocese of Mashonaland had become a reality.

To understand the significance of these important events, it is necessary to go back in time for a further three years. In June, 1888, Bishop Knight-Bruce had been at the royal kraal of the Ndebele, and had succeeded in obtaining permission from King Lobenguela to visit the eastern part of Zimbabwe (Ibid). The Bishop was at his time in charge of the Diocese of Bloemfontein in what is now the Republic of South Africa, but he was
aware that there was a large area to the North, where the Christian gospel had not yet penetrated. His plan was to visit the chiefs in the area, and to ask them if they were willing to receive evangelists and teachers. Having obtained Lobengula’s permission for the journey, he travelled as far as North as the Zambesi and as Far East as Nyazura, and he became strongly convinced that missionaries were needed and would be welcomed (Ibid).

Even as Knight-Bruce passed through Bulawayo on his return journey, representatives of Rhodes and the British South Africa Company was there negotiating what came to be known as the Rudd Concession. This was interpreted as giving to the company the right, not only to search for minerals in Mashonaland, but to open the area to occupation by the settlers. Accordingly, the Pioneer Column entered the country in 1890 and raised the British Flag in Harare, which they named Salisbury on September 12th. Not only were political events moving quickly, but the churches, too, wasted very little time in responding to the opportunities which were now available to them. As a result of Bishop Knight-Bruce’s report about his journey, the Church of England’s Society for the Propagation of the Gospel voted a sum of seven thousand pounds, to be spent at the rate of one thousand pounds in each of the next seven years for the establishment of the Anglican Diocese of Zimbabwe (Ibid). In January, 1891, the synod of the Anglican Church Province of South Africa created the new diocese, and, not surprisingly, invited Knight-Bruce to become the Bishop of Mashonaland. The Anglican Church later spread its wings across Zimbabwe and it became one of the biggest Christian denominations in Zimbabwe owning Mission schools, hospitals, orphanages and other properties.

IV. Situating the Anglican Crisis in the Context of Leadership and Socio-Political Dynamics in Zimbabwe

The conflict in the Anglican Church was prompted or precipitated by conflicting news in matters of doctrine particularly the ordination of women as pastors, the traditional Anglican refused to accept, as well as accepting gay marriages-on the part of the liberals. The other critical point was the position of the Anglican Church in matters of politics. The Anglican Church in Zimbabwe was more vocal on that. In reference to history in the Anglican church if the Anglican Church of England in UK sneeze all Anglican churches sneezes with it. It is fundamental to note that with the moral decay in the western countries the church there has not been spared therefore, accepting gay marriages.

In 2007, Bishop Kunonga left the (CPCA) to form his own Anglican Church Province of Zimbabwe over the issue of gay marriages saying he could not accept the CPCA Harare Diocese’s refusal to, “exclude from our fold such people or elements that have embraced out their own free will, support and sympathy for homosexuals”. According to Guma (2011), in 2007 Kunonga unsuccessfully tried to withdrew his diocese from the Church province of Central Africa claiming it was over differences on the ordination of gay priests. In terms of the Anglican canon law, Bishop Kunonga was supposed to get two thirds majority support although he went ahead to unilaterally withdrew the diocese and from his own church.

With tacit support from President Mugabe, he became an exponent of anti-homosexual crusade and went on to seize Anglican property. The conflict in the Anglican Church degenerated into a complex theological and political dispute that assumed an international character. The major cracks appeared i.e. the Bishop Kunonga faction and the Bishop Sebastian Bakare and later Chad Gandiya faction. Kunonga’s legitimacy was challenged because he was excommunicated by the broader Anglican leadership but approached the courts for legal recourse.

Bishop Kunonga initially won the battle to be in charge of the Diocese of Harare. Since 2008, Kunonga seized over 90 properties belonging to the church, including the main cathedral in Harare, 19 primary and Secondary Schools, and several orphanages around the country. Although many international news agencies are reporting this Anglican split as being based on a disagreement about homosexuality, the dispute could have been caused by other reasons. As Bishop Kunonga appeared to get support from the ZANUPF political leadership, the CPCA represented by Bishop Gandiya appeared to be bankrolled by the western church and to receive sympathy from the MDC political formations. When the Head of the Anglican church Dr Williams came to Zimbabwe, his speech was instructive when he said:

Day by day you are faced by an enemy driven by self-enrichment and lies-we thank God for your patience. You know very well, dear brothers and sisters what it means to have doors locked in your faces by those who claim the name Christians and Anglicans. You know how those who claim the name use greediness and violence, have refused the grace of God trying to frustrate your worship and frustrate your witness in the churches and schools and hospitals in this country (Ibid).

To demonstrate the level of leadership crises in the Church, Bishop Kunonga convened a press conference at the Anglican Church cathedral at which he said: “Williams’ coming will not make the CPCA get in church buildings, look we are here in the cathedral and they are meeting at sports centre. I am the owner of this. Gandiya is showing off with a white man and I do not care. This is not the end of Kunonga” (Ibid).

The complexity of leadership in the Anglican Church had been most evident in that divisions within this church were mostly based on personality, governance, administrative and leadership and theological issues.
When Kunonga formed the province of Zimbabwe, he became the doyen of ZANU PF party and officiated on most of its public functions and even governments one (http://www.Zimbabwean). However, in as much as this may not mean that he became an extension of the ruling party, he shared the same nationalist ideological trend or rather there was a marriage of convenience or a “happy accident”. The church membership was literally divided into either ZANU PF or MDC. Even the media was divided on the same line. Notably Nevanji Madanhire of the Standard paper opined that:

Evil had personified itself in Bishop Kunonga, who with the political backing of those in power- and their courts had desecrated the church, reducing parishes into brothels, chasing away the infirm from hospitals and children from crèches. Great schools that had formed the ribcage to mere upper tops (makeshift schools), while mission hospitals were looted of money and equipment leaving them shells of their former selves (http://The Standard.co).

The above statement is instructive in that it highlights the extent of challenges of leadership and factions in the Anglican Church and also how the media also got to assume polarised positions with regards to the Anglican saga.

V. Exploring Anglican Episcopalian Polity and its link to the Leadership Crises

The Anglican leadership styles are influenced by the Episcopalian system of church governance. An Episcopalian system of church polity is hierarchical in structure with chief authority being vested in the Bishop. The Episcopalian church structure is found in the Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox Church, Anglican lineages and the Lutherans. The word Episcopal is derived from a Greek word “episkotios” transliterated “episkopos”, which literally means overseer or Bishop.

Just like the Anglican Church in Zimbabwe, the Bishop is in charge of the diocese conferences or synods (in general referred to as a judiciary). Their presidency is both sacramental and political, as well as performing ordinations, confirmations, and consecrations, the Bishop supervises the clergy within the judiciary and is the representative to both secular and in the hierarchy of the church. It is usually considered that Bishops derive their authority from an unbroken, personal apostolic succession from the twelve apostles of Jesus (Ibid).

Bishops with such authority are known as historical episcopate. In terms of episcopality, Anglicanism is the most prominent of the Reformation tradition to lay claim to the historic claim to episcopate through apostolic succession in terms comparable to the various Catholic and orthodox communions. Anglicans assert unbroken Episcopalian succession in and through the Church of England beck to St Augustine of Canterbury and to the first century Roman province of Britain (Holden cited inhttp://en.wikipeida.org).

Functionally, Anglican Episcopal authority is expressed synodically, although individual provinces may accord their primate with more or less authority to act independently. Called variously “synods”, “councils” or “conventions”, they meet under Episcopal chairmanship. In many jurisdictions, consular resolutions that have been passed require Episcopal assent and/or consent to take force. Seen in this way, Anglicans often speak of ‘the bishop-in-Synod” as the force and authority of Episcopal governance.

Christianity is religion that is rooted in the philosophy of servant hood as a style of leadership. Servant leadership is a life long journey that includes discovery of one’s self, desire to serve others, and a commitment to lead (http://www.3.com/keryynings.html). Servant leaders strive to be trustworthy, self-aware, humble, caring, visionary and empowerment. Servant leadership strive to be trustworthy, self-aware, humble, caring, visionary and empowering. Servant leadership is ethical practical and meaningful. The Anglican Church leadership must adopt the servant-hood attitude to their attributes and demonstrate that their primary motivation for seeking to lead people is rooted in a deep desire to serve and help out. Servant leadership is about serving to secure and promote people’s welfare, their collective ethics and positive aspects of their socio-cultural norms.

The Anglican controversy was caused by reasons which ranged from religious -theological, political, economic, social, and precipitating factors. These are highlighted in greater depth below. Firstly,

VI. Conclusion

This study has generally highlighted the impact of the Anglican leadership controversy on the performance of leadership in the Anglican Church. Many reasons have been highlighted as being behind the controversy, but it is generally noted that the craving for legitimacy became the main source of contestation in the Anglican Church. That being the case there must be renewed interest among churches to address the issue of leadership if the church is to fulfil its mandate holistically. The aspect of leadership legitimacy became the centre of the Anglican Schism, but connected to that were the socio-political factors which to a greater extent influenced the unfolding of the Anglican saga through the courts.

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