

“THEY SEEM NOT TO HAVE BEEN TRAINED. ...” ST. ANTONY’S STUDENTS’ REACTION TO THE LOCAL BROTHERS’ MANAGEMENT OF THEIR FORMER SCHOOL IN ZAMBIA, 2021-2023

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Abstract Many Catholic mission schools established and administered by expatriate missionaries from countries in the global north are now in the hands of indigenous Africans. This, in some cases, has had implications on the running of schools, in terms of maintaining infrastructure, academic standards, discipline, and Catholic identity. This article is a critical analysis of a conversation on a WhatsApp group of former students of a Catholic mission school in Zambia, between 2021 and 2023. The article critically analyses the disappointment of the former students, with the Indigenous Zambian Brothers presently in charge of the school that Anthony Simpson, a British anthropologist in his ethnography of the school calls St. Antony’s. The statement, “They seem not to have been trained” by one of the former students seems to have encapsulated the disappointments of his fellow former students. The Missiological theory of Henry Venn (1796-1873) and Rufus Anderson (1796-1880) on the imperative of indigenising missionary churches has been utilised as the analytic framework in this qualitative case study. Two conclusions are made in the article. The first one is that the former students of St. Antony’s seemed to have over-looked the stark reality that the local Brothers did not have the kind of resources in terms of money, equipment, and skills that the European Brothers had. Secondly, rather than discussing how to strengthen the Alumni association, they somewhat depreciated the Black Brothers, thereby, buying into the racial notion that Black Zambian Brothers are incapable of running St. Antony’s as efficiently as the Europeans did.

Keywords St. Antony’s, Marian Brothers, Missionary, Local Brothers, Mockery, Headmaster, Former Students

Résumé De nombreuses écoles catholiques créées et administrées par des missionnaires expatriés de pays du Nord sont aujourd’hui entre les mains des Africains autochtones. Dans certains cas,

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cela a eu des conséquences sur le fonctionnement des écoles en termes de maintien des infrastructures, des normes académiques, de la discipline et de l'identité catholique. Cet article est une analyse critique d'une conversation sur un groupe WhatsApp d'anciens élèves d'une école missionnaire catholique en Zambie, entre 2021 et 2023. L'article analyse de manière critique la déception des anciens élèves à l'égard des Frères indigènes zambiens actuellement en charge de l'école qu'Anthony Simpson, un anthropologue britannique, appelle dans son ethnographie de l'école Saint Antoine. La déclaration de l'un des anciens élèves, « Ils semblent ne pas avoir été formés », semble résumer la déception de ses camarades. La théorie missiologique d'Henry Venn (1796-1873) et de Rufus Anderson (1796-1880) sur l'impératif d'indigénisation des églises missionnaires a été utilisée comme cadre analytique dans cette étude de cas qualitative. L'article tire deux conclusions.

La première est que les anciens élèves de Saint Antoine semblent avoir négligé la dure réalité selon laquelle les Frères locaux ne disposaient pas du type de ressources en termes d'argent, d'équipement et de compétences dont disposaient les Frères européens.

Deuxièmement, au lieu de discuter de la manière de renforcer l'association des anciens élèves, ils ont quelque peu déprécié les Frères noirs, adhérant ainsi à la notion raciale selon laquelle les Frères noirs zambiens sont incapables de gérer l'école Saint-Antoine aussi efficacement que les Européens.

Mots Clés de Saint Antoine, Frères Marials, Missionnaires, Frères locaux, Moqueries, Directeur d'école, Anciens élèves

Introduction

There is, in this article, a topic for research and a proposition that would probably address the perennial requests from St. Antony's to the former boys to help fix a problem of one kind or another at their former school. Broadly, the article recalls the questions that Simpson (2003a) asks: What happens to an institution established by Europeans once they are gone, and it is in the hands of the local people? Are the local Brothers enjoying the same deference as the expatriates who have left? What kind of school will St. Antony's be if in the hands of Africans, and what implicit knowledge will guide those who lead the school? As a matter of fact this article in its finality ends with questions. An attempt to explore the implications of the withdrawal of the European Brothers from St. Antony's and the financing of the school was made (Cheyeka et al., 2011). The undeniable truth is the reality that transition from Western missionaries to the local clergy and lay religious in Zambia is complete. The massive flow of Western missionaries into Africa is in fact, now something of the past across missionary societies (Lado, 2020).

In any event, between 2021 and 2023, former boys of St Antony's were enraged by the school's poor results, incidents of theft, mockery, dirt, dilapidation of infrastructure, congestion in the dormitories, poor state of water reticulation and many other problems at their former school. They largely blamed the school management of the African Marian Brothers for the problems. The former students discussed how a school they called "Half-London" because of its beautiful buildings and the surroundings, especially the lawns and flower borders (Simpson, 2003b: 1) could

possibly lose its ranking in academic results, on one hand, discipline, order and cleanliness and maintenance of infrastructure, on the other. Firstly, the former students questioned the school administration and wondered if at all, the European Brothers had prepared the African Brothers to run the school. Secondly, they questioned whether the European Brothers had stopped supporting the school materially. Some former boys even asked if St. Antony's was still a Catholic school. In exasperation, one of them referring to the African Brothers wrote: "They seem not to have been trained." Scholars of Catholic education have placed logical emphasis on what makes a school Catholic (Wodon, 2021: 270). This is evident in many articles published in Catholic-focused education journals such as the *Journal of Catholic Education*; *International Studies in Catholic Education*; and in the landmark collection by Gerald Grace and Joseph O'Keefe (2007) for their *International Handbook on Catholic Education* (Wodon, 2021: 271). The former students of St. Antony's wondered about the identity of their school.

Generally, in African thought, a 'mission station' is a place where European, American or missionaries reside. This is very much the classic Beach and Fahs (1925: 223)'s definition cited by Reinhard Henkel (1989: 34); that a mission station is "a place of residence for one or more missionaries from Christendom." The definition excludes non-white missionaries and Henkel provides a well-known example of this definition in Zambia when Lubwa Mission of the Free Church of Scotland under development by an African, David Kaunda, father of Zambia's President Kenneth Kaunda, only came to be called a mission from 1913 onwards when the first European missionary (Rev. Robert McMinn) settled there (Henkel, 1989: 24-25). The point being made is that although mission stations are in the hands of Africans, the Euro-centric definition still lingers. In fact, the most common question asked about St. Antony's is: "Is it still a mission school?" This question could also be understood as inquiring if European Brothers are still at St. Antony's or if the school is still a Catholic school.

In any event, what sparked off the conversation that this paper is examining was an assault on a Grade 9 student by a Grade 12 student. Although this 2021 incident at St. Antony's has to be understood in the context of mockery, which Simpson explored in his ethnography of the school, it opened up a Pandora's box; it exposed what was "hidden" from the public. The conversation disclosed a number of themes that are interrogated. They included how the former students cherished the education they had received from St. Antony's when it was still in the hands of European Brothers' and how they denigrated their kind, the African Brothers. Sousa Jamba (1989: 9) cited in Simpson (2003b: 7) argues that the feeling that all that is African is inferior runs very deep among the post-colonial generation. This seems to be a warranted argument that cannot blithely be dismissed. It is not unusual in conversations of politics, economic hardships, corruption, and social problems in Zambia to hear the question, "What is wrong with us Black people?" Or "What is wrong with our skin?" The older people who experienced the 1950s of British colonial rule will say, "We were better off during the Federation under Roy Welensky."

In this article, it is argued that the local Brothers are reasonably well-trained. They may not have gone to Marian schools for their secondary education, but they arguably underwent solid Marian spiritual formation and teacher education. How much school leadership skills they possess, is a different matter. This article only attempts to critically examine the conversation of former St. Antony's students on a WhatsApp group from April 2021 to May 2023. They did not discuss the situation at their school every day. However, there was always something that reignited the discussion.

The article begins by providing the methodology and the analytic framework employed and then proceeds with a short and succinct historical note on St. Antony's. What triggered the conversation on this particular WhatsApp group of former students of St. Antony's is narrated followed by a critical analysis of the conversation.

Methodology and Analytic Framework

This article is framed by the author's familiarity with St. Antony's Catholic Secondary School since 1976 and conversations of the school's former boys on a WhatsApp group. I did my secondary school education at St. Antony's. I then underwent Marian formation, within the school premises at the Juniorate which was transformed into a noviciate. After my initial teacher education as a Marian scholastic, I came back to St. Antony's to teach History and Religious Education. Having not made my final vows, I separated from the Brothers in 1991. In 2022, I visited St. Antony's and checked on my former dormitory. I was, to say the least, numbed by the shock of seeing the deplorable state of the dormitory and the crowding inside. To me the whole school needed a face lift.

This is a qualitative paper, which requires interpreting a conversation on a WhatsApp group of men (176) who had gone to St. Antony's Catholic Mission School between 1973 and 2000. There is also, on the group, one or two former St. Antony's teachers. The chat group was formed in 2017 and I became part of it in 2019 because some students I had taught invited me to join the group. Thus, I did not intrude the group. When the incident of assault happened, I was fascinated by the discussion on the chat group and found it a site for research on an area I have currently begun to explore, namely, the Catholic Church in post-missionary times in Zambia. Because the case of alleged assault at St. Antony's came to be known by the public in the country, I felt it would be useful to "listen" to the former students' feelings when they began to discuss the matter on the chat group. Not all former students of St. Antony's on the WhatsApp group participated in the conversation; only a few of them who have been assigned pseudonyms to protect their identity posted their opinions. Sérgio Barbosa and Stefania Milan (2019: 50) have, in relation to chat groups asked the following question: "How can we safeguard the ethics of research, protecting user privacy and respecting the intimacy of their exchanges, while simultaneously taking advantage of such rich data source?" As mentioned pseudonyms have been used, but "a chat app creates a situation that it is not really possible to inform every group participant about the

ongoing observation, let alone to remind each of it; ensuring ‘informed’ consent is probably just wishful thinking in very large groups” (Barbosa and Milan, 2019: 50).

The conversation started in March 2021 and went on to 2023; abandoned and rekindled by any information about an occurrence or activity at the school or when an Alumni Association of a different school, especially a Catholic school donated money or materials such as desks, paint and computers to their former school. The usual comment when that happened was *utunesu* (Look at our friends!).

The single incident of a 17 year old Grade 12 boy assaulting a 13 year old Grade 9 student in 2021 opened up a Pandora’s Box of undesirables at St. Antony’s. A WhatsApp platform conversation provided primary data, which required interpretation so as to fully understand what was being discussed and debated. Simpson’s ethnography provides empirical solid information, which has assisted in making sense of the post-missionary situation of St. Antony’s. Furthermore, the article has profited from a surfeit of publications on the history of Catholic education in Zambia by Brendan Carmody, an Irish Jesuit priest who worked in the country for thirty-three years (Carmody, 2021). Reliability and trustworthiness of the data in this article were assured by my visit to St. Antony’s in 2022 and interviews with four African Marian Brothers in 2024 in the process of writing up the essay. They too have been given pseudonyms.

The article employs both analytical and descriptive methods, while the Missiological theory of Henry Venn (1796-1873) and Rufus Anderson (1796-1880) about indigenisation of churches serves as the analytic tool of what is a qualitative analysis of the conversation of former students of St. Antony’s. Venn was the Secretary of the Church Missionary Society in the United Kingdom from 1841 to 1872, while Anderson was the Secretary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission (Hastings, 1994). The Missiological theory makes the fundamental statement that missionaries are meant, from the outset, to provide teaching, pastoral care, sacraments, buildings, finances, and leadership training to local converts to take over these responsibilities. Put differently, Missiological theory states that regarding the ultimate objective of a mission, viewed under its ecclesiastical aspect, is to be the settlement of a native Church, under native pastors, upon a self-supporting system (Farrimond, 2003). In the final analysis, the concept of Indigenous church emerged as the central construct of Venn and Rufus’s mission theory with Venn emphasising that a church is judged to be Indigenous when it is self-propagating, self-financing, and self-governing (Three Selves).

The mission was the scaffolding that would be removed when the building was complete. The missionaries were not part of the Church they built; they would move on “to the regions beyond” as soon as the Church was strong enough. This “euthanasia” was, however, delayed, in every mission, for far longer than Venn especially had anticipated (Sanneh, 1983 and 1989). For sake

of clarity, the Marian Brothers are not a church, but an organisation in the Catholic Church. However, the missiological theory neatly fits the situation of the Brothers who established St. Antony's, trained local Brothers to take over the school and moved on to build another in the north-western part of Zambia, which they also handed over to the local Brothers to run and one after the other, they returned to Europe. The implicit questions in relation to the missiological theory in this article are, does the reason for today's situation at St. Antony's pivot on the fact that the European Brothers did not properly hand over following the lines of Venn's ideal of transition from mission to local church? How is it that some of the more traditionally called mission schools in the country have maintained the good standards left behind by missionaries? If the European Brothers knew that they would one day leave their schools in the hands of the Africans, how did they prepare them to sustain the standards of the school?

This essay is situated in scholarship on Catholic education which addresses issues of lack of knowledge of, and commitment to, Catholic beliefs and values among Catholic educational administrators, school managers, teachers, and other staff, as well as the diminishing percentage of even nominally Catholic staff. Other issues are discipline, Catholic identity, academic performance, sustainability and financial challenges, curricula, catechesis, and inadequate number of clergy and religious serving in schools, *etcetera*.¹

A Historical Note on St. Antony's

The establishment of Catholic Schools is part of the mission of the Catholic Church as documented in the Second Vatican Council and declared on 28 October 1965 by Pope Paul VI in a document called *Gravissimum*, which became the Declaration on Christian Education (Ezeh, 2022: 140). From the beginning, Catholic mission schools in Africa and elsewhere were part of the Catholic Church's mission of evangelisation and conversion of the local people to Catholicism (See, e.g, Carmody, 2016; 2015; 2014; 2012; 1999; 1992; Omenka, 1989; Simpson, 2003a and Simpson, 2003b). The Missionaries of Africa popularly known as White Fathers introduced Catholicism in the northern parts of Zambia in 1891.

St Antony's was founded by the Marian Brothers as Simpson calls them; they had come from the Marian province of Iberville in Canada. They had earlier built a school in Southern Rhodesia, presently Zimbabwe before Bro. Paul Constant came to Zambia to build St. Antony's. According to Hugo Hinfelaar (2004: 172), the Marian Brothers came to the Lusaka Archdiocese in 1959. They were invited by Bishop Adam Kozłowiecki and Fr. Colm O'Riordan to open a secondary

¹ Some of these issues were discussed at an International Office of Catholic Education (OIEC in French) conference of 2019 in New York. See, Cattaro, G., Richard, P., and Wodon, Q (2021). Challenges and Opportunities for Catholic Schools Globally: Insights from OICEC's World Congress, *Journal of Catholic Education*, 24(1), 239-251. <https://dx.doi.org/10.15365/joce.2401132021> (Accessed on 1 September 2024).

school for boys near the present day Kabwe town formerly known as Broken Hill in what is today Central Province of Zambia. In 1969, four Brothers of the Marian Province in Spain arrived in Zimbabwe and in 1973, they relocated to St. Antony's to join the French Canadians who, in 1974, due to their falling numbers back home, handed over the school to the Spanish Brothers. By 1983 the last French Canadian Brother left Zambia.

By 2005, St. Antony's was in the hands of an African Marian headmaster. In 2006, the Spanish Brothers finished building a day secondary school for both boys and girls on the Copperbelt. An African Brother became the headmaster. He later came to St. Antony's but went back to the Copperbelt in the same capacity. In the hands of the Black Zambian Brothers, according to former students on the WhatsApp conversation being analysed, the academic results of St. Antony's took a downward turn and indiscipline seemed to have become part of the school's ethos. In 2021, the problem of indiscipline came to public attention when a son of a Member of Parliament assaulted another boy.

It can be argued that generally, since its establishment, St. Antony's has been a peaceful and safe school with occasional non-destructive riots. What has led to thefts and unruly behaviour will need to be thoroughly investigated. This paper merely serves as a beginning of a conversation on the state of the school in doing so to add a voice to that of the former boys who are urging other former students to contribute money towards rehabilitating that they describe as having been one of the best in Zambia and the best in Central Province.

Sparking the Conversation on a WhatsApp Group

Two incidents fanned the conversation on the WhatsApp group discussion of the prevailing situation at St. Antony's. The first and the main incident was, more broadly, mockery, which had resulted in the assault of a Grade 9 student, Mapalo Simwaba. The second incident, much later in 2023, was the death of one of the Spanish Brothers who had been headmaster at the school between 1995 and 2003. He died in his home country and was buried there, but some former boys went for the memorial mass at St. Antony's. Moyo, in the diaspora and arguably one of the former students striving to mobilise funds for the school, asked those who went to the memorial mass to report what they had seen and what they made of the school. "What did you see and what has changed?" he asked. On April 3, 2023, Don listed what he referred to as "Changes at St. Antony's", namely: 1). The infrastructure is generally, dilapidated to a level where even tiles in the dining halls have come out. You cannot eat from those dining halls. 2). Dormitories are dirty. We took a tour of the school from 16 to 18 hours. Almost all the beds were not spread [made] – a culture very different from ours when we were there. 3). The premises were not clean. A lot of grass around the hostels. Students no longer slash the surroundings.

To explain the first incident on which the article is anchored; on 19 March 2021, one of the parents of a boy at St. Antony's posted a recording to a WhatsApp group of parents of students at the school in which he expressed his disappointment with the management of the school and the behaviour of "children from certain families at the school" as he called them. The recording was also posted by some parent (likely a former student) to the St. Antony's group that is being referred to in this article. In his angry monologue, the parent whose child had been beaten, started by disclosing himself, "Good evening fellow parents of St. Antony's. My name is Simwaba Paul. I am one of the parents having a child in this school. My son is Mapalo Simwaba." He then went to say the following:

My son got his first entry into the school by merit – after leaving Milestone School in Kabwe. In the first one month, we had reports of him losing K4, 000.00 (US \$148) worth of groceries through theft. Children from other sections of society, children from other homes, stole his groceries. We aired our complaints on this platform and teachers who are on the forum saw our complaints, but nothing was done to resolve the issue. In the second term, when I was picking my son from school, we found him with swollen lips. He was badly beaten; he was bleeding and I asked him why he was beaten. My son had refused to carry the trunk of a Grade 12 from the furthest dormitory to the front of the school. What the Grade 12 boy did was to punch him in the face. I posted that on the group and complained to the school authority. This matter wasn't addressed.

Today [2021], my child is in Grade 9. Today a terrible situation has happened. My son was badly beaten to an extent of having his teeth; two of them uprooted. ... According to my understanding, St. Antony's is a learning institution. It is not a battle ground.... I want to blame the management of this school for hiding certain information because my son was brutally beaten at 23 hours and I was only communicated to the following day at 11:45 hours. This is not good. ... (AUD 20210319-WAO, 19 March 2021).

The WhatsApp Audio from Mr. Simwaba caused an avalanche of comments on the school by former students who singled out the African Brothers for lashing. A number of themes emerged from the discussion. They are identified and systematically analysed below.

Themes from the WhatsApp Conversation

Identified themes are poor academic performance; poor management of the school; corruption; dilapidation and dirt; and weak Alumni. The case of Mapalo was clearly mockery or bullying. According to his father, he was badly beaten in Grade 8 and he was again beaten in Grade 9. Did the boy bear a pre-existing behavioural problem that made his parents send him to St. Antony's so that he could benefit from discipline offered in a Catholic school? Whatever the case, on the WhatsApp group as the conversation progressed, poor results, poor administration of the school, infrastructure dilapidation, congestion in the dormitories, and the school's loss of its past glory surfaced. In 2023, during the memorial mass of the Brother who had been a headmaster at St.

Antony's some former students posted messages of utter disappointment and disbelief of the state of the school; stimulating more discussion.

Mockery: A Rite of Passage at St. Antony's

At St. Antony's, Simpson, examined mockery using Arnold Van Gennep's notion of *rite de passage*, which marks the transition from childhood to adulthood. A child passing through the stage of being a non-person to that of being a person to take up his or her responsibility in the community (Rasing, 1995). Simpson analysed mockery at St. Antony's according to the three-phases – separation, marginal, and aggregation as conceptualised by Van Gennep who (cited by Rasing, 1995: 35) pointed out that the boundaries were dangerous and society was made up of a series of social boundaries between categories so that the social life of individuals can be seen as a series of transitions as individuals change their status. Van Gennep, therefore, went on to explain that transitions are accompanied by rituals such as the rite of passage.

To Simpson, the first stage is the 'physical suffering and humiliation' that the Grade 8 suffers at the hands of mostly, grade nines away from his home. The Grade 8 is socially invisible, his personal name neither known nor used. He is referred to as *kwiyo* or *zeze*². Threats, humiliation and 'beatings' deny the Grade 8 the status of being fully human (Simpson, 2003a: 126). *Kwiyos* or *ba zeze* were said to be slaves, at the beck and call of others, sent on errands by senior students and given tasks for superiors such as carrying their plates and washing their plates (Simpson, 2003a: 127). Stage two, the marginal phase or liminality as Victor Turner (1974) calls it, is 'the stage of speech' when the Grade 8 was made to give a speech about himself and his family in his wing of the dormitory at night. He was made to do so in his underwear. According to Simpson, this was part of acceptance and incorporation into the house [and the whole school it may be added] as long as the delivery of the biographical speech in English was successful (Simpson, 2003b: 127-134). The Grade 8 was asked questions about his family, girlfriends, former primary school and whether or not he had genuinely passed to come to St. Antony's.

Stage three was marked by "Cutting of the tails" of *ba zeze*. The Grade 8, as a *zeze*, had an invisible tail. During the course of the school year, the student body decided upon the date of the final rite, which proved the social acceptance, and hence, incorporation, of the Grade 8 students (Simpson, 2003b: 134). At the time Simpson did his fieldwork, the cutting of tails was on the first day of April (Fool's Day). Previously, in the history of the school, it had been done at the end of the year.

² These are bullying or mocking terms used in all schools in Zambia. Their precise meaning is not known. In my search, etymologically is a Swahili word referring to some traditional music instrument while *Kwiyo* has to do with music as well. A Grade 8 could be made to sing or made to play an imaginary and sing. Overall, the *Kwiyo* or *Zeze* was non-human to manipulate. Only after his invisible tail had been cut did he become human.

When on 19 March 2021, the audio of Mr. Simwaba complaining about the beating of his Grade 9 son by a Grade 12 pupil was heard on a WhatsApp group of former St. Antony's students, Clint one of the members of the group reacted first, "What has happened to the discipline that the school was once known for? The boy who beat up Mapalo was described as "savage and primitive". To the former students, school is a civilising tool. Because school managers were implicated in the incident, Clarence called for the immediate removal of the headmaster.

The school administration has a different account of what happened. The offender, a grade 12 pupil was fast asleep when some grade 8s and 9s began to make noise in the dormitory. The offender woke up and made the noise makers to squat down as punishment. Mapalo pleaded with the senior student not to punish him as he was not making noise himself, but the senior boy, who had a problem with anger management pushed Mapalo to the ground, resulting into broken teeth (Headmaster, Mobile phone conversation, 23rd September, 2024). Interesting though, when the school management invited Mr. Simwaba to take away his child from St. Antony's after the incident, he (Mr. Simwaba) refused to do so and apologised to the school management for his misleading WhatsApp audio. He went on to reconcile with the parents of the grade 12 student who was suspended. It would seem, going by the decision taken by Mr. Simwaba, that 'Santos' as St. Antony's is also nicknamed by the former students, remains an inspirational dream school despite the problems it was facing. It is at St. Antony's that the former students' dreams of what they imagined education would deliver were after school fulfilled (Simpson, 2009).

Falling Academic Standards

In a conference paper, Fr. Robert Lavertu, a member of the Missionaries of Africa popularly known as White Fathers pointed out that:

... In Zambia, Catholic secondary schools always have had a good reputation since the beginnings in the 1950s, when they were administered by expatriate missionaries. Among other achievements, they are known to offer the best results at the Grade 12 exams, often in the area of 90% success. Today, these same schools are run by a complete Zambian staff of religious and lay teachers, and they achieve the same good results. ... (Lavertu, 2016: 5-6).

In this article, some former students of St. Antony's doubted the capabilities of the Zambian Marian Brothers in relation to producing outstanding results of 90% success.

Falling academic standards at St. Antony's were attributed largely to indiscipline, which the Brothers had purportedly failed to manage. Casam argued, "This explains the pathetic academic performance of our beloved and esteemed "Santos". And this nonsense cannot continue as long as we are still alive." Incidentally, the conversation on the poor standing of St. Antony's, in the eyes of the former students had actually started in 2020 when the Grade 9 results were published by the Ministry of Education. Casam posted the rankings of schools in Zambia in terms of their

academic performance at Grade 9 level in 2020 and St. Antony's was number 79. It was not certain whether or not the headmaster of the school was on the group or not, but some of the former students seemed to have been in possession of his mobile phone number for the obvious reason that they could ask him to secure for them a place in the school for their child or a relative. Justin posted the following question to the headmaster: "The old students are asking if the above ranking is a true position. If it is, what are the measures that the administration is taking to bring it back to the top ten?"

This particular WhatsApp group of former students consists of successful men in life; among them politicians, academicians, doctors, successful farmers, businessmen, teachers, academics, executives in private companies, bankers, chief financial officers, directors in government departments, serving and retired Army and Air Force Generals, and high ranking officers in the Zambia Correctional Services, and others. Some of the former students are working overseas. Peter made a proposal that a committee of educationists and enthusiasts should be constituted to look into the matter and propose remedial measures to St. Antony's. Jackson replied in support:

... I suppose we can write a diplomatic letter to the school expressing our grave concern at the performance of Santos [St. Antony's] and our desire to work with the school to recover its glory.

It was further suggested by Casam that the former boys' committee should meet teachers and the school managers in relation to academic performance. For some reason(s) the idea of a committee did not materialise. It may have been because of this comment from Patrick, "Are we a recognised body that the school is answerable to like for instance, the PTA [Parents Teachers Association]?"

In April 2023, the conversation on the problem of poor performance at St. Antony's resurfaced and this time, the introduction of girls back in 1990 became one reason for the poor results. Some of the former boys argued that the introduction of girls had contributed to poor results. They did not explain how. However, Oliver, a retired Headmaster posted a contrary view as follows:

I want to submit that St. Antony's is still very competitive. On the contrary, the introduction of girls and the primary school was from the Marian Brothers to improve access to education by the local community at an affordable fee. ... The introduction of girls was aimed at ensuring that girls around St. Antony's have an opportunity to earn an education of high standard and quality like ourselves did.

In Simpson's ethnography, the general and most widely shared public attitude towards girls and women in the formerly all-male school environment was extremely negative. Former students told Simpson that the introduction of girls had "contaminated" the school. Additionally, many male students and male teachers alike attributed the decline in examination performance solely to the presence of girls (Simpson, 2003b: 25). Nevertheless, the European Brothers insisted on admitting girls as day-scholars. The Brothers undertook the task of sensitising local people – parents, boys

and girls that St. Antony's would welcome boys and girls from the surrounding area to enrol in the primary and the secondary school. Oliver was particularly sympathetic to the Brothers policy of enrolling girls in the school, because "at St. Antony's, the Brothers, dedicated to the Virgin Mary, strove in some respects to be like her. Because of this, they tried to bring more female students into the school" (Simpson, 2003b).

In his 2013 fieldwork on Catholic schools in Zambia, Carmody was told in interviews with headmasters and teachers as well as church administrators that examination results measured the school's success. And when he asked a bishop how he viewed the value of the Catholic school, he responded by saying that it provided better education as evidenced through its place in the national results league table (Carmody, 2014: 65). The net effect of this, according to Carmody, is that because of the overarching concern with lucrative and prestigious employment, even where schools have leeway to act autonomously in selecting students from less privileged environments, they move slowly if at all. This happens because it is perceived to mean accepting less qualified students with the result that such students are likely to take more of the teachers' time and ultimately do less well academically (Carmody, 2016: 15 and 2015: 6).

Poor School Management Skills

This is a broad theme and it seemed to have been believed or suspected to be at the root of all the problems at St. Antony's. First of all, Levy asked, "Are the Marian Brothers still in charge?" Mwendalubi came in and said, "St. Antony's and the other Marian schools are being run by Zambian Brothers. They seem not to have been properly trained in the principles under which the school should operate." These former students may not know all the principles that guided the Marian Brothers in running their school, but they recalled order, discipline, and academic rigour. To Mwendalubi and the rest of the former boys, poor management of the school is what had brought St. Antony's to where it is today. He argued thus:

The Zambian Marian Brothers have failed to collaborate with the mother organisation in either Canada or Spain to continue promoting the ideals for which Bro. Paul founded the school. Also, what is going on at St. Antony's is a result of government interference in the running of the school. The Jesuits at Canisius have not tolerated that and the academic standards are still high there.

There are four fundamental points that Mwendalubi raised in the statement above. Firstly, is the lack of leadership in the African Brothers; secondly, is the absence of Catholic character at the school; thirdly, government interference; and fourthly, lack of collaboration between the local Brothers and the European ones. In light of the school lacking the Catholic outlook among administrators and teachers, Carmody (2014) has established that, there is a renewed consciousness of the need for the Catholic school to be better aligned with the ideals of its Catholic sponsors although things are slow. As regards government interference, historically, the church grant-aided school, as opposed to private school in Zambia, lost much of its autonomy

when after independence in 1964 the Ministry of Education continued to direct the schools (Carmody, 2014: 57).

Corruption

Duke argued: “There has been too much corruption reported at the school for some years now. With the exit of European Brothers, things got into Zed hands (Zambian Brothers), and everything nosedived.” Duke insisted on corruption as the reason for the falling standards at St. Antony’s. He further argued:

... There has been too much corruption there since the White Brothers left. These Zambian Brothers who have come, have not only failed the school but caused embarrassment to all of us. The school has been our pride as alumni.

No one paid attention to Duke’s insistence on the problem of corruption. He had no evidence of it at all. He had at face value taken the following statement, “My son got his first entry into the school by merit. ... He managed to get into the school after leaving Milestone School in Kabwe” made by Mr. Simwaba as evidence.

Duke interpreted the above statements in this way, “Like the affected brother [Mr. Simwaba] stated in the audio recording yesterday, it appears that a good number of learners now, do not get admitted on the basis of academic merit but financial merit, let alone status.” Whatever the case, Mr. Simwaba’s othering comment, which did not only have to do with academic performance but also of some boys from other families stealing from his son seems to suggest that St. Antony’s is mainly for children of the elite from private schools.

Dilapidation in the School

In February 2023, one of the European Brothers who had served as headmaster at the school, died in his home country. He came to Zambia in 1983 and went back to Spain in 2021, due to ill-health. When he became the headmaster in 1995, he embarked on rehabilitating the school and he is remembered for that. Consequently, when he left to build another Marian school (opened in 2006) on the Copperbelt, the PTA at St. Antony’s built a dormitory and named it after him. According to Dennis in the diaspora, the departure of the Brother in 2005, marked the beginning of decay, poor results, indiscipline and dirt at St. Antony’s. This observation seems to have been confirmed by the former students who went to attend the Brother’s memorial mass at St. Antony’s as has earlier been explained. On April 3, 2023, responding to Moyo’s request, Don had listed the following changes at St. Antony’s: 1). Dilapidated infrastructure. 2). Dirty dormitories. 3) Unmade beds. 4). Dirty and unkempt premises.

Don also posted that, “The administration system seems to have collapsed. ...” Don’s “report” stimulated nostalgia among the former students; they recalled House and School inspections on

Sundays. Mwendalubi commented, "...This Zambianisation³ of the Marian Brothers has been a big embarrassment. A general problem for Africa in anything that we have taken over." To Sanford, the PTA had to be blamed because its members did not want their children at the school to do manual work, which they equated to child labour. Generally, students in Zambia speak approvingly of Catholic schools' ethos and what they appear to treasure is emphasis on order – desks, teaching materials, clean and well-kept surroundings and supervision of teachers, which they contrast with what occurs in the state-run schools (Carmody, 2014: 65). Carmody is not talking about the time when Catholic mission schools were in the hands of expatriates, but now in the hands of Africans. What has happened at St. Antony's? It was learned that the majority of students are from towns and well to do families and refuse to do manual work.

Moyo who had asked his colleagues that had made it to the requiem mass to report what they had seen at the school came back to the discussion and said:

... Last year [2022], I recommended St. Antony's to a friend. He went there and toured the dormitories and the classrooms. He called me from St. Antony's, very angry calling me a joker. I was ashamed and I refunded his fuel expense.

Don also shared an earlier experience he had while in the company of some parents and the headmaster took them around the school premises. He explained to the parents that because students did not pay anything to the school, tools such as slashers, rakes, hoes and lawn mowers could not be bought.

It should be pointed out that the Marian Brothers do seek assistance from overseas and within the country, especially from the Alumni. It is not expected that they will always succeed to secure funds, and when they do, it is for a particular project in the school. To find money that can enable the Brothers to overhaul the infrastructure in the school after many years of natural decay is not quite easy, but as González (2019: 9) opines, "My opinion and option is that Castilla-Compostela has a moral and institutional responsibility to keep alive its historical commitment to Zambia-Mission, now Southern Africa." Exactly, Bro Chansa had the following to say, "When we became part of Southern Africa province, we felt abandoned by the European Brothers. However, we do receive monetary help for needy children and some projects, but the economic challenges are still many. The Brothers abroad demand accountability and transparency and these are key to securing funding" (Bro Chansa, Mobile phone conversation, 24 September, 2024). Bro. Ngosa, when asked if he felt abandoned by the European Brothers responded: "We still communicate with our Brothers in Spain and they do help us when they can, but overall,

³ This is a term often used to describe the situation of indigenous Zambians taking over jobs that were done by expatriates. The word has a political overtone because it was the vogue after Zambia's independence as the first president, Kenneth Kaunda embarked on nationalising the country's assets in private corporations or companies. Nationalisation went hand in hand with Zambianisation.

they look at us as a province of Southern Africa and we should look after ourselves” (Bro. Ngosa, Mobile phone conversation, 26 September 2024).

Weak Alumni Association

Catholic schools in Zambia tend to have weak Alumni associations and for the most part, there is still relatively little follow-up on past students (Carmody, 2014: 67). Some former students of St. Antony’s blamed themselves for the situation obtaining at their former school. Moyo in particular argued that while the school had a plan, there was a lack of philanthropy from the former boys. Mwiinga concurred, “I agree with you that we should do more, but the current administration and current parents need to carry the primary burden.” Moyo retorted, “Well, let us implement the secondary plan, which is micro projects.” Rashford, working for the Ministry of Education in a town thirty-three kilometres from St. Antony’s posted: “Good afternoon colleagues, I don’t think this is an emergency matter. Let us just leave the Ministry of Education to handle this issue since it is a government matter together with the Brothers.” Quite clearly, Rashford’s comment suggested dependency and Petros countered: “We hear you loud and clear, but we are still obligated to do something.” However, Dennis from the diaspora argued, “as a group, our fund-raising success rate is very poor. I don’t see this changing soon.” Dennis volunteered no reason.

The conversation relating to the school in the month of May 2023 was about water reticulation and sanitation at St. Antony’s. Some Alumni members on a different WhatsApp group had paid a company to assess the water and sanitation situation at the school. In the report of 14 May 2023, the company recommended the following:

The Alumni to consider admonishing the school management to resolve all that can be resolved i.e., closing up leaking points, unblocking drainages and many others by their maintenance team before we attend to that which they cannot do.

The company, which seemed to be owned by a former St. Antony’s student also indicated the following:

The school management has dropped the bar on cleanliness. The dormitory and dining areas are in a very bad state. The staff [Housemasters] and their prefects are not working at all. Routine inspections are a thing of the past. The Manpower [punishment] sessions that used to clean up the school are no longer there.

Who takes responsibility for the weak Alumni association at St. Antony’s? Both the school administration and the Alumni may be blamed. Given the galaxy of luminaries of the former students, it should not be too difficult for the Alumni to come up with a model of self-financing for the school. The school administration could come up with a way of keeping the Alumni abreast with what is going at St. Antony’s. To that end, there ought to be an Alumni link person in the school.

How St. Antony's came to be under Local Brothers

In giving the background to local Brothers, something must be said about how they came to be in charge of the school. According to Simpson (2003a), the Canadian Brothers in Zambia made an early attempt at recruitment, which came to nothing. In 1962, four years after their first arrival in Zambia, to establish St. Antony's, the Brothers constructed and opened a formation house with accommodation for about fifteen candidates. The house, known locally as the Juniorate, was situated in an area of the mission compound that was set apart from the school and where the Brothers' residence and the Catholic chaplain's house were located. One Brother was in charge of the candidates – four or five, who had expressed some desire to join the Brothers, although at this time, there was no formal programme of recruitment. After the official opening of the Juniorate, eight schoolboy aspirants transferred from the dormitories to the newly completed Juniorate. Not a single one of them became a Brother. One Marian Brother told Simpson, "They were more interested in the advantages, especially with regard to their studies, than anything else. One by one, they started to leave" (Simpson, 2003a: 378).

At the beginning of the 1980s, the interest in attracting vocations to Catholic religious life in the country was renewed (Simpson, 2003a: 379). In 1981, three of the four young men who undertook Marian formation were former St. Antony's students. In 1983, all four took the vows of Marian Brotherhood, but they left years later. In subsequent years, the European Brothers managed to recruit young men from different parts of the country to join Marian life. As of 2023, there were 14 local Brothers but two of them were working outside Zambia.

Before the African and European Brothers, the French-Canadians had managed to keep enrolments at St. Antony's to manageable levels. According to Simpson (2003b: 54), the French-Canadian Brothers managed to fend off an early attempt to encourage all schools in Zambia to increase drastically student numbers. Their argument was that numbers in excess of 400 would make it impossible to carry out their primary aims which they had identified in 1968, namely, giving education to boys to work for the Church in helping the formation of Christians and getting recruits to perpetuate the Church in Zambia.

As already pointed out, in 1974, the Spanish officially took over control of the school from their French counterparts. According to Simpson (2003b: 54),

The school continued to be successful, both on the sports field and in the examinations room, which added the pressure on enrolment, especially from better-off Zambians, and created a great gap between the school and local people, very few of whose children were admitted as students.

This situation made the Brothers reflect on and debate their relevance at St. Antony's as Simpson illuminates:

Some Spanish Marian Brothers found the nature of ‘Catholic’ school in contemporary, postcolonial Zambia problematic. They wondered about their presence and their goals and felt a tension: should they remain at St. Antony’s or start another mission elsewhere, among ‘the poorest of the poor?’ The Brothers, among themselves, constantly debated the purpose of their work, and defended different perspectives, different concepts of ‘mission’ and ‘presence’ (Simpson, 2003b: 14).

If as noted, the European and North American Brothers kept the number of students in the school to acceptable levels, one of the African Brothers who have served as headmasters at St. Antony’s reversed the policy, which the European Brothers had come up with, namely, to de-congest the school and as much as possible by enrolling local boys and girls as day scholars. The Brothers even sourced funding to buy bicycles for students walking long distances to St. Antony’s. The plan to decongest the boarding went hand in hand with a creation of a primary school, St. Antony’s primary school. Some dormitories were consequently converted into classrooms for the primary school. In March 1998 the primary school was officially opened in the designated St. Antony’s dormitories with a Zambian Marian Brother as headmaster (González, 2019 and Simpson, 2003b). González contends that:

The Brothers [Africans] should not abandon what those [Europeans] who have gone left behind. Our goal was to have three hundred boarders and two hundred day scholars, and we wanted to have as many girls as possible in the school. ... What the Brothers can do now is to have a quarter allocation of grade eights to the primary school and the entry points for day scholars should not be the same as that of boarders (Spontaneous sharing from Gonzáles after his visit to the school, 15 September, 2024)

There is evidence that the presence of Catholic schools in communities – historical or current, may have benefits for communities as a whole (Wodon, 2019: 135-153). According to Mwenya (2008) the initiative of creating a primary school by the Brothers at St. Antony’s was very highly praised and appreciated by the local people.

As mentioned already, the African Marian Headmaster in the secondary school probably under pressure from the PTA and the Ministry of Education, introduced bunk beds in the dormitories or hostels so that there would be more students in the school after three blocks of dormitories had been converted into a primary school. In 2022, there were 800 students in the secondary school, only a few of them were day scholars. This was phenomenal because the highest number of learners that the school has ever recorded during the time of expatriate Brothers is 500. Brother Ngosa regretted the situation in these words, “We lost it – the policy of the European Brothers was abandoned. In fact, we enrolled more pupils in the boarding than ever before. We even built new class rooms and dormitories. We bear the blame” (Mobile phone conversation, 26 September, 2024). Along the lines of Brother Ngosa, Moyo posted on the chat group on 31 July 2024 when he visited the school, “A new row of classrooms has been added behind the old grade 11-12 classrooms to accommodate an influx of kids.”

The biggest challenge the African Brothers face is a chronic lack of money to maintain the school infrastructure. The annual Government grant oscillates between K106, 000-00(US\$ 3, 926-00) and K160, 000-00 (US\$ 5,926-00) per quarter and it goes to cover recurrent operating expenses. Parents also pay K3, 100-00 (US\$ 115.00) per term towards food for their children in the boarding. Clearly, the Brothers do not seem to have means of generating money for themselves and the school. Also, in the past ten years, they have suffered a “dry spell” of vocations to Marian Brotherhood, which has its own implications on the pastoral aspect of their work at St. Antony’s.

Conclusion

The conversation of the former St, Antony’s captured nearly all the issues being discussed in the academic study of Catholic education including; Catholic identity, enrolments, moral and infrastructure decay, poor academic performance of learners, quality of teachers, learning environment, management of schools, diminishing numbers of religious personnel, *etcetera*. The situation at St. Antony’s presents some interesting questions, not least of which is whether the Brothers in Europe could do more to assist their counterparts to get weaned off dependency on foreign initiative, foreign money, and foreign personnel. The situation also makes a perceptive observer to ask: What is the point about having more and more students in a school of a capacity of 400 and less so after the creation of the primary school out of some dormitories?

The argument that the Brothers at St. Antony’s were not trained is contestable. It may be argued that most likely, “They seem not to have been trained” implies not having been prepared to manage a Marian school. It is noted that none of the African Brothers deputised under a European headmaster. In short, they were not mentored. Thus, it is possible that African Brothers have lacked mentorship because they were simply appointed as headmasters because a Marian Brother had to be headmaster of a Marian School.

Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson’s theory remains relevant to the situation at St. Antony’s. It is a perfect lens through which to examine the problem at St. Antony’s. The expatriate Brothers had built a beautiful boarding school including a full size Catholic chapel on the premises, cosy staff houses, a Juniorate, which later became a postulancy and a Noviciate, recruited African young men to become Brothers, and educated them to up to PhD level in two cases. However, time came when the European Brothers had to leave St. Antony’s in the hands of the African Brothers, and they did just that – going back to Europe after having started a new mission on the Copperbelt. In the light of the missiological theory, the questions to ask regarding the issues being addressed in the article are: Did the foreign Brothers remove their support too early? Did the foreign Brothers provide scaffolds once they had exited the school? One African Brother argued: “The European Brothers did not have a vision for the Zambian Brothers; they seem not to have had it at the back of their mind that they were going to leave the schools in the hands of the African Brothers. Secondly, when Zambia became part of the province of Southern Africa, the Europeans

were reluctant to be part of the province” (Bro. Changwe, 8 September, 2024). Little remembered, it seems, is that three European Brothers had opted to belong to the new African province (González, 2019), but left Zambia due to illness and relocation to new mission field overseas.

Generally, although the departure of the European Brothers should be understood in the context of what Werner Ustorf (1992) calls the situation of ‘Christianised Africa and De-Christianised Europe’, it has raised hopes among many in Europe and North America that Africa is the place of growth and hope for the renewal of a Western church (Simpson, 2023a: 377). Noted is the fact that the last young European Brother to have come to St. Antony’s albeit briefly was in 1992. There were few young men becoming Brothers in Europe, while Zambia was doing fairly well in this regard.

I argue that the members of the Alumni Association on the WhatsApp group which has been the focus of this essay has some wealthy and also well positioned members in government should reorganise itself and raise money for the school on annual basis. The African Brothers on their part must unequivocally maintain the policy left by European Brothers of reducing the number of students in the boarding by admitting more and more day students. Clearly, local learners affirmative action is a must. If, for some reason, the Brothers feel that they need to boost enrolments in the school, day students should be the option. I further argue as Wodon (2019: 136) does, that boosting enrolment should not be the primary goal of school system. Finally, I also argue that the African Brothers at St. Antony’s are good enough but lack financial capacity to do what the expatriate Brothers did. Inevitably, this article ends with questions: Did the European Brothers abandon the African Brothers in Zambia? Do the African Brothers feel abandoned? What do the European Brothers think about the situation of the African Brothers? Given the affluent situation of the European Brothers, how can they help the Zambian Brothers? Or how can the wealthy Brothers in the global north help the poor Brothers in global south? If the European Brothers knew that they would one day leave their schools in the hands of the Africans, how did they prepare them to sustain the standards? Either the African Brothers were not prepared or they have not been successful in running St. Antony’s.

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