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# The relationship between the mission and the state:

## An investigation of the early days of Lemana Teachers' Training College

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### Opsomming

*Onderwys in Afrika het sy oorsprong in 'n kombinasie van sending- en koloniale instellings gehad. Die soort onderwys wat aan inheemse mense in die pre- en post-koloniale era voorsien is, veral dié wat deur sendingskole voorsien is, was gegrond op die Gereformeerde teologie. Die verhouding tussen die sendelinge, koloniale owerhede en plaaslike swartmense was ingewikkeld en is gekenmerk deur strydvoeringe, vyandskap, die nastrewing van uiteenlopende belange en allerlei ander konflikte. In hul pogings om hulle hoofdoelstelling te bereik, naamlik 'n kerstening van die plaaslike bevolking, het die sendelinge voor spesifieke geografiese, politieke, teologiese, ekonomiese en sosiale uitdagings te staan gekom waarop hulle noodgedwonge moes antwoord. Ten spyte daarvan dat hierdie faktore 'n beduidende invloed op die voorsiening van onderwys aan inheemse bevolkings gehad het, word hierdie faktore dikwels in studies oor sendingonderwys misgekyk. In hierdie artikel ontleed ek beide die verhouding tussen die Sweedse Sendinggenootskap en die regering van die dag, en die uitwerking van*

*hierdie verhouding op die opleiding van swartmense aan die Lemana Onderwysersopleidingskollege.*

## **Abstract**

*Education in Africa was started by a combination of missionary and colonial institutions. Education which was provided to indigenous people, especially by mission schools, in the pre and post-colonial era was grounded in the Reformed theology. The relationship between the missionaries, colonial governments and the Africans was a complex one characterised by struggles, antagonism, the pursuit of separate interests and conflicts. In their efforts to achieve their principal aim, namely to convert Africans to Christianity, the missionaries had to deal with and respond to specific geographic, political, theological, economic and social challenges. In most instances, these factors are ignored in missionary studies, even though they had a considerable impact on the provision of education to indigenous people. In this article I analyse the relationship between the Swiss Mission Society and the government of the time, as well as the effect this relationship had on the education of Africans at Lemana Teachers' Training College.*

## **Key terms:**

**Lemana Teachers' Training College; state-mission relationship; Swiss Mission Society; African education; Reformed theology.**

## **1. Introduction**

The education of indigenous people in South Africa up until the middle of the twentieth century was largely initiated and conducted by missionaries. These early missionaries were grounded in the Reformed theology<sup>1</sup>. The Reformed tradition is also known for its emphasis and stance on the Christian life, morality and ethics, from the personal to the political (Smit, 2011:322). One of the key proponents of Reformed tradition, John Calvin,

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<sup>1</sup> The Reformed theology originated in different Swiss communities (Zurich, Geneva, Basel and elsewhere during the 16<sup>th</sup> century) and it include leaders such as John Calvin, Zwingli, Bullinger, Oecolampadius, Beza, and many others (Smit, 2011).

was concerned about the implications of Christian faith on life, that is, the doctrine for ethics. Calvin believed that Christian life and ethics were inseparable. The Reformed theology which was characterised by religious fervour and the realization that the grace that Christians received through Jesus Christ should be communicated to non-believers all over the world was upheld (Richter, 1924:1, 4, 28; Ellis, 1844:3, 5; Walters, 1884:23-4; Enklaar, 1988:50-1). Believers in the Reformed tradition regard highly, among others, the inspiration of the Bible, the requirement that Christians live moral lives, the need for the new birth and the Great Commission (Boice, 1999). The Great Commission, the term given to Christ's injunction to his disciples to evangelise all people, was a core responsibility and function of the Reformed missionaries. The Great Commission is based on Matthew 28, verses 19-20 which states: "Make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Christianising the social order to make it reflect the divine will was problematic to the Reformed missionaries. The state, which was constituted by different members of society, was not easy to transform or convert to Christianity. Society was not only fragmented in terms of political beliefs and association, but between Christian world-views. Dunch (2002:307) argues that, in most instances, missionaries were habitually portrayed in literature as narrow-minded chauvinists who through the preaching of the gospel destroyed indigenous cultures and in one way or the other, promoted colonial rule. One should not lose sight that these missionaries had to live as minorities within a plural and sophisticated environment and in most instances, they found themselves interacting with people of different belief systems who also believed in particular political ideologies. These relationships and interactions to convey the gospel to the indigenous and un-churched members of society were problematized by a number of factors. These factors included the missionaries' convictions and beliefs, personal circumstances surrounding their lives, their economic background and the education that they have received from their mother countries. The education of indigenous people by Reformed missionary societies should, therefore, also be understood within the context of the circumstances that prevailed during different missionary periods.

The encounters between missionaries, indigenous peoples and governments were the source of countless tensions and conflicts. Some missionary education scholars emphasised the philanthropic role of missionaries, others saw missionaries as agents of imperialism. In most instances, missionary

education in South Africa is described predominantly from a single, nationalistic perspective, one where colonial governments gradually extend their control over schooling. Nationalist historians have frequently defined missionary education as being arrogant and to be deeply regretted as it promoted, amongst others, the propagation of industrial and manual labour by colonial governments, racism and subordination, and sexism and woman subordination by the missionaries (Christie, 2006; Majeke, 1952; Nwandula, 1987; Lewis & Steyn, 2003; Pienaar, 1990). State-mission relationships had both political consequences and a significant effect on the educational endeavours in South Africa.

Garvey (1982) discusses four phases that describe the historical relationship between mission schools and the government<sup>2</sup>. The first is an early stage where colonial governments cannot interfere with or impede the educational activities of the missionaries. The next phase is a gradual involvement of government in missionary education activities. The third phase refers to the period when colonial governments officially begin taking charge of the administration of education for indigenous people, and the last phase takes place when mission formations fuse with colonial governments and finally hand the education system over to the state. The nationalist perspective emphasises the view that mission activities are crafted in such a way that they transform and undermine the traditional patterns of indigenous peoples and their cultural independence. Much has been said about the last phase where colonial and mission structures integrate and the consequences of this fusion between government and mission societies. Temu (1972:132) argues that to characterise missions as nothing more than an “arm of the colonial administrations” is unacceptable and says that this viewpoint disregards the differences that colonial governments had with mission societies. Struggles, antagonisms, separate interests and conflicts existed between the missions and colonial governments. Nevertheless, by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, many missionaries were working under the influence of the government’s somewhat prescriptive education policies. In addition, the mission schools had to contend with the indecisive and deleterious attitudes of colonial communities towards the schooling of indigenous people, and also the frustration experienced when they failed to produce the kind of students they wanted them to be.

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2 In his chapter entitled “Education and underdevelopment in Africa: The historical perspective” in *Education in the Third World*, edited by K. Watson, Brian Garvey (1982:63) explains that the four phases dominated the Anglophone African territories.

Missionaries were constantly engaged with local communities and sometimes this engagement was confrontational. As evangelists, missionaries had their own cultural, theological and personal frameworks within which they worked and which guided all their encounters with indigenous people. In fact, scholars of mission schools often concern themselves with answering the questions: “Whose side was the missionary really on?” and “Whose end did the missionary serve?” (Comarrof & Comarrof, 1986). All these factors had serious implications on the missionary encounters across the globe and many times they are ignored in mission studies. Jensz (2012:307) explains that although the primary aim of missionaries throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century was to convert indigenous people to Christianity, they also had to deal with and respond to specific geographic, political and social challenges. Within the community of the colonists and the colonised, a strong culture of bargaining, compromise and shifting of alliance existed and this cannot be ignored.

In this article, the educational activities of the Swiss Mission Society will be used to examine the relationship between the colonial government, indigenous peoples and the missionary society. Lemana Teachers’ Training College, located in Limpopo province, is one of the oldest extant teacher education institutions for indigenous people in Southern Africa, and it was a key part of Swiss Mission’s activities. This article is not intended to become a polemical debate; its objective is to make a careful scrutiny of the part played by the Swiss Mission in providing education to students at Lemana Teachers’ Training College. This is also illustrative of how members of the Swiss Mission endeavoured to realise the tenets of the Reformed tradition and Reformed missiology within a complex and challenging environment. The article advocates the notion that the part that the Swiss Mission played in the political arena with regards to the provision of education at Lemana was fluctuating and indeterminate. This undertaking will be achieved by answering the following questions:

- What characterised the state-mission relationship during its various historical phases?
- What variables shaped and influenced the Swiss Mission’s endeavor to realize the tenets of the Reformed tradition at Lemana Teachers’ Training College?
- What were the complexities that were associated with the state-mission relationship at Lemana within the context of the Swiss Mission’s philosophy of the Reformed tradition?

Before answering these questions, it is important to provide some insight into the origin of the Lemana Teachers' Training College as well as the philosophy underlying the Swiss Mission Society.

## 2. The founding of Lemana Teachers' Training College

The genesis of the Swiss Mission Society's activities in South Africa can be traced back to 1869 when Ernest Creux and Paul Berthoud offered themselves to do missionary work for their church, the *Free Church of Canton de Vaud* (Brookes, 1925:6). Both men were theological students in Switzerland and they shared the aspiration to offer their services as missionaries in South Africa after completing their theological training (*The Tsonga Messenger*, 1949:2-3). In February 1872, Ernest Creux was sent to Lesotho by the Synod of the *Free Church of the Canton de Vaud*. In 1873, Berthoud and Adolph Mabilie (a colleague working for the *Paris Evangelical Mission Society*) explored the northern part of the Transvaal. In a letter which the theology students wrote, Ernest Creux and Paul Berthoud wrote to the synod of the Swiss Mission, they reiterated their willingness, by the grace of God to fulfil their mandate to go preach the gospel to the unconverted (Maluleke, 1994). Their commitment to go to different parts of South Africa was motivated by Reformed theology as grounded in its interpretation of the Great Commission. These missionaries came into contact with the Sesotho-speaking people, but instead of evangelising amongst them, they decided to establish a mission station in the north-eastern area of the Transvaal where the Tsonga or Shangaan tribes lived. Their wish was to do missionary work in Northern Sekhukhune in the Transvaal and use their Sesotho language skills to preach the gospel. Unfortunately this did not materialise as intended (Phillips, 1949; Brookes, 1950; Crafford, 1975).

The Swiss Mission established a number of schools among the Tsonga tribe. These schools included *Valdezia* (founded in 1875). In 1879 a mission station was founded under Rev and Mrs De Meuron in Louis Trichardt next to the present Elim Hospital in the Limpopo Province (Brookes, 1925:12). In 1899 the Swiss Mission established *Shiluvane Evangelical School*<sup>3</sup> in response to the dire need for the training of teachers and evangelists in the Transvaal and Mozambique (Mabunda, 1995:61). The *Shiluvane Evangelical School*

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3 The Shiluvane Evangelical School was established by Henri-Alexandre Junod. In 1903 he was recalled to Neuchâtel as a minister. He joined the school again in 1904 (Jeannerat, Morier-Genoud & Péclard, 2011).

area was badly affected by malaria, sleeping sickness and typhoid fever at that time and eventually the Mission Board in Switzerland decided to close the school. The Board then decided to open the *Normal Training Institution* next to Elim and named it Lemana. The name Lemana was chosen by the Board because most of the Swiss Mission Society's missionaries and friends were then living around Lake Geneva which is called *Lac Lemman* in French (Cuendet, 1966:1). And so on 8 January 1906 the *Lemana Teachers' Training College* was established on the slopes of the Klein Splonken range. Its primary function was to train black teachers and until 1910 it was the only institution in the northern part of the Union of South Africa which educated black people above Standard 6. It was officially inaugurated on 27 May 1906 (Cuendet, 1966:1). Buys (2013:171) mentions that it was the reformist belief that ministers of the Word were used as God's "hands" to establish churches through the preaching of the word.

### **3. Philosophical foundation of the Swiss Mission Society**

The primary aim for nearly all missionary organisations during the 19<sup>th</sup> century was to convert the so-called 'heathen' to Christianity and they would also encourage indigenous peoples to participate in missionary endeavours. Jenz (2012:306) notes that missionaries regarded themselves as a "moral, stabilizing force for Indigenous people". When the Swiss Mission Society first came to South Africa, the urgency for the conversion of Africans to Christianity was deemed to be of paramount importance. They did not only aim to convert adults, but focussed much attention on converting young people. Years earlier, in 1852, the *Sunday School Society* was founded and its object was to reinforce religious training in the face of the already growing secularisation of public schools. The Swiss evangelicals believed that this secularisation of education by the state would compromise and undermine the morality holding society together and they wanted to oppose the state's intellectual dominance in the lives of the youth and children. According to Harries (2007:19), this was the main reason behind the Swiss Mission focussing so much on education for children and youths; at no time was it on the agenda to have the education of indigenous people under the control of the state.

Education was seen as an important vehicle to be used to convert indigenous people to Christianity. To attain their evangelical goal, the Mission made efforts to found schools on its mission farms and on neighbouring farms with the

permission of the land owners. By 1954, the Swiss Mission had established 70 schools in the Soutpansberg area, the majority being primary schools. Unlike the farm schools, schools located on mission farms were initially built and financed by the Swiss Mission Society (Hartshorne, 1992:137). It was through education that the Swiss Mission reinforced the notion that indigenous people had to be transformed from paganism, superstitions, polygamy and ancestral beliefs to Christianity. Education was seen as a way to free African society from paganism (Lemana Annual Report, 1910).

The philosophy of the Swiss Mission Society should be understood within the broader context of South African politics. Cox (2002) explains that in most instances mission schools were viewed as institutions which had been Christianised within colonies. Mission schools were also perceived as being institutions which the government used to promote indigenous workers who were expected to contribute to the colonial political system. The Reformed tradition, which was also applicable to the Swiss missionaries, was that Christian life should be understood from a morality and ethics, and from the personal to the political perspective (Smit, 2011:323). The term "Christian freedom" which intended as introduction to discussion of the church polity and civil government was of primary importance for reformists. Conversion to Christianity was to be understood within the parameters of the scriptures.

One cannot, however, examine missionary education and only consider one particular and single variable. A number of elements were in play and this makes the interpretation and assessment of mission education a complex one. Like any other mission society, the Swiss Mission had to deal with challenges around the politics of the time, for example, the race-culture relationship, the adaptation of mission schools' curriculum to fit that laid down by the state, the financing of indigenous schools by missions or state, the provision of infrastructures, and the payment of teacher salaries.

In the following section, a few variables with a bearing on the provision of education at Lemana Teachers' Training College are discussed. These will be traced in the areas of the state/mission funding and curriculum that dominated the education provision at Lemana College.

#### **4. The financing of Lemana Teachers' Training College**

When Lemana opened its doors of learning in 1906, it consisted of a dilapidated building which was formerly used by soldiers during the Anglo-



Boer War between 1899 and 1902 (see Figure 1). The old, crumbling building was located at a farm in Rossbach and was refurbished by the proprietors of the farm (*Zoutpansberg Review*, 1906:1). The educational facilities which the College used were of poor quality and were in a poor condition. The building was divided into four rooms which were used as classrooms. Next to the classrooms was a hall which was used for devotions and manual work lessons. The Swiss Mission financed the relocation of the college from Rossbach to the hillside of Elim in 1922 by selling one of their farms; they also received additional funding from the Mission Society in Switzerland. The maintenance of the infrastructure at Lemana was predominantly the responsibility of the mission society in Switzerland. However, maintaining the mission infrastructure at Lemana was not a sustainable practice since it did not have enough funds to even run the College. In most instances, missionary schools had to rely on the government for their financial survival.



*Fig 1: The remaining building of Lemana Training College in 2013.*

Mission schools experienced a serious challenge in terms of maintenance. The education in the Transvaal was exclusively a mission venture, initially being carried out without any financial aid from the state. It was not until 1903 that a system of grant-in-aid (through the Education Ordinance of 1903<sup>4</sup>) was introduced in the Transvaal. In 1904, the Department of Education, which

4 The Education Ordinance of 1903 was premised on the principle that there should be separate schools for white people and black people (Union of South Africa, 1936:par 95). The funding model was to be differentiated according to race groups.

was run on racial basis, was introduced. The Department made provision for the subsidisation of teachers' salaries. Primary schools got a 100% subsidy on teacher salaries, whereas college teachers and principals received a 50% subsidy (Transvaal Education Department, 1904). The government had to benefit from the financial relationship that it had with the Swiss Mission and all other mission institutions. Etherington (2010:133) postulates in his dissertation that the more government-funded a mission organisation was, the more it wanted to dictate the curriculum, pedagogical practices and learning outcomes of that organisation. Obviously, accepting financial assistance from the government meant that the Swiss Mission had to accept certain conditions that were coupled to the funding arrangement.

Government grants to mission schools were dependent on the following two conditions:

- Each black mission school had to be under the superintendency of a white missionary or any other person recognised by the government as being competent and efficient to exercise control and act as an intermediary with the government in all matters relating to the school.
- All mission schools were to be registered with the Transvaal Education Department by the Mission Society concerned on prescribed registration forms (Transvaal Education Department, 1904:8).

The issue of the subsidisation of Lemana created fluctuations, contradictions, divergences and convergences between the colonial government and the Swiss Mission. An appointed Inspector of Schools (who could have been either "a white missionary" or "any other person recognised by government") would have to visit the school and this reflects the government's need to control black education. The circumstances on the ground, i.e. a lack of financial resources to pay teachers, made the Swiss Mission conform and temporarily disregard their view of not wanting the education of indigenous people to be under the control of the state.

The government went so far as to prescribe admission requirements and conditions of service for teachers; these did not totally match the ones laid down by the Swiss Mission. Admission, suspension or expulsion of students on account of their behaviour at Lemana was the responsibility of the Superintendent (Constitution of the Lemana Training Institution, [sa]:1). Even though the Lemana College had its own admission requirements and conditions of service for teachers, the government had the final say on the appointment of teachers. There was, however, an element of convergence in terms of admission requirements and conditions of service for teachers between the Swiss Mission and the State.

The issue around the subsidisation of the college teachers' salaries was problematic. Firstly, between 1906 and 1952, most teachers and superintendents employed at Lemana worked for only one or two years before resigning from their positions (Lemana Training Institution 1949; Lemana Training Institution, 1951; Cuendet, 1966:2). Teachers were employed on a temporary basis and often had to leave because their posts were not guaranteed. Consequently the Swiss Mission could not reject the government subsidy because it put them in a position to guarantee their employees better employment packages. Secondly, fully qualified teachers who possessed a certificate or other satisfactory qualification were entitled to a full grant. Only up to half of this salary was payable in the case of teachers not yet fully qualified; after graduating, the teacher's salary would be adjusted (Jeannerat, Morier-Genoud & Péclard, 2011:26). To a certain extent these subsidisations meant that the Swiss Mission compromised on their idea not to allow the education of Africans to become secularised.

Over and above this, the government allocated bursaries to students who wanted to become teachers. Obviously, conditions were attached to the allocation of the bursaries. These included that the students teach in government schools for three years after the completion of their studies and the requirement that on entering the training college, students were expected to have passed Standard III of the Native Education Code within the previous twelve months or a preliminary examination of equal difficulty (Transvaal Education Department, 1904). Government had more say in the allocation of the funds to prospective teachers. Most African students who enrolled at Lemana were coming from impoverished family backgrounds and had a dire need for a bursary. The Swiss Mission wanted their students to be eligible for the bursaries. It was probable that the Swiss Mission adjusted and adapted their philosophical beliefs to converge and conform to government conditions for the sake of the students that needed financial assistance. This kind of conformity cannot be entirely interpreted on the basis that the Mission project was entirely political. There were compelling reasons why mission institutions had to adapt, modify or converge with government requests or stipulations.

It is imperative to note that even though Lemana depended on government subsidies between 1906 and 1921, the Swiss Mission in Switzerland made a substantial annual contribution to the education of Africans. In 1908 for example, the income for Lemana was distributed as follows:

	£
1. Total government grant on 31 December 1908	338
2. School fees	54
3. Contribution from the church funds	502
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>894</b>

Table 1: Lemana College Income for 1908  
(Source: Transvaal Education Department, 1908:1-5)

It can be seen from Table 1 that the church made a substantial contribution towards African education. It was the deep urge that most reformist missionaries had within themselves to go to heathen countries to preach the gospel (cf. Dickson, 1974:18; Philip, 1838:xxxii-xxxiii; Moffat, 1969:15) that made them do everything in their power to make sure that indigenous people are not only converted, but they are also educated. The amount contributed by government (£338) went to teacher salaries and these were the funds that the mission schools needed to give their teachers better salary packages. Parents also made a contribution by means of school fees. The Mission Society grants from Switzerland were insufficient but without them, African education could have lagged behind. Between 1910 and 1948 the Swiss Mission found itself in a very serious predicament. African education, including mission education, experienced significant financial challenges (Union of South Africa, 1936). Unfortunately, due to limited financial resources, mission societies gradually started handing their schools over to the government<sup>5</sup>. The *Conseil Directeur* in Switzerland made it clear that he was not happy about this decision (Swiss Mission, 1949). Parents also could not continue to pay school fees for their children due to the high levels of poverty that characterised the areas in which these mission schools were traditionally located (see Seroto, 1999).

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5 In 1953, when the Bantu Education Act, No. 47 of 1953 was introduced, the government threatened to reduce financial aid to mission schools. The Swiss Mission could not anymore balance its primary aim of Christianising the indigenous people and also of providing education which was of a Christian nature (Jeannerat, Morier-Genoud & Péclard, 2011).

## 5. Aim of the teaching

The Swiss Missionaries saw Lemana as a “beacon of light upon a mountain which would civilise and promote the knowledge of the gospel” among the indigenous people who were predominantly residing in the northern part of the Transvaal (Zoutpansberg Review, 1906:1). The Constitution of the Lemana Training Institution ([sa]) states that the College primarily aimed to train the student to become both an evangelist and a teacher. The Mission wanted to retain its philosophical objective of not focussing only on teacher training, but also on making sure that the Kingdom of God was extended to Africans. Zwemer (1950:206-216) argues that the reformists demonstrated an ardent longing for the conversion of non-Christians and they were not prepared to compromise this virtue. The Swiss Mission wanted to provide Africans with a “higher education and train them as Christian teachers and leaders of their people, and of their native church” (Constitution of the Lemana Training Institution, [sa]).

Tensions existed between the government and the Swiss Mission on what the focus of the teacher training should be. As stated, the Swiss Mission wanted to produce both evangelists and teachers. However, the mission’s focus on training teachers to also become evangelists did not receive the approval of the Department of Education in the Transvaal. The state was of the opinion that there was insufficient time to train students in both disciplines. At the *South African Race Relations Conference* which was held in Johannesburg in 1953, Hartshorne (1953:19) confirmed forty years later that one of the shortcomings of mission training institutions was that they did not cover much ground in the classroom time they had at their disposal. Generally, the government was of the opinion that the training of the teachers at Lemana and other missionary colleges was too generalised and did not adequately address teaching methods and practice.

The other challenge that faced Lemana was that both white and black teachers were not especially trained and prepared to teach prospective teachers<sup>6</sup> (Lenoir, 1906:1). The *Report of the Interdepartmental Committee on Native Education* (Union of South Africa, 1936:38) came to the same conclusion, namely that most of the teachers who taught at Mission schools were in many instances unqualified or under-qualified. The lack of pedagogical knowledge

6 In 1906, when Rev D.P. Lenoir was the principal of Lemana, Mr Pochard, who was unqualified had to replace Mr Jules Dentan (the industrial teacher). Most of the teachers that taught at Lemana came from a Christian or church background. In some instances, Superintendents of Mission Schools had to recommend their children or spouses for teaching position at the schools they were attached to (Seroto, 1999).

by staff members at Lemana may be ascribed to the different focus that government and the Swiss Mission had about the kind of teacher they wanted to produce. The Swiss Mission unfortunately did not want government to interfere in their educational activities. However, Lemana could not totally prohibit government involvement in African education because the Mission could not sustain itself financially. Gradually the government got involved with the activities of Lemana and in most instances the Swiss Mission employees had to compromise to conform to government practices.

At a Missionary Conference which was held in Johannesburg in 1905, Junod (1905:2) reiterated that the Swiss Mission wanted to raise indigenous people from "barbarism into a higher state of morality and culture". In their view the teaching of Christian values to teacher trainees was of primary importance (Lemana Annual Report, 1910). That is the reason why religious instruction dominated daily activities at Lemana and other Swiss Mission schools. Teachers were taught how to teach the contents of the Bible and how to explain it to children. They were expected to play a role in moulding the character of the child, to show him/her what was good and bad, and to help him/her to live a righteous life. Before a teacher could shape the moral fibre of the child, he/she had to first be converted to Christianity (Cuendet, 1942).

The issue of moral training was rather sophisticated whether seen from a governmental or missionary point of view. Government convictions and beliefs on the aspect of morality was that it should include: cleanliness, obedience, punctuality, tidiness, truthfulness, honesty, respect, self-restraint and temperance (Transvaal Education Department, 1912:2). To a certain extent, both the government and the Swiss Mission agreed on the point that a teacher should be someone of high moral standing, even though they could differ on exactly what was meant about morality. The Swiss Mission emphasised a morality which was premised on the Christian value system whereas the government believed in a morality that would produce "good" citizens.

The reformed tradition, as postulated by John Calvin in Geneva emphasized church polity. Liturgy became an important aspect in government institutions such as the city council, welfare and medical services and money-lending businesses (Graham, 1973:18). All these services had to answer to what was contained in the scripture. The Swiss missionaries also believed that God's invisible rule, through the scriptures, was to be made visible in the justice and equity practiced in their mission stations. Unfortunately, the material conditions they found themselves in couldn't allow them to "push" government or align state policies in accordance to scriptures.

## 6. Curriculum provision

The other challenge that needs to be carefully examined is the interaction of the state and mission in the area of the school curriculum.

### 6.1 *Teaching of the vernacular*

The importance of emphasis on the degree of literacy and vernacular can be traced to the Calvinist insistence on reading as a practice that predominated in post-Reformation Switzerland. The practice encouraged introspection and meditation upon the scripture, which consequently led to personal salvation and individual conversion. In essence, by putting more emphasis on literacy and the teaching of vernacular, the missionaries upheld the Reformed tradition of converting the indigenous people to Christianity (Harries, 2001:407).

To increase the level of literacy and vernacular for religious purposes, the Swiss Mission made sure that vernacular became an important element of the curriculum at Lemana College. Three teacher qualifications were offered at Lemana: a three-year professional teacher certificate which was called a *Third Year*, the *Native Lower Primary Teachers' Certificate* and the *Native Higher Primary Certificate*. The latter two were offered at Lemana after 1929 (Union of South Africa, 1936:122). It should be noted that it was not until 1924 that student teachers were required to do at least one native language at the institutions at which they were enrolled (Transvaal Education Department, 1924:1). In contrast to many mission schools that had English as a medium of instruction before 1924, the Swiss Mission had long taken a resolution to teach in the vernacular at primary schools (Transvaal Missionary Association, 1907:10). In his letter to the Superintendent of the Education Department, Rev Junod (1906:2) of the Swiss Mission stated the following:

*The heathen boy coming from his kraal, not knowing a word in English, is treated as an English born child. He is meant, from the first year, Substandard A, to read intelligently from an Easy Reading Primer ... On the other hand, not a word is said about his own language. It seems, however, that he ought to know first of all to read it (vernacular) and to write it.*

The missionary contribution to the teaching of vernacular and especially literacy at elementary level was of primary importance. A high degree of literacy teaching at Lemana was necessary for several reasons. The introduction of literacy formed an important aspect of the nonconformist belief of missionaries. Beidelman (1982:14) argues that Christianity, which is based on Protestantism, was the faith of the book. Literacy enabled the convert to be self-conscious and committed to "the word". Literacy was therefore a tool that could be used to make personal interpretations of the



Bible without the mediation of a class of clergyman<sup>7</sup>. A relatively high degree of teaching of vernacular was of primary importance so that teachers could understand the Scriptures and be able to disseminate Christian virtues to villagers in the countryside.

Harries (2001:408) argues that the teaching of vernacular at teacher training or elementary levels had to happen within spatial and temporal contexts. The state, the Swiss missionaries and the indigenous people saw the teaching of vernacular from different contexts. For example, the indigenous people saw an opportunity to use literacy skills acquired for their own social benefits. The new skills were perceived to be a vehicle that could enable students to write letters and open opportunities for upward social mobility to the economic world.

Some of the missionaries, like Junod, saw the role of teaching vernacular from multiple perspectives. In a presentation that Junod (1905:1-2) made at the Missionary Conference in Johannesburg, he mentioned that Native education should aim at forming the mind of the African child and also make an African child a useful member of the South African Commonwealth. Junod propagated the notion that the vernacular should be used as a vehicle to achieve the native objectives as per his presentation at the Conference (see above quotation). These objectives would be attained by making sure that the school assisted African learners to take their proper place in the existing social conditions of South Africa.

The government's stance had for years been that indigenous people belong to a rural setting and that their education should be patterned in that direction (Seroto, 2004). The role of teaching vernacular was to instil in indigenous people the notion that they belong to rural areas. Harries (2007) contends that the idea of using the vernacular to make African children learn their home language which was imbued with the minds of their ancestors, were later used by the government to rationalise its racial laws. However, it is important to note that the Swiss missionaries, irrespective of the challenges that confronted them, kept on advocating the importance of using vernacular as a tool for the advancement of the gospel to the unconverted. Firstly, around the Elim area where Lemana was located, there were a number of African peoples who spoke different languages. The Lemana Teachers' Training College was attended mainly by members of the Tsonga and the

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7 The origins of literacy for Swiss missionaries can be traced back to the Calvinistic philosophy that prevailed in Switzerland. Calvinists insisted that reading encouraged inner reflection and meditation upon sin and the need for conversion and salvation (Harries, 2007:183).



Bapedi tribes (Transvaal Education Department Reports, 1926; 1930) and this posed an additional challenge because two languages needed to be taught. In addition, various groups of people who came from the Western area of Mozambique also lived in the Transvaal. One of the resolutions that the Swiss Missionaries took was to unify various languages into a single written language. This move could not bear fruit because the unified language (referred to as Gwamba)<sup>8</sup> could not be understood by the majority of the people, especially further south in the country (Macagno, 2009:65).

Secondly, although the Swiss Mission took a resolution as early as 1907 to teach the vernacular at their institutions, teachers who taught vernacular were not always adequately qualified to teach African languages. For example, a third year student (Mr Mongalo) had to teach his fellow students Sepedi at the institution where he was a student (Transvaal Education Department Report, 1925:1). The decision to have a third year student was purely based on the mission's reformed tradition of empowering student teachers with language skills to be able to spread the gospel through vernacular.

The state, which prescribed the syllabus, wanted to ensure that the interaction between vernacular teaching and/or literacy with other social factors would determine the way the skills related to the vernacular, literacy, reading and writing that were acquired and perceived by those who received them. However, missionaries and the Africans held divergent and contradictory views on teaching the vernacular at mission institutions. Missionaries wanted to further their objective of making sure that the evangelists they produced at mission institutions helped in spreading the gospel to the unconverted. On the other hand, government saw vernacular and the teaching of literacy from a technocratic point of view which aimed at producing a particular kind of citizen.

## ***6.2 Teaching of practical subjects***

The other subjects that were offered at Lemana Teachers' Training College were agriculture, woodwork, needlework and domestic science, all prescribed by the Transvaal Education Department (Cross, 1986:57). Industrial training was intensively done at third year level. Initially the Swiss Mission encouraged their students to do manual work for biblical reasons. They based this thinking on the passage from the book of Genesis in *The Bible* where it states that man/woman will eat food by the sweat of his/her brow until he/she is buried

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8 In 1907, Junod abandoned the use of the term Gwamba which classified the northern clans. Thonga or Shangaan became the predominant language of the northern Transvaal people.

in the ground. The Swiss Mission stressed the “gospel of work” as a means of remedying the so-called wayward kind of existence and transforming it into a more organised way of life (Harries, 2007:82). The re-ordering of the indigenous people’s way of life, as will be seen below, extended to the notion of gender. There was a division in the kind of training that was offered to boys and girls. Boys did carpentry; girls did needlework and sewing (Lemana Training Institution, 1918:1). In 1934 the *Domestic Science School* at Lemana was established and was renamed the *Lemana Industrial School* some time later (Transvaal Provincial Council, 1938:1). Dividing the work between girls and boys was purely based on the Christian principles and beliefs held by the Swiss Mission, namely that the roles of the two genders are different. Through the establishment of domesticated training (such as sewing), the missionaries wanted to extend their belief that women do not belong in the field but in the home. The Swiss Missionaries also believed that clothing is a sign of Christian women’s respectability.

The government also had strong reason to introduce manual training for learners in mission schools. The government’s aim to introduce manual work in mission institutions can be traced to a few years before Lemana was established. In 1855 Sir George Grey, governor of the Cape in 1855, outlined why it was important to allow mission schools to operate in South Africa, saying:

*If we leave the natives beyond our border ignorant barbarians, they will remain a race of troublesome marauders. We should try to make them a part of ourselves, with a common faith and common interests, useful servants, consumers of our goods, contributors to our revenue. Therefore, I propose that we make unremitting efforts to raise the natives in Christianity and civilization, by establishing among them missions connected with industrial schools. The native races beyond our boundary, influenced by our missionaries, instructed in our schools, benefiting by our trade would not make wars on our frontiers (quoted in Christie, 2006:37).*

In a letter which was addressed to the Lemana institution before its official opening in 1905, the Department of Education stated the following:

*Government is not likely to act harshly towards any institution that has been co-operating heartily with it in a work that is of joint advantage (Transvaal Education Department, 1905:3).*

A few months after the opening of Lemana College, Rev. H.A. Junod, then Superintendent of Lemana, wrote a letter to the Inspector of Native Education in the Transvaal and stated the following:

*The necessary stress will be laid on the value of manual labour ... I may add that besides, pupils are daily occupied for 2 to 3 hours with various manual occupations (Lenoir, 1906:1).*

The above quotations suggest that basically there is a point of convergence with regards to manual training at African schools. The notion that government and the Swiss Mission collaborated with regards to the reasons why industrial subjects were primary in the curriculum of Lemana college, is also a delicate issue which needs to be dealt with cautiously. The various manual training that Junod refers to above generally included physical training, sports and athletics (Syllabus of work for students in training for native teachers' certificates, [sa]:5).

The establishment of industrial classes was a precondition to receiving government subsidisation and provisions such as additional equipment. To fulfil its obligation of making sure that the Swiss Mission cooperated at Lemana College, an amount of £50 was appropriated to Lemana in 1907 for the purchasing of industrial equipment (Lenoir, 1907:1). Lemana College continued to receive allocations for industrial education in subsequent years. The collaboration between the government and the Swiss Mission cannot be judged merely on the basis that it received a government subsidy; Lemana needed financial assistance to be able to provide adequate industrial education.

Throughout the country, serious tensions existed between Mission institutions and government with regards to what was to be taught to African learners. Government always accused missionaries of providing a "bookish" education and also for providing education which was almost entirely tinged with the White man's outlook (Davis, 1976:91). At the official opening of Lemana College, Mr Murray, then Sub-Native Commissioner, stated that Africans were expected to do both intellectual and manual labour. He continued saying that tools as well as books should be handled in the schools (Zoutpansberg Review, 1906:1). Rev. Junod (1902:5) made similar claims by propagating that:

*The head of the native is not able to sustain the strain of mental study so well as the heads of the Whites. He has not been accustomed for generations to school attendance and mental work, and would be apt very quickly to get headaches, nervous exhaustion arising from over-study if he has not as a diversion the bodily exercise of outdoor work.*

To a certain extent Junod was influenced by Carl Vogt's ideas on the arrested mental development of Africans<sup>9</sup>. Carl Vogt advocated the notion that Africans

<sup>9</sup> The theory of arrested mental development was extensively debated in the early 19th century by the Cape Select Committee on Native Education. The theory is underpinned by the view that Blacks were overgrown children and helped to counter pose European rationality with Black illogicality. It also advocated black intellectual inferiority (see Loram, 1917; Theal, 1912).

were physically primitive and that their brains were undeveloped (Baker, 1974:129-132). Junod tentatively accepted that Africans could develop intellectually as children and then experience a decline in cerebral activity at puberty (Harries, 2007:235). He supported the view that the arrested mental development advocated by Vogt could be reversed, since he believed it was the product of Africa's environmental isolation rather than the results of racial, or African physical conditions. In actual fact, the Swiss Mission emphasised religion as being the primary marker of social differences. Paul Berthoud confirms the notion that it was due to cultural practices or religiosity that missionaries distinguished Africans from other people. He said:

*It is dreadful to find oneself, even for a moment, in the midst of this uproar and these improper dances. No man would dare approach the theatre of these ceremonies; he would risk being cut to pieces. Troops of women are charged with coming to give us a representation of their hullabaloo. The first impression that one receives of this spectacle is that of disgust and horror and, if one were to follow the impulse of the moment, one would flee immediately. One has to be extremely strong-willed to live in the midst of these unfortunate, ignorant and degraded people and try to educate them (Berthoud, 1900:242).*

The Swiss Missionaries at Lemana College did not deliberately use industrial subjects to undermine Africans. In essence, the Swiss Missionaries did not primarily believe in the inequality of Whites and Africans (Jeannerat *et al.*, 2011:25). Most Swiss Missionaries believed that Africans and Europeans were equal, but were at different stages of social development. Harries (2000:42) maintains that the expansion of missionary work in the Transvaal coincided with the time when Swiss Missions were severely divided by differences of language, religion and level of development, and not by race. The Swiss Mission advocated the notion that Africans had the skill to develop to the levels achieved by Europeans. The Europeans were expected to act as "advisors and trustees for African change" (Jeannerat *et al.*, 2011:25). This paternalism shows that Europeans felt that they had a responsibility to assist Africans to develop to a higher level, and thought that it had to be done in a gradual manner. However, Pienaar (1990:40) argues that the Swiss Mission's gradualist liberal ideology was questionable because the Swiss Mission encouraged Africans to develop separately and at their own rate. Pienaar (1990:40) explains that the Swiss Mission propagated 'protectionist' segregationism. African people were to be protected from the evils of the Westerners, and hence they were to develop in rural areas. The interaction between Africans and the Whites was to take place under the constant and systematic protection of the Whites. It can be argued that the Swiss Missionaries' belief in Whites and Africans having different mental capabilities was used by colonial governments in their build-up to their

racial policies. This also led to the government enacting laws that led to the classification of separate education systems for Africans and White people in which they respectively occupy sub- and super-ordinate positions. However, the Swiss Missionaries cannot be condemned for holding a view that later influenced racial division in South Africa. It is important to note also that the missionaries mostly came from the labour class (cf. Ross, 1986:2) and this explains why they had to resort to native labour training at the mission stations. It is also for this reason that missionaries had to concentrate on training teachers in technical subjects and the various trades.

More, importantly, the Swiss missionaries did not require the dictates of government to value and teach manual skills, because it formed part of the Reformed tradition. It was apparent to them that the teaching of manual skills and related subjects combined with goals of Christianity would produce a useful and self-sustaining person of good Christian character. Thus, manual training skills formed an important part of the Lemana curriculum: blacksmithing, wood-working and agriculture for boys; cooking, dressmaking and domestic arts for girls. The Swiss Mission conception of education, from a Reformed perspective, was that the true purpose of education was, among others, to prepare students for comprehensive learning that embraced both the theoretical and the practical with a view to useful employment through character building. Manual education, according to the Swiss Mission, was to focus on moral and intellectual instruction.

## **7. Conclusion**

The mission-state relationship, seen from the reformist ideology has attracted a lot of debate and has been variously interpreted. Different political ideologies, for example forms of oppression in South Africa, have been associated with the Reformed theology. A host of other political practices and routines have been traced back to Reformed theologians such as John Calvin and his followers. This kind of selective scholarship, which defines the relationship between the missionaries, the state and the indigenous people, is not only controversial, but it also compromises the contextual factors that go with the relationships. In this article, I hold the view that the relationship that existed between the Swiss Mission and government of the day was characterized by various challenges. These include: the state funding of mission schools, the political, philosophical and social interactions between the state and the Swiss Mission. From a theological point of view, the Swiss missionaries had to take adhere to the Great Commission, on the one hand and on the other

emphasise to the converted that Christian life is based on morality and ethics, as stipulated in the scriptures. I have also argued in this article that it is impossible to arrive at any consistent conclusion that the missionary projects in South Africa were purely 'political'. In most instances, efforts to provide Africans with the kind of education that they wanted required that the missionaries adapt, converge and also contrast their beliefs and guiding principles.

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