

**African Ministers and the Emergence of Resistance  
to Colonial Domination: The Development of  
Indigenous Clergy in the Wesleyan Methodist  
Church in Zimbabwe from 1891 to 1980**

**by**

**Kennedy Gondongwe (B.A. Hons, MA)**

**Student Number: 208529369**

**Submitted in fulfillment of the academic requirements for  
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**Supervisor: Professor Philippe Denis**

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## **Declaration**

I declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. All citations, references and borrowed ideas have been duly acknowledged. This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.

Signed.....

As the supervisor, I have agreed to the submission of this thesis

Professor Philippe Denis.....

Date.....

## **Abstract**

This study is a critical assessment of the degree of political consciousness of the Zimbabwean Wesleyan Methodist indigenous ministers from 1891 to 1980. It documents the nature of the domination that the Wesleyan Methodist indigenous ministers experienced. It also documents and analyses how the indigenous ministers responded to the domination.

The study relies upon primary documents from the National Archives of Zimbabwe, the Methodist Connexional Archives and other private archives. Information found in these archives includes minutes of synods, minutes of quarterly meetings, minutes of conferences, ministers' personal files and many other documents. The thesis also depends on interviews and other secondary material relevant to the study.

Additionally, this thesis explores the training of the indigenous ministers. It emerges that the theological training of the indigenous ministers brought about some form of political radicalism. This was strengthened by the fact that the stipends and working conditions were not attractive. This thesis argues that the indigenous ministers had no clear position with regard to the significance of African culture. They oscillated between its rejection and acceptance. When they were politically inspired they rejected African culture to embrace it when it seemed expedient to do. It is further observed that the indigenous ministers contributed immensely to the liberation struggle.

Using, *Of Revelation and Revolution, Peasant Consciousness, Domination and the Arts of Resistance* and *Savage Systems* as theoretical frameworks, this thesis concludes that the level of political consciousness of the indigenous ministers increased phenomenally in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This was because of a number of reasons including the role played by mission churches in education, the impact of the Second World War, and adherence to certain constructions of John Wesley particularly those with liberation emphasis and many more. It also emerges that, although the political consciousness of the indigenous clergy was high, quite a number of them oscillated between two poles of patriotism and expediency. Put differently, the indigenous clergy were sometimes ambivalent in terms of what they adhered to. This was particularly so in cases to do with African culture.

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I am also indebted to the World Methodist Church for granting me a scholarship to study in South Africa. Without their contribution this study would not have been possible. Furthermore, I am appreciative of the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe for support and permission to study at this University. To Annalise, I say thank you for editing and proof reading my work.

Lastly, a huge measure of gratitude is due to my family, close and far. Special thank you goes to my wife Patricia for your love, companionship and sacrifice. Without you everything could have been just a wild dream. To my two daughters Rumbidzai and Rufaro who have grown alongside these pages I say thank you.

## **Dedication**

To my grandfather Joseph Gondongwe and grandmother Getrude Gondongwe who when I was still a child took me to church.

To my wife Patricia and my two daughters Rumbidzai and Rufaro

## **List of abbreviations and Acronyms**

AACC	: All Africa Council of Churches
ABCFM	: American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions
ABM	: American Board Mission
AME	: African Methodist Episcopal
AMF	: African Ministers Fellowship
ANC	: African National Congress
ATR	: African Traditional Religion
BCU	: Boys Christian Union
BMC	: Black Ministers Consultation
BSAC	: British South African Company
BT	: Beit Trust
BTS	: Beit Trust Scholarship
CADT	: Central African Diploma in Theology
CCAP	: Church of Central Africa Presbyterian
ZCBC	: Zimbabwe Catholic Bishop's Conference
DRCSA	: Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa
DTUCR	: Department of Theology at the University College of Rhodesia
ELCR	: Evangelical Lutheran Church in Rhodesia
ELCZ	: Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe
ETC	: Epworth Theological College
ETC	: Epworth Training Council
FEDSEM	: Federal Theological Seminary of Southern Africa
GCE	: General Certificate in Education
GCU	: Girls Christian Union
IMC	: International Missionary Council
IMC	: International Missionary Conference
LLM	: Local Leaders Meeting
LMS	: London Missionary Society

MBE	: Member of the Order of British Empire
MCA	: Methodist Connexional Archives
MCSA	: Methodist Church of Southern Africa
MCU	: Men Christian Union
MCZ	: Methodist Church in Zimbabwe
MMC	: Methodist Missionary Committee
MYD	: Methodist Young Disciples
NAZ	: National Archives of Zimbabwe
NTI	: Nenguo Training Institute
OAU	: Organisation of African Union
PCR	: Programme to Combat Racism
RCC	: Rhodesian Council of Churches
SCM	: Students Christian Movement
TEF	: Theological Education Fund
UANC	: United African National Council
UCCAR	: United Church of Central Africa Rhodesia
UCCSA	: United Congregational Church of Southern Africa
UCCZ	: United Church of Christ in Zimbabwe
UCRN	: University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland
UDI	: Unilateral Declaration of Independence
UMC	: United Methodist Church
UNISA	: University of South Africa
USA	: United States of America
UTC	: United Theological College
WCC	: World Council of Churches
WCCPCR	: World Council of Churches Programme to Combat Racism
WMMS	: Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society
WWCAC	: World Council of Churches Advisory Committee
ZANU	: Zimbabwe African National Union
ZANU (PF)	: Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front
ZAPU	: Zimbabwe African National Union
ZIPRA	: Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

## **PAGES**

Title Page.....	i
Declaration.....	ii
Abstract.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
Dedication.....	v
List of abbreviations.....	vi
Table of Contents.....	viii
The Map of Zimbabwe.....	xvi

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE THESIS.....1**

1.2. Background of the study.....	1
1.2.1. Clarification of terms.....	1
1.2.2. Location of the study .....	2
1.3. Statement of the problem .....	3
1.4. Objective and research questions .....	5
1.5. Historiography.....	6
1.6. Hypothesis.....	7
1.7. Literature review.....	7



1.7.1. Literature survey on the history of Christianity in Zimbabwe.....	7
1.7.2. Review of selected literature.....	9
1.8. Methodology.....	16
1.8.1. Archival sources.....	17
1.8.2. Oral history.....	19
1.7.3. Secondary sources.....	21
1.8. Theoretical tools.....	21
1.8.1. „Of Revelation and Revolution’.....	23
1.8.2. „Peasant Consciousness and Guerrilla War in Zimbabwe’.....	28
1.8.3. „Domination and the Arts of Resistance, Hidden Transcripts’.....	33
1.8. 4 „Savage systems: Colonialism and Comparative Religion in Southern Africa’.....	36
1.9. Researcher’s location.....	38
1.10. Limitations of the study.....	39
1.11. Structure of dissertation.....	40
<b>CHAPTER TWO: AN OVERVIEW OF THE WESLEYAN</b>	
<b>METHODIST CHURCH.....</b>	<b>43</b>
2.1. Introduction.....	43
2.2. The coming of Methodism to Zimbabwe.....	43
2.3. The establishment of the Methodist mission stations (1891-1914).....	49
2.4. From mission to church.....	53
2.5. Propriety and rules governing the church.....	55

2.6. The church's quest for more workers.....	60
2.7. Methodists and healing ministry (1913-1964).....	63
2.8. Methodists and education (1898-1980).....	66
2.9. Sodalities.....	70
2.9.1. Ruwadzano.....	71
2.9.2. Girls' Christian Union .....	74
2.9.3. Men's Christian Union.....	74
2.9.4. Boys' Christian Union.....	75
2.9.5. Methodist Young Disciples.....	76
2.10. Conclusion.....	76

## **CHAPTER THREE: THE TRAINING OF THE METHODIST**

### **INDIGENOUS MINISTERS.....78**

3.1. Introduction.....	78
3.2. The recruitment of the indigenous ministers in the Wesleyan Methodist Church	78
3.3. Equipped and ready to serve: The training of Methodist indigenous ministers...91	
3.3.1. Waddilove Training Institute.....	92
3.3.2. Epworth Theological College/UTC .....	96
3.3.2.1. Programmes of study at United Theological College.....	102
3.3.2.2. United Theological College as a centre for social transformation.....	105
3.4. The indigenous ministers' quest for further education.....	110
3.5. Conclusion.....	117

## **CHAPTER FOUR: STIPENDS AND WORKING CONDITIONS**

### **FOR THE METHODIST INDIGENOUS MINISTERS**

#### **FROM 1891-1980.....119**

4.1. Introduction.....	119
4.2. Stipends for the indigenous ministers in the WMC from 1891-1980.....	120
4.3. Benefits for the indigenous ministers.....	137
4.3.1. Accommodation for the indigenous ministers.....	137
4.3.2. Transport for the indigenous ministers .....	142
4.3.3 Furloughs .....	148
4.3.4. Children’s education.....	153
4.3.5. Medical aid, funeral policy and pension scheme.....	155
4.4. Reaction of the indigenous ministers to their domination.....	156
4.4.1 Appeals by the indigenous ministers.....	156
4.4.2. Theft or mutual exploitation? The indigenous ministers’ response to poor remuneration and oppressive working conditions .....	165
4.4.3. Indigenous ministers and entrepreneurship.....	175
4.4.4 The indigenous ministers’ “play the fool strategy”.....	180
4.5. Conclusion.....	182

## **CHAPTER 5: THE METHODIST INDIGENOUS MINISTERS AND**

### **AFRICAN CULTURE.....184**

5.1.	Introduction.....	184
5.2.	European missionaries’ socio- religious and cultural presuppositions.....	186
5.3.	Zimbabwean Methodist indigenous ministers’ attitude towards African marriage.....	188
5.4.	The Shona and Ndebele view of the world.....	210
5.5.	The social and religious standpoint of the Methodist indigenous Ministers in view of ancestor veneration.....	211
5.6.	The attitude of the Methodist indigenous ministers to witchcraft and traditional healing .....	220
5.7.	The indigenous ministers and other aspects of African culture .....	230
5.8.	The Methodist indigenous ministers as “black Europeans”.....	234
5.9.	Reasons for the indigenous ministers’ adherence to African culture.....	237
10.	Conclusion.....	239

**CHAPTER SIX: THE ZIMBABWEAN METHODIST INDIGENOUS MINISTERS AND POLITICS OF PROTEST IN RHODESIA.....240**

6.1.	Introduction.....	240
6.2.	Methodist indigenous ministers’ response to major political events and ideologies in Zimbabwe.....	241
6.2.1.	The First <i>Chimurenga</i> War: The first two indigenous ministers become victims.....	241
6.2.2.	Matthew and Meshek Zvimba: Precursors of militant resistance to colonial domination.....	247

6.2.3. A sermon or a political speech? Moses Mfazi's dismissal from the Wesleyan Methodist Church.....	250
6.2.4. The indigenous ministers and the Land Apportionment Act of 1930.....	252
6.3. The breeding of political radicals: 1930- 1949 .....	254
6.4. Esau Nemapare and the birth of the African Methodist Church.....	259
6.5. Thompson Samkange: A nationalist par excellence.....	261
6.6. The Wesleyan Methodist Church's position concerning race relations.....	266
6.7. The appointment of Andrew Ndhlela as district chairperson.....	270
6.8. The indigenous ministers and Unilateral Declaration of Independence.....	273
6.9. Methodist indigenous ministers and the deployment of chaplains to government troops .....	275
6.10. The reaction of the indigenous ministers to World Council of Churches' Programme to Combat Racism.....	277
6.11. The involvement of the indigenous ministers in the liberation struggle.....	282
6.11.1. Arthur Kanodereka: A martyr to self- rule.....	282
6.11.2. Canaan Banana and the road to the State House.....	287
6.11.3. Pastoral care to political detainees and the restricted.....	294
6.11.4. The Methodist indigenous ministers and mass mobilisation.....	298
6.11.5. Logistical support to the freedom fighters.....	301
6.12. Conclusion.....	304
<b>CHAPTER SEVEN: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS OF THE THESIS.....</b>	<b>305</b>
7.1. ....Introduction.....	305

7.2.	Main findings.....	305
7.2.1.	Missionaries and colonialists were strange bedfellows.....	305
7.2.2.	There was unequal relationship between missionaries and indigenous clergy.....	306
7.2.3.	Indigenisation of the church.....	307
7.2.4.	Wesleyan Methodist Church and social responsibility.....	307
7.2.5.	The indigenous process of theological training increased their political awareness.....	308
7.2.6.	The indigenous clergy were generally not well paid.....	310
7.2.7.	Indigenous clergy swinging like a pendulum.....	313
7.2.8.	Indigenous clergy: patriots, „sellouts’ or both?.....	315
7.3.	Conclusions of the study.....	316
7.4.	Historiographic observation.....	318
7.5.	Research gaps and recommendations for future research.....	319
	<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY.....</b>	<b>320</b>
	<b>APPENDIXES</b>	
	<b>Appendix 1 Ethical Clearance .....</b>	<b>339</b>
	<b>Appendix 2 Transcribed interview .....</b>	<b>340</b>
	<b>Appendix 3 Interview Consent form.....</b>	<b>347</b>
	<b>Appendix 4 Letter from the Minister of Home Affairs .....</b>	<b>348</b>
	<b>Appendix 5 Letter from Wesley Theological Seminary to the Prime Minister of Rhodesia..</b>	<b>350</b>
	<b>Appendix 6 Pictures of Samkange and his family .....</b>	<b>351</b>
	<b>Appendix 7 Picture of Matthew Zvimba.....</b>	<b>352</b>
	<b>Appendix 8 Pictures of past church leaders and indigenous lecturers.....</b>	<b>353</b>



The map of Zimbabwe which shows the areas in which the indigenous clergy worked



The map modified from the Zimbabwe Information Centre-maps\_files.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.worldatlas.com>



# **1. CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

**1.1 Thesis title:** African Ministers and the Emergence of Resistance to Colonial Domination: The Development of Indigenous Clergy in the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Zimbabwe from 1891 to 1980

## **1.2 Background of the study**

This section consists of clarifications of terms and concepts as well as the location of the thesis in the field of study.

### ***1.2.1 Clarification of terms and concepts***

The term „minister’ shall refer to ordained or non-ordained persons who worked as full time employees of the church. It designates teachers, evangelists, pastors and ordained clergy. To minister, is to render service. This usage of the term deviates from the way it was used in Zimbabwe. I use the term in an expanded way after realising that many indigenous people worked for many years, performing the majority of the duties of the clergy, but without ordination. The term „clergy’ shall be used interchangeably with the term minister.

The term „indigenous ministers’ normally refers to African ministers whose call to ministry was as a result of the mission success in a particular mission field. This category of church workers was distinct from another one known as African agents. The latter included non-indigenous Africans as well as non-ordained evangelists and other support staff. However in this thesis, the term „indigenous minister’ is deployed to mean both ordained and non-ordained indigenous ministers as well as other Africans who worked with the missionaries and whose place of origin was Africa. Some of the companions of the missionaries whose home was South Africa became indigenous Zimbabweans through naturalisation.

I am fully aware of the contested nature of this concept. Some would argue that the term should be used to refer to anyone born in Africa. Others would argue that, when used in Africa, this term should apply to black people only. Aware of these different viewpoints, I

have come up with a specific definition as presented above. I have avoided terms such as ‚native’ which was profusely used by the missionaries. The term ‚native’ was politicised in Zimbabwe so that it came to be experienced as derogatory by black people and, therefore, unusable in a postcolonial academic study. The opposite of ‚native’ was ‚settler’ and both were political identities. Whenever these terms are used without brackets in this thesis, it will be in respect of particular quotes from the archives or interviewees.

The postcolonial term Zimbabwe shall be generally used in the thesis. However, colonial names such as Southern Rhodesia, Rhodesia and Zimbabwe Rhodesia, will also be used in order to emphasise the context. The same principle will apply to names of cities and towns. When it comes to names of institutions, colonial names will be retained because of their legal nature. This study commences with the establishment of the Wesleyan Methodist Church (hereafter sometimes referred to as Methodist Church) in the year 1891. It closes with the attainment of Zimbabwe’s political independence in 1980. Although the church became autonomous in 1977, this did not bring much change in terms of domination of the indigenous people by the Europeans. Substantial change came only in 1980, hence the rationale of pursuing this study up to 1980. In an endeavour to put this study in context, I shall occasionally, refer to other denominations which operated alongside the Wesleyan Methodist Church. This study would be woefully inadequate if I did not refer to South Africa in general and to the Methodist Church of Southern Africa in particular. This is because of the political influence that South Africa exerted on Zimbabwe. More importantly, the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Zimbabwe was planted by missionaries from South Africa.

### ***1.2.2 Location of the study***

This study belongs to the field of history of Christianity in Africa in general and the history of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Zimbabwe in particular. It seeks to put into the public domain the history of indigenous Wesleyan Methodist ministers in Zimbabwe. The key questions in the field of study today include the following: How were the indigenous ministers recruited and trained? How was the indigenous ministry developed? What are the methodologies to be employed in the study of the same? What is the historiographic perspective best suited for their study? How did the indigenous ministers see themselves in the light of the domination under which they suffered during colonialism? What were the

working conditions of the indigenous ministers? How were the indigenous ministers promoted? What delayed the indigenous ministers in taking over the leadership of their churches at an earlier stage? It must be noted that this set of questions is by no means sufficiently inclusive to capture all the research questions propelling current research on the indigenous ministers.

This study commences with the establishment of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in the year 1891. It closes with the attainment of Zimbabwe's<sup>1</sup> political independence in 1980. Although the church became autonomous in 1977, this did not bring much change in terms of domination of the indigenous ministers by the Europeans. Substantial change came only in 1980, hence the decision of pursuing the study to 1980.

### **1.3 Statement of the problem**

The history of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Zimbabwe is grossly understudied. The situation is worse for its indigenous ministers. This thesis intends to document the development of the indigenous Methodist ministers in Zimbabwe. It further seeks to explore why and how they initiated resistance to domination by the colonialists and the missionaries. The existing history of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Zimbabwe is biased. It celebrates the activities of the missionaries and misrepresents the achievements of the indigenous ministers. Although it is valid that some European missionaries such as John White were champions of social justice, the indigenous actors who were central to the execution of the war of liberation only merit one or two sentences in the story of the liberation struggle as recorded by missionaries. According to missionary historiography, only missionaries had a strong political consciousness whereas the indigenous ministers are portrayed as naive. Ogbu Kalu, a Nigerian historian, argues with veracity that „this missionary history was written by missionaries and their protégés who had swallowed the missionary ideology hook, line and

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<sup>1</sup> I am aware that the country was formally called Rhodesia and it was changed to Zimbabwe in 1980 when the country attained its independence. In fact, with the coming of colonialism, the country was named Southern Rhodesia. The name changed to Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland in 1953. With the break of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland the country then became known as Rhodesia until 1979. It was briefly named Zimbabwe Rhodesia in 1979 and finally Zimbabwe in April 1980. However this thesis will use the name Zimbabwe in general reference to the country but will also use colonial names to keep up with the context. In addition, colonial names will be retained in respect of quotations from archives and interviews. This means colonial names and postcolonial names will be used interchangeably.

sinker.<sup>2</sup> This history was bound to be propagandist, because such writings were often designed to boost morale and promote material aid.<sup>3</sup> „Even when the propagandist element is missing, European writers still tend to study the history of Christianity in Africa by focusing predominantly on what missionaries did or did not do.<sup>4</sup> Mark Shaw has pointed out that Peter Falk's *Growth of the Church in Africa* and C.P Grooves's four-volume work, *The Planting of the Church in Africa* are typical examples of missionary historiography.<sup>5</sup> However, the view that missionaries only wrote about Europe is contested because since 1970s several missionaries had been writing about Africans.

It is ironic, that in the history of the mainline Christian churches, only missionaries<sup>6</sup> are highlighted and that the indigenous ministers are hardly presented. This biased portrayal of the indigenous ministers is shocking but not surprising, given that some of the missionaries were precursors of colonialism.<sup>7</sup> According to George Mukuka, missionaries came to spread the gospel, but were influenced by their political and religious backgrounds and deeply entrenched in their Western culture.<sup>8</sup> The under portrayal of indigenous ministers is not only misleading but also impoverishes church history. Eduardo Hoornaert argues that „the principal actors of indigenisation were the ordinary people and not the missionaries on the stage.<sup>9</sup> In spite of such arguments, the story of the church as seen from this perspective has never been convincingly recorded. Van Velsen summarised the situation in one sentence: „Generals tend to attract more attention and write more about themselves than the corporals.<sup>10</sup>

In the light of the above, this study endeavours to take an approach that allows the muted voices to be heard. The study seeks to examine the idea that the indigenous ministers became

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<sup>2</sup>Ogbu. U. Kalu, „Church Presence in Africa: A Historical Analysis of the Evangelisation Process', in K. Appiah-Kubi & S. Torres., (eds.) *African Theology en route* New York: Orbis Books, 1978, p.14.

<sup>3</sup>Ogbu. U. Kalu, *Church Presence in Africa*, p.14.

<sup>4</sup>Ogbu Kalu, (ed.), *The History of Christianity in West Africa*, London: Longman, 1980, p.2.

<sup>5</sup>Mark R. Shaw, *The Kingdom of God in Africa: A Short History of African Christianity*, Michigan: Baker Books, 1996, p.13.

<sup>6</sup> There has been debate by scholars whether indigenous church workers who came from other parts of Africa such as South Africa could be referred to as missionaries. In most of the cases they are referred as catechists because they were not ordained. In this thesis, the term missionary refers to European clergy.

<sup>7</sup>J. Lukas de Vries, *Mission and Colonialism in Namibia*, Braamfontein: Ravan Press, 2001, p.75.

<sup>8</sup> George Mukuka, „Clashes of Worldviews in the Early History of the Catholic Church in South Africa: The Struggles of Fr. Aloys Majonga Mncadi with his white superiors (1877-1933).'*Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, September 2006, vol xxx11, number 2, p.213.

<sup>9</sup> Eduardo Hoornaert, „The Making of an Indigenous Clergy in Latin America and the Logic of Indigenisation' in Philippe Denis (ed.),*The Making of Indigenous Clergy in Southern Africa. Proceedings of the International Conference held at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg 25-27 October 1994*,p.20.

<sup>10</sup>J.Van Velsen,in „*The Life of a Zambian Evangelist.The Reminiscences of the Reverend Paul BwembyaMushindo*, Lusaka: Institute for African Studies, UNZA, communication 9, 1973, p. ii.

increasingly conscious of their oppression by the missionaries and colonialists and they responded accordingly. However, their response was either minimised or totally lost in history. Terence Ranger argues that there were African voices raised in Rhodesia during the period of colonialism and some of the voices he mentioned belonged to the indigenous ministers of the Wesleyan Methodist Church.<sup>11</sup> There is no doubt that these voices were many but were not recorded.

## **1.4 Objective and research questions**

The overarching objective of the thesis is to explore the degree of political consciousness of the indigenous Wesleyan Methodist ministers from 1891 to 1980. It is essential that I elaborate on what I mean by the ‚degree of political consciousness.‘ The concept of political consciousness was borrowed from Terence Ranger’s work, *Peasant Consciousness and Guerrilla War in Zimbabwe*.<sup>12</sup> The theory will be fully explained in this chapter. However, for the purpose of foregrounding this concept, I will mention that the Zimbabwean peasants were conscious of their domination by the Europeans. Similarly, the indigenous ministers were aware of their domination by the missionaries. Consequently, they came up with many strategies in order to survive in their situation.

In order to adequately achieve its objective, this thesis will answer the following questions. In what way were the indigenous ministers trained and what was the possible impact of such training? To which extent did the indigenous ministers perceive further education as a means to ascend the social ladder? What were the levels of stipends and working conditions for the indigenous ministers? How did the indigenous ministers perceive African culture?<sup>13</sup> To what extent were the indigenous ministers involved in the struggle for political independence? This thesis endeavours to tackle these questions. In this sense, my study is a continuation of the work done by other scholars on the indigenous ministers.

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<sup>11</sup> Terence Ranger, *The African Voice in Southern Rhodesia*, London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd, 1970.

<sup>12</sup> Terence Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness and Guerrilla War in Zimbabwe*, Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1985.

<sup>13</sup> I am aware of the debate about whether we should talk of African cultures or African culture. However, this thesis will use African culture fully aware of this inconclusive debate.

## 1.5. Historiography

Several approaches have been suggested in response to the missionary historiography. The first one involves a nationalist historiography. This seeks to give new emphasis to indigenous or independent expressions of Christianity in Africa.<sup>14</sup> Its weakness is that it is just as propagandist as the missionary approach, although it is on the side of the dominated. An example of this type of approach is Anold J. Temu's *British Protestant Missions*.<sup>15</sup>

Other African historians have suggested an ecumenical historiography as the panacea for the writing of African history in the postcolonial period. In this approach, different churches, Christian movements and races can be presented without even a minimum of favouritism.<sup>16</sup> This approach has been criticised for not providing solid ground for value judgements.<sup>17</sup> It is also propagandist as it pushes an ecumenical agenda. John Baur's *2000 Years of African Christianity* represents this approach to Christian history.<sup>18</sup>

Mark Shaw suggests that the history of African Christianity must be written using what he called the Kingdom of God approach.<sup>19</sup> This approach does justice to missionary contributions and accommodates both nationalistic responses and ecumenical fairness.<sup>20</sup>

Ukuchuwu Chris Manus, writing on the same topic, holds that the reality of the Kingdom of God provides men and women of all ages with insights on the basis of which they can judge this world and renew it through a total commitment to peace, justice and freedom.<sup>21</sup> In other words, this approach uses the values of the Kingdom of God as the paradigm for human behaviour. The weakness of this approach is that it emphasises the practice of something that is otherwise only obtainable in theory. The Kingdom of God ethics is idealistic and apocalyptic and anything that is apocalyptic is difficult to sustain in this age. The author will employ this approach while being fully aware of its limitations. The actions of the missionaries, indigenous ministers, indigenous people, government officials and nationalists will be evaluated against the Kingdom of God values. Kingdom of God values include justice, love, mercy and compassion.

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<sup>14</sup>Mark R. Shaw, *The Kingdom of God in Africa*, p.13.

<sup>15</sup>Anold J. Temu, *British Protestant Missions*. London: Longman, 1972.

<sup>16</sup>Mark R. Shaw, *The Kingdom of God in Africa*, p.13.

<sup>17</sup>Mark R. Shaw, *The Kingdom of God in Africa*, p.13.

<sup>18</sup>Mark R. Shaw, *The Kingdom of God in Africa*, p.15.

<sup>19</sup>Mark R. Shaw, *The Kingdom of God in Africa*, p.15.

<sup>20</sup>Mark R. Shaw, *The Kingdom of God in Africa*, p.15.

<sup>21</sup>Ukuchukwu Chris Manus, *Christ the African King*, Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1993, p.164.

## **1.6 Hypothesis**

This study argues that the Zimbabwean indigenous Methodist ministers became increasingly politically aware in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and this increased awareness was caused by the changing socio-economic and political environment. As an expression of this consciousness, the indigenous ministers engaged in several acts of resistance to political domination. This thesis argues that the indigenous ministers were conscious of the colonial domination that was taking place. In some cases they engaged in passive resistance because of fear of reprisals but in other cases they overtly defied the system. The question that now begs to be answered is: what then are the strengths and weaknesses of the works that have recorded the history of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Zimbabwe? The next section will examine this.

## **1.7 Literature review**

This section is in two parts. The first section deals with literature survey on the history of Christianity in Zimbabwe. The second section critically reviews the selected literature for this study.

### ***1.7.1 Literature survey on the history of Christianity in Zimbabwe***

The history of Christianity in Africa was largely written by missionaries from a missionary perspective. Missionaries have been accused of writing about themselves and minimising the contribution made by indigenous people to the spreading and development of Christianity in Africa. In the Zimbabwean context, Terence Ranger, admirably put the African voice into the public domain during colonialism.<sup>22</sup> However, his works were overshadowed by the vast amount of publications by the missionaries and colonialists. With the collapse of colonial

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<sup>22</sup>See some of Terence Ranger's works, *Peasant Consciousness, Revolt in Southern Rhodesia, 1896-97, A study in African Resistance*, London: Heb, 1967 and *The African Voice in Southern Rhodesia, 1898-1930*.

governments in Africa, the need to rewrite the history of Christianity on the continent became apparent and many scholars were engaged in this task.

The history of the Wesleyan Methodist Church was initially published by missionaries. The indigenes had neither the adequate education nor the resources to be involved in such a task. In postcolonial Zimbabwe, the history of the Wesleyan Methodist Church was written by a secular historian by the name Chengetai Zvobgo.<sup>23</sup> In fact, there was a remarkable interest in religious history on the part of secular historians across denominations. On the eve of Zimbabwe's political independence, Ngwabi Bhebhe published substantial material on the history of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe.<sup>24</sup> After Zimbabwe's political independence, Stan Mudenge published, *The Political History of Munhumutapa*<sup>25</sup> in which account the Catholic Church features prominently. Many other secular historians published books and wrote in journals on the history of Christian denominations.

After the period in which secular historians dominated the writing of religious history which, I believe, ended in the 1990s, there was a wave of indigenous religious historians writing the history of Christianity in Zimbabwe. In this endeavour, Paul Gundani became one of the leading scholars when he published a number of books on the history of the Catholic Church in Zimbabwe.<sup>26</sup> The history of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Zimbabwe remains largely unknown and there is no relevant work by a trained church historian in Zimbabwe available. However, there is a recent unpublished Doctor of Philosophy thesis on the Wesleyan Methodist Church and Politics submitted to the University of Pretoria by Simon Madhiba.<sup>27</sup>

The current study is ground breaking in the sense that it is the first to specifically focus on the indigenous ministers of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Zimbabwe. I am aware, however, that some considerable work has been done in relation to the theme of indigenous ministers, especially in the Catholic Church in Zimbabwe. Two such works are: „The Jesuit perspective

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<sup>23</sup>See Chengetai J. M. Zvobgo, *The Wesleyan Methodist Missions in Zimbabwe*, Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications, 1991.

<sup>24</sup>For instance, see Ngwabi Bhebhe, *Christianity and Traditional Religion in Western Zimbabwe*, Harare: Longman, 1979.

<sup>25</sup>Stan Mudenge, *The Political History of the Munhumutapa c 1400-1902*, Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1988.

<sup>26</sup>See for example, Paul Gundani, „Catholic youth mobilization in Zimbabwe' in Carl Fredr Hallencreutz (ed.), *Religion and Politics in Southern Africa*, Uppsala: Scandinavia Institute of African Studies, 1991, Paul Henry Gundani, *Changing Patterns of Authority and Leadership: Developments in the Roman Catholic Church in Zimbabwe*, Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publication, 2001 and P.H. Gundani, „The Second Vatican and Beyond: A study of the Transformation Process, Power Transfer and Sharing in the Roman Catholic Church in Zimbabwe (1965-85)' Doctor of Philosophy thesis, University of Zimbabwe, 1994.

<sup>27</sup>Simon Madibha, „Methodist Church in Zimbabwe and Politics', unpublished Doctor of Philosophy thesis, University of Pretoria, 2011.



on the formation of African clergy and religious institutes in Zimbabwe 1922-1959'<sup>28</sup> and „The Diakonos Option: An investigation into the Development of an Indigenous ministers in the Catholic Archdiocese of Bulawayo'<sup>29</sup> by Creary Nicholas and Paul Gundani respectively.

Although this review focuses on Zimbabwe, it is important to assess the situation in Zimbabwe's neighbours. In fact, there has been considerable interest in the work of indigenous ministers in the region of Southern Africa. Philippe Denis wrote, „The indigenous ministers in Portuguese South-East Africa (1560-1835)'<sup>30</sup>, Jerome Skhakhane authored „The Beginnings of Indigenous ministers in the Catholic Church in Lesotho'<sup>31</sup>, George Mukuka published, *The Other Side of the Story: The Silent Experience of the Black Clergy in the Catholic Church in South Africa (1898-1976)*<sup>32</sup> and Henry Mbaya wrote a thesis entitled „The Making of an African Clergy in the Anglican Church in Malawi with a special focus on the election of Bishops (1898-1996)'.<sup>33</sup> This list does not claim to exhaust all the publications concerning indigenous ministers.

There are no published documents that focus exclusively on the political consciousness of the indigenous Methodist ministers. However, there is some literature focussing on the history of the Wesleyan Methodist Church as a whole. Some of these works refer to the work of indigenous ministers but lack detail. The next section critically reviews the selected literature on this subject matter.

### **1.7.2 Review of selected literature**

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<sup>28</sup>Creary Nicholas, „The Jesuit perspective on the formation of African Clergy and religious institutes in Zimbabwe 1922-1959', <http://web.ebscohost.com>, Accessed on 7<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

<sup>29</sup>Paul Gundani, „The Diakonos Option, An Investigation into the Development of an Indigenous Clergy in the Catholic Archdiocese of Bulawayo 1976-1994,' in Philippe Denis (ed.), *The Making of an Indigenous Clergy in Southern Africa Proceedings of the International Conference held at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 25-27 October 1994*, Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 1995.

<sup>30</sup>See Philippe Denis, „Indigenous Clergy in Portuguese South-East Africa (1560-1835)' in Philippe Denis (ed.), *The Making of an Indigenous Clergy*, 1995.

<sup>31</sup>See Jerome Skhakhane, „The Beginnings of Indigenous Clergy in the Catholic Church in Lesotho' in Philippe Denis (ed.), *The Making of an Indigenous clergy*, 1995.

<sup>32</sup>George Mukuka, *The Other Side of the Story: The Silent Experience of the Black Clergy in the Catholic Church in South Africa (1898-1976)*, Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2008.

<sup>33</sup>Henry Mbaya, „The Making of an Indigenous clergy in the Anglican Church in Malawi with a special focus on the election of bishops (1898-1996),' unpublished Doctor of Philosophy thesis, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2004.

Clarence Thorpe in his book, *Limpopo to Zambezi: Sixty Years of Methodism in Southern Rhodesia*,<sup>34</sup> documented the strides and setbacks encountered by the church in the propagation of the gospel in the first sixty years of missionary endeavours. The book is relevant for this study since its focus is the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Zimbabwe. The author states that by 1897 there were five ordained European ministers but no ordained indigenous ministers. By 1950, there were twenty-one European ministers as opposed to twenty-five indigenous ministers<sup>35</sup>. The strength of the book is that the author was a missionary of the Wesleyan Methodist Church so he was close to the events. He provides the chronological development of the church. The weakness of the work is however that the author, being a missionary, largely focuses on the successes of the missionaries and on the indigenous people who embraced the missionaries' teaching. This is typical of the missionary approach to Christian history.

Another weakness is that it does not inform us how indigenous ministers were recruited, trained, appointed, and worked, nor does it tell us how indigenous ministers viewed the oppressive system they operated under. Furthermore, the book was intended as a source of information for the jubilee celebrations which were held on 29 September 1951. Consequently, it is little more than a eulogy of the church's achievements, fit to boost the morale of church workers.

John Weller and Jane Linden in the work entitled, *Mainstream Christianity to 1980 in Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe*,<sup>36</sup> describe among other things, how the first Wesleyan Methodist missionaries started work in Zimbabwe. The two authors highlight the contribution, made by four indigenous ministers of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Zimbabwe, to the preaching of the gospel.<sup>37</sup> While it is a useful and instructive work, it is too brief and therefore not a satisfactory history of the ministers concerned. Besides, there were many other indigenous Methodist ministers who did in many ways outstanding work, but Weller and Linden do not mention them. This is understandable given that the scope of their book is too wide for any one theme to be exhaustively covered. On the basis of this observation one can argue that the book is merely a good introduction.

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<sup>34</sup>Clarence Thorpe, *Limpopo to Zambesi: Sixty Years of Methodism in Southern Rhodesia*, London: The Cargate Press, 1951.

<sup>35</sup>Clarence Thorpe, *Limpopo to Zambesi*, p.124.

<sup>36</sup>John Weller and Jane Linden, *Mainstream Christianity to 1980 in Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe*, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1984.

<sup>37</sup>John Weller and Jane Linden, *Mainstream Christianity to 1980 in Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe*, p.90-93.

Chengetai M. Zvobgo's work, *The Wesleyan Methodist Missions in Zimbabwe 1891 to 1945*<sup>38</sup> broke new ground in that it was the first work by a trained historian to specifically focus on the history of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Zimbabwe. The book is relevant for the current research because of the light it throws on the fundamentals of the Methodist Church. The author establishes the denomination's record of expansion which includes the history of the church's educational institutions, health institutions, the response of the missionaries to African culture and the response of the indigenous people to the gospel to mention but a few. The strength of the book is its comprehensiveness. The demerits are that it does not provide an in-depth study of the indigenous ministers. The author only mentions the indigenous ministers in passing. For instance, the author holds that by 1900, Nenguo Training Institute was established and six young men were accepted as candidates for training as evangelists and teachers.<sup>39</sup> The author does not give the names or any other details of these young men. He also does not disclose whether these students were the pioneers. Therefore the book does not provide the full development of the indigenous ministry and it raises more questions than answers, hence it confirms a need for further research.

Another weakness of Zvobgo's work is his exclusive use of archival sources. The problem is that archival sources, if not balanced by oral sources, have a propensity to be misleading. This is precisely so because documentary sources are produced by individuals who express their own particular empathy - and in this case the writers were Europeans.<sup>40</sup> Archives reflect the mindset of those who constituted them. Oral sources could have helped to close the gaps left by archival records. Moreover, Zvobgo's interpretation of events leaves a lot to be desired. When Isaac Shimmin, one of the pioneer missionaries, concluded that Africans were not converting to Christianity because the gospel was too sophisticated for their simple minds, Zvobgo commented that, the refusal to repent was because African traditional religion was very strong amongst the indigenes.<sup>41</sup> While this might have been true, Zvobgo seems to ignore other possible reasons. It was, for instance, possible that the refusal to repent was politically motivated.

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<sup>38</sup> Chengetai J.M. Zvobgo, *The Wesleyan Methodist Missions in Zimbabwe 1891-1945*, University of Zimbabwe Publications, 1991.

<sup>39</sup> Chengetai Zvobgo, *The Wesleyan Methodist Missions in Zimbabwe*, p.88.

<sup>40</sup> G. Verstraelen-Gilhuis, *A New look at Christianity in Africa: Essays on Apartheid, African Education and a New History*, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1992.p.85.

<sup>41</sup> Chengetai J. M. Zvobgo, *The Wesleyan Methodist Missions in Zimbabwe*, p.30.

Zvobgo's second work, *A history of Christian Missions in Zimbabwe 1890-1939*<sup>42</sup>, is invaluable in so far as it focuses on the history of Christian missions belonging to several mainline<sup>43</sup> churches in Zimbabwe. The major weakness of this work in relation to the current study is that it does not concentrate on indigenous ministers and there is no exclusive focus on the Wesleyan Methodist Church. It is more ecumenical in approach and therefore far from comprehensive. More importantly, it only covers a part of the period under review in the current study.

Terence Ranger's ground breaking work entitled *The African Voice in Southern Rhodesia 1898-1930*<sup>44</sup> is invaluable to this study. The major thrust of the book was to document the African voices in the then Southern Rhodesia between 1898 and 1930. It argues that indigenous people were expressing political discontentment even in the early period of European colonisation. The book focuses on voices coming from African religion Christianity and from a secular perspective. The major contribution of Ranger is that he manages to put the fact that Africans offered resistance to colonial domination from the outset in the public domain. His book also demonstrates that religion played a significant role in this effort towards resistance. The limitation of this work for the purposes of this study is that it does not exclusively focus on voices from the church. The quest to be inclusive was achieved at the expense of profundity. Also the cutting-off point for the book is 1930, but African voices became much louder in the period after 1930. In fact, according to the author, the cutting-off date was not fixed by design but by accident. In 1963 Ranger was deported from Rhodesia when he had done research only up to 1930. Given this background, the need for more research is obvious.

Focusing on the Samkange family, Terence Ranger's other book, *Are We Not Also Men? The Samkange Family and African Politics in Zimbabwe 1920-64*,<sup>45</sup> deals with the factors that caused the indigenous ministers to be more conscious of inequality within the church and society. The book is important for this study because it focuses on one of the earliest indigenous Methodist ministers. Its strength is that it is based on material in state archives, family archives and interviews.

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<sup>42</sup> Chengetai .J .M. Zvobgo, *A history of Christian Missions in Zimbabwe 1890-1939*, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1996.

<sup>43</sup> The term mainline church is used to refer to churches whose roots are outside Africa.

<sup>44</sup> Terence Ranger, *The African Voice in Southern Rhodesia 1898-1930*, London: Heinemann, 1970.

<sup>45</sup> Terence Ranger, *Are We Also Not Men? The Samkange Family and African Politics in Zimbabwe 1920-64*, Harare: Baobab, 1995.

Ranger argues in this book that Thompson Samkange's political views were primarily shaped by his theological education. He passed on that political consciousness to his children. The question that begs for an answer is: what was the nature of the education offered to indigenous ministers? It is a question that Ranger does not consider. Was Samkange an isolated case of an indigenous minister in politics or there were others whose activities have never been recorded? This study seeks to fill in the gaps left by Ranger's work.

Ranger observes that Thompson was one of the founders of the African press and that he was president of the Bantu Congress<sup>46</sup> from 1943 to 1948.<sup>47</sup> All these activities were fruits of his political consciousness. Ranger writes from a typical nationalist perspective. The weakness of this perspective is that it tends to fail to see the weaknesses of indigenous people, particularly their contribution to the development of colonialism in Africa. The other limitation of this work is that it focuses on only one family and yet we know that many indigenous ministers were involved in politics. Again, further study is needed.

Canaan Banana's work, *A Century of Methodism in Zimbabwe 1891-1991*; (ed.)<sup>48</sup> goes a long way in telling the Methodist story since the establishment of the church until 1991. This book was written specifically, for the centenary celebrations of the church in 1991.

It is a very important work because the majority of contributions came from indigenous ministers who were eyewitnesses of events in the church. It was written in 1991 and by then several indigenous ministers who knew the story of the church from its beginnings were still alive. Besides, the book was written from the memory of the actors themselves which makes it into a primary document.

The major limitation of the book is that, since it was written for the centenary celebrations, it has a tendency towards being propagandist in nature. Secondly, it does not focus in depth on indigenous ministers. Although the book was written by several authors and themes such as youth work and women's work were discussed, it contains no contribution by youth and women.

Banana's second book, *Politics of Repression and Resistance: Face to Face with Combat Theology*<sup>49</sup> is very significant for this study. The book is helpful, firstly, because it focuses on

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<sup>46</sup>The Bantu Congress drew its membership from teachers, evangelists, and ministers of religion. It was one of the earliest representations of organised political voices from Africans.

<sup>47</sup>Terence Ranger, *Are We Also Not Men?* p. 95.

<sup>48</sup> Canaan S. Banana (ed.), *A Century of Methodism in Zimbabwe 1891-1991*, Harare: Methodist Publications, 1991.

the role of the churches, particularly the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Rhodesia, in the political developments in Zimbabwe. Secondly, the author was an insider and one of the biggest political actors; therefore he draws for much of the information on his personal recollection. The book mainly focuses on the period beginning from the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) in 1965 to events around 1995.<sup>50</sup> By implication, it covers a short part of the period under review. The major limitation of Banana's book with regard to this study is that it mainly focuses on political events and decisions at the level of the church leadership. It discusses how the church dealt with particular events and how individual ministers responded to specific decisions. Whilst this is very instructive, the book completely ignores the 'micro' platforms where individual ministers, particularly the indigenous ministers, engaged in numerous political activities. The intention of the current thesis is to accord those unsung heroes some place in the history of both the country and the Wesleyan Methodist Church. An example of those who were shunned by history is Arthur Kanodereka who did so much for the country and who died a martyr. Banana however remains silent about his contribution. It is for such reasons that I wish to conduct this study.

Paul H. Gundani published a convincing article entitled 'Canaan Banana's encounter with Colonialism and Apartheid in Rhodesia (1963-1980).'<sup>51</sup> In this article, Gundani first outlines Banana's personality. He discusses how Banana encountered colonialism and how that encounter shaped him politically. The author critically examines the efforts of the ecumenical movement, the Christian Council of Rhodesia, to dismantle racial domination. He concludes that this body contributed very little. The major thrust of his article is to show the contribution of Banana in the struggle for Zimbabwe.

This article is very important because it is mainly based on interviews the author conducted with Banana. This means that it reflects the thinking and memory of Banana as the subject of investigation. Banana was a participant in the struggle for Zimbabwe and his reminiscences constitute primary data. What makes the article relevant to this study is that Banana was a Methodist indigenous minister himself so that his contribution to public life is part of the concern of this thesis.

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<sup>49</sup>Canaan S. Banana, *Politics of Repression and Resistance Face to Face with Combat Theology*, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1996.

<sup>50</sup>Canaan S. Banana, *Politics of Repression and Resistance*, 1996.

<sup>51</sup> Paul H Gundani, 'Canaan Banana's Encounter with Colonialism and Apartheid in Rhodesia (1963-1980),' in Philippe Denis (ed.), *Orality, Memory and the Past, listening to the Voices of Black Clergy under Colonialism and Apartheid*, Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2000, p.176-193.

In his recent book, *The Other Side of the Story: The Silent Experience of the Black Clergy in the Catholic Church in South Africa (1898-1976)*,<sup>52</sup> George S. Mukuka argues that missionaries in South Africa had a superiority complex with respect to their indigenous counterparts.<sup>53</sup> This caused untold suffering on the part of the black clergy. Mukuka's work provides insights that are very helpful for the current study since there are many similarities between what happened in South Africa and what happened in Zimbabwe, although the work focuses on a different geographical area and a different denomination. Its weakness in relation to my study is that, while Mukuka provides an ideological entry point to my study, cultures in Zimbabwe and South Africa differ greatly and we know that cultures played a pivotal role in shaping the indigenous ministers in Africa.<sup>54</sup>

Henry. H. Mbaya's thesis „*The Making of an African Clergy in the Anglican Church in Malawi with special focus on the election of Bishops 1898-1996*”<sup>55</sup> is central in the sense that it demonstrates weaknesses in the processes of recruitment, selection and training of clergy and in the election of bishops in the Anglican Church in Malawi and shows how these have contributed to problems surrounding the emergence and exercise of leadership. This is very relevant for my research as I will examine the nature of the training received by the indigenous ministers of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Zimbabwe and the impact of that training on their worldview. Mbaya's thesis will throw some helpful light on the results of my research. The difference is that his thesis is about African clergy in the Anglican Church in Malawi with special focus on the election of bishops, whereas my research focuses on indigenous ministers of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Zimbabwe.

The literature review indicates the importance of this study: in Zimbabwe, the Wesleyan Methodist Church is the third largest denomination after the Roman Catholic and the Anglican Churches<sup>56</sup>, and yet there is no recorded history of her indigenous ministers. Bengt Sundkler has established the critical role played by indigenous ministers in the propagation of the gospel<sup>57</sup>, and yet in the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Zimbabwe they are forgotten.

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<sup>52</sup>George S. Mukuka, *The Other Side of the Story*, p.68.

<sup>53</sup>George S. Mukuka, *The Other Side of the Story*, p. 66.

<sup>54</sup> See John and Jean Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa Vol One*, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1991, p .10-22.

<sup>55</sup>Henry H. Mbaya, „The Making of an African Clergy in the Anglican Church in Malawi with Special Focus on the Election of Bishops 1898-1996”, unpublished Doctor of Philosophy thesis, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2004.

<sup>56</sup> See the report of a survey conducted by Zimbabwe Council of Churches on denominational representation in Zimbabwe, 1995 unpublished document.

<sup>57</sup> See B. Sundkler, *The Christian Ministry in Africa*, London: SCM Press, 1962, p.78-88.

Having noted that in the majority of cases, histories of Methodism in Zimbabwe have been written from a missionary perspective as well as from a nationalist perspective, it is my intention to write the same history from the Kingdom of God perspective, the value of which I have espoused earlier in this chapter.

## **1.8 Methodology**

This study will make use of written and oral sources. The written sources include archival and published materials. In both written and oral sources, I will use a qualitative analysis of the data. This is because qualitative approaches are on the whole more open and broader in the way they tackle problems than quantitative approaches.<sup>58</sup> I will assess the merits and demerits of each of the chosen methodologies. It is noteworthy that the outcome of a study depends on the methodology used. The history of Christianity in Africa has been largely written from the Eurocentric perspective using Eurocentric methodologies and terminologies, hence the observation by J. Ki-zerbo:

The history of Africa needs rewriting, for up till now it has been often masked, faked, distorted, mutilated, by „force of circumstance’- i.e through ignorance or self-interest. Crushed by centuries of oppression, Africa has seen generations of travellers, slave traders, explorers, missionaries, governors, and scholars of all kinds give out its image as one of nothing but poverty, barbarism, irresponsibility, and chaos.<sup>59</sup>

Although the observation by Ki-zerbo is valuable for this study, there is today, in the field of study of religion, a general appreciation of all the categories of Western writers mentioned by Ki-zerbo. It is vital to acknowledge that every author is a product of his or her age and everyone will be biased but I must be quick and point out that these authors did a wonderful job by preserving the material and my task in this study will be to sift the material and purify it.

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<sup>58</sup>Mouton, Johann and H.C. Marais, *Basic Concepts in the Methodology of the Social Sciences*. Human Science Research Council, 1990, p.163.

<sup>59</sup>J.Ki-zerbo, *General History of Africa Vol 1, Methodology and African Prehistory*, California: University of California Press, 1981, p.2.



### **1.8.1 Archival sources**

Archival sources simply refer to written documents found in the archives. This study uses three types of archives. Firstly, the state archives known as National Archives of Zimbabwe (NAZ). Secondly, the church archives known as Methodist Connexional Archives in Harare, Zimbabwe and United Theological College (UTC). Finally private collections, owned by individual ministers and laypersons were used.

In the National Archives of Zimbabwe, I have accessed, among other things, information concerning ministers of the Wesleyan Methodist Church as well as statements made by the church during the period under review. I have also been able to access correspondence between the church and government departments, especially the department of the Native Commissioner. More importantly, these archives contain various reports from other government departments concerning the activities of churches and particular individuals in the country. Most of these reports were coming from the Native Commissioners around the country. They are important for this study, because they represent viewpoints from other disciplines and perspectives. Paul Gundani argues that an interdisciplinary approach is critical because it allows insights from other disciplines to enlighten not only the purview of the subject under discussion but also its analysis.<sup>60</sup>

The major source for this study was the Methodist Connexional Archives in Harare Zimbabwe. In these archives, I was able to access ministers' individual files, diaries of individuals, minutes of synods, minutes of circuits' quarterly meetings, minutes of schools' boards of governors, church's financial statements, photographs, newspapers, magazines, handbooks, newspaper cuttings and other resources.

This thesis has benefitted from private archives. Archives from the United Theological College were used, especially for chapter three which is on the training of the indigenous ministers, and chapter five which is about the indigenous ministers and African culture. In these archives I found material on course outlines and minutes of college council meetings, as well as magazines published by the institution, yearly handbooks, minutes of staff meetings, minutes of academic board meetings and papers presented by staff members during staff seminars.

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<sup>60</sup>Paul Gundani, „Prophecy, Politics and Power: Changing Relations between the Catholic Church and the Zimbabwe State (1980-2007)’, in *Studia Historiae Ecclesasticae*, no 1 July 2008, p. 213.

Other private archives used include the Samkange archives. These contain many papers belonging to Thompson Samkange who was one of the early indigenous ministers to be employed by the Wesleyan Methodist Church. These archives are housed at the Samkange homestead in Harare, Zimbabwe.<sup>61</sup> Several other documents were accessed from „small’ private archives belonging to ministers and lay people, generally persons whom I had gone to interview.

Archives are very helpful for the defining of dates. They also enable historians to come up with histories of bygone era. They provide first hand documents. The danger of archival history is that in Zimbabwe the archives are generally colonial sources and as such, they exude the colonial mindset. Lynn Schler holds that „colonial sources provide historians with a wealth of information about African lives during the colonial period but they must be read against the grain filtering out valuable information from the biases and prejudices of European officials.’<sup>62</sup> This is corroborated by Mukuka who holds that written sources mostly reflect the institutional aspect of the Christian life such as the arrival of missionaries, the building of churches and schools.<sup>63</sup> This study will overcome this problem by making a critical analysis of the available data. In addition, oral history will be employed. The results of archival research will be considered in relation to the interviews with various sources in an attempt to construct a balanced history of the indigenous ministers of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Zimbabwe.

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<sup>61</sup> Samkange’s homestead is at number 1 St Patricks Road, Hatfield, Harare, Zimbabwe.

<sup>62</sup>S. Lynn, „Writing African Women History with Male Sources: Possibilities and Limitations’, in *History in Africa: A Journal of Method*, Vol 31, 2004. p.319.

<sup>63</sup>George S. Mukuka, „The Establishment of the Black Catholic Clergy in South Africa from 1887 to 1957,’ unpublished Doctor of Philosophy thesis submitted to the University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2000, p.18.

## **1.8.2 Oral history**

Philippe Denis holds that the purpose of oral history is to uncover what might otherwise remain hidden.<sup>64</sup> He develops this idea in his recent book *Oral history in a wounded country, interactive interviewing in South Africa*.<sup>65</sup> His argument is that „whilst in social sciences and in other disciplines, recordings will be kept secured in a locked environment and will be destroyed once data capture and analysis are complete, oral history practitioners hold interviews for purposes of posterity, and the identity of the informants is made public if they sign a release agreement form.’<sup>66</sup> This methodology is central in any serious attempt to reconstruct the history of the subjugated. It must be noted however, that there is a difference between oral history and oral tradition. Oral history relates to the immediate recollections of people, the hearsay accounts and their circumstances. These are normally gathered through interviews, whereas oral tradition concerns the passing of stories by word of mouth from one generation to another over a period of time.<sup>67</sup> For J.H. Kwabena Nketia, oral tradition goes beyond reaching out to others through word of mouth and includes visual forms as well, such as art objects, gestures in movement, speech surrogates, and dance.<sup>68</sup>

For this study interviews were used to collect data. This method was very useful as it managed to close various gaps left by archival history. Before the interviews were conducted all interviewees were asked to sign an informed consent form as well as an interview release agreement form. The interview consent form was signed after the interviewer narrated all the facts concerning the interview to the interviewees. These included the right of the interviewee to withdraw from the interview at any given time when he or she deemed it necessary. I also pointed out that there were no financial rewards for participating in the interview. The interview release form was a written permission granted by the interviewees for the interviewer to make use of the interview transcripts in the study. All important ethical issues were attended to before engaging in this study.

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<sup>64</sup>Philippe Denis, „Introduction’ in Philippe Denis (ed.), *Orality, Memory and the Past. Listening to the Voices of Black Clergy under Colonialism and Apartheid*, Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2000, p.2.

<sup>65</sup>Philippe Denis, „The Ethics of Oral History in South Africa,’ in Philippe Denis and Ratikobo Ntsimane (eds.), *Oral History in a Wounded Country, Interactive interviewing in South Africa*, Pietermaritzburg: University of Kwazulu-Natal Press, 2008.

<sup>66</sup>Philippe Denis, „The Ethics of Oral History in South Africa,’ in Philippe Denis and Ratikobo Ntsimane (eds.), *Oral History in a Wounded Country, Interactive interviewing in South Africa*, 2008, p. 64.

<sup>67</sup> J. Tosh and Sean Lang, *The Pursuit of History: Aims, Methods and New Directions in the Study of Modern History*, London: Pearson Longman, 1984, p.172.

<sup>68</sup>J.H. Kwabena Nketia, „Reference Modes of Meaning as Strategies of Communication in Oral Tradition’ *Journal of African Christian Thought*, vol 11, no 1, June 2008, p.3.

The interviews took the form of interactive conversational narratives. I asked open-ended questions and posed some follow-up questions. The interviews were recorded by an electronic device and transcribed. Twenty-two people were interviewed. Of these, four were women and eighteen were male. Out of the twenty-two, six were laypeople and sixteen were indigenous ministers. Of the sixteen indigenous ministers thirteen were from the Wesleyan Methodist Church and three belonged to other denominations. The thirteen indigenous Methodist ministers constituted 75% of the total of the surviving Methodist clergy who had been in active service already before 1980. Put differently, I interviewed thirteen out of seventeen surviving indigenous ministers who began their service before 1980.

Furthermore I interviewed only six laypersons because in the Wesleyan Methodist Church the life of ministers is ‚hidden’ from the laity. Laypeople for instance did play no role in committees that dealt with the discipline of ministers. Although my sampling may seem to be somewhat inadequate, this concern is mitigated by the fact that the research is qualitative in character. The choice of the interviewees was determined by the degree of their familiarity with the subject under discussion. Furthermore, interviews are in this study used to compliment the rich findings from the archives.

The weakness of interviews as a source of information is that memory lapses occur and when memory lapses people tend to fill in the gaps with lies. Jan Vansina explains such lies as explanatory interpolations.<sup>69</sup> This is corroborated by John Tosh and Sean Lang who argue that memory itself has to be treated with caution. It can be remarkably clear even after a very long time. On the other hand, it can play tricks and what seem to be firm and detailed memories may be disproved by other evidence.<sup>70</sup>

The other danger is that human beings are mortal and once they die the ‚library has been burnt’. For the purpose of this study, the results of the interviews were analysed critically in an endeavour to come up with a balanced testimony. In addition, evidence from the interviews was compared with what I got from the archives so as to present a reputable account.

The strength of this method is that at times it can unveil what written sources fail to show. Denis contends that oral sources concern what tends to be hidden- the spoken message

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<sup>69</sup>Jan Vansina, *Oral tradition: A study in Historical Methodology*, Chicago: Aldine Publishing company, 1965, p.40.

<sup>70</sup>J. Tosh and Sean Lang, *The Pursuit of History: Aims, Methods and New Directions in the Study of Modern History*, London: Pearson Longman, 1984, p.335.

fugitive by nature.<sup>71</sup> Not all information can be put down in writing. Furthermore, oral sources make the story more vivid and, in the case of interviews, it allows the interviewer and the interviewee to relive the experience. In a nutshell, this method evokes memories and brings the emotions associated with the event back to life. This methodology is particularly suited to an African context because Africans have always preserved that which is fundamental to them in oral form. John S. Mbiti argues that African traditional religion does not exist in written form but it exists in the minds and hearts of the believers.<sup>72</sup>

### **1.8.3 Secondary sources**

The study makes use of several secondary sources. Relevant material from published books and academic journals has been used. Because the context of the study is Africa, it follows that much of the books used focus on Africa.

## **1.9 Theoretical framework**

Theoretical framework is the *conditio sine qua non*<sup>73</sup> of any modern research. Tinyiko S. Maluleke postulates that to leave theory out is like stepping in to a war zone without ammunition.<sup>74</sup> The process of developing indigenous ministers in Africa was complex and it cannot be seen as an easy process culminating in a smooth handing-over of responsibilities by missionaries to local counterparts. Sigbert Axelson argues that evangelisation in the lower Congo was inhibited by cultural confrontation.<sup>75</sup> Jean and John Comaroff postulate that in South Africa in the region of Mafikeng there was cultural confrontation between the Tswana people and the British Nonconformist missionaries.<sup>76</sup> After having noted the complexities

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<sup>71</sup> Philippe Denis, 'The use of Oral Sources in African History,' in *Bulletin for Contextual Theology in southern Africa and Africa*, vol two, Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal, April, 1995, p.32.

<sup>72</sup> John S. Mbiti, *African Religion and Philosophy*, London: Heinemann, 1969, p.3-4.

<sup>73</sup> This simply means 'that without which not'.

<sup>74</sup> Tinyiko S. Maluleke, 'The Quest for Muted Black Voices in History: Some Pertinent issues in (South) African Mission Historiography,' *Missionalia*, 28/1 April 2000, p.50.

<sup>75</sup> S. Axelson, *Culture Confrontation in the Congo: From the Old Congo Kingdom to the Congo Independent State with special reference to the Swedish Missionaries in the 1880s and 1890s*, Fairhope: Gummessons. 1970, p.339.

<sup>76</sup> John and Jean Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, p.18.

that characterised the relationships between the missionaries and the indigenous people in Africa, this study has come up with two theoretical frameworks to buttress it.

The theoretical assumptions underpinning my study belong to a historical-anthropological perspective and to comparative religion in the postcolonial framework. Theories by Jean and John Comaroff, Terence Ranger and James C. Scott are part of historical anthropology. A theory by David Chidester falls under postcolonial comparative religion.

Historical anthropology covers the period from upper paleolithic to the present. For Andrew M. Jones, „historical anthropology consciously splices together interview-oriented ethnographic (i.e. narrative) information with documentary and archival information with the goal of producing holistic anthropological knowledge of a particular subject over a period of time.’<sup>77</sup> This is pertinent to my research because interviews and archives are central to it.

Comparative religion involves comparing two or more entities with a view to understanding the unusual. Benson Saler argues that „we regularly monitor the world and in doing so we creatively and selectively compare newly encountered phenomena to established representational structures.’<sup>78</sup> The comparative religion approach, used in the postcolonial framework, involves comparing two or more religions, or aspects of religions, with the aim of correcting distortions made by colonial comparative religion scholars. However, the term postcolonial is ambiguous. It may be used to refer to a historical period after colonialism in any given environment. It can also be used to refer to a philosophy of life that negates colonial and domineering attitudes. The latter presupposes that colonialism did not end with the colonised gaining political independence but continued in a veiled way.

The postcolonial framework seeks to reinterpret events or texts in a quest to empower the previously colonised. For the purposes of this research, comparative religion is invaluable, especially for chapters two and five of the thesis. Chapter two gives an overview of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Rhodesia. The section on the encounter between European missionaries and the indigenous people shows how the missionaries compared Christianity to African religions. Chapter five of this study deals with indigenous ministers and African culture. In this chapter both the missionaries and the indigenous ministers compare Christianity to African religion. The majority of Europeans made such comparisons with the

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<sup>77</sup> A. M. Jones, „Culture, Identity, and Motivation: The Historical Anthropology of a family firm’, *Culture and Organization*, Vol 12(2), June 2006, p.171.

<sup>78</sup> Robert A. Segal, *The Blackwell Companion to the Study of Religion*, Oxford: Willy-Blackwell, 2006, p.26.

aim of rubbishing whatever Africans believed in. A substantial number amongst the indigenous people compared the two religions with the aim of showing conjunctions between the two religions, there by demonstrating that rejection of African religion by some missionaries was an act of cultural colonialism.

These two theoretical frameworks may not account for every detail in this thesis but they will provide a philosophical basis for understanding the ‚commerce‘ between the missionaries and colonialists on the one hand and the indigenous ministers on the other. In addition, I will discuss individual theories within the ambits of the already given theoretical frameworks.

### **1.9.1 ‘Of Revelation and Revolution’**

It is instructive to note that the work of the Comaroffs, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonisation, and Consciousness in South Africa*,<sup>79</sup> ‘is a historical anthropology of colonialism and consciousness, culture and power; of an anthropology concerned at once with the coloniser and the colonised, with structure and agency.’<sup>80</sup> The stated goal of the work is to present an anthropology of the colonial encounter, in this case between the British Protestant Nonconformist missionaries in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the southern Tswana and with the larger implication that the missionaries acted as the cultural arm of colonialism and that the dilemmas faced by the Tswana in their confrontations with colonialism mirrored - but obviously did not precisely reproduce - the experience of other colonised African groups in South Africa.<sup>81</sup> In fact the Comaroffs categorically stated that they hoped that their discussion of this particular mission would accomplish three other things. Firstly, to anticipate later modes of consciousness and struggle in South Africa. Secondly, to look at an example of historical processes that were happening across Africa and indeed much of the non-Western world and, lastly, to examine analytic issues to do with the nature of power and resistance.<sup>82</sup> My adoption of this theory to analyse some historical processes of the same nature in Zimbabwe accords the Comaroffs’ vision.

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<sup>79</sup>Johand JeanComaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, p. 11.

<sup>80</sup> John and Jean Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution* , p. 11.

<sup>81</sup>Elizabeth Elbourne, „Word Made Flesh: Christianity, Modernity, and Cultural Colonialism in the Work of Jean and John Comaroff’ *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 108, No. 2 April 2003, p.435-459.

<sup>82</sup>Elizabeth Elbourne, „Word Made Flesh: Christianity, Modernity, and Cultural Colonialism in the Work of Jean and JohnComaroff’ *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 108, No. 2 April 2003, p. 435-459.

Writing from the vantage point of 1991, the Comaroffs castigated anthropologists for neglecting both the study of colonialism and more broadly history itself.<sup>83</sup> The Comaroffs claim that the study of mission history prior to 1990 was much concerned with issues of political economy at the expense of culture, symbolism and ideology.<sup>84</sup> By saying this, the Comaroffs were echoing the 1986 claim by Terence Ranger that, until that point in time, most of the historiography of early missions had overestimated the role of political and economic factors in its expansion.<sup>85</sup>

Concerning the British mission among the Tswanas, the Comaroffs argue that the missionaries were set to impose their worldview on those whom they sought to convert. In this sense, in the process of evangelisation of the Tswana community, the missionaries functioned as agents of colonialism. The book is important as a narrative of dispossession and resistance.<sup>86</sup> The authors endeavour to reveal the links between political, economic and cultural colonialism in southern Africa.<sup>87</sup>

The domination of the indigenous people by the missionaries placed the two sides in an oppositional situation<sup>88</sup> and the Tswanas began to brace themselves for resistance. The dominated were not passive recipients of the missionary domination but they were active players creating an exchange. In sum, the encounter between colonial evangelism and the southern Tswana can be best described as a long conversation, a continuing process in the course of which signifiers were set afloat, fought over, and recaptured on both sides of the encounter.<sup>89</sup> The Europeans were not absolute winners in so far as they ended up assimilating some aspects of African culture into their worldview. Consequently, colonisation was a two way process, with a dialogue between coloniser and colonised, although the colonised responses were at a much lower level since the terrain was not even. This position was corroborated by Jonathan Draper who postulates that this confrontation of cultures was not a one way street but a two-way traffic, albeit an unequal one, since the parties' economic and

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<sup>83</sup>Elizabeth Elbourne, „Word Made Flesh: Christianity, Modernity, and Cultural Colonialism in the Work of Jean and John Comaroff' *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 108, No. 2 April 2003, p. 435-459.

<sup>84</sup>John and Jean Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, p. 8.

<sup>85</sup>Terence Ranger, „Religious Movements and Politics in Sub-Saharan Africa,' *African Studies Review*, 29 1986, p. 1-69.

<sup>86</sup>Elizabeth Elbourne, „Word Made Flesh: Christianity, Modernity, and Cultural Colonialism in the Work of Jean and John Comaroff' *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 108, No. 2 April 2003, p. 435-459.

<sup>87</sup>John and Jean Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, p.19.

<sup>88</sup>John and Jean Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, p.17.

<sup>89</sup>John and Jean Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, p.15.



military power was obviously uneven.<sup>90</sup> It is worth noting that it is this process that made the Europeans view their culture as a closed entity, and the same was true for the Tswanas.<sup>91</sup> The indigenous people began to see their culture as a separate and reified entity with a set of „Tswana’ customs known as *Setswana*.<sup>92</sup> In the same breath the indigenous people absorbed some aspects of the European worldview. Colonialism did not only produce reified cultural orders, it also gave birth to a new hegemony amidst, and despite, cultural contestation as the interaction was influenced by issues of cultural hegemony and ideology.<sup>93</sup>

The Comaroffs borrowed some insights about issues of culture, hegemony and ideology from Gramsci.<sup>94</sup> However the Comaroffs’ view is that culture is the space signifying practice, the semantic ground on which human beings seek to construct and represent themselves and others - and hence, society and history.<sup>95</sup> Among other things culture is made up of issues of hegemony and ideology, the Comaroffs argue:

This is where hegemony and ideology become salient again. They are two dominant forms in which power enters, - or more accurately, is entailed in culture. It is through them, therefore, that the relationship between power and culture is finally grasped although a further caveat is necessary.<sup>96</sup>

This work by the Comaroffs is divided into two volumes. The first was published in 1991 and the second was published in 1997. In both the central analytical concept is that of hegemony. Sally E. Merry reflecting on the work of the Comaroffs defines hegemony as the unspoken, taken for granted assumptions about person and action that shape social life even though they are not brought to consciousness.<sup>97</sup> However, the Comaroffs, relying on the works of Marx, Bourdieu, Gramsci and others,<sup>98</sup> define hegemony as „that order of signs and practices, relations and distinctions, images and epistemologies - drawn from a historically situated cultural field - that come to be taken-for-granted as the natural and received shape of the

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<sup>90</sup>J. Draper, „Hegemony, Ideology and Social Construction: Special Focus on the Work of John and Jean Comaroff’ in *Bulletin for Contextual Theology in Southern Africa*, vol. No, 3, December, 1988, p.3.

<sup>91</sup> John and Jean Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, p.18.

<sup>92</sup> John and Jean Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, p. 18.

<sup>93</sup> John and Jean Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, p.18.

<sup>94</sup>See A. Gramsci, *Selection from the prison notebook*, Edited and translated by Q. Hoare and G..N.Smith. New York: International Publishers, 1971.

<sup>95</sup>John and Jean Comaroff *Of Revelation and Revolution*, p. 22.

<sup>96</sup>John and Jean Comaroff *Of Revelation and Revolution*, p.21.

<sup>97</sup>Sally Engle Merry, Hegemony and Culture in Historical Anthropology: A Review Essay on Jean and John L. Comaroff’s ‚Of Revelation and Revolution’, *The American Historical Review*, Vol.108, No2, April 2003, p.460-470.

<sup>98</sup>John and Jean Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, p.23.

world and everything that inhabits it. It consists of things that go without saying because, being axiomatic, they come without saying, things that, being presumptively shared, are not the subject of explication or argument.

Hegemony is a process of habit forming because its power lies in what it seeks to silence, what it prevents people from thinking and saying, what it puts beyond the limits of the rational and the credible.<sup>99</sup> Once such signs and meanings become recognised and explicitly articulated they fall into the domain of ideology and are more susceptible to contestation.<sup>100</sup> On the other hand, ideology is ‚an articulated system of meanings, values and beliefs of a kind that can be abstracted as worldview of any social grouping’.<sup>101</sup> Thus the difference between hegemony and ideology is very fluid. There is a lot of overlapping of ideas within these two concepts. However, this does not mean that the two concepts are the same. One major difference is that hegemony is beyond direct argument and not negotiable, whilst ideology is more susceptible to being perceived as a matter of inimical opinion and interest and therefore is open to contestation. Hegemony homogenises, ideology articulates. Hegemony at its best is mute ...ideology babbles on.<sup>102</sup> Hegemony is always unstable and once it is shaken it becomes an ideological struggle-which can be expressed in the form of a refusal, an attempt to reverse things and negations. Hence there is always a struggle for ideology, by different hegemonic groups.<sup>103</sup>

Theories of hegemony acknowledge the continual emergence of counter-hegemonies and resistance. The Comaroffs note that ‚hegemony is always being made and can be unmade, that it is never total, and that it is a process as much as a thing.’<sup>104</sup> For example, the evangelical message of the missionaries became part of the emerging hegemony, yet it also gave rise to new forms of consciousness that sparked forms of resistance that ultimately became part of the black consciousness and the fight against apartheid.<sup>105</sup>

The Comaroffs categorically stated the emergence of forms of political consciousness, ideas of rights, and Christian concepts of self that were fundamental to the emerging political

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<sup>99</sup>John and Jean Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, p.23.

<sup>100</sup>John and Jean Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution* ,p.23.

<sup>101</sup> Jean and John Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, p.23.

<sup>102</sup>John and Jean Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, p.24.

<sup>103</sup>George Mukuka,,‚The Establishment of the Black Catholic Clergy in South Africa from 1887 to 1957’ unpublished Doctor of Philosophy thesis submitted to the University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2000, p. 39.

<sup>104</sup> John and Jean Comaroffs, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, p.25.

<sup>105</sup> John and Jean Comaroffs, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, p.12.

opposition.<sup>106</sup> For the Comaroffs, resistance does not take place in the context of organised social action alone but it could include activities as different as painting graffiti on the walls and refusing to do school work.

The Comaroffs could be criticised in four main areas. Sally Engle Merry states that the linkages between political and cultural colonialism are often unclear in *Of Revelation and Revolution*, and the role of cultural colonialism is over determined.<sup>107</sup> It seems the authors overvalued the issue of culture and made it to stand on its own whereas it is possible that cultural colonialism was inextricably linked to economic and political colonialism.

The second area of criticism is that the Comaroffs presuppose that the coming of the British missionaries presented the first opportunity for cultural exchange for the Tswana people. It is known that colonial settlers preceded the missionaries in this part of South Africa. It is also known that there was a lot of cultural exchange amongst the Bantu tribes even before the arrival of the Europeans.<sup>108</sup> Therefore to claim that with the arrival of British missionaries the Tswana culture came for the first time under threat is inaccurate.

The third area of criticism is that Comaroffs do not take missionaries religion seriously but rather consider their mundane practices. Nor do they consider the role of mediating of African evangelists.

Lastly, African religions and culture are very secretive in nature. The believers are of the view that if one speaks about some aspects of their religion, it will lose its power. For that reason, things are done indirectly, and it is in that ‚indirection‘ that the insiders find direction and yet outsiders may fail to detect any direction at all. The Comaroffs being outsiders might not have got the full story about the Tswana culture.

Notwithstanding these contested aspects in the Comaroffs' theory, I consider this theory as the best to use as a framework for my study although it may not account for every detail in the findings. The theory is most relevant to chapter five of this thesis. For instance, the

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<sup>106</sup>Sally Engle Merry, ‚Hegemony and Culture in Historical Anthropology: A review Essay on Jean and John L. Comaroff's *Of Revelation and Revolution*‘, *The American Historical Review*, Vol, 108, No2, April 2003, p. 460-470.

<sup>107</sup>Sally Engle Merry, ‚Hegemony and Culture in Historical Anthropology: A review Essay on Jean and John L. Comaroff's *Of Revelation and Revolution*‘, *The American Historical Review*, Vol, 108, No2, April 2003, p. 458.

<sup>108</sup>Sally Engle Merry, *Hegemony and Culture in Historical Anthropology: A review Essay on Jean and John L. Comaroff's ‚Of Revelation and Revolution‘*, *The American Historical Review*, Vol, 108, No2, April 2003,p. 458.

indigenous ministers of the Wesleyan Methodist Church viewed some aspects of African culture as something that was closed and not open to modification. They perceived the adherence to African culture as an expression of their identity and right to self-determination. In this regard culture took on the form of an ideology which could be contested.

The indigenous ministers fought against European culture, sometimes as individuals and sometimes as a collective. The early secessionists such as Matthew Zvimba, who formed the White Bird Church, Paul Mwazha who founded *Vapostori veAfrica*<sup>109</sup> and Mai Chaza, who formed the City of God Church, were protesting, among other things, the negation of African culture by the missionaries.

### **1.9.2 'Peasant Consciousness and Guerrilla War in Zimbabwe'**

Terence Ranger was one of the earliest lecturers to teach at the University of Zimbabwe (UZ) which was by then called College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. He did a lot of research in Zimbabwe before being deported for political reasons. He came back to Zimbabwe after the country attained political independence. In 1985, he published a book, *Peasant Consciousness and Guerrilla war in Zimbabwe*.<sup>110</sup> Ranger did much of his research in the Makoni area in eastern Zimbabwe. His theory falls under historical anthropology. The author uses archives as well as interviews as sources of information in a bid to reconstruct the level of consciousness of the peasants in the Makoni area.<sup>111</sup>

Ranger's theory is closely linked to the Comaroffs's theory. For example the Comaroffs, as noted, argue that the message preached by the evangelical missionaries became part of the hegemony in South Africa. This hegemony gave rise to new forms of consciousness that sparked forms of resistance that ultimately became part of the black consciousness and the fight against apartheid. Similarly, Ranger holds that hardship which characterised hegemony in Makoni gave rise to high levels of political consciousness.

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<sup>109</sup>Vapostori ve Africa simply means Apostles in Africa. The church was formed as a protest after the missionaries refused to approve of his practice of healing, using categories of African healing.

<sup>110</sup>Terence. Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness*, Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1985.

<sup>111</sup> Terence Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness*, p.5.

Ranger argues against a popular theory, which claims that the guerrilla war in Zimbabwe was never the people's war, due to lack of empathy and commitment on the part of the peasantry.<sup>112</sup> The author compares the situation in Kenya, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe, and his conclusion is that peasants in Zimbabwe were not apolitical. They had a certain consciousness, which led to political radicalism. The situation was different in Kenya where the colonial government created a rural elite that was allowed to establish itself. This rural elite remained loyal to the government. In Mozambique, the situation was different because the peasants themselves differed from those in Zimbabwe.<sup>113</sup>

Ranger sought to assess the level of consciousness of the peasants in colonial Zimbabwe. He holds that before the 1930s the peasants in Makoni did not offer any meaningful resistance to colonialism, because there was still land available to them. However, even when this was the case, peasants were very conscious of subjugation and domination. It was in the 1940s when land became scarce that resistance amongst the peasants surfaced.<sup>114</sup> For Ranger, protest movements started to proliferate around this period. When the guerrilla movement was born in the 1960s, it simply tapped on the consciousness of the peasantry and, with the support of the spirit mediums, the war began.<sup>115</sup>

Ranger drew for much of his material on Charles Van Onselen who demonstrated the existence and operation among migrant labourers in the mining industry of strategies of self-help and protest, documenting by implication their understanding of the system in which they were caught up.<sup>116</sup> The author argues that political consciousness was not a preserve of the migrant workers but was very much present amongst the peasants as well. He further argues:

In fact it seems clear that one cannot talk about worker consciousness in a migrant labour system without also at the same time considering a parallel and connected peasantry consciousness.<sup>117</sup>

The theory argues that „the people of Makoni were not already peasants neither were they striving to preserve peasant status against colonialism. For them the process of peasantization took place painfully in the aftermath of conquest and alienation of land. It took place in

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<sup>112</sup> M. Schoffeleers, book review, *Peasant Consciousness and Guerrilla war in Zimbabwe* in *Journal of Southern African studies*, Vol 14 October 1987, p.147-152.

<sup>113</sup> Terence Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness*, p. 1-5.

<sup>114</sup> Terence Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness*, p. 8.

<sup>115</sup> Terence Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness*, p. 8.

<sup>116</sup> Terence Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness*, p. 8.

<sup>117</sup> Terence Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness*, p. 26.

defiance of the very different plans for the economics of the district which were being adumbrated by the victorious whites.’<sup>118</sup> The whites had arranged that the African men of Makoni were to provide labour necessary for the development of white enterprise. The African women were to produce subsistence crops.<sup>119</sup> A railway line was constructed which was to link Harare and Mutare and it passed through the Makoni area.<sup>120</sup>

Ranger holds that the capture and summary execution of Chief Makoni, the subsequent flight of the people of Makoni into the rocky highlands, and the rapid appropriation of the great expanses of Makoni District by capitalist investment companies and individual white farmers with the aim of breaking down the pre-colonial political and economic system, awakened the consciousness of the African peasants.<sup>121</sup>

The wanton killing and raping of African women by the police were common occurrences in Makoni. The very fact that they were forced to work in mines and farms belonging to Europeans were awakening experiences in their own right.<sup>122</sup>

In a nutshell, Ranger’s theory holds that peasants in Zimbabwe, particularly in the area of Chief Makoni, developed a political consciousness in reaction to a series of deprivations. These included the expropriation of their land by the settlers, the use of violence by the police, raping of African women by Europeans, and enactment of repressive laws by the administration, to mention but a few. In Ranger’ view it was these series of misfortune that gave rise to political consciousness among the indigenes. This rising level of consciousness found expression in many actions of resistance such as the killing of Native Commissioners and the refusal to plant cash crops by the peasants. When the nationalists began to fight their second war of liberation in the late 1960s, they found support among the peasants and other socially disadvantaged people within the republic. Ranger argues that the peasants rendered invaluable logistical support to the combatants. In this sense the Second *Chimurenga* War was a people’s war.

Freedom fighters were given shelter, food and clothing by the peasants because the two shared common goals and values. In many other essential operations by the freedom fighters

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<sup>118</sup>Terence Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness*, p. 28.

<sup>119</sup>Terence Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness*, p. 28.

<sup>120</sup>Terence Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness*, p.29.

<sup>121</sup> Terence. Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness*,p. 319.

<sup>122</sup> Terence. Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness*,p..319.

the peasants played a central role. Reconnaissance missions were usually carried out by peasants, thus demonstrating their political awareness.

Scholars have responded to Ranger's theory in a very instructive way. One response came from Stephen Robins in an article, 'Heroes, Heretics and Historians of the Zimbabwe Revolution', a review article of Norma Kriger's article 'Zimbabwe's Guerrilla War: Peasant Voices.'<sup>123</sup> In this article Robins argued that liberation historians such as Ranger, particularly in his theory of peasant consciousness, neglected many important aspects of the liberation war. He notes that Norma Kriger's 1992 work where she argues that, what Ranger and others called peasant consciousness was actually peasant coercion because peasants were forced to render support to the freedom fighters, neglected some pertinent aspects of the struggle. For Kriger the practice of guerrilla violence and coercion during and after Zimbabwe's political independence influenced the authoritarian character of the state during the post war period.<sup>124</sup>

Robins came up with a middle of the way position. He argued that Ranger's assertion ignored the violent character of the liberation movements. On the other hand he found that Kriger's work overemphasised the practice of coercion by the liberation movements and ignored the moments when the peasants voluntarily offered support to the freedom fighters. This view by Robins was echoed by Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni in his 2009 work, *Do 'Zimbabweans' exist? Trajectories of Nationalism, National Identity Formation and Crisis in a Postcolonial State*.<sup>125</sup> Robins argues that peasant consciousness as perceived by Ranger was a typical ZANU PF<sup>126</sup> praise text. His revelation about Ranger's self-evaluation in this matter is of immeasurable significance. He wrote:

Ranger has recently conceded that his 1985 work *Peasant Consciousness and Guerrilla War in Zimbabwe*, uncritically celebrated the liberation struggle from a ZANU PF perspective. This confession coming from an accomplished and respected historian is of great significance and needs to be taken seriously. He acknowledges that his *Peasant Consciousness* not only marginalised the role of

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<sup>123</sup>S. Robins, 'Heroes, Heretics, and Historians of the Zimbabwe Revolution', a review article of Norma Kriger's article 'Peasants Voices', *Zambezia* 1996, XX111 (1), p. 4-30.

<sup>124</sup>S. Robins, 'Heroes, Heretics, and Historians of the Zimbabwe Revolution' a review article of Norma Kriger's article 'Peasants Voices', *Zambezia*, p. 77.

<sup>125</sup>Sabelo J. Ndlovu- Gatsheni, *Do 'Zimbabweans' Exist? Trajectories of Nationalism, National Identity Formation and Crisis in a postcolonial State*, Oxford: Peter Lang, 2009, p. 48- 60.

<sup>126</sup>ZANU PF is a political party that has been in power since the advent of Zimbabwe's political independence. It is up to date led by Robert Mugabe who rose to the position of party president in 1976. It was initially known as ZANU.

Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) and Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) but was also silent about the state terror in Matabeleland in the 1980s.<sup>127</sup>

Additionally, in his later texts such as *Voices from the rocks* and *Violence and memory* Ranger makes amends for his error. The arguments by Kriger, Robin and Ndhlovu-Gatsheni are critical. However, they do not erase the fact that the peasants were conscious of the world around them. They only add another dimension to the reasons for peasant support of the liberation movements. In spite of the negative review of this theory by the new regime of historians - who are trying to break the tradition of the old school of Zimbabwean historians with its blind praise for acts of ZANU PF at the expense of other realities - this theory is useful for the current thesis because my starting point is not that there was high political consciousness among the indigenous ministers but my goal is to assess the degree of that political consciousness.

Ranger's theory fits very well into a theoretical framework for my research question which seeks to establish the degree of political awareness of the Zimbabwean indigenous Methodist ministers from the time of the church's inception to the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Ranger's theory is relevant to this study as a whole. Chapter three argues that the indigenous Methodist ministers' political consciousness was awakened by their theological training. The fact that the indigenous ministry was, without exception, trained locally while the European ministers were trained abroad indicates racial inequality subsisting in the Wesleyan Methodist Church. Similarly, the fact that there were no opportunities for further studies for the indigenous ministers was testimony to the fact that Africans were held in low esteem by their European counterparts. Importantly, the liberation ethos that characterised theological studies at Epworth Theological College radicalised the indigenous ministers and this influence was compounded by the example, by some of the European missionaries who were proponents of social justice.

The theory is also relevant for chapters four, five, and six. These chapters argue that the indigenous ministers' consciousness was awakened by series of deprivations such as lack of competitive stipends and the relatively poor working conditions which included poor

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<sup>127</sup>S. Robins, 'Heroes, Heretics, and Historians of the Zimbabwe Revolution,' a review article of Norma Kriger's article 'Peasants Voices', *Zambezia*, p.77.



accommodation as well as cultural and political domination. All these forms of deprivation made the indigenous ministers conscious of their plight and set the stage for resistance.

### **1.9.3 'Domination and the Arts of Resistance, Hidden Transcripts'**

In his *Domination and the Arts of Resistance Hidden, Transcripts*,<sup>128</sup> James Scott<sup>129</sup> describes the thrilling encounter between the dominant and the dominated groups. In fact, Scott, the Comaroffs, and Ranger question certain assumptions. Scott questions the perception that the dominated were always passive in their deprived situation. The Comaroffs question the overemphasis of political and economic colonisation at the expense of cultural colonisation in Africa and South Africa in particular. Ranger questions the view that Zimbabwe's liberation war was not a people's war but was waged by trained freedom fighters.

Scott doubts the view that the dominant are always transparent in their thoughts and actions concerning the dominated and that the dominated are always passive about their situation. He believes that this way of seeing things robs the poor and the powerless, especially in Africa, of the importance of their spirited and protracted struggle against domination. He believes that subordinate groups always offer resistance to their domination but that this resistance always takes place off-stage.

The major concept in Scott's theory is that of the 'hidden and public transcripts.' He suggests that the public transcripts are the open interactions between the dominant and the subordinate groups. They are deceptive in nature. They are a false representation of the feelings of the parties involved. Public transcripts can come from both the dominated and the dominant groups. They are simply acts which are displayed in the public eye by both the dominant and the dominated. Subordinate groups do not display their inner feelings about anything. This is because they know what is expected of them by the dominant and in order to avoid punishment they act as if they accept their inferior position. Scott puts this in a more insightful way when he argues:

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<sup>128</sup> James Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance, Hidden Transcripts*, New Haven: Yale University, 1990.

<sup>129</sup> James Scott is the Eugene Meyer Professor of Political Science and Chairman of the Council on Southeast Asia Studies at Yale University. He published many books which include, *The moral economy of the Peasants: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia* and *Weapon of the Weak: Everyday forms of Peasant Resistance*.

The theatrical imperative that normally prevails in situations of domination produces a transcript in close conformity with how the dominant group would wish to have things appear. The dominant never control the stage absolutely, but their wishes normally prevail.<sup>130</sup>

The opposite of the public transcript is the hidden transcript. For Scott, hidden transcripts are discourses that occur off-stage in the absence of dominant groups or individuals. Life consists of acting and disguise, hiding real motives and intentions. These are what he calls ‚hidden transcripts’. They consist of off-stage speeches, gestures and practices.<sup>131</sup> They are ‚a self-portrait by the subordinate as they wish themselves seen by the dominant’.<sup>132</sup> It is specific to a given social site and to a particular set of actors.<sup>133</sup> Scott further argues that whilst being dominated requires a credible performance of humility and deference, the dominant needs to give a credible performance of haughtiness.<sup>134</sup>

Additionally, the hidden transcripts arise as a consequence of the need to survive in relations of domination.<sup>135</sup> They represent a very high level of consciousness on the part of the dominated, who at the same time have to ascertain that their actions donot threaten their safety.

Antony Balcomb concurs with this view when he argues that the hidden transcript is a self-disclosure that power relations normally exclude from the official transcript.<sup>136</sup> The dominated will always behave as he or she is expected to behave by the dominant party.

Scott identifies three aspects of hidden transcripts. He holds that slaves were able to appeal to their masters for betterment of their conditions when they detected some representations of their aspirations.<sup>137</sup> Such betterment would be the result of the subordinate identifying some rhetorical concessions in the public transcript of the dominant.

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<sup>130</sup>James Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, p. 4.

<sup>131</sup>James Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, p. 4-5.

<sup>132</sup>James Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, p. 27.

<sup>133</sup>James Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, p.14.

<sup>134</sup>James Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, p.11.

<sup>135</sup>James .Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, p.24.

<sup>136</sup>Antony Balcomb, ‚Of Radical Refusers and very willing Victims, interpolations of the Missionary Message in the stories of Nongqause, Nxele, Ntsikana, and Soga’ in *the Bulletin for Contextual Theology in Southern Africa and Africa*. Vol 5, No 1 and 2, Pietermaritzburg: School of Religion and Theology, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 1998, p.4.

<sup>137</sup>James Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, p.18.

The second aspect occurs when the subordinate group gathers in the absence of the powerful. In this context they would engage in discourse that shows dissent. They will reveal their misgivings about the status quo. This is called social site, precisely intended for a particular set of actors.<sup>138</sup>

The last aspect is what Scott refers to as politics of disguise and anonymity, taking place in the public domain but remaining coded. It may serve to shield the identity of the actors concerned or to keep implied meanings completely coded. Under this aspect are discourses involving rumour, gossip, jokes, songs, rituals, and euphemisms collected, along with many other forms of disguise.<sup>139</sup>

In the opinion of T. S. Maluleke, Scott's argument goes against the conception of hegemony as the most important concept in understanding the relations between the dominant and the dominated. In this sense Scott engages the Comaroffs' idea. This is because hegemony belongs to what Scott refers to as public transcript which is normative. And yet, what is important in power relations between the dominant and the dominated is not what happens in the public but what happens in private which Scott referred to as hidden transcript.<sup>140</sup> Maluleke is echoing a view expressed by Gerald West in 1996 that the public transcript does not tell the whole story about power relations because both parties thrive on misrepresentations.<sup>141</sup>

Scott uses a number of examples to illustrate his theory. I consider this theory as very useful for my thesis. My objectives will be met, using this theory. For instance, the power relations between the missionaries and the indigenous ministers were characterised by deception. The missionaries were the dominant party and the indigenous ministers were the subordinates. Chapter four of this thesis examines the working conditions of the indigenous ministers. It is evident that the indigenous ministers were being dominated and discriminated against. They responded to this situation by engaging in subtle resistance. This was mostly done off-stage. Some indigenous ministers gave nicknames to missionaries. Others wrote anonymous letters in order to protect themselves from the wrath of the dominant.

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<sup>138</sup>James Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, p.18.

<sup>139</sup>James Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, p.19.

<sup>140</sup>Tinyiko S. Maluleke, „The historical Quest For A Black Presence that Walks: Some theoretical Issues in South African Mission Historiography' in Philippe Denis (ed.), *Orality Memory and the Past*, Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2000, p. 101.

<sup>141</sup>Gerald West, „And the Dumb do Speak: Articulating incipient readings of the Bible in Marginalised Communities' *The Bible and Ethics*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996, p. 2.

Additionally, in chapters four, five and six of this thesis, the hidden transcripts become public in direct confrontations between the leadership of the Wesleyan Methodist Church and indigenous ministers such as Canaan Banana and others. Many of the indigenous Methodist ministers became active in politics as a result of the realisation that they were dominated. This theory's point of departure is that the dominated groups are always conscious of their subordination. Chapter six of the thesis examines the role played by the indigenous ministers in the execution of the war of liberation. Many of their acts existed as hidden transcripts.

#### **1.9.4 'Savage systems: Colonialism and Comparative Religion in southern Africa'**

David Chidester wrote a book entitled, *Savage Systems: Colonialism and Comparative Religion in Southern Africa*.<sup>142</sup> This work belongs to comparative religion in a postcolonial framework. Chidester seeks to repudiate conclusions on indigenous religion, attained by missionaries and colonialism. He argues that using non-western perspectives of the history of comparative religions is now required if the field is to maintain its integrity in the light of postcolonial discussion.<sup>143</sup> He goes on to argue that comparative religion was a European colonialist activity that produced knowledge that functioned as a justification for subjugation and exploitation. Initially the Europeans perceived the indigenous population as having no religion; conquest by a more developed civilisation was considered fully justified.

In line with the above, Chidester observes that the colonialists regarded the early period of their arrival as a period when religion was absent.<sup>144</sup> It was only after colonisation had fully taken place that Africans were credited with having a religion but one which was couched in Middle Eastern terminology and which could be slotted neatly into European conceptions of non-Christian religions. The Xhosa were Arabs, Zulus were Jews, and Sotho-Tswana were Ancient Egyptians. The author confessed that, when he started this study, he knew that missionaries, colonial administrators and explorers had assumed that indigenous people had no religion. But he did not expect to discover that it had taken the savage system of

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<sup>142</sup>David Chidester, *Savage Systems: Colonialism and Comparative Religion in Southern Africa*, Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1996.

<sup>143</sup>David Chidester, *Savage Systems*, p. 12.

<sup>144</sup>David Chidester, *Savage Systems*, p.11.

colonialism for the Europeans to recognise that there was a system in the indigenous religions of southern Africa.<sup>145</sup> Briefly, Chidester's theory argues that missionaries, explorers, and colonial administrators conveniently compared African traditional religion with Christianity with the view to denigrating the former for the purpose of exploiting those who subscribed to the denigrated religion. Chidester calls for a paradigm shift in the study of comparative religions. He advocates for a thrust that corrects the legacy of colonial comparative religion by seeing African traditional religion as a world religion.

This theory is valuable for this research, in so far as it explains the attitudes of most of the pioneer missionaries within the Wesleyan Methodist Church. It will provide an entry point to understanding how the Methodist missionaries in Rhodesia perceived African culture. A case in point is where the Rev. Shimmin wrote a letter to the missionary office in London, arguing that there was a need to send more missionaries because the indigenous people had no religion and their world was a bizarre world.<sup>146</sup>

The weakness of this work is that it focuses largely on observers of European origin without allowing itself to fully dissect the complexity and diversity of those observers.<sup>147</sup> Secondly, it might be a dangerous generalisation to state that all missionaries started by dismissing indigenous religions as nonexistent and that all of them needed the savagery of colonialism to realise that the indigenous people did after all have a religion. To the contrary, some research has established that there were missionaries who advocated the need to respect indigenous religion and culture (*sui generis*).<sup>148</sup> With this in mind, this theory will be useful in understanding how and why indigenous ministers related to African culture. It must be noted that some of the comments and actions of the indigenous ministers were a reaction to what the missionaries were doing. It is valid then to argue that the attitudes of the indigenous ministers to African culture can only be fully understood in the context of how the missionaries viewed the same. The missionaries had obviously a lot of influence on the worldview of the indigenous ministers.

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<sup>145</sup>David Chidester, *Savage Systems*, p. 14.

<sup>146</sup> See a letter by the Rev. I. Shimmin to Marshal Hartley the secretary in the Mission House in London, 20 September 1895.

<sup>147</sup>E. Elbourne, A review of David Chidester's *Savage Systems*, in the *Journal of Religion in Africa*, p.504.

<sup>148</sup>This simply means that African traditional religion should be accorded the respect it deserves as a world religion.

## 1.10 Researcher's location

This study would be incomplete if I did not highlight issues relating to my own location as a researcher. The research is on the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Zimbabwe. Being an ordained minister in the same church may mean that I am an insider. The issues surrounding the status of 'insider' and 'outsider' in research methodology are well documented. For example, Ezra Chitando reflecting on the theme 'Insiders and outsiders in the study of ATRs: Examining identities'<sup>149</sup> argues that insiders in the study of African traditional religion are those who are African.<sup>150</sup> Using this model, it can be argued that a Methodist in the study of the history of the Wesleyan Methodist Church or related aspects of this denomination is an insider. The fact that the researcher is actually an ordained minister in the church buttresses the insider argument.

I am aware of the challenges inherent in the 'insider, outsider concept.' Chitando problematises the concepts, especially in relation to the study of African traditional religion. He managed to show that there are several nuances to these identities.<sup>151</sup> Mxolisi Mchunu wrote an article: 'Are Rural Communities Open Sources of Knowledge?'<sup>152</sup> In this article he postulates that one can be an insider and an outsider at the same time.<sup>153</sup> This is the case with this researcher because I may be considered to be an insider by virtue of being an ordained minister of the Wesleyan Methodist Church and I may be considered to be an outsider because I have studied in South Africa in an academic environment.

Be that as it may, being a Methodist minister means that I had easy access to church archives. I managed to access some documents that are usually the preserve of insiders only. These include ministers' personal files and other documents marked 'highly confidential.' the insider status worked in my advantage during my interviews. Retired ministers saw more than a researcher when I was conducting interviews. They saw a colleague, and this became an incentive for them to say more. Also, being an insider meant that I could easily understand

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<sup>149</sup> Ezra Chitando, 'Insiders and Outsiders in the study of ATRs: Examining identities,' *Missionalia*, April 2001, Vol No, 1.

<sup>150</sup> Ezra Chitando, 'Insiders and Outsiders in the study of ATRs: Examining identities,' *Missionalia*, April 2001, Vol 1, p. 45.

<sup>151</sup> Ezra Chitando, 'Insiders and Outsiders in the study of ATRs: Examining identities,' *Missionalia*, April 2001, Vol 1, p.45.

<sup>152</sup> Mxolisi Mchunu, 'Are Rural Communities Open Sources of Knowledge' in Philippe Denis and Ratikobo Ntsimane, *Oral History in a Wounded Country Interactive Interviewing in South Africa*, Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu- Natal Press, 2008, p.130.

<sup>153</sup> Mxolisi Mchunu, 'Are Rural Communities Open Sources of Knowledge' in Philippe Denis and Ratikobo Ntsimane, *Oral History in a Wounded Country Interactive Interviewing in South Africa*, p.130.

issues such as power dynamics within the denomination. This helped the analysis, thereby pushing the thesis forward.

Although there are some advantages in being an insider, there are some disadvantages too. Mxolisi Mchunu argues that in his own research at a place of his upbringing, he struggled to maintain adequate objectivity in interviews and analyses.<sup>154</sup> He further argues:

The insider knowledge of local dynamics that I brought to the interpretation of testimonies both enriched and complicated my work.<sup>155</sup>

This is because an insider has a baggage of many preconceived ideas and value judgments which, if not mitigated, tend to influence conclusions. More significant is the fact that outsiders may bring new insights to a debate, something beyond the reach of an insider. More so, insiders are often implicated whereas neutral outsiders are told more.

Having noted these advantages and pitfalls, I hasten to point out that a balanced approach will be adopted and biases will as much as possible be avoided.

## **1.11 Limitations of the study**

As has been noted, I interviewed twenty-four people and this sample may be too small for a study of this magnitude. The reason for this is that the study covers the later part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the majority of indigenous ministers who worked during this period have obviously died. Some were too old to grant an interview. Cases in point are Revds Aneas Mandinyenya and Charles Manyoba who, in spite of agreeing to give an interview, failed to do so on the appointed day because of sickness. Others could not be interviewed because they were geographically inaccessible; hence I concentrated on those in accessible areas.

Another limitation of this study is that some of the interviewees gave information that had been passed on to them by their senior colleagues. This obviously exposed the information to

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<sup>154</sup>Mxolisi Mchunu, 'Are Rural Communities Open Sources of Knowledge' in Philippe Denis and Ratikobo Ntsimane, *Oral History in a Wounded Country Interactive Interviewing in South Africa*, p.130.

<sup>155</sup>Mxolisi Mchunu, 'Are Rural Communities Open Sources of Knowledge' in Philippe Denis and Ratikobo Ntsimane, *Oral History in a Wounded Country Interactive interviewing in South Africa*, 2008, p.130.

contamination since memory can be very unreliable, especially after a very long time. This is not to suggest that written sources are always reliable.

Since the focus of the research is on those indigenous ministers in the Zimbabwean Wesleyan Methodist Church whose stronghold is in Mashonaland, it follows that the study concentrated mainly on them and that it is not safe to draw general conclusions about the political consciousness of indigenous ministers in the country as a whole during the colonial period.

The number of women interviewees is too small. Although it was the wish of the researcher to interview more women, this was not possible considering the focus of the study. The thesis focuses on male indigenous Methodist ministers because the Wesleyan Methodist Church recruited only male indigenous ministers during the period under review with the exception of one female. This female clergy was white, but born in Rhodesia. She was accepted as a candidate for ministry in 1977 three years before the terminus *ad quem* of this study. By 1980 she was still a student of theology; hence this thesis makes few references to her work and person.

Lastly, the study does not focus on the activities of the spouses of the indigenous ministers. Yet it is a fact that many indigenous ministers relied on their wives for counsel, comfort and emotional support. An effort to address this concern in a more detailed way could not have been made without interfering with the scope of the study.

## **1.12 Structure of dissertation**

This dissertation will have the following structure.

### **Chapter one: *Introduction***

This chapter acts as an introduction to the entire project. It consists of the statement of the problem, the background, and context of the study, location of the study in the subject area, hypothesis of the study, literature review, methodology of the study, theoretical framework, the author's position in the study, limitations of the study as well as structure of the dissertation.

### **Chapter Two: *Overview of the Wesleyan Methodist Church***



This chapter presents an overview of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Zimbabwe. The overview discusses how the Church came into being. It includes the development of the church up to the time it began to institutionalise. There is a section on the rules and regulations governing membership of the church. It also examines different sodalities within the Wesleyan Methodist Church and their growth. The whole idea of presenting this is to give the readers a general picture of the structure of the church and its operations.

### **Chapter Three: *The training of the indigenous Methodist ministers in Zimbabwe***

This chapter seeks to establish where and how the indigenous ministers were trained. Who trained them? What qualification were they given and were there opportunities for further education? It also establishes the impact of the training of the indigenous ministers on their political consciousness.

### **Chapter four: *Stipends and working conditions of the indigenous Methodist ministers***

This chapter focuses on economic issues in relation to the indigenous ministers. It establishes the level of stipends the Methodist indigenous ministers were earning during the period under review. It also seeks to establish the working conditions of the indigenous ministers. What was the nature of their accommodation? What were their transport arrangements? How did the indigenous ministers respond to their working conditions?

### **Chapter five: *B36 indigenous Methodist ministers and African culture***

The purpose of this chapter is to establish how the indigenous Methodist ministers related to African culture in the light of the fact that the missionaries under whose shadow the indigenous ministers operated denigrated African culture. Did the indigenous ministers embrace African culture? Did they perceive adherence to African culture as an expression of cultural independence?

## **Chapter six: *The indigenous ministers and politics***

This chapter focuses on the self-understanding of the indigenous ministers in the context of oppression, domination, and exploitation of indigenous people. It seeks to find out on which side of politics the indigenous ministers were? Did they support the status quo, the freedom fighters or both? What was the contribution of the indigenous ministers to the liberation of the country?

## **Chapter seven: *Conclusion***

This chapter brings the study to a conclusion. I will give a summary of the findings, followed by an evaluation and I will make recommendations.

## **2. CHAPTER TWO: AN OVERVIEW OF THE ZIMBABWEAN WESLEYAN METHODIST CHURCH**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter provided an introduction to the study. The objective of the current chapter is to give a historical overview of the Zimbabwean Wesleyan Methodist Church. The intention is for this chapter to cast some light on the work of its indigenous ministers. The period under review is from 1891 to 1980. The chapter discusses the coming of the first Methodist missionaries and their African agents, the leadership structure that emerged as a result of the institutionalization of the church, propriety and the rules that governed church membership, the church's quest to recruit more indigenous ministers, the church and healing ministry, the church and education as well as sodalities within the church.

This chapter is necessary because of two factors. Firstly, it provides an entry point to an understanding of the thesis for readers who are not Methodists. Some of the terms and concepts discussed in this study require some denominational background. Secondly, this chapter seeks to briefly, introduce the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Zimbabwe's fundamentals in the hope that this will help the reader to get some insight into the position of the indigenous ministers in the church. This will obviously push the thesis forward in the sense that this chapter, provides the study with the context in which the indigenous ministers were 'born' and in which they developed.

### **2.2 The coming of Methodism to Zimbabwe**

The origins of Zimbabwean Methodism are linked to South African and British Methodism.<sup>156</sup> The Wesleyan Methodist Church of Southern Africa became autonomous in 1882.<sup>157</sup> However, the Transvaal District was Boer territory and it was felt expedient to retain this district as a dependent extension of British Methodism.<sup>158</sup> As shall be established below, the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Zimbabwe in turn was an extension of the Methodist

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<sup>156</sup>Chengetai J.M. Zvobgo, *The Wesleyan Methodist Missions in Zimbabwe 1891-1945*, p. 17.

<sup>157</sup> John Weller and Jane Linden, *Mainstream Christianity to 1980 in Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe*, p.81.

<sup>158</sup> John Weller and Jane Linden, *Mainstream Christianity to 1980 in Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe*, p.81.

Church in Transvaal; it is in this sense that the Zimbabwean Methodism has South African origins. If one examines this from another angle, it may emerge that Zimbabwean Methodism originated from Britain because Transvaal was under the British Conference and as a result the administration of the church in Zimbabwe was in the hands of the British Conference. But how did Methodism come to South Africa in the first place? The seed of Methodism reached South Africa on the „wings’ of European colonization. The first to bring Methodism to South Africa were five Methodist soldiers who arrived with the British troops in 1795 and settled in the Cape.<sup>159</sup> Upon settling they immediately hired a room for two hours a week where they held prayer meetings. These were nothing more than class meetings. The room became known as the first Methodist chapel in South Africa.<sup>160</sup> This first group was transferred to the East Indies and another group of soldiers arrived in the Cape of Good Hope in 1816. Their work was consolidated by the arrival of the Rev. Barnabas Shaw on 14 April 1816.<sup>161</sup>

Shaw is regarded as the father of Methodism in South Africa. He was sent by the Wesleyan Missionary Society with the sole responsibility of directing missionary activities. Shaw and his wife moved from Cape Town where they had settled and found a new home in the rural areas of Namaqualand where they established various mission stations.<sup>162</sup> In a letter written in 1818, Shaw left us a clear statement of missionary policy when he asked the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Committee:

What is your primary objective in supporting a missionary in Cape Town? Is it the instruction of heathens or Christians? As for myself, if the greater part of my labour cannot be devoted to the heathens, whilst I bear the name of missionary, I shall soon be petitioning to return home, where those to whom I preach will support me. If, whilst I am preaching to heathens, I can also render any service to my countrymen, I will most gladly do it as a secondary object, but to make Christians a primary one I should consider a total misappropriation of the fund from which I am supported, and should rather beg to be sent to the ends of the earth.<sup>163</sup>

In the 1860s several Methodist mission stations were founded in the Transvaal. This expansion of Methodism in the Transvaal was to a large extent a result of the transformative

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<sup>159</sup>R. SimangalisoKhumalo, *Methodists with a White History and a Black Future in South Africa*, Gauteng: Upperroom Ministries, 2009, p. 38.

<sup>160</sup> R. SimangalisoKhumalo, *Methodists with a White History and a Black Future in South Africa*, p. 38.

<sup>161</sup>R. SimangalisoKhumalo, *Methodists with a White History and a Black Future in South Africa*, p. 38.

<sup>162</sup> R. SimangalisoKhumalo, *Methodists with a White History and a Black Future*, p.38.

<sup>163</sup> Leslie Hewson, *An Introduction to South African Methodism*, Cape Town: The Standard Press, 1950, p.17.

work of the Revd Owen Watkins.<sup>164</sup> He was born of Welsh Methodist parents near Manchester in 1842.<sup>165</sup> He was accepted as a missionary candidate in 1863 and sent to Richmond for training. His health was unsatisfactory and consequently he was sent to work in Western England for twelve years.<sup>166</sup>

Whilst in Bath, his health deteriorated further because of the humid weather and he offered to be posted overseas. He was subsequently sent to South Africa for the sake of his health. From 1876 to 1880 he worked in Pietermaritzburg.<sup>167</sup> At the third annual conference of South African districts, Watkins was elected first chairman of a district called Transvaal and Swaziland.<sup>168</sup> Upon commencement of office, he executed a vigorous programme of church planting.<sup>169</sup> In 1891 the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society in London decided to send Watkins and another young minister by the name of Isaac Shimmin to work as pioneers in Mashonaland.<sup>170</sup> The success of the mission in Mashonaland would largely depend on the goodwill of Rhodes whose company had just occupied the new country. On this score, Shimmin had an interview with Rhodes on 20 November 1890 where Rhodes promised some substantial help if one of the Methodist missionaries was sent to Mashonaland.<sup>171</sup> He advised Shimmin to make a formal application.<sup>172</sup>

Shimmin urged Watkins to apply forthwith whilst the issue was still fresh in Rhodes' memory.<sup>173</sup> Watkins made the application on 25 November 1890 and in response Rhodes pledged the sum of £100 annually for five years towards the expenses of the mission.<sup>174</sup> Watkins considered this amount to be too little, so on 15 December 1890 he wrote another letter to Rhodes who, like Watkins himself had come to South Africa, hoping that its climate would restore him to good health.<sup>175</sup> Rutherford Harris responded on behalf of Rhodes and promised them land on top of the £100 he had already been promised.<sup>176</sup> Now the journey to Rhodesia could begin. It was characterised by much hardship and it took about seven months

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<sup>164</sup> Leslie Hewson, *An Introduction to South African Methodism*, p.47.

<sup>165</sup>Chengetai J. M. Zvobgo, *The Wesleyan Methodist Missions in Zimbabwe 1891-1945*,p.17

<sup>166</sup>Chengetai J. M. Zvobgo, *The Wesleyan Methodist Missions in Zimbabwe 1891-1945*,p. 17.

<sup>167</sup> R SimangalisioKhumalo, *Methodists with a White History and a Black Future*, p. 39.

<sup>168</sup> Leslie Hewson, *An Introduction to South African Methodism*, p. 47.

<sup>169</sup>Chengetai J. M. Zvobgo, *The Wesleyan Methodist Missions in Zimbabwe 1891-1945*, p. 18.

<sup>170</sup>Chengetai J. M. Zvobgo, *The Wesleyan Methodist Missions in Zimbabwe 1891-1945*, p. 17.

<sup>171</sup> Leslie Hewson, *An Introduction to South African Methodism*, p. 51.

<sup>172</sup>Chengetai J. M. Zvobgo, *The Wesleyan Methodist Missions in Zimbabwe 1891-1945*, p. 18.

<sup>173</sup>Chengetai J. M. Zvobgo, *The Wesleyan Methodists Missions in Zimbabwe 1891-1945*, p. 19.

<sup>174</sup>Chengetai J.M. Zvobgo, *The Wesleyan Methodist Missions in Zimbabwe 1891-1945*, p. 19.

<sup>175</sup>Chengetai J.M. Zvobgo, *The Wesleyan Methodist Missions In Zimbabwe 1891-1945*, p. 19.

<sup>176</sup>Chengetai J. M. Zvobgo, *The Wesleyan Methodist Missions in Zimbabwe 1891-1945*, p. 18.

to complete.<sup>177</sup> Shimmin and others began the journey on 2 June 1891 and, concerning the journey, Shimmin wrote:

When we left Pretoria we had sixteen bullocks; we lost some on the road, and had to replace them, and now we are finishing our travels with only ten of them. Nearly thirteen hundred miles, all through our journeying the hand of God had been leading and protecting us, and now we had to come to the last mile. Thankfully we looked back to the past, and very hopefully we faced the future. To him who will own his work, we ascribe all praise and glory.<sup>178</sup>

The indispensable companions of the missionaries on this long journey were evangelist Michael Bowen together with John Peters, who was the driver of the oxen, and John Walters, the leader of the oxen.<sup>179</sup> Watkins wrote in 1894 that Bowen was a first class ‚native‘ evangelist who spoke several languages.<sup>180</sup> Concerning John Peters he wrote that he was a good reliable ‚native,‘ who had travelled with him in Zululand, Swaziland, Transvaal and ‚Bamangato.‘<sup>181</sup> Concerning John Walters, Watkins postulates that ‚he was a Cape-half caste, who is a fore cooper and seems a willing active man.‘<sup>182</sup> It must be noted that efforts to establish why these people had English names did not bear any fruits. All the sources available are silent about their real names. One amongst these people was a coloured from the Cape. These three did not stay long in Zimbabwe so very little about them is known. The classification of these gentlemen shows that they were not equal to their white counterparts. Even on their missionary journey they could not have a meal together, as revealed by Watkins:

After dinner the three native men came into the wagon for family prayer. Very blessed seasons do we have in the wagon at the time of prayer..?<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>177</sup>Chengetai J.M. Zvobgo, *The Wesleyan Methodist Missions In Zimbabwe 1891-1945*, p.20.

<sup>178</sup>Isaac Shimmin’s 7 September 1894 article entitled ‚Journey to Mashonaland‘ in a magazine called *Works and Wonders in the Mission Field*, file number WWM.38, Methodist Connexional Archives hereafter referred to as MCA.

<sup>179</sup>Chrispin G. Mazobere, ‚Christian Theology of Mission‘ in Canaan Banana (ed.), *A Century of Methodism 1891-1991*, Harare: Methodist Publication, 1991.

<sup>180</sup>Chrispin G. Mazobere, ‚Christian Theology of Mission‘ in Canaan Banana (ed.), *A Century of Methodism 1891-1991*, Methodist Publication, p.172.

<sup>181</sup>Chrispin Mazobere, ‚Christian Theology of Mission‘ in Canaan Banana (ed.), *A Century of Methodism 1891-1991*, p.173. unpublished work.

<sup>182</sup>Watkins’ letter to Wesleyan Methodist Society in London, 1894. file RS/MS, 1894, MCA.

<sup>183</sup>Watkins’ report to the Wesleyan Missionary Society in London, file RS/MS, 1891, MCA.

We notice from the above statement that the three indigenes were by themselves outside the wagon whilst the two missionaries were inside. They would come together for the prayers but could not have dinner together. This kind of relationship between blacks and whites continued for a very long time as Rev. Julius Juru pointed out:

For a long time we black ministers were excluded from the white missionaries' table. We would attend the same synod meeting but come dinner time, they would separate themselves from us.<sup>184</sup>

On a matter related to the above, Rev. Naison Makwehe pointed out that the tradition was that after infant baptism, a minister was expected to kiss the child who had received baptism, but some missionaries such as Bill Blackway and John Roberts would only kiss white children and refused to kiss the black children whom they baptised.<sup>185</sup> It will not be hard to give nine or ten of similar examples where blacks were discriminated by their white counterparts. This separation of blacks from whites foreshadowed what later on became known as apartheid in South Africa. In Zimbabwe this racial segregation culminated in the war of resistance waged by the indigenous people.

On September 29, 1891 Watkins and Shimmin arrived at Fort Salisbury now known as Harare.<sup>186</sup> With their arrival the work of expanding Methodism began. This expansion must be seen in the context of the Christian missionary enterprise in Zimbabwe as a whole. The first mission society to penetrate the virgin lands of Zimbabwe was the London Missionary Society (LMS)<sup>187</sup> which established Inyati and Hope Fountain missions in 1859 and 1870 respectively.<sup>188</sup> The LMS was followed by the Jesuits who arrived at Lobengula's capital at Bulawayo in 1879.<sup>189</sup> Subsequent to their arrival, they established Empandeni mission in 1895, making it the first Jesuit mission to be established in the colony.<sup>190</sup> The effort by the Jesuits did not survive the unsettled state of affairs in Matabeleland and the Jesuits left the country to return to Mashonaland with the British South African Company (BSAC) forces in 1890.<sup>191</sup> John Weller and Jane Linden argue that the complicity between the Jesuits and

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<sup>184</sup>Rev JuliusJuru, interview conducted by Kennedy Gondongwe on 4 April 2010 at Old Highfield Manse, Harare, Zimbabwe.

<sup>185</sup>Rev Naison Makwehe, interview conducted by Kennedy Gondongwe on 5 April 2010 at number 10684 ,Zengeza 4, Chitungwiza, Zimbabwe.

<sup>186</sup>Watkins 1891 report to the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, file number RS/MS, 1891, MCA.

<sup>187</sup>London Missionary Society is generally referred to as LMS.

<sup>188</sup>Chengetai J. .M. Zvobgo, *The Wesleyan Methodist Missions in Zimbabwe 1891-1945*, p. 18.

<sup>189</sup>Chengetai J.M. Zvobgo, *The Wesleyan Methodist Missions in Zimbabwe 1891-1945*, p.19.

<sup>190</sup>Chengetai J.M. Zvobgo, *The Wesleyan Methodist Missions in Zimbabwe 1891-1945*, p.19.

<sup>191</sup>John Weller and Jane Linden, *Mainstream Christianity to 1980 in Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe*.p. 52.

colonialists was a turning point in the history of Christianity. Indeed, this was a signpost indicating the future kind of relationship between the Jesuits and the state in Southern Rhodesia. However, according to Weller and Linden the Jesuits did not wish to be instruments of the company but they saw Rhodes and his money as useful tools for furthering their own work.<sup>192</sup> Father Hartman became chaplain of the „Pioneer Column’, marching on Mashonaland. Father Peter Prestage followed later with mother Patrick’s band of sisters who volunteered to treat the sick. Later in 1892 the Jesuits established a mission station in Chishawasha near Harare.<sup>193</sup>

The Jesuits were followed by Anglicans who established several mission stations, the most famous being St Augustine’s mission built in Penhalonga in 1891. After the Anglicans, the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa (DRCSA) missionaries arrived. This group was led by Rev. A. A. Louw. Their first mission station was established at Morgenster on 9 September 1891. It appears therefore that, when the Methodist missionaries arrived in Fort Salisbury on 29 September 1891, several mission stations from other denominations were already in existence. The Methodists were followed by the Salvation Army who arrived in Salisbury on 18 November 1891.<sup>194</sup> The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions established a mission station at Mount Selinda in 1893.<sup>195</sup> The Seventh Day was to follow after they founded a mission station at Solusi in Matabeleland in 1894.<sup>196</sup> The United Methodists (UMC) established a mission station at Old Mutare only in 1898.<sup>197</sup> Thereafter many other denominations arrived and marked their presence by establishing mission stations around the country.

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<sup>192</sup>John Weller and J Linden, *Mainstream Christianity to 1980 in Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe*, p. 52.

<sup>193</sup>Harare was formerly called Salisbury.

<sup>194</sup>Chengetai J.M. Zvobgo, „An Overview of the Methodist Church,’ Canaan Banana (ed.), *A Century of Methodism, 1891-1991*, p. 7.

<sup>195</sup>Chengetai J.M. Zvobgo, „An Overview of the Methodist Church,’ Canaan Banana (ed.), *A Century of Methodism, 1891-1991*, p. 8.

<sup>196</sup>Chengetai J.M. Zvobgo, „An Overview of the Methodist Church,’ Canaan Banana (ed.), *A Century of Methodism, 1891-1991*, p. 8.

<sup>197</sup>Chengetai J.M. Zvobgo, „An Overview of the Methodist Church,’ Canaan Banana (ed.), *A century of Methodism, 1891-199*, p. 8.



## **2.3 The establishment of the Methodist mission stations (1891-1914)**

As soon as Shimmin and Watkins had settled down, they approached Rhodes about the grants he had promised them. Rhodes honoured his promise and in October he gave Watkins five stands in the Salisbury Township and four in Umtali.<sup>198</sup> He also gave them three farms, 3000 acres each, one in the Umtali District, another in the Salisbury District and a third in the Nemaikonde area<sup>199</sup>. Rhodes promised as well, in writing, that the company would give the Methodists enough land in every town that might be laid out in Mashonaland and that, should they require more land for mission stations, he would give their application very favourable consideration.<sup>200</sup>

After having secured land, Watkins thought his mission was accomplished, so he went back to Pretoria via Beira and Durban. While in Beira he fell so ill that he almost died.<sup>201</sup> He eventually went back to England leaving Shimmin with the task of propagating the gospel in Mashonaland. On 2 December 1891 Shimmin and the evangelist Bowen set off for Nemaikonde looking for a site to peg out a farm but before they began their journey, they consulted the famous hunter Fredrick Selous on the best place for a farm.<sup>202</sup> This collaboration among hunters, missionaries and colonial administrators to a certain extent demonstrates that these three were hand in glove. Of course they were strange bedfellows.

On 15 December they marked out the new mission farm which they named Hartley in honour of Marshal Hartley who was the secretary of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society in England. Shimmin and Bowen preached to about six Shona men after which Shimmin remarked: „These poor degraded people have no God and no religion of any kind except that of fear’.<sup>203</sup> This postulation by Shimmin deserves a comment. Some missionaries who came to Africa thought that they had brought God for the first time to the continent. They described Africa as a bizarre world. Africans were seen as people who were primitive and without religion. David Chidester observed in his work entitled: *The Savage Systems* that some European missionaries thought the Hottentots had no religion and that it took the savage

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<sup>198</sup>Mutare was known as Umtali during the colonial days.

<sup>199</sup>Chengetai J.M. Zvobgo, *The Wesleyan Methodist Missions in Zimbabwe 1891-1945*, p. 32.

<sup>200</sup>Letter from Watkins to Mission Society, file RS/MS, 7 September 1891, MCA.

<sup>201</sup>Letter from Watkins to the Mission Society, file RS/MS, 30 November 1891, MCA.

<sup>202</sup>Letter from Shimmin to Mission Society, file RS/MS, 4 February 1892, MCA.

<sup>203</sup>Shimmin’s letter to the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, file RS/MS, 26 February 1896, MCA.

system of colonialism for them to discover that indeed there was a religion in Africa.<sup>204</sup> In 1610 Pyrrard de Laval reported that „the Hottentots live without law or religion, like animals...’<sup>205</sup>

It is indisputable that missionaries deserve credit for introducing Christianity into Africa about four centuries ago. This is because their task was neither an easy nor an enviable one. They encountered problems of health, persecution, language, culture, transport, communication and even death.<sup>206</sup> They were viewed with suspicion by administrators for giving Africans ideas above their station in education. Missionaries disliked settlers for their gambling and drinking and often complained about harsh conditions and migrant labour system which divided families and emptied villages. However, this is only one side of the coin. The other side of the coin is that missionaries were part of a larger programme of European colonization of Africa.<sup>207</sup> This made them reject the notion that Africans knew and worshipped God before Christianity was introduced in Africa.<sup>208</sup> They argued that it is they, who brought God to Africa and that, until then, Africans were animists. Contrary to this view, it was God who brought missionaries to Africa and Africans knew about God well before the arrival of missionaries.<sup>209</sup> Of the manifold reasons for the missionaries’ negative perception of Africa we will highlight only five that are discussed by Adrian Hastings.

Hastings argues that darkness was unquestionably a recurring note in the missionary image of Africa. This term „dark’ had several meanings. Firstly, it meant that Europeans knew very little about Africa as a whole. Secondly, it was „dark’ because its vast interior was largely unmapped. Thirdly, it was „dark’ because of European and Arab crimes perpetrated in and affecting Africa over the centuries: the slave-trade and subsequent colonial oppression weighed heavily on the missionary conscience, producing a stress on the need for reparations. Fourthly, it was „dark’ most of all because it was „heathen’ and corrupted by all sorts of terrible practices.<sup>210</sup> Finally, it was „dark’ - though missionaries would mostly have found difficulty in focussing on this underlying, more psychological, theme - because its inhabitants

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<sup>204</sup> See David Chidester, *Savage Systems*, p. 35f.

<sup>205</sup> David Chidester, *Savage Systems*, p. 36.

<sup>206</sup> E.M. Uka, *Missionaries Go home? A Sociological Interpretation of an African Response to Christian Missions*, New York: Peter Lang, 1989, p. 20.

<sup>207</sup> E.M. Uka, *Missionaries go home? A Sociological Interpretation of an African Response to Christian Missions*, p. 21.

<sup>208</sup> Wilfred Griggs, *Early Egyptian Christianity From its origins to 451 CE*. New York: E. J. Brill, 1991, p. 13.

<sup>209</sup> Malcolm J. McVeigh, *God in Africa-conceptions of God in African Traditional Religion and Christianity*, Massachusetts: Claude Stark, 1974, p. 9f.

<sup>210</sup> Adrian Hastings, *The Church in Africa 1450-1950*, p. 299.

were dark.<sup>211</sup> It is the designation of Africa as a „dark’ continent that provided justification for its subjugation. David Chidester writing about the South African context holds that:

In surveying the indigenous religions of southern Africa, Philip like other commentators of the period, found no belief in God among either Hottentots or „Caffers,’ although he did note that the missionary John Brownlee had recently found that the Xhosa held „some idea of a Supreme Being, whom they call *Umhlanga*. Without a clear belief in God, however, Africans could not be said to have a religion, even though they did have numerous superstitious beliefs and customs.<sup>212</sup>

What can be concluded is that missionaries had a very low opinion of Africa. They believed that Africans had no religion. African beliefs were labelled as superstitions. This denigration of the indigenous religion was a result of comparisons they made between Christianity and African traditional religion.

On 25 February Shimmin interviewed the Surveyor- General, Mr Andrew Duncan- and asked for more farms. The results of the interview were positive as can be derived from Shimmin’s letter to Marshal Hartley:

Instead of granting me three or even six farms, he said he would willingly give thirty or sixty if I wanted them. His idea is briefly this. Whenever we find native towns or villages of any importance we can there mark out a farm including those towns and such farms will be registered and handed over to us for missionary work. We are to put a native teacher there to have oversight of the place...<sup>213</sup>

In July 1892, Shimmin established a mission in Salisbury which he called Epworth. He later wrote to the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society informing them that the importance of the farm was its proximity to the town.<sup>214</sup> One other reason why the farm was important, although Shimmin does not mention it, was that it was located in a region with high rainfall, making crop husbandry possible. With the benefit of hindsight, the farm was furthermore important because the country’s biggest and oldest university was to be built twelve kilometres away from the farm. This made it the best place for building a theological college.

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<sup>211</sup> Adrian Hastings, *The Church in Africa 1450-1950*, p. 299.

<sup>212</sup> David Chidester, *Savage Systems*, p.88.

<sup>213</sup> Shimmin’s letter to the Missionary Society, file number, RS/MS, 23 February 1892, MCA.

<sup>214</sup> Shimmin’s letter to the Missionary Society, file number RS/MS, 12 August 1892, MCA.

In the second half of the century, the largest ecumenical theological college in Zimbabwe was built on this farm and it was named Epworth Theological College.

Two more mission stations were founded in 1892 at Nenguo and Kwenda.<sup>215</sup> As mission stations were being established, the need for more personnel to run the stations arose. It was against this background that the Rev. George H. Eva and eight African evangelists and teachers arrived from the Transvaal and Cape Colony in August 1892.<sup>216</sup> Two more evangelists arrived later, making a total of ten. Five of the ten returned home in due course. Two of the remaining five, namely James Anta and Modumedi Moleli, died during the First *Chimurenga*.<sup>217</sup> The remaining three were Josiah Ramushu who was to be the first black minister to be ordained in the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Zimbabwe, Samuel Tutani and Wellington Belisi. The latter two also became Methodist ministers. These three made Zimbabwe their home.<sup>218</sup>

The Methodists only managed to establish a mission in Matabeleland in 1894 after the collapse of the Ndebele Kingdom in the Anglo Ndebele war of 1893. The Ndebele Kingdom was always a threat to the spread of the gospel in Matabeleland. Shimmin once remarked that, unless the Ndebele factor was dealt with once and for all, the gospel was not going to find its way in Matabeleland.<sup>219</sup> After this first station in Matabeleland, the church built another one at Tengwani in 1897. Many other small missions were established in Matabeleland and across the country. The story of the Methodist missions has been admirably studied by Chengetai Zvobgo in his seminal work called *Wesleyan Methodist Missions in Zimbabwe*.<sup>220</sup> It is however, important to mention that in 1913, a new mission station called Sandringham was established after Thomas Meikles, a friend of Rev. John White, offered the Sandringham estate for sale for about £1000. By 1980 this mission station had become home to one of the finest mission high schools in Zimbabwe. In 1894 a new mission station was begun at Marshal Hartley farm and, as time progressed, a high school called Moleli was established on this mission station. The school was named after one of the first indigenous

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<sup>215</sup>Chengetai J.M. Zvobgo, „An overview of the Methodist Church’ in Canaan Banana (ed.), *A Century of Methodism, 1891-1991*, p. 9.

<sup>216</sup>Chengetai J.M. Zvobgo, „An overview of the Methodist Church’ in Canaan Banana (ed.), *A Century of Methodism, 1891-1991*, p. 9.

<sup>217</sup>The First *Chimurenga* war was the war of resistance waged by the Ndebele and the Shona people in early 1890s.

<sup>218</sup>Chengetai J. M. Zvobgo, „An overview of the Methodist Church’ in Canaan Banana (ed.), *A Century of Methodism, 1891-1991*, p. 10.

<sup>219</sup>Letter from Shimmin to the Missionary Society, file number, RS/MS, 23 February 1892, MCA.

<sup>220</sup>See Chengetai Zvobgo’s work, *The Wesleyan Methodist Missions in Zimbabwe 1891-1945*, p.10-28.

ministers to work in the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Mashonaland, namely the earlier mentioned Modumedi Moleli.

The Wesleyan Methodist Church in Zimbabwe, like other denominations, established many mission stations. Just as these mission stations were centres from where the gospel was to be radiated, they also were early symbols of the increasingly institutional nature of the churches. Missionaries came from particular institutions and as such they believed institutions were central to the spreading of the gospel. Although Africans were familiar with other institutions such as chieftainship, hunting guilds, possession cults, the Mwari cult, mhondoro cults this notion was quite unpopular among the indigenous people because most of these institutions were known for their coercive powers. It is against this background that, when the missionaries introduced Christian villages aimed at quarantining those of the „heathens’ who had embraced the faith, many people did not like to stay in these villages. In fact, the idea of Christian villages in as much as it facilitated the spiritual growth which was desired, it also brought about religious syncretism in the sense that some of the inhabitants of Christian villages ended up being Christians by day and African traditionalists by night.

## **2.4 From mission to church**

In 1895 the church which began under the leadership of Shimmin and Watkins began to become institutionalised. In September 1895 the first synod of the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe but by then known as Methodist Church in Southern Rhodesia was conducted, facilitated by George Weavind who was the chairperson of Transvaal District.<sup>221</sup> The membership of the synod comprised three European missionaries and eight evangelists. Since then, the church has held a synod every year. The mandate of the synod was to review the progress made during the year and to make plans for the ensuing year.

The Zimbabwean Wesleyan Methodist Church remained for many years a district within the British Conference. Every year reports would be prepared for the conference and delegates would be sent to represent the synod in Britain. The first chairperson, or general superintendent as they were called, was Owen Watkins. He was the general superintendent from 1891 to 1902. Watkins was succeeded by John White who was general superintendent

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<sup>221</sup>Synod is a church meeting of representatives from various circuits. It is the supreme decision body at the level of the district. It is always chaired by a minister of religion known as the district chairperson.

from 1903 to 1927. He was followed by Frank Noble who led the church from 1928 to 1938. From 1939 to 1953 the general superintendentship was in the hands of Herbert Carter and the last European missionary to be general superintendent was Jesse Lawrence from 1954 to 1964. The first indigenous minister to lead the Rhodesian District was Andrew Ndhlela who ascended to the position in 1965.<sup>222</sup>

Ndhlela's appointment to the leadership of the Rhodesian District in 1965 caused resentment in some parts of the church in the country, especially among European members. The Bulawayo Area Council<sup>223</sup> which was dominated by white missionaries passed a resolution deploring lack of consultation.<sup>224</sup> There were divisions in the Rhodesian District and those divisions could have been along racial lines. The dissatisfaction of some church members however could not bring the Methodist Mission Society to rescinding its decision. When the church became autonomous in 1977, Ndhlela was appointed the first president of the Conference of Rhodesia<sup>225</sup>. He led the church until his retirement in 1980.<sup>226</sup>

In terms of the structure of the church, the highest authority was the conference<sup>227</sup>. This body was responsible for policy formulation and other matters related to church governance.<sup>228</sup> Below the conference was the synod which met once every year. The officer presiding over the synod was called district chairman [sic]. For a minister to be eligible as district chairperson, he or she was supposed to have been ordained for a minimum of five years.<sup>229</sup>

Under the synod was the quarterly meeting. The officer presiding over the quarterly meeting was called superintendent. The officer had jurisdiction over the whole circuit and was assisted by circuit stewards on the side of the laity.<sup>230</sup> In cases where there was more than one minister in a circuit, the most senior was appointed as superintendent and others were assistant ministers<sup>231</sup>. The circuit reported to the district. The quarterly meeting was the

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<sup>222</sup>Connexional yearly handbooks 1964-1977, file number, HB 1960-1977, MCA.

<sup>223</sup>Area Council consisted of a number of circuits. When these area councils were brought together they formed a district or a synod.

<sup>224</sup>Resolutions from Bulawayo area council in the synod agenda of 1965, file S/A, p. 32, MCA.

<sup>225</sup>Minutes of synod 1977, file S/M, MCA.

<sup>226</sup>See Ndhlela's obituary in his personal file. Ndhlela died in 1981 after having been knocked down by a car, MCA.

<sup>227</sup>Rules and regulations, 1966, file RR 1892-1977, p.17, MCA.

<sup>228</sup>Rules and Regulations, 1966, file RR 1892-1977, p. 18, MCA.

<sup>229</sup>Rules and Regulations, 1966, file RR 1892-1977, p.18, MCA.

<sup>230</sup>Rules and Regulations, 1966, file 1892-1977, p.18, MCA.

<sup>231</sup>Rules and Regulations, 1966, file RR 1892-1977, p.19, MCA.

highest legal body at the circuit level.<sup>232</sup> Immediately under the circuit was the society which was usually run by a society steward in liaison with the local leaders meeting (LLM).<sup>233</sup>

Also central to the Wesleyan Methodist Church were lay preachers of the gospel. This tradition goes back to John Wesley who is associated with the founding of Methodism in Britain.<sup>234</sup> Lay preachers were trained in basic theology and commissioned to preach in Methodist societies in the absence of a minister. This arm of the church helped Methodism to grow tremendously in 18<sup>th</sup> century Britain<sup>235</sup> and likewise it facilitated the expansion of the church in Zimbabwe, even to places that missionaries could not access.

## **2.5 Propriety and rules governing the church**

One of the key attributes of British Methodism was its methodical way of doing things. In fact, the term Methodist was a nickname given to the founders because of their *modus operandi*.<sup>236</sup> When the church extended its frontiers to Africa, and in particular to Southern Rhodesia, it immediately began to promulgate rules and regulations to regulate its operations. Several of these regulations impacted directly and indirectly to the indigenous ministers.

The synod of 1902 came up with series of resolutions governing membership in the Wesleyan Methodist Church. One of the resolutions was that all members would be on trial up to such time as the minister was convinced of their sincerity and knowledge of the bible. The length of the probation was to be decided by the minister in consultation with the local leaders' meeting.<sup>237</sup> The minimum period was two years.<sup>238</sup> Only then baptism would be administered. However by 1940, the synod had reduced the period of probation before baptism to one year.<sup>239</sup> This prompted a response from the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society who wrote:

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<sup>232</sup>Rules and Regulations, 1966, fileRR1892-1977, MCA.

<sup>233</sup>Rules and Regulations, 1966, fileRR 1892-1977, MCA.

<sup>234</sup> Robert Southey, *The life of Wesley and Rise and progress of Methodism*, London: Longman, 1864, p.263.

<sup>235</sup> Robert Southey, *The life of Wesley and Rise and progress of Methodism*, p.366.

<sup>236</sup> Robert Southey, *The life of Wesley and Rise and progress of Methodism*, p.210.

<sup>237</sup>Synod minutes 1902, file M 1902, MCA.

<sup>238</sup>Synod minutes 1902, file S/M 1902, MCA.

<sup>239</sup>See 1940 synod minutes, file S/M, MCA.

I wonder if a year's instruction is sufficient for primitive peoples before baptism. In West Africa the average time is more than a year and is sometimes nearly two years.

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Two things become clear from the regulation and from the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society's response. Firstly, it is evident that it was not easy to become a full member of the church. Secondly, the minister was central to the process of approving candidates for full membership.

The other rule passed by the synod in 1902 and emphasised in 1932 concerned marriage. The rule stipulated that only members who were married according to Christian rites would be accepted as full members and receive Holy Communion.<sup>241</sup> African ways of marriage were denigrated as evil. Even old couples with several children were told that they were only cohabiting as long as their marriage was not conducted by the minister of religion. A mother whose daughter had eloped was not fit to be a full member of the church.<sup>242</sup>

Infant baptism was administered only to children whose parents or guardians would have pledged to rear them in a Christian way.<sup>243</sup> A Christian man was not allowed to marry a non-Christian woman unless there were exceptional reasons. *Lobola* was initially castigated but with the progress of time, it became recognised as an integral part of the *Bantu* social custom and the church pointed out that its purpose was to act as a token and pledge of care. In this regard Christian parents were discouraged from charging exorbitant bridewealth.<sup>244</sup> Polygamy was condemned as evil.

By 1940 the issue of Christian marriage was still giving the authorities some problems. The Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society wrote to the Methodist District of Rhodesia to offer some wisdom on the matter.

It is quite obvious that the problem of marriage and its subsidiary difficulties have created as much difficulty in Rhodesia as elsewhere in Africa and we sympathize very much with those who have to deal with these problems at first hand. The thing to watch, as I know you are fully agreed, is that the ideals of Christian marriage be

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<sup>240</sup>Letter from the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society to Herbert Carter, file MMS/RS, 14 February 1940, MCA.

<sup>241</sup>1932 synod minutes, file S/M, MCA.

<sup>242</sup>Minutes of synod, 1932, file S/M, MCA.

<sup>243</sup>Rules and Regulations for African Work, 1940, file number RR1892-1977, MCA.

<sup>244</sup>Minutes of synod, 1902, file SM/1902, MCA.



not lowered by permitting present alliances which the church really wishes to discourage. Most certainly the marriage of a Christian man to a nonChristian woman should be forbidden, and any Christian man entering into such marriage should be disciplined. The Marriage of a Christian woman to a nonChristian man is on a different footing, especially if the woman is a minor; Women have so little to say in Africa as to whom they shall or shall not marry. Even here, however, unmarried Christian girls should be encouraged to stand out to the best of their ability against being given in marriage to a nonChristian man...<sup>245</sup>

The Christian marriage was one of the institutions that sought to alienate black people from their culture. Marriage in Africa was a matter of religion. Men were the most affected by this regulation, especially the condemnation of polygamy. Concerning this the Methodist Synod issued a statement in 1943.

In some countries before Christian teaching was given a man might have many wives and in few countries a woman might have many husbands in accordance with the custom of the country. There is little doubt the custom of the polygamy grew up not because there were too many women or for any real necessity of life, but as a privilege of the powerful and rich at the expense of the weaker and the poor. We should remember that Africans of ancient times made laws and encouraged customs to safeguard women, to show the importance of virginity and of marriage. Christians everywhere believe that the right way is for a man to marry one wife, and a woman one husband and that a marriage should not be broken as long as they both live.<sup>246</sup>

As concerns finances, members of the church were required to make some contribution towards the running expenses of the church. Anyone who was found wanting in this respect risked having his or her membership suspended.<sup>247</sup> The need for money created big problems, especially for those accommodated in the Christian villages. Many middle aged men ended up migrating to towns to look for employment in mines so as to be able to pay services and commodities associated with Christian villages. Once they arrived in urban areas the

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<sup>245</sup>Missionary Society, letter to Herbert Carter 1940, file number, MMS/RS 14 February 1940, MCA.

<sup>246</sup>Minutes, 1943, file S/M, MCA.

<sup>247</sup>Minutes of synod, 1943, file, S/M, MCA.

problems associated with industry caught up with them to the detriment of their newly acquired faith. Concerning this F. Nursey who was a minister in Kadoma<sup>248</sup> wrote:

The native mining camps in Gatooma have taken away from the native his normal life. Unless a constant touch is kept with these people we cannot prevent the harm caused by excessive beer drinking and immorality in some of these areas.<sup>249</sup>

To be sure, the need for money on the part of the church and the colonial administration pushed people into mines and into urban areas in general. Once they experienced urban life, they discarded their old life. H. G. Rolls, a minister in Salisbury, lamented the conditions in his area of residence and said: „One feels sorry for the detribalised man, so proud of his spectacles and his European clothes.’<sup>250</sup> One may argue that the demand by the church for monetary contributions during these early years of church planting accelerated urban migration which in turn destroyed African identity amongst urbanites.

Drinking beer was not allowed, let alone brewing it. This of course set the church on a collision course with African religion because beer is such an important component of the African worldview. This collision manifested itself as early as 1905 when the church banned African dances such as the Jerusalem dance.<sup>251</sup> The argument of the missionaries was that these dances were a moral danger to the youth.<sup>252</sup> In 1914 the district chairman [sic] lamented the backsliding of members:

There was the most distressing and repeated lapse of church members, even local preachers of long standing were found taking part in heathen practices such as spirit worship and beer drinking. Sad as all these things are, there is no relaxing of discipline and the encouraging fact is that the leaders’ meeting demanded a high standard of Christian life.<sup>253</sup>

This shows how deep rooted African religion was, amongst the indigenous people. In African religion people do not convert to a religion but they are born into it as Mbiti has noted:

In traditional religions there are no creeds to be recited; instead, the creeds are written in the heart of the individual, and each one is himself a living creed of his

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<sup>248</sup>The colonial name for Kadoma is Gatooma.

<sup>249</sup>The report of the work in the Southern Rhodesia District, file R/WR, January 1945, MCA.

<sup>250</sup>Report of the work in the Southern Rhodesia District; file R/WR, January 1945, MCA.

<sup>251</sup> This was a dance where one uses the waist more than any other part of the body.

<sup>252</sup>Minutes of synod, 1905, file, S/M, MCA.

<sup>253</sup>Minutes of synod, 1914, file, S/M, MCA.

own religion. Where the individual is, there is his religion, for he is a religious being. It is this that makes Africans so religious: religion is in their whole system of being.<sup>254</sup>

Of course this could be an overstatement by Mbiti because the statement fails to appreciate that Africans have a life outside religion as well. For instance, one may argue that crying in African religions is a religious act, but not all crying is religious; sneezing is religious but not all sneezing is religious. Mbiti's work can be criticised for being ahistorical, unempirical and over reliant on the functionalist texts produced by 1930s missionary ethnographers. Pre-colonial identity was fluid, plural and not always overlapping with political territory. Christianity found it hard to completely dismantle all African religious practices and beliefs. Some African scholars have argued that what missionaries referred to as spirit worship was in fact veneration of the living-dead.<sup>255</sup> They argue that Africans and in particular Zimbabwean Shona people have always been monotheists; they worshipped their supreme deity known as *Mwari*.<sup>256</sup>

Concerning candidates for the ministry, the 1930 synod passed a resolution that the church would only accept candidates who had been full members of the church for two or more years. In addition to this requirement, the candidate was supposed to have passed Standard Six and trained as a teacher and evangelist.<sup>257</sup> The 1940 synod added that:

Every candidate for ministry must inform the synod whether he has had a previous wife, or wives and if so, whether she, or they, is/are deceased or divorced, if the latter, under what circumstances and whether with the knowledge of the church?<sup>258</sup>

It is noteworthy that the church expected candidates for the ministry to be people of considerable experience. They also expected them to be people with a good level of education. With regards to morality, they were expected to be people of high morality and on matters concerning marriage, the „one man one wife’, or „one wife one man’ principle was the ideal. The numerical growth of the church had made the emergence of ground rules inevitable. This growth also necessitated the appointment of more workers.

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<sup>254</sup>John Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, London: Heinemann, 1969, p.3.

<sup>255</sup> See John Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, p.3.

<sup>256</sup>*Mwari* is a term used by the Shona people to refer to God.

<sup>257</sup>Minutes of synod, 1930, file S/M, MCA.

<sup>258</sup>Minutes of synod, 4 February 1940, file S/M, MCA.

## 2.6 The church's quest for more workers

The Wesleyan Methodist Church is among the churches that acquired the greatest number of farms during the 1890s. These farms were strategically located in all the provinces of the colony. Shimmin's dream was to have the entire colony embracing Methodism. He used his political connections to acquire as much land as he could. Once the land was available, the next challenge was that of the shortage of workers. Shimmin wrote a letter to the Wesleyan Methodist Mission Society appealing for more ministers. The Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society's response was as follows:

We at the mission society are grateful for all your efforts which have brought the need for more personnel. You will appreciate the expenses involved in having a big number of European ministers working in the colony. Whilst we will certainly consider your request and perhaps send one or two more ministers together with some lay missionaries to assist the work, it is our conviction that the solution lies in you recruiting of as many natives as possible. This will reduce the demand for European ministers because they will be left with the job of supervising the work. This has worked well in some other West African colonies.<sup>259</sup>

This letter gave the church its primary impetus for the recruitment of indigenous ministers. This is because it is clearly stated that the job of the indigenous ministers was to supervise. By implication the bulk of the work was to be carried out by the indigenous ministers. Quite a number of evangelists were recruited to become ministers but some failed to make it for various reasons. By the 1950s, the Rhodesian District was still short of full-time church workers. This prompted some discussions over the matter in synods prior to 1954. In 1954 the district chairman Rev. Jesse Lawrence wrote the following letter to all circuits.

You will remember that synod asked that an appeal concerning the shortage of workers should be sent out by me. I enclose a copy of the statement prepared by the committee appointed for that purpose and commend it to your prayerful consideration. Our work is in danger of being seriously injured by the shortage of ministers and evangelists and it is of the first importance that young men [sic] with

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<sup>259</sup> Wesleyan Methodist Mission Society's letter to the Rhodesian Synod, MMS/RS, 1908, MCA.

the necessary qualities of soul and mind should be encouraged to respond if the call comes to them to offer for this work.<sup>260</sup>

This letter prompted several responses from circuits. Kwenda mission listed the following reasons as causes for the shortage of ministers in the Wesleyan Methodist Church. Firstly, it pointed out that the social standing of workers was low, being determined by the low pay.<sup>261</sup> Secondly, indigenous ministers could not support themselves and their families on the salaries paid. In the early days the salaries were more than adequate but they had not kept pace with the rising costs of living and for secular work the financial return was better.<sup>262</sup> Thirdly, „the men [sic] in the work were not good examples, they grumble, they talk of their difficulties, they do not encourage the young men’<sup>263</sup> [sic]. The superintendent of the circuit Rev. H.H. Morley Wright who sent these observations commented:

The whole argument ranged round money. There may be other reasons but I am led to the conclusion that the African expects his job to pay.<sup>264</sup>

Wankie Circuit also responded to the chairman’s letter, indicating that it perceived two factors that keep young people from responding to God’s call. Firstly, the difficult conditions under which evangelists and „native’ ministers worked were a major discouragement<sup>265</sup>. The report gave examples of frequent travels, living in the reserve and the fact that workers were moved about, often losing good crops.<sup>266</sup> Secondly, they stated that sometimes a man felt called but his wife refused to go with him because she felt no calling<sup>267</sup>[sic].

Epworth Circuit’s report suggested three reasons. It pointed to the poor accommodation for both evangelists and „native’ ministers as a deterrent factor.<sup>268</sup> The other reason they gave was that church and school workers were not usually welcomed, respected or encouraged by

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<sup>260</sup> Rev. Jesse Lawrence’s letter, 8 July 1954, file Ms 246, National Archives of Zimbabwe hereafter known as NAZ.

<sup>261</sup> Rev H. H. Morley Wright’s letter’s to the district chairperson. 11 November 1954, file MS 246, NAZ.

<sup>262</sup> Rev Wright’s letter’s to the district chairperson, 11 November 1954, file Ms 246, NAZ.

<sup>263</sup> Wright’s letter to the district chairperson, 11 November 1954, file Ms 246, NAZ.

<sup>264</sup> Rev. H. H Morley Wright’s letter to the district chairperson 11 November 1954, file Ms 246, NAZ.

<sup>265</sup> Wankie Circuit response to district chairperson’s appeal, 22 November 1954, file Ms 246, NAZ.

<sup>266</sup> Wankie Circuit response to the district chairperson’s appeal, 22 November 1954, file Ms 246, NAZ.

<sup>267</sup> Wankie Circuit’s response to the district chairperson’s appeal, 22 November 1954, file Ms 246, NAZ.

<sup>268</sup> Epworth Circuit’s response to the call by the district chairperson, 2 January 1955, file Ms 246, NAZ.

the village people.<sup>269</sup> Lastly the report pointed out that wages were not comparing well with those in industry.<sup>270</sup>

G. Marsh, the quarterly meeting secretary of Epworth Circuit gave the following comments with regard to the resolutions given by people from her circuit.

The discussion was disappointing as it was maintained on such a materialistic level and even became an opportunity for airing difficulties and grievances. Most contributions were made by the evangelists and the teachers and we were given little help by the members of the meeting who were not themselves paid workers and who might have given a different line on the matter. Members seemed unable to see the spiritual cause of the lack of offers of service.<sup>271</sup>

Plumtree Circuit offered its response on the 5 of February 1955 and lamented low wages which were seen as inadequate.<sup>272</sup> The report also suggested that young men [sic] run away from bad and harsh treatment.<sup>273</sup> It further pointed out that Europeans ministers were supplied with vehicles whereas African ministers were supplied with bicycles. Worst off were evangelists who were expected to find their own transport.<sup>274</sup> The report also revealed that church workers had no facility for ploughing in the reserve and some were being deprived of their expectations in this direction.<sup>275</sup>

Pakame Circuit wrote its report on the 10th of March 1955.<sup>276</sup> It indicates that pension rates were inadequate and as a result people were hesitant to offer for the ministry. They also suggested that church workers were unable to pay for their children's education.<sup>277</sup> The other problem mentioned was that there was no place for retirement for the indigenous church workers.<sup>278</sup>

The recurring problems in all these responses are to do with the conditions of service. By 1980, there were 37 indigenous ministers in full time service. The number rose to 49 in 1980. This figure is very small considering that there were 788 preaching points and 112 500

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<sup>269</sup>Epworth Circuit's response to the call by the district chairperson, 2 January 1955. File Ms 246, NAZ.

<sup>270</sup>Epworth Circuit's response to the call by the district chairperson, 2 January 1955. file Ms 246, NAZ.

<sup>271</sup>Epworth Circuit's response to the call by the district chairperson, 2 January 1955. file Ms 246, NAZ.

<sup>272</sup>Plum tree Circuit's response to the call by the district chairperson, 5 February 1955, file Ms 246, NAZ.

<sup>273</sup>Plum tree Circuit's response to the call by the district chairperson, 5 February 1955, file Ms 246, NAZ.

<sup>274</sup>Plum tree Circuit's response to the call by the district chairperson, 5 February 1955, file Ms 246, NAZ.

<sup>275</sup>Plum tree Circuit's response to the call by the district chairperson, 5 February 1955, file Ms 246, NAZ.

<sup>276</sup>Pakame Circuit's response to the call by the district chairperson, 10 March 1955, file Ms 246, NAZ.

<sup>277</sup>Pakame Circuit's response to the call by the district chairperson, 10 March 1955, file Ms 246, NAZ.

<sup>278</sup>Pakame Circuit's response to the call by the district chairperson, 10 March 1955, file Ms 246, NAZ.

Methodist members by 1965.<sup>279</sup> One way in which the church exercised its ministry was by engaging in healing ministry.

## **2.7 Methodists and healing ministry (1913-1964)**

In May 1913 Dr Sidney Osborn arrived at Kwenda mission from England. His coming was necessitated by the opening of a new hospital at the same mission. The government, on top of having undertaken to pay the doctor's salary, offered £200 towards the building of the hospital. Also the costs of drugs, surgical instruments and general equipment would be the responsibility of the government. The hospital had a capacity of eighteen in-patients. By the end of the year 128 patients had been treated at the hospital.<sup>280</sup> Per day only a few patients would visit the hospital, sometimes there were none. There were seldom in-patients so that the doctor used one of the largest wards as a classroom.

By June 1916 the situation had not changed and the government considered it pointless to continue to support the doctor's services and withdrew its grant to the hospital. Consequently, Osborn terminated his services and left the country for England. After Osborn's departure the missionaries who remained at Kwenda continued to render medical services as much as they could. It was only in December 1917 that the hospital was formally closed.

In these early years many African people did not want to seek medical attention from Western institutions. This was possibly because at the time it was thought that every disease was caused by witchcraft, by the living dead or by avenging spirits. The efficacy of Western medicine was doubted on the grounds that it was believed to concentrate on the symptoms of the disease, leaving out the metaphysical causes. When Mr. Joseph Gondongwe,<sup>281</sup> the researcher's grandfather, was asked whether people willingly visited hospitals during the 1920s, his response was that people who mostly visited western hospitals were those who resided on mission farms because, according to the laws promulgated by the missionaries, they were obliged to do so. People coming from outside the mission farms would not visit the hospital until their disease had become chronic and any hopes for life had been dashed. There was another side to this situation in that some would visit the hospital when the disease posed

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<sup>279</sup>Handbook for 1965, file H/B, MCA.

<sup>280</sup>Kwenda Mission Hospital doctor's report to the district chairperson, December 1913. file KM/R, MCA.

<sup>281</sup>Joseph Gondongwe was born in about 1910 in Buhera near Kwenda mission farm. His reminiscences are from his childhood.

no danger whatsoever and was so insignificant that they felt they could safely experiment by visiting hospitals.<sup>282</sup> Dr. Osborn wrote in his 1916 report to the mission office:

On the medical side of my work, I have met with so much discouragement. It has been very difficult to break down the natives prejudice against hospitals. I have however, toiled on faithfully in the hope that this obstacle will in time vanish.<sup>283</sup>

The set-back at Kwenda did not make the Methodists abandon the healing ministry. In May 1927, they opened another healing centre at Waddilove Institute<sup>284</sup>. This centre was later to be used as the training institute for African nurses. Sister Madge Dry came from England specifically to be the instructor at this centre. When she arrived there was no infrastructure suitable for the task and her ward was her bedroom. She later wrote:

I had to do all the nursing myself and only had a girl for cleaning and cooking. Then three girls from the school who passed Standard Six asked if they could come to the hospital to learn some nursing. I had so little to offer them but felt it was worth trying, so I made out a simple syllabus and had regular classes. At the end of three years, I felt the girls must have some recognition of their training, so I wrote to the Medical Department and asked if they would kindly examine them. This they did and were satisfied with the results. We were able to give the nurses a certificate signed by the Waddilove superintendent, the examiner and myself. This was the beginning of a nursing assistant training in the country.<sup>285</sup>

As time progressed, the Missionary Committee in London donated £200 at the request of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Rhodesia to be used for building a small dispensary and a hospital at Waddilove. From the onset it was known that the money would not be enough and it was meant to be supplemented by local efforts. In 1928, four student nurses: Ester Maketo, Barbara Benn, Dinah Mgugu and Lillian Tyeza, began to train as nurses and by the end of the year they had graduated.<sup>286</sup> The examinations were conducted by Dr. T.G. Burnett of the Bulawayo General Hospital who remarked that the result of the examination was a great credit to the instructress.<sup>287</sup> In 1929 Sister Dry sent the medical director a detailed syllabus of

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<sup>282</sup>Joseph Gondongwe interview conducted by Kennedy Gondongwe on 10 April 2010 at Gondongwe Homestead in Zvishavane, Zimbabwe.

<sup>283</sup>Dr Osborn report to the mission office, January 1916.file, RS/MMS, MCA.

<sup>284</sup>Waddilove Institute's 1927 report to the synod, file, S/M, MCA.

<sup>285</sup>Sister Madgy Dry's report to the district chairperson 1928, file number W/RS, MCA.

<sup>286</sup>Waddilove Institute report to the synod, 1928, file, W/S/M,MCA.

<sup>287</sup>Waddilove Institute Medical doctor's 1928 report to the synod,,file W/RS, MCA.



the three year training course in nursing at Waddilove Hospital. At the end of the year, five students graduated. The government did however not recognise Waddilove Hospital as a training school for orderlies and nurses, firstly, because there was no medical practitioner attached to the hospital. Secondly, the hospital was very small and treated only a limited range of diseases so that it could, in the opinion of the government, not provide an efficient and comprehensive training.<sup>288</sup>

In spite of the failure to get recognition as a training school for African nurses, medical facilities were expanded. In 1933 John White bequeathed £1000 for the extension of the work. The hospital continued to operate until 1964, when it was closed down and nurses in training were sent to Howard Institute which belonged to the Salvation Army.<sup>289</sup>

Since that time the Wesleyan Methodist Church has not returned to the healing ministry. Other denominations did well in this area. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Zimbabwe (ELCZ) had Munene Hospital which became the centre for medical services in the whole of Mberengwa District. The Catholics had several hospitals including Driefontein which specialised in communicable diseases including tuberculosis. The Salvation Army owned Howard Hospital and the Anglicans St. Albert's Mission Hospital. All these hospitals endured the vicissitudes of time and were still operational by 1980. It is clear that the Wesleyan Methodist Church did not do very well in the area of health provision. We suggest two reasons for this state of affairs, but there could be others. Firstly, John Wesley's belief that people must be taught basic ways of healthy living as well as simple forms of fighting disease could have influenced the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society not to prioritise the healing ministry. Secondly, the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society had no deliberate policy to train her clergy in other professions beside the ministry of word and sacrament.

The other contribution made by the Wesleyan Methodist Church to public life consisted in the provision of education. The church's contribution in this regard is fully explored below.

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<sup>288</sup>Waddilove Institute report to the synod 1930, file W/RS, MCA.

<sup>289</sup>Synod minutes 1964, file S/M, MCA.

## 2.8 Methodists and education (1898-1980)

The initial goal of the Methodist missionaries was to spread the Christian gospel. However, circumstances on the ground motivated them to venture into education. Although the church often influenced the course of events, there were times when it was the events that influenced the activities of the church. Some of the events which impacted on the church are highlighted below. The Methodists were not the only ones propagating the gospel in Zimbabwe; other denominations were doing the same and this soon led to competition to attract members. It became evident that the denomination that catered best for the material needs of the indigenous people would attract the largest membership. It was partly because of this realisation that the Methodists invested so much in education.

The other reason for venturing into education was the genuine desire to improve the lives of indigenous people. This cannot be disputed because several missionaries, for example John White, were well known for their desire to uplift the indigenous people.<sup>290</sup>

The other possible reason why the Methodists invested in education was that secular education was meant to subserve the theological interests of the missionaries. Schools were to be springboards for the spread of the gospel and educators also acted as evangelists. This was true of Zimbabwe and many other African nations where Christian missionaries operated.

Related to this is the fact that Christianity was a religion of the book, so it was necessary that the converts be literate so that they could read the Bible on their own. The need for the converts to read Christian literature necessitated the building of schools. Missionaries devised a strategy to evangelise the children, fully aware that the children would in turn influence their parents to embrace the faith. The easy way of accessing those children was through formal schools.

Another possibility is that missionaries built schools to improve the abilities of those who would become domestic workers for Europeans. For this purpose education was utility based. The latter proposition makes sense in view of what one missionary by the name Herbert J. Baker wrote: „If we continue to educate Africans then we are adding arrogance to their

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<sup>290</sup> See C. Andrews, *John White of Mashonaland*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1935.

ignorance.<sup>291</sup> This view was corroborated by Rev. Blackwell who wrote that educated black people ran the risk of being snobs.<sup>292</sup>

Closely related to the above is the fact that the missionaries depended to a certain extent on the colonial administration, especially in security matters. The colonialists were not highly educated people and while they were ready to use black labour in most of their economic endeavours, they have always balked at spending money on the education of Africans. This is because they thought that an illiterate African would be less likely to threaten their position of privilege. Lawrence Vambe, writing on the Roman Catholic missionaries, postulated that most of what has been achieved in African education has been possible only through the dogged perseverance of missionary bodies who have pressed on with African education in the teeth of white fear and penny-pinching; and even this education has, unfortunately, often been misdirected and is, as a result, unsatisfactory.<sup>293</sup>

Although the reasons for establishing schools could have been many, it seems that the aim of promoting evangelism was the overarching one. Education became the *sine qua non* of religious enterprise in Africa. Sometimes people would come to church because they were in need of education. Rev. J. Steward of Chibero mission wrote in his 1936 synod report:

In more than one instance at places where we had established churches we have seen that failure to provide a school has meant that the church has practically disappeared.<sup>294</sup>

The first Methodist School in Zimbabwe was Epworth Primary School. It was established by one of the earliest indigenous ministers who worked in Zimbabwe and who had come from South Africa. His name was Josiah Ramushu. He started by running a Sunday school which became so popular that even Chief Chiremba allowed his daughter to enrol. This Sunday school was to become a formal school in 1894.<sup>295</sup> It was eventually taken over by the community, becoming a community-run school. In Nenguo one of the evangelists started a school which was named after Chief Nenguo who had allowed Christian activities in his area. This school became very popular as children were taught how to read and write. It closed

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<sup>291</sup> Herbert Baker's letter to the district chairman, 1904, file B/DC, 1902-1910, MCA.

<sup>292</sup> Blackwell's letter to the district chairman, 1962, file B/DC, 1962-1979, MCA.

<sup>293</sup> Lawrence Vambe, *An ill-Fated People-Zimbabwe before and After Rhodes*, London: Heinemann, 1972, p. 236.

<sup>294</sup> Chibero mission report to synod 1936, file, S/M 1936, MCA.

<sup>295</sup> Shimmin's letter to the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, 1895, file RD//MS, MCA.

down only in 1897 after the death of the evangelist Moleli, killed in the First *Chimurenga* on suspicion of being a sellout.<sup>296</sup>

In January 1898 Rev John White reopened Nenguo School, establishing it near the shrine of Moleli as a way of fulfilling Moleli's dream. The first enrolment was of six young men. The idea was to give these candidates some training in biblical and theological knowledge to enable them to function as preachers and school masters. Rev. White wrote to Mr. Hartley on August 14 1899 and said: „If our work is to be a success we desire, we must have educated men.’<sup>297</sup> [sic] By 1915 a sizeable number of students had passed through this institution and four of these became prominent Methodist ministers. They were Peter Mantiziba, Matthew Rusike, Simon Chiota and Thompson Samkange. Still in 1915, Sir. Joshua Waddilove donated the sum of £1, 500 towards infrastructural development. A grateful Wesleyan Methodist Church renamed the school Waddilove and this name survived to present.<sup>298</sup> By 1919, 94 students had enrolled at Waddilove some of whom were being instructed in leather work, others in carpentry, building, agriculture and domestic science. By 1922 a teacher training course was underway.

Waddilove grew to become one of the few best schools in the country. In the exams for the 1979 Cambridge school certificate, the best student at Waddilove was Daniel Mhlanga who passed with an aggregate of six. He was second at national level.<sup>299</sup> Many people who became influential during the liberation struggle were graduates of Waddilove. These include prominent politicians like Josiah Chinamano who attended Waddilove as from 1937. He was a high ranking officer in ZAPU and was upon his death declared a national hero. Others include Dr. Nathan Shamuyarira, Dr. Sydney Sekeramai, and Dr. Herbert Ushewokunze.<sup>300</sup> All these became cabinet ministers when Zimbabwe became politically independent in 1980.

In academia, people like Professor Stanlake Samkange, a celebrated historian and the son of a minister of religion, went through Waddilove. And so did Dr Enoch Dumbutshena, the first black Chief Justice of Zimbabwe. The list is inexhaustible. Although Waddilove was a Methodist institution, its fame attracted people from other denominations as well. Mr Mugabe, the father of Robert Mugabe who became executive Prime Minister of Zimbabwe in

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<sup>296</sup>Terence Ranger, *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia*, London: Heinemann, 1967, p.32-40.

<sup>297</sup>Letter from John White to the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society 4 August 1899, file number, RD/MS, MCA.

<sup>298</sup>In fact the name survived beyond 1980.

<sup>299</sup>Waddilove's report to the conference, 1979, C/M, MCA.

<sup>300</sup>Rev EnosChibi, interview conducted by Kennedy Gondongwe on 28 April 2010 at number 22 Glamiss Road, Hatfield, Harare.

1980, sent his son named Donato to Waddilove, ignoring the fact that, at just a stone's throw from his residence, there was a Catholic school, called Kutama. The decision angered the Catholic missionaries who responded by chasing the Mugabe family from the mission village where they were only welcomed back by father Jerome O'hea who was the first headmaster of Kutama College and who was later honoured by Robert Mugabe who named a local hospital after him.<sup>301</sup>

Apart from Waddilove, the Wesleyan Methodist Church built numerous primary schools and six prominent boarding high schools. These were Chemhanza, Kwenda, Sandringham, Moleli, Tegwani, and Pakame. All these schools played a significant role in educating black people. These included Dr C.G. Mazobere who would serve the church with distinction. Mazobere was a former student of Pakame. Canaan Banana, the controversial first ceremonial president of independent Zimbabwe, was a former student of Tekwani. The late Dr Eddison Zvobgo, a well-known lawyer and government minister, studied at Tegwani. Webster Shamu who became deputy minister of youth in 1980 was also educated at Tegwani and so was Professor Chengetai Zvobgo, a well-known historian. The list is endless.<sup>302</sup>

It was the policy of the church to appoint chaplains at its schools. In some cases ministers would be invited to conduct services at nearby schools run by either government or local councils. These ministers became important models for a wider range of people. This explains for example, how Rev. Arthur Kanodereka managed to influence a big number of students at a non-Methodist school like (St Albert's mission) to cross the border to Mozambique for military training. Amongst these youths was Joyce Mujuru who became the youngest female cabinet minister in the 1980 government of Zimbabwe<sup>303</sup>. The issue of the indigenous ministers and the liberation struggle will be comprehensively dealt with in chapter six of this thesis.

In 1962, the Methodists made a watershed decision to train nine specialist teachers for blind people at Waddilove Institute. The course was conducted by Mr. G. Salisbury of the Royal Commonwealth Society for the Blind. The unit was begun with five pupils. In 1966, twelve blind pupils were recruited. By 1969 four of the five blind pupils recruited in 1962 completed

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<sup>301</sup>Robert Mugabe, interview on state television on the eve of his birthday. 20 February 2004, interview recorded by Patricia Gondongwe during a live broadcast.

<sup>302</sup>Masala B. Masuku, education secretary of the Methodist Church, interview conducted by Kennedy Gondongwe at Connexional Office, 16 April 2010.

<sup>303</sup>Gladys Kanodereka, interview conducted by Kennedy Gondongwe on 7 April 2010 at number T5 funeral road, Adbennie, Harare.

their primary course. In 1973 Waddilove introduced secondary education for the blind. The most outstanding of the blind students was Pearson Nherere who was admitted to Waddilove in 1973 on a Beit Trust Scholarship (BTS). He passed his exam for the Cambridge school certificate in 1976 and proceeded to do Cambridge higher certificate at Goromonzi Secondary School which he passed with a division 1. In 1979 Pearson was accepted into the University of Rhodesia to do a Bachelor of Law Degree in the university's Faculty of Law<sup>304</sup>. Other students such as Runoza Moyo also managed to go through to university specialising in religious studies and Shona language.<sup>305</sup>

The programme to make education accessible to the blind was extended to Pakame Secondary School. The idea was to empower people who had been considered useless in society. The Shona people understood blindness as a curse. It was seen as a spiritual matter rather than physical and a health issue. By educating the blind, the church was continuing with its tradition of caring for the underprivileged. The idea of empowering those on the periphery of society resonated with John Wesley who came up with programmes to care for the widows, orphans and destitutes in England<sup>306</sup>.

It is worth noting that the Wesleyan Methodist Church performed better in the area of education than in the area of health. In fact the majority of missionary churches in Zimbabwe did well in education. It can be argued that the mission schools' education played a pivotal role in evangelising and raising political consciousness among the indigenous people. Quite a substantial number of the indigenous ministers were educated in mission schools.

## **2.9 Sodalities<sup>307</sup>**

In many Christian denominations, especially those with missionary origins, there were organisations such as *Ruwadzano*<sup>308</sup>, Mens' Christian Union and youth groups. In the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Zimbabwe, these organisations contributed immensely to the

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<sup>304</sup> After his degree from the University of Zimbabwe, he got a scholarship to do post graduate studies at the University of Cambridge, in the United Kingdom.

<sup>305</sup> Masala B. Masuku Education Secretary of the Methodist Church, interview conducted at Connexional Office, 16 April 2010.

<sup>306</sup> Robert Southey, *The life of Wesley and Rise and progress of Methodism*, London: Longman, 1864, p.301.

<sup>307</sup> These were organizations within the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe.

<sup>308</sup> Ruwadzano is a Shona term used to refer to the women's organization in Zimbabwe. Ndebeles who constitute a minority of the Zimbabwean population used the word Manyano.

evangelisation of the people. Amongst all these groups the *Ruwadzano* was the most successful.

### **2.9.1 *Ruwadzano***

Deborah Gaitskell observes that *Ruwadzano* was rooted in the late nineteenth century revivalism of the mission churches.<sup>309</sup> She observes that the revivalist context fed into *Ruwadzano* in two ways, fostering both a particular religious style and encouraging indigenous mobilisation and leadership.<sup>310</sup> In the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Rhodesia, *Ruwadzano* was the most potent evangelistic agency ever to exist. Shimmin wrote in 1892 that Africa was to be saved by Africans themselves.<sup>311</sup> By 1923, this notion was still running high amongst missionaries serving in Zimbabwe as evidenced by Shimmin's end of year report.

Our missionaries in Rhodesia tell us that they find that the most effective method of presenting the gospel is by African witnessing to Africans. The European can never get to the back of the native mind, though his particular appeal does not lack effectiveness...<sup>312</sup>

It was in the context of this realisation that the organisation called *Ruwadzano* was formed in 1920.<sup>313</sup> It was modelled on the *Manyano* organisation of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Southern Africa, formed in 1906.<sup>314</sup> *Manyano* started as an African Women Prayer Union. It was launched in Transvaal by Mrs. Burnet and it expanded to Mashonaland as *Ruwadzano* and as *Manyano* in Matabeleland. Mrs. Emma White was the first president of this organisation. The first *Ruwadzano* meeting was held in 1926 at the Waddilove Institute with ten circuits and about 1500 delegates in attendance. In 1927 Mrs. Mildred Noble took over the presidency from Mrs. White. She led *Ruwadzano* from 1927 to 1938. From 1938 to 1954

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<sup>309</sup>Deborah Gaitskell, „Praying and Preaching: The Distinctive Spirituality of African Women's Church Organizations, A paper presented at UWC Conference on People, Power, and Culture, The History of Christianity in South Africa', 1792-1992, August 1992, p.2.

<sup>310</sup>Deborah Gaitskell, „Praying and Preaching: The Distinctive Spirituality of African Women's Church Organizations,' p.4.

<sup>311</sup>Shimmin's letter to the Missionary Society, 4 February 1892, file RS/MS, MCA.

<sup>312</sup>District chairman's 1923 report to Missionary Society, file number, RS/MS, MCA.

<sup>313</sup>See the brief history of *Ruwadzano* in the *Ruwadzano Handbook* of 1991, MCA.

<sup>314</sup>Lyn Holness, „Women's Piety and Empowerment: An observer's Understanding of the Methodist Women's *Manyano* Movement,' *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, July 1997, p. 2.

the leader of *Ruwadzano* was Mrs. Sally Carter. From 1954 to 1962 the leader was Mrs. Dora Lawrence. The first black woman to lead *Ruwadzano* was Mrs. Musa. She took over after Mrs. Lawrence, the wife of the district chairperson, resigned from the post in 1962. Mrs. Musa held the position until Mrs. Ndhlela took over after her husband was elected the first black district chairperson of the Rhodesian District in 1965.

Marc Epprecht postulates that the word *Manyano* which is the Xhosa version of the Shona *Ruwadzano* means „to pull together’ and has to do with union.<sup>315</sup> The *Ruwadzano* movement was essentially a union of mothers coming together to pray.<sup>316</sup> The central objective of the organisation was to further the work of the Wesleyan Methodist Church among women. It represented a powerful female spiritual response to Christianity in the face of both male-dominated churches and traditional patriarchal culture.<sup>317</sup> Interestingly, the missionaries initially welcomed these women’s groups because of their perceived role in fostering ‚devout domesticity’ among the women.<sup>318</sup> In time the women’s *Ruwadzano* was to assume the somewhat modified characteristic of being a contextualised channel of mutual support, both for women who had moved to urban areas and for rural women whose husbands had moved to the cities for work, in the face of social, economic and emotional disruption.<sup>319</sup>

Any woman who was a full member of the church or a member on trial was free to join the *Ruwadzano*. However, only full members of the church were allowed to wear the red blouse. This red uniform played a very significant role amongst women. It conferred a sense of identity to women who experienced the triple oppression of being women, black and poor.<sup>320</sup> Secondly, in the *Ruwadzano* uniform everyone looked the same. The uniform was a ‚leveller’ to the extent that women could, without shame, hide their poverty, wearing their official dress. No one could detect who was rich and who was poor.<sup>321</sup>

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<sup>315</sup>Marc Epprecht, ‚Domesticity and Piety in Colonial Lesotho’, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 19, no. 2, June 1993, p.202ff.

<sup>316</sup>Lyn Holness, ‚Women’s Piety and Empowerment: An Observer’s Understanding of the Methodist Women’s Manyano Movement’, *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, July 1997, p.3.

<sup>317</sup>Deborah Gaitskell, ‚Praying and Preaching: The Distinctive Spirituality of African Women’ Organizations, paper presented at UWC Conference on People, Power, and Culture, p.2.

<sup>318</sup>Deborah Gaitskell, ‚Devout Domesticity? A Century of African Women’s Christianity in South Africa’, in Cheryl Walker (ed.), *Women and Gender in South Africa to 1945*, Capetown: David Philip, 1990, p.250.

<sup>319</sup>Lyn Holness, ‚Women’s Piety and Empowerment: An Observer’s Understanding of the Methodist Women’s Manyano Movement’, *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, July 1997, p.3.

<sup>320</sup>Lyn Holness, ‚Women’s Piety and Empowerment: An Observer’s Understanding of the Methodist Women’s Manyano Movement’, *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, July 1997, p.5.

<sup>321</sup>Lyn Holness, ‚Women’s Piety and Empowerment: An Observer’s Understanding of the Methodist Women’s Manyano Movement’, *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, July 1997, p.5.



Women in polygamous marriages were not allowed to wear the red blouse as they were not accepted as full members of the church. Only the first wife in such a marriage had the privilege of wearing the red blouse. These women would meet on Thursdays for fellowship and instruction. Their programme would include visiting the sick, instruction on Christian life, marriage life and raising the children in a Christian way. Thursday was generally the resting day for the indigenous people in Zimbabwe, especially in those areas where the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Zimbabwe had its roots. The resting day varied from place to place. For instance, in Masvingo it was Wednesday. Be that as it may, it was easy to mobilise women to attend *Ruwadzano* on this particular day as they were not expected to be working.

Propriety and rule constituted a crucial dimension of the *Ruwadzano* movement; members would be ‚de-bloused’ for violating the organisation’s constitutional provisions. Members of *Ruwadzano* were expected to observe general tidiness of themselves and their households. They were barred from engaging in acts of violence as well as causing disharmony in their areas of residence.

In terms of leadership, the post of the *Ruwadzano* president was, at any given level, always reserved for the minister’s wife. In cases where there were several ministers’ wives, the superintendent’s wife would automatically become the *Ruwadzano* president<sup>322</sup>. This became the subject of debate in the 1970s with lay women feeling short-changed by that rule.<sup>323</sup>

By 1942, there were 4798 fully bloused members of *Ruwadzano*.<sup>324</sup> In 1944 the number rose to 5819. By 1974 the *Ruwadzano* membership had grown to 19372. This organisation became the most popular within the entire Wesleyan Methodist Church. The reasons for this popularity could be many. For instance, it is possible that the egalitarian nature of the movement made it a good centre of hope for the socially, economically and politically oppressed women. The other reason was perhaps that the uniform itself conferred a substantial amount of dignity to women and as a result it attracted quite a number of them. The *Ruwadzano* worked closely with a movement of girls called Girls Christian Union.

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<sup>322</sup>Minutes of *Ruwadzano*Connexional Committee, 18 March 1965, file R/M, MCA.

<sup>323</sup>Minutes of *Ruwadzano*Connexional Committee, 10 September 1974, file R/M, MCA.

<sup>324</sup>Minutes of *Ruwadzano*Connexional Committee, 12 March 1942, file R/M, MCA.

### **2.9.2 Girls' Christian Union**

The Girls' Christian Union (GCU) was a movement of girls. The synod sanctioned its formation in 1943.<sup>325</sup> The role of the organisation was to teach young girls about sexual purity, instructing them in cooking, cleanliness, devotional life and many other virtues as dictated from time to time by the leadership. Members of GCU were, upon being married, supposed to be „weaned' into *Ruwadzano*. The girls wore a uniform of black skirt, white blouse, red collar, red belt and white hat. Only unmarried girls or those who had never been married could be members of the GCU fellowship. Those with children were excluded because it was feared that they might contaminate the little girls and entice them to immorality.

With the increase in rural-urban migration, many young girls moved to towns where the majority worked as domestic workers. This meant that the number of girls dwelling in the rural areas dwindled. This affected the vibrancy of the organisation in rural areas phenomenally. However, the group remained strong in urban areas.

### **2.9.3 Men's Christian Union**

This organisation was meant for men. The majority of rules, applied to *Ruwadzano*, were applicable to this group as well. The only difference was that, in cases where a man was a polygamist and wanted to join the group, he became an adherent and was not allowed to become a full member of the organisation just like he could not become a full member of the church. He would only be admitted as a full member if one of the wives died. The objective of the organisation was to teach men to be benevolent leaders in their families. Their membership cards read that „every man is expected to love and provide leadership to his family, wife battering is discouraged.'<sup>326</sup> They discussed issues of masculinity before this subject was popularised in the 1980s. Of course the emphasis was not on equality as it is now, but men were encouraged to adopt „soft' masculinities. Although this thrust would have been inadequate in terms of what is expected today, it was a distinct case of half a loaf being better than nothing.

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<sup>325</sup>Minutes of synod, 1943, file S/M, MCA.

<sup>326</sup>See Men's Christian Union membership card of 1967, file M.C.U/C, MCA.

On the religious front the organisation sought to deepen the spirituality of its members by undermining African religion. Members were taught not to venerate the ancestors or consult traditional healers.<sup>327</sup>

Furthermore, men would be taught skills pertaining to their all responsibilities in life such as carpentry, thatching and constructing houses. The idea was to equip men so that they could fend for themselves. The membership of the MCU remained small. By 1943 it rose to 1441.<sup>328</sup> Many indigenous ministers sprang from this group of males and up to 1977 the Wesleyan Methodist Church did not have a female candidate.<sup>329</sup> The MCU did not attract a large membership because of its insistence on monogamous marriages and soft masculinities. Soft masculinities simply mean to be benevolent men. Amongst the Shona peoples a man was considered blessed when he had many wives, many children and vast tracts of land.<sup>330</sup> Because the MCU's teachings were hostile to the ideals of African men, many of them stayed away from this group. However, it became a fertile seedbed for the recruitment of indigenous ministers.

### **2.9.4 Boys' Christian Union**

The Boys' Christian Union was the male version of the GCU. The group was closely linked to the MCU. It was formed in 1944 on the instruction of the synod<sup>331</sup>. The Rev. Matthew Rusike and others were mandated to come up with a constitution for the group. The constitution stated among other things that members of the movement were supposed to be full members of the church. The major aim of the movement was to teach young boys about being responsible youths. They were also given lessons that prepared them for manhood. These lessons included the roles of men in households, the meaning of marriage and how to become responsible fathers. Just like the MCU, this group did not flourish much in terms of membership but it remained an important tool of evangelisation for the church.

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<sup>327</sup>See Men's Christian Union membership card of 1967, file M.C.U/C, MCA.

<sup>328</sup>MCU Connexional Committee 1943 minutes, file MCU/C, MCA.

<sup>329</sup>Minutes of conference August 1977, file M/C, MCA.

<sup>330</sup>Rev Enos Chibi, same interview.

<sup>331</sup>Minutes of synod, 1943, file S/M, MCA.

### **2.9.5 Methodist Young Disciples**

The Wesleyan Methodist Church created another platform where girls and boys would meet. This organisation was aimed at bringing them together to encourage marriages within the church. This group became so popular that it attracted membership from both those who were looking forward to marriage and those who had been married but could not continue. The group would hold night vigils as a way of propagating the gospel. Persons who worked hard to make this group grow were Osborn Mpofo and Canaan Banana.<sup>332</sup>

### **2.13 Conclusion**

This chapter presented an overview of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Zimbabwe. The chapter's main objective was to provide important information about the Church that may help the reader to better understand the position of the indigenous ministers. The chapter related the history of the Wesleyan Methodist Church from its beginnings to the time of institutionalisation. It also presented the problems that the first missionaries encountered in the process of propagating the gospel and how their affinity to the colonial administration helped them acquire land. Furthermore, the chapter discussed how the first mission centres were developed, the structure of the emerging institutional church, propriety and rules governing church membership, the church's quest for indigenous ministers, the church's contribution in areas of health and education and the work of the sodalities in the Wesleyan Methodist Church.

Concerning the planting of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Southern Rhodesia, the chapter noted the central role played by the first missionaries and their African agents. It also remarked on the pivotal role played by these pioneer missionaries and their agents in establishing mission stations. When the church began to institutionalise, it also promulgated rules and regulations which were rather difficult for the indigenous people to follow. With regard to the need for more indigenous ministers, the chapter established that apathy was caused by poor working conditions for the indigenous people. The evaluation given by this chapter is that the Wesleyan Methodist Church performed well in the area of education as well as in its strategy to evangelise different age groups and different genders. However, it

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<sup>332</sup>See MYD handbook, file MYD, (no date) MCA.

must be noted that more could have been done in areas of health and women's empowerment.<sup>333</sup> Some missionaries saw African religion as the greatest impediment to the acceptance of the gospel.

What remains to be considered is the nature of the training, given to indigenous ministers. How did their theological training impact on their political consciousness? To what degree were opportunities for further education available? How did indigenous ministers react? The next chapter is going to deal with these questions.

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<sup>333</sup>I am not oblivious to the fact that women's empowerment is a recent theme the world over, let alone in Africa.

## **3. CHAPTER THREE: THE TRAINING OF THE INDIGENOUS METHODIST MINISTERS**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter gave a general overview of the Methodist Church with the aim of introducing the reader to the religious context in which the indigenous ministers operated. Based on the findings of that chapter, two major conclusions were made. The first one is that, during the period under review, the church experienced a huge shortage of indigenous ministers, mainly because the job seemed not to be attractive from the perspective of Africans. Secondly, it emerged that the church performed well in the provision of secular education to the indigenous people.

The task of chapter three is to establish the nature of education given to the indigenous ministers. In order to achieve this, the chapter examines the church's recruitment policy and evaluates the impact of theological training given to indigenous ministers.

The central questions to be answered in chapter three are: What was the nature of the theological education given to indigenous Methodist ministers and what impact did it have? Were there any opportunities for further education for indigenous ministers? Did the indigenous ministers perceive those opportunities as the gateway to leadership positions? These are the questions chapter three will grapple with. The chapter will argue for the position that the indigenous Methodist ministers' worldview was transformed by the theological education they received as well as by the mere social setting of their training. The indigenous ministers's political consciousness tremendously increased as a result of their theological education.

### **3.2 The recruitment of indigenous ministers in the Wesleyan Methodist Church**

The pioneer missionaries of the Wesleyan Methodist Church who came from South Africa brought with them a sizeable number of indigenous missionary workers who acted partly as the missionaries' personal aids and partly as their colleagues in the ministry. These African

agents were teachers recruited in South Africa. Denis correctly argues that the indigenous missionary workers-catechists, lay preachers, deacons and priests, were the backbone of the missionary enterprise. Without them, the white missionaries would have achieved almost nothing.<sup>334</sup> He further noted that „clergy indigenization is to be understood as a process, with a starting point, a continuation and possibly a conclusion.’<sup>335</sup> It is important that this study begins by exploring the starting point of this phenomenon of clergy indigenization in the Methodist Church.

The reasons for clergy indigenization varied from denomination to denomination but in the Methodist Church it was caused by a complex interplay of ideas. There were both intrinsic and extrinsic factors at play. One of the intrinsic factors was that, although the African teachers from South Africa who had accompanied the first missionaries to Zimbabwe were central to the execution of the objective of the missionaries, in time their limitations became manifest and this gave rise to the need for a Zimbabwean indigenous clergy.

Secondly, these African agents were not familiar with the religious and geographical terrain of their new territory of operation, hence the need for people with that kind of indigenous knowledge. Thirdly, the South African indigenous agency did not speak the language of the majority of the Zimbabwean people and this made communication difficult, especially given the fact that the white missionaries desperately needed translators. Fourthly, although these South African agents were Africans, the Zimbabwean people regarded them as foreigners and therefore always suspected them of being in complicity with the whites. A case in point is when two Methodist teachers of South African origin were murdered during the First *Chimurenga* which took place between 1896 and 1897.<sup>336</sup> These were Modumedi Moleli and James Anta.<sup>337</sup> Moleli was killed at the Nenguu mission on Sunday 21 June 1896 and Anta was killed in the Zvimba area of Hartleton on 18 July 1896.<sup>338</sup> The reason for their murder was that they were suspected of being pathfinders for the white people. However, the major reason for the death was that they shared a civilising mission with missionaries. But the indigenous people perceived them to be sell-outs. This perception about the South African

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<sup>334</sup>Philippe Denis, „introduction’ in Philippe Denis (ed.), *The Making of the Indigenous Clergy in Southern Africa: Proceedings of the International Conference held at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 25-27 October 1994*, p.9.

<sup>335</sup>Philippe Denis, „introduction’ in Philippe Denis (ed.), *The Making of the Indigenous Clergy in Southern Africa*, p.10.

<sup>336</sup>Chengetai Zvobgo, *The Wesleyan Methodist Missions in Zimbabwe*, p. 38.

<sup>337</sup>Chengetai Zvobgo, *The Wesleyan Methodist Missions in Zimbabwe*, p. 54.

<sup>338</sup>Chengetai Zvobgo, *The Wesleyan Methodist Missions in Zimbabwe*, p.54.

teachers was not an exclusively Methodist Church phenomenon. An Anglican teacher by the name of Bernard Mizeki was murdered in 1896 in Marondera under similar circumstances.<sup>339</sup> The death of Mizeki was the result of a protracted hatred between himself and an African religious functionary. For a long time Mizeki had condemned the work of the traditional healer who resided near his home. On the other hand, the traditional healer was an avid hater of Christianity. He hated Mizeki and the whites. He was described as the evil genius of the district.<sup>340</sup> When the news spread that the Mashona had engaged in a rebellion, the traditional healer saw this as the chance to eliminate Mizeki and he utilised it.

The traditional healer assembled elders and headmen for a secretive meeting at which he was supposed to inform his audience of the truth about the Rev. (*Umfundisi*) Mizeki.<sup>341</sup> After throwing his bones and falling in a trance, he uttered words along the following lines.

Mizeki was not a really black man. He was as much a white man as any European. He had been born among Europeans, reared by them, and his aim was to change all the Mashona people into Europeans by witchcraft... The famine, the drought, the rinderpest, the locusts, the hut tax, the branding and slaughter of cattle, the \smallpox, the curtailment of all their liberties – all this was the work of the white men.<sup>342</sup>

It was after this secret meeting that Mizeki was killed. Simply put, the South African teachers were thought to be sellouts whose agenda was to pacify the indigenous people so that the whites could expropriate land without facing any resistance. Mizeki's death was precipitated by cultural confrontations between Christianity and African religion. The Comaroffs observed that in South Africa, traditional healers were a big threat to the spreading of the gospel. For instance, a Kwena healer, upon being asked by David Livingstone, himself a Western trained medical doctor, whether he believed that he could command the clouds to bring rain, answered:

We both believe the very same thing. It is God that makes the rain, but I pray to him by means of these medicines, and, the rain coming, of course it is then mine. It was

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<sup>339</sup>Chengetai Zvobgo, *The Wesleyan Methodist Missions in Zimbabwe*, p.54.

<sup>340</sup>Jean Farrant, *Mashonaland Martyr: Bernard Mizeki and the Pioneer Church*, London: Oxford University Press, 1966, p.202.

<sup>341</sup>Jean Farrant, *Mashonaland Martyr: Bernard Mizeki and the Pioneer Church*, p.203.

<sup>342</sup>Jean Farrant, *Mashonaland Martyr: Bernard Mizeki and the Pioneer Church*, p. 203.



I who made it for the Bakwains for many years...through my wisdom; also their women became fat and shining. Ask them, they will tell you the same as I do.<sup>343</sup>

When Livingstone accused him of waiting till the clouds appeared before using his medicine, and then taking the credit which belonged to God only, he responded:

I use my medicine and you employ yours, we are both doctors and doctors are not deceivers. You give a patient medicine. Sometimes God is pleased to heal him [sic] by means of your medicine, sometimes not - he dies. When he is cured, you take the credit for what God does. I do the same. Sometimes God grants us rain, sometimes not. When he does, we take the credit of the charm. When a patient dies you don't give up trust in your medicine, neither do I when rain fails. If you wish me to leave off my medicines, why continue your own?<sup>344</sup>

In the history of Zimbabwe the murdering of religious functionaries was not without precedent. On the 15<sup>th</sup> of March 1561, a Jesuit priest called Goncalo da Silveira was murdered in the Munhumutapa Court, because of the threat his gospel posed to the Muslim traders, the traditionalists and the court dignitaries. The three groups formed an alliance to counter Silveira's challenge to their roles. They levelled a number of allegations against him. These included the notions that he was a spy and a wizard. Stan Mudenge, writing in 1988, described Goncalo da Silveira as a one-man army of invasion.<sup>345</sup> This begs the question whether these people were religious martyrs or political heroes? Neville Richardson, writing about the South African context of apartheid, argues that a martyr's death cannot be the result of an accident, or misfortune, or illness.<sup>346</sup> Rather it is an expression of the character of someone who consciously chooses a particular way of life, aware of its possible costly consequences, and who intentionally accepts the kind of destiny that was given to the Disciples of Christ.<sup>347</sup> Using this paradigm of Richardson, Silveira, Moleli, Anta and Mizeki qualify as martyrs.

Another intrinsic reason compelling the missionaries to recruit Zimbabwean indigenous ministers was that the rapid expansion of the church necessitated an increased number of workers. Extrinsic factors playing a role were that the general missionary motto in this early

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<sup>343</sup>John and Jean Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, p. 210.

<sup>344</sup>John and Jean Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, p. 210.

<sup>345</sup>S.I.G Mudenge, *A Political History of Munhumutapa c 1400-1902*, p.67.

<sup>346</sup>Neville Richardson, „Heroes of the Struggle or Martyrs for the faith'? How do we recognize Martyrs Today? in *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, July 2008, No 131, p.46.

<sup>347</sup>Neville Richardson, „Heroes of the Struggle or Martyrs for the faith,' p.46.

period was that Africa must be served by Africans. This philosophy could have led to the developing of an indigenous ministry in many denominations, including the Methodist Church. Secondly, the failure by the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society to send more missionaries meant that the solution to the shortage of personnel lay in the recruitment of local ministers. With the passage of time, more indigenous ministers were recruited. The ultimate outcome of all these factors was that the Methodist Synod of 1898 was compelled to emphasize the need for the recruitment of Zimbabweans as evangelists and teachers.<sup>348</sup>

The first black people to be accepted as indigenous ministers had come from South Africa and their names were Josiah Ramushu and Samuel Tutani. They were recruited on the basis of their proven records as companions of the white missionaries. The relationship between the missionaries and these African agents resembled that of heroes and admirers. In most cases, these African agents were not critical of the activities of the missionaries and as a reward for their allegiance, the missionaries made them assistant-ministers although some died as evangelists. Wellington Belisi who was part of the first group of teachers could not make it to becoming an ordained minister and he continued to work as a teacher until the time of his death.

The second phase was the recruitment of Zimbabwean agents. For these, the route to pastoral vocation led via the teaching profession. It was mandatory that a person who wanted to become a minister had to train as a teacher and evangelist before enrolling as a minister. Because the ordained African ministry in the Wesleyan Methodist Church was inextricably linked to the teaching profession, it is necessary that we discuss the process by which one became a teacher and an evangelist.

Methodist teachers and evangelists were trained at Waddilove Institution. This institution was established at the behest of the Zimbabwean Methodist Synod of 1898. The synod unanimously agreed that an institution to train evangelists and teachers was urgently needed. The synod requested the Missionary Committee to permit the Rev John White to collect funds during his furlough in England in order to establish a training institution in Mashonaland.<sup>349</sup> In 1899, the synod asked the Missionary Committee to give them £800 from

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<sup>348</sup>Letter from John White to Marshal Hartley, 14 August 1899, file, RS/MMS, MCA.

<sup>349</sup>Minutes of synod, 1898, file S/M, MCA.

the Twentieth Century Fund. The purpose was to establish a training institution in Mashonaland.<sup>350</sup> The Nenguo Training Institute was begun in January 1900.<sup>351</sup>

The institution focused on the training of nurses, industrialists, teachers and evangelists. It became the centre of an African renaissance in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Every profession was supposed to subserve theological interests. Joan Millard is of the view that the earliest missionaries were firm believers in the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers and looked upon every convert as a possible evangelist.<sup>352</sup>

By 1910, it was the synod that selected candidates for training as evangelists and teachers, on the nomination of the superintendent of the various circuits from which they came.<sup>353</sup> By then, to be accepted as a teacher and evangelist, one had to have attained at least Standard Three.<sup>354</sup> A person with Standard Four was exempted from literary subjects.<sup>355</sup> A missionary by the name of H.H. Morley-Wright made a very instructive remark in 1915 when he said that „95% of the village school teachers were below Standard Three, a Standard Four was quite a person.“<sup>356</sup> This observation helps the reader to understand the social standing of Zimbabwean society in this early period of missionary endeavours.

The normal period of training of evangelists was three years. The first year focused on preparing the candidates for a Standard Four examination. The remaining two were devoted to evangelist training.<sup>357</sup> The courses for the evangelist training were: Preaching, Bible study, the Gospel of John, Genesis, Ruth, Matthew and field work.<sup>358</sup> It is from the preserved documents not clear what each subject entailed. However, Rev Makwehe who studied at Waddilove between 1943 and 1945 believes that the missionaries never emphasized theological knowledge but that they aimed to equip Africans for ministerial tasks such as preaching and bringing sinners to God.<sup>359</sup> Candidates accepted as evangelists and teachers were to be trained free for the work of the church but they had to do three years of service after leaving the institution, or pay the institution at the rate of £8 per annum for the number

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<sup>350</sup>Minutes of synod, 1899, file S/M, MCA.

<sup>351</sup>Minutes of synod, 1901, file S/M, MCA.

<sup>352</sup>Joan Millard, „Educating Indigenous Clergy in Some South African Protestant Churches During The Nineteenth Century“, in Denis (ed.), *The Making of the Indigenous Clergy in Southern Africa*, p.58.

<sup>353</sup>Wesleyan Methodist Mission Society report for 1910, file, MMS/RS, p.154, MCA.

<sup>354</sup>Wesleyan Methodist Mission Society report for 1910, file, MMS/RS, p.154, MCA.

<sup>355</sup>Rules and Regulations for the African Work, 1915, file, R/R, MCA.

<sup>356</sup>Waddilove Review, file WTI.1915, MCA.

<sup>357</sup>Rules and Regulations for the African Work, 1915, file R/R, MCA.

<sup>358</sup>Rules and Regulations for the African Work, 1915, file R/R, MCA.

<sup>359</sup>Naison Makwehe, same interview.

of years not completed.<sup>360</sup> Concerning the quality of the students' results of 1917, John White made the following remark:

Some of the answers of the senior students were both full and accurate. They had grasped the lessons of most of the incidents on which they were questioned. Taking however all the answers, they were fullest and most accurate where memory rather than reasoning were called into play.<sup>361</sup>

The first four teachers to be trained at this institution in 1901 were Jonas Chihota, Petros Lewanika, Silas Memeza and Philip Mukasa.<sup>362</sup> Matthew Zvimba who later rebelled against the missionaries was also trained at Waddilove in 1905. In 1917, fifty teachers passed their examinations and nineteen failed. Of the fifty who passed the best paper was by George Malusalila while that of Jonas Chihota also had exceptional merit.<sup>363</sup> With the passage of time, more teachers and evangelists were trained by this institution. The statistical returns of 1934 show that the Methodist Church had trained 190 evangelists since the programme started.<sup>364</sup> These evangelists were shepherding a total of 13031 Christians.<sup>365</sup>

Although the church registered a huge output of evangelists and teachers, there was still a need for African ministers whose training went well beyond what the evangelists were trained for and who could, consequently, fulfill many more tasks. John White's 1920 report is instructive in terms of the leadership's strategy for the Christian work in Rhodesia. For instance, the report says:

Very few of our European friends have any clear conception of the variety and extent of the work that engages our church in Rhodesia as it seeks to bring heathen race to know the gospel. A leading principle of our society is to do as much as possible of the teaching and the preaching by means of native evangelists, leaving the European ministers free to supervise and direct, hence the Waddilove Institution. There are some 80 students receiving industrial, literary and religious

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<sup>360</sup>Minutes of meeting held at the institution 16-17 May 1912, file WTI, MCA.

<sup>361</sup>Minutes of synod 1917, file S/M, MCA.

<sup>362</sup>Minutes of Synod 1901, file S/M, MCA.

<sup>363</sup>Minutes of synod 1917, file S/M, MCA.

<sup>364</sup>Statisticall returns, 1934, file Y/ST, MCA.

<sup>365</sup>Statisticall returns, 1934, file Y/ST, MCA.

instruction to fit them to lift up their own people. From the most reliable of these men some have been selected as native ministers.<sup>366</sup>

Evangelists who wanted to join the African ministry were easily accepted, provided they had received a 75% vote of confidence from members of the circuit quarterly meeting they belonged to. Also, the candidate should have exhibited outstanding discipline during his or her training as teacher and evangelist. The major issue was for the candidate to receive a favourable report from his or her superintendent.

By 1920, the synod approved a set of rules to be followed in the processing of candidates for the African ministry. Firstly, it remained a requirement that prospective candidates for the African ministry be qualified teachers. The candidate was supposed to have been baptized and a member of the Methodist Church for at least two years as well as being fully accredited local preacher.<sup>367</sup> As a general rule, no candidate above thirty years was to be accepted for the African ministry.<sup>368</sup> The synod ruled that every candidate was to be examined by the synod in post Standard Six literary works.<sup>369</sup> Another requirement with far reaching possible consequences, reads:

A candidate shall have read Wesley's sermons numbers 1-44 and must approve the general system of doctrine contained therein, and the rules of the Methodist Church in Rhodesia. The candidate must have read John Wesley's thoughts about slavery and his doctrine of scriptural holiness. Over and above this the candidate must be able to recite any five of Charles Wesley songs as well as have a general knowledge about the life and works of John Wesley.<sup>370</sup>

These requirements need to be unpacked. Ross Olivier's study on „The Wesleyan heritage planted in African soil,<sup>371</sup> clearly articulates some of the challenges inherent in the reception of Wesleyan's thoughts in Africa. He writes:

We must avoid the temptation to try and carbon copy eighteenth century Wesleyanism. We would be foolish to simply repeat Mr. Wesley's words and

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<sup>366</sup>Directory of the Rhodesia District, 1920, p.4.file D/RD, MCA.

<sup>367</sup>Rules and Regulations for the African Work, 1930, file R/R, MCA.

<sup>368</sup>Rules and Regulations for the African Work, 1930, file R/R, MCA.

<sup>369</sup>Rules and Regulations for the African Work, 1930, file R/R, MCA.

<sup>370</sup>Rules and Regulations for the African Work, 1930, p.15, file, R/R, MCA.

<sup>371</sup> Ross A. J. Olivier, „The Wesleyan Heritage Planted in African Soil,' in Purity Malinga and Neville Richardson, (eds.), *Rediscovering Wesley for Africa*, Pretoria: Methodist Church in Southern Africa, 2005.

patterns in our context as if neither three hundred years nor seven thousand kilometers separate us...<sup>372</sup>

Oliver's premise is that Wesley was a contextual theologian.<sup>373</sup> For him, if history could be written in the subjunctive, Wesley would have said to us:

When my missionaries brought the gospel of Jesus to you, it was in the form of potted-plant. It was your task to remove it from the constraints of the pot and plant it in your African soil so that it would be nurtured by African nutrients.<sup>374</sup>

Despite Olivier's observation, Joan A. Millard holds that Wesley had a fair idea of what the African countryside was like. The source of his knowledge could have been people who had been there.<sup>375</sup> Wesley describes the West Coast of Africa in his work entitled 'Thoughts about slavery.' The description goes:

Concerning the first, the Senegal Coast, Mons Brue who lived there for fifteen years...says: The farther you go from the sea the more fruitful and improved is the country. ...There are vast meadows that feed large herds of large and small cattle. And the villages that lie thick show the country is well peopled. The Gold Coast and the Slave Coast all who have seen it agree is exceeding fruitful and pleasant.<sup>376</sup>

Millard's interpretation is that Wesley hoped to dispel the impression that many people had, that slave owners were doing the African people a favour because conditions in Africa were so primitive.<sup>377</sup> Furthermore, Millard postulates that slavery was not the only problem Wesley addressed. As in Africa, poverty was widespread in Britain and led to great suffering.<sup>378</sup> Millard implies that Wesley's thoughts were and are still applicable to Africa. Having noted this, it is important that we further unpack some of the already delineated requirements for joining the Methodist ministry.

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<sup>372</sup> Ross A. J. Olivier, 'The Wesleyan Heritage planted in African Soil,' in Purity Malinga and Neville Richardson, (eds.), *Rediscovering Wesley for Africa*, p.2.

<sup>373</sup> Ross A. J. Olivier, 'The Wesleyan Heritage planted in African Soil,' in Purity Malinga and Neville Richardson, (eds.), *Rediscovering Wesley for Africa*, p.3.

<sup>374</sup> Ross A. J. Olivier, 'The Wesleyan Heritage planted in African Soil,' in Purity Malinga and Neville Richardson, (eds.), *Rediscovering Wesley for Africa*, p.4.

<sup>375</sup> Joan A. Millard, 'Re-Appropriating Wesley for Africa,' in Purity Malinga and Neville Richardson, (eds.), *Rediscovering Wesley for Africa*, Pretoria: Methodist Church in Southern Africa, 2005, p.133.

<sup>376</sup> John Wesley, *Thoughts Upon Slavery*,(X1: 59-79). London: J. Hawkes, 1774, cited in W. Smith, *John Wesley and Slavery*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986,p.47.

<sup>377</sup> Joan A. Millard, 'Re-Appropriating Wesley for Africa,' in Purity Malinga and Neville Richardson, (eds.), *Rediscovering Wesley for Africa*, p.141.

<sup>378</sup> Joan A. Millard, 'Re-Appropriating Wesley for Africa,' inPurity Malinga and Neville Richardson, (eds.), *Rediscovering Wesley for Africa*, p.141.

Wesley's forty-four sermons were on various issues current in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. However, some of the issues that he addressed were relevant even in 20<sup>th</sup> century Rhodesia. For instance, Wesley's number seven sermon, entitled „The way of the kingdom', emphasizes that people must take care of the underprivileged and resist being corrupted by the world.<sup>379</sup> His ninth sermon was entitled „The spirit of bondage and of adoption'. This sermon emphasizes that the spirit that God has given to people does not make one into a slave nor does it cause people to be afraid. Instead the spirit makes every person into God's child.<sup>380</sup>

Apart from the forty-four sermons, every candidate for ministry was supposed to demonstrate some degree of acquaintance with the general life and works of John Wesley. Wesley is known in history as one of the people who contributed immensely to the fight against slavery and his preferential option for the poor was unparalleled.

It is noteworthy that the figure of John Wesley was very significant for the Methodist ministry in Southern Rhodesia. His thoughts and actions became the basis of the church's praxis and theological beliefs. It is important to explore how the reading of Wesley by the indigenous Methodist ministers could have affected the African ministry in Rhodesia. Shimmin remarked, in February 1891, that the Mashonaland mission would rouse the old Methodist enthusiasm again.<sup>381</sup> And certainly fervid enthusiasm accompanied the preaching of Wesleyanism in early twentieth-century Zvimba.<sup>382</sup> Drawing on family memories, Stanlake Samkange evokes his mother's first reception of the gospel:

With the Bible raised high in one hand and the index finger pointing [the evangelist] threatened hell fire and damnation with such ferocity that people fell down on their knees weeping and wailing loudly. Some began to speak in unknown tongues...Then the evangelist began to pray for the possessed men, shouting so loudly that he could be heard a mile away. The audience fervently responded with heartfelt „amens'...sobbing and prayers of their own...Those who wanted to give

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<sup>379</sup>J. R. Sorrell, *The Wesley Message- A Restatement and Summary of the Forty Four Sermons of John Wesley*, Sydney: Royston Publications, 1977, p.42.

<sup>380</sup>J. R. Sorrell, *The Wesley Message- A Restatement and Summary of the Forty Four Sermons of John Wesley*, p. 42.

<sup>381</sup>Shimmin's letter of 14 February 1891 is cited by C.J. M Zvobgo, *The Wesleyan Methodist Missions in Zimbabwe, 1891-1945*, p.19.

<sup>382</sup>Zvimba is a name of a place in Mashonaland. It existed during the period under review and even after. There are also people using this name as a family name. Mathew and Meshek are examples.

themselves to Christ were then invited to come forward. Nearly everyone present went forward, including my mother, my grandmother.<sup>383</sup>

Another striking observation is made by Rev Cephas Mukandi who argued that Methodist African ministers were taught not to be themselves. They were taught that Wesleyan principles were the best for any Methodist minister, regardless of the context in which one operated. The missionaries never imagined the existence of any complexities, inherent in reading Wesley in an African context.<sup>384</sup>

Mukandi further points out that, as ministers, they were taught to follow the example of Wesley in everything. Wesleyans were the perfect paradigm. To demonstrate how far the Methodist African ministers were willing to follow Wesley, the story is told that one Methodist African clergy was asked how many children he desired to have, all things being equal. His response was that he would have as many children as God would allow because Samuel Wesley had many children and the most successful of them came last.<sup>385</sup> This again serves to demonstrate the extent to which the indigenous Methodist ministers had swallowed the Wesleyan history and tradition, hook, line and sinker. In relation to the World Council of Churches' (WCC) support for the nationalists during the 1970s, Canaan Banana would write for instance:

I find the attitude of some of the white missionaries very disturbing. I read several letters in the press that originated from them condemning the World Council of Churches for having given humanitarian assistance to the resistance movements. I wonder which tradition they are drawing from because neither Jesus tradition nor Wesleyan tradition is consonant to their thinking. Wesley's position on slavery must have made them think otherwise. One cannot help concluding that theirs is a false gospel...<sup>386</sup>

In the 1960s Charles Wesley's songs were translated into the vernacular and became popular. Some of Charles Wesley's songs were sung during ordinary church services as well as during special events such as baptism, confirmation of membership and ordinations. At

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<sup>383</sup> Stanlake Samkange, *The Mourned One*, London: Heinemann, 1975, p.35-45.

<sup>384</sup> Cephas Mukandi, interview conducted by Kennedy Gondongwe on 2 February 2009 at Amaveni Methodist Manse.

<sup>385</sup> Cephas Mukandi, same interview.

<sup>386</sup> Canaan Banana's letter to the chairman of Rhodesia District, 2 December 1970, Banana's personal file, MCA.



the ordination service of 1968, the opening hymn was, „For a thousand tongues to sing’ and the fifth verse of that hymn has the following words.

He breaks the power of cancelled sin. He sets the prisoner free. His blood can make the foulest clean. His blood availed for me.<sup>387</sup>

At the 1971 ordination service, the closing hymn was about peace in the world and the words of the fourth verse were as follows:

Who can explain the struggle for my life? This travail, pain, trembling, strife, plague, earthquake, famine, tumult and war. The wonderful coming of Jesus declares.<sup>388</sup>

Several hymns of Charles Wesley with a liberation theme were evidently sung at various functions. One wonders what could have been their impact on the indigenous Methodist ministers’ level of political consciousness.

By 1940, the synod had made some additions to the requirements for the African ministry. In addition to what was agreed upon earlier on, there was a requirement that a medical certificate indicating the state of the candidate’s health be submitted to the synod.<sup>389</sup> The report was not supposed to be older than three months.<sup>390</sup> The new requirements also included questions which sought to establish the candidate’s level of education, the titles of the principal books that the candidate would have read the educational level of the spouse of the candidate and information with regard to the reading and writing skills of the spouse.<sup>391</sup> If a candidate satisfied the leadership of the church with respect to all of the above requirements, the candidate would be invited to write preliminary exams. The regulation reads:

A preliminary examination for the candidates of who notice of nomination has been given at the March quarterly meeting shall be held on the last Friday and Saturday of April each year, except when otherwise directed by synod. The subjects for

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<sup>387</sup>Ordination service programme, 21 August 1968, file, O/D, MCA.

<sup>388</sup>1971 ordination service programme, file O/D, MCA.

<sup>389</sup>Rules and Regulations for the African Work, 1940, p.16, file R/R, MCA.

<sup>390</sup>Rules and Regulations for the African Work, 1940, p.16, file R/R, MCA.

<sup>391</sup>Rules and Regulations for the African Work, 1940, p.17, file R/R, MCA.

examination shall be English essay, English reading, Arithmetic and General Knowledge.<sup>392</sup>

The regulation went on to give the scope of the examination. The English essay was designed to test the candidate's ability to express him- or herself in English.<sup>393</sup> It was important for the indigenous ministers to learn to speak English because that was the medium of exchange at the theological institution. English reading was set to test the candidate's ability to read and understand English.<sup>394</sup> Arithmetic was just an examination of Standard Six work.<sup>395</sup> General Knowledge was a test of knowledge of current events and matters of local interest.<sup>396</sup> By implication, it means that, candidates for the African ministry were expected to be up-to-date regarding current affairs in order for them to successfully go through the process. They were supposed to read newspapers, magazines and other news sources. The question begged by this requirement is: what effect did it have on their level of political consciousness?

Candidates, who passed this stage, were subjected to another examination, this time a simple test of the candidate's knowledge of theology. This course covered the essential facts of Christian experience, God's purpose for the world, and the meaning of church and sacraments.<sup>397</sup> An examination in biblical knowledge ensured that the candidates were knowledgeable about the great men and women of the Old Testament, the Psalms, the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles.<sup>398</sup>

After the candidate has satisfied the examiners on all aspects of the test, he was, by way of a direct question, asked about his or her attitude to bridewealth (*lobola*) where his or her daughters and wards were concerned.<sup>399</sup> The leaders would also enquire from the candidate about the extent of his or her financial liabilities, if any. A candidate who was heavily in debt was not accepted.<sup>400</sup>

By 1980, the process of recruitment was almost the same. The only change concerned educational requirements. The new regulation required that a candidate for the ministry

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<sup>392</sup>Rules and Regulations for the African Work, 1940, p.17, file R/R, MCA.

<sup>393</sup>Rules and Regulations for the African Work, 1940, p.17, file R/R, MCA.

<sup>394</sup>Rules and Regulations for the African Work, 1940, p.17, file R/R, MCA.

<sup>395</sup>Rules and Regulations for the African Work, 1940, p.17, file R/R, MCA.

<sup>396</sup>Rules and Regulations for the African Work, 1940, p.17, file R/R, MCA.

<sup>397</sup>Rules and Regulations for the African Work, 1940, p.18, file R/R, MCA.

<sup>398</sup>Rules and Regulations for the African Work, 1940, p.18, file R/R, MCA.

<sup>399</sup>Rules and Regulations for the African Work, 1940, p.18, file R/R, MCA.

<sup>400</sup>Rules and Regulations for the African Work, 1940, p.18, file R/R, MCA.

had passed at least some subjects in the Cambridge ordinary examinations.<sup>401</sup> It was only after satisfying the examiners that was one received as a candidate for the African ministry.

### **3.3 Equipped and ready to serve: The training of indigenous Methodist ministers**

Joan Millard correctly observed that during the nineteenth century, indigenous ministers were prepared for the ministry in two ways: by in-service training, and by time spent in missionary theological institutions.<sup>402</sup> In the Methodist Church, the training of the indigenous ministers followed this trend. In the early period, the Methodist African ministers received in-service training and later, in the 1900s, indigenous ministers were trained at an institution.

Josias Ramushu, who was the first African to be accepted as a candidate for the African ministry in 1900, was never sent to any theological college. He was accepted and continued to work in the circuit under the supervision of the Rev H. Oswald Brigg who was a white missionary.<sup>403</sup> The white missionary continued to write a progress report, year after year, with regards to the progress of the probationer. Ramushu was eventually ordained in 1910, making him the first African to be ordained in the Wesleyan Methodist Church. His ordination came after 10 years in the ministry. The Wesleyan Methodist Church was not alone in being slow to ordain indigenous ministers. The ELCZ by then known as Evangelical Lutheran Church in Rhodesia (ELCR) ordained its first Zimbabwean minister in March 1937.<sup>404</sup> His name was J.B Hove. He had previously worked as a teacher in the church, until he received his pastoral training at the Oscarsberg Seminary in Natal. He received his certificate from this seminary in 1931.<sup>405</sup>

The Catholic Church ordained her first African priest, trained at Chishawasha, in 1947.<sup>406</sup> The first indigenous minister in Zimbabwe as a whole was ordained in 1898.<sup>407</sup> The second

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<sup>401</sup> Connexional yearly handbook for 1980, file, HB 1960-1980, MCA.

<sup>402</sup> Joan Millard, 'Educating Indigenous Clergy in Some South African Protestant Churches during the Nineteenth Century,' in Philippe Denis (ed.), *The Making of the Indigenous clergy in Southern Africa*, p.58.

<sup>403</sup> Clarence Thorpe, *Limpopo to Zambezi*, p.69.

<sup>404</sup> Hugo Soderstrom, *God Gave Growth, The History of the Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe, 1903-1980*, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1984, p.80.

<sup>405</sup> Hugo Soderstrom, *God Gave Growth, The History of the Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe, 1903-1980*, p.79.

<sup>406</sup> Hugo Soderstrom, *God Gave Growth, The History of the Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe, 1903-1980*, p.79.

<sup>407</sup> Philippe Denis, 'Introduction', in Philippe Denis (ed.), *The Making of the Indigenous Clergy in Southern Africa*, p.11.

African clergy in the Methodist Church was Samuel Tutani. He joined the ministry in 1906 and was ordained in 1913.<sup>408</sup> After these pioneers who had been ordained without attending any theological institution, those who followed were sent to Waddilove Training Institute. The Methodist Church seemingly was ahead of other denominations in educating and ordaining its ministers. This enlightenment is something that is intrinsic in the Methodist doctrine and ecclesiology.

### ***3.3.1 Waddilove Training Institute***

Waddilove was training evangelists from as early as 1900. When the time came for Zimbabwean indigenous ministers to be trained, they were all sent to Waddilove. They included M. Mfayi, K.M. Gazi, and G. Malusalila and M.K. Zvimba. By 1920 the Wesleyan Methodist Church had managed to recruit eight indigenous ministers.<sup>409</sup> Waddilove was to remain the institution of theological training until 1953 when the indigenous ministers began to be trained at Epworth.

At Waddilove the course for ministerial formation comprised Theology, New Testament, Church History, Christian Ethics, History of Methodism and Homiletics. The duration of the course was two years. After successfully completing this course, the students graduated with a Certificate in Theology.

After the training at Waddilove, the candidate had to spend five years as a probationer. Until such a time as a probationer was received into full connexion,<sup>410</sup> he was required to take annual examinations in Scripture and Theology. Ordination could be deferred on the recommendation of a superintendent.

The synod prescribed particular text books for post-collegiate studies. In addition, probationers were required to yearly submit to their superintendent a list of books that they had read in the course of that particular year. If a probationer did not satisfactorily pass his or her examinations or if his or her character and work were not satisfactory, the synod could recommend to the British Conference, either that his or her probation be extended, or that he

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<sup>408</sup>Minutes of synod 1913, file S/M, P.12, MCA.

<sup>409</sup>Clarence Thorpe, *Limpopo to Zambezi*, p.124.

<sup>410</sup>This term is used by the Methodists to refer to ordination.

or she was invited to retire from the training. The training was technically considered to be finished only after ordination but, even after ordination, the minister was expected to continue reading, in order to widen his or her horizon.

African ministers, training at Waddilove, were supposed to bring their spouses along. In fact, there were only female spouses, since there were as yet no female ministers in training. The church perceived the role of a minister's spouse as of paramount importance. Therefore, there was a programme for ministers' spouses as well. They were supposed to attend lessons in English Grammar, Reading in the Vernacular, Domestic Science, which included Cookery and Sewing, and simple Bible Studies. In the church's view, this basic education was necessary for their role. After training, ministers' wives were expected to exercise leadership in the community, especially amongst other women and in *Ruwadzano* organizations. Although the programme for ministers' wives was less formal, it was very enriching considering that very few women had access to any form of education during this period.

In 1926, Matthew Rusike was accepted as a candidate for the African ministry.<sup>411</sup> He applied from Gatooma Circuit, having been a former student of Waddilove. Upon his candidature, he was sent back to Waddilove for ministerial formation.<sup>412</sup> He was ordained in 1934, becoming the first indigenous person who had received baptism as an infant to be ordained in the Wesleyan Methodist Church.<sup>413</sup> In 1936 he was appointed circuit superintendent, making him the first indigenous minister to attain that position.<sup>414</sup> This delay in promotion of indigenous ministers was not unique to the Methodists. Soderstrom, writing about the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Rhodesia, holds that some missionaries doubted the abilities of the indigenous ministers to organize and take initiatives. They considered it safer that the management of the parish was in the hands of the missionary who was assisted by a number of evangelists. This way of thinking persisted among pioneer missionaries until the end of the 1920s.<sup>415</sup>

The second group of African ministers to be trained at Waddilove included Thompson Samkange, Simon Chiota, and E.T.J. Nemapare. The three were ordained in 1936.<sup>416</sup> The group was followed by other Africans training for the ministry at Waddilove such as Andrew

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<sup>411</sup>Rev Rusike's obituary in his personal file, the obituary is dated 1977. which is the year he died but there is no month and day, MCA.

<sup>412</sup>Rusike's obituary, MCA.

<sup>413</sup>Rusike's obituary, MCA.

<sup>414</sup>Rusike's obituary, MCA.

<sup>415</sup> Hugo Soderstrom, *God Gave Growth, The History of the Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe, 1903-1980*, p.80.

<sup>416</sup>Minutes of synod, 1936, file S/M, MCA.

Ndhela, J.C. Mashingaidze, Henry Kachidza, E. M. Musa, and E. M. Mapondera, S. Munyama, Solomon Leonard Zwana, Oliver Kawonza, W.J. Ramushu, Oswald Ramushu, Nehemiah Chiyoka, C.G. Mazobere, Naison Makwehe, Michael Chidarikire, Wellington Gubudu, Stephen Mkuruba, Jacob Tabaziba, Simon Sithole, Joseph Siamutinda, James Dabengwa, Job Mamukwa and C.B. Manyoba. The list is not exhaustive but it mentions all the outstanding African ministers who trained at Waddilove.

In 1948 there were three tutors in the theological department at Waddilove Training Institution. They were Revds. Fredick Hudson who did not have a degree, W.A Hoskins who had a Masters Degree in Arts and Enoch Musa who was an African tutor who held no academic degree and whose responsibility consisted mainly in the training of evangelists.<sup>417</sup>

One could argue that the level of theological training that the African ministers received was very low. Clarence Thorpe in a work designed to mark 60 years of Methodism in Southern Rhodesia observed as much:

Up to the time of writing, our own candidates for the ministry have been almost without exception, trained teachers, and often with evangelist-training as well. Ministerial responsibilities in a backward country involve candidature at a relatively advanced age, and during the three different spells of training at the institution the necessary testing is accomplished. But we are on the threshold of a new age. There is the prospect now that our candidates, in increasing numbers, will be matriculates, or at least of junior certificate standard and a theological course of greater intellectual range will become possible.<sup>418</sup>

Although the training seems to be somewhat inadequate, as Thorpe observed, it must be noted that if this level of education is considered in its own historical context, it was not inferior to general standards of African education at the time. Thorpe's assessment could have been informed by his knowledge of the level of theological education given to contemporary white missionaries. By 1950 the church had produced 25 African ministers. The number of white missionaries, serving the church in the same year, stood at twenty-one.<sup>419</sup> The black ministers constituted 54% of the total clergy whilst the white ministers

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<sup>417</sup>Handbook of the Methodist Church 1948, file H/B 1910-1959, MCA.

<sup>418</sup>Clarence Thorpe, *Limpopo to Zambesi Sixty Years of Methodism in Southern Rhodesia*, p. 116.

<sup>419</sup>Clarence Thorpe, *Limpopo to Zambesi Sixty Years of Methodism in Southern Rhodesia*, p. 124.

constituted 46%. African membership was 12305, as opposed to 1324 whites.<sup>420</sup> The total Christian community, including members on-trial was 31500. In the same year, the Methodist Church of Southern Africa comprised 527 clergy.<sup>421</sup> Out of these 527 clergy, 242 were white and 285 were black.<sup>422</sup> These figures represent a 54% blacks and 46% whites.

In the Church of the Province of South Africa, by 1950, there were 603 white clergy and 287 black clergy. This translated to 68% whites and 32% blacks. These figures show that the Methodists, both in South Africa and in Zimbabwe, in terms of percentages were ahead of the Anglicans with respect to the recruiting of indigenous ministers. By 1960 the proportion of indigenous ministers in the Church of the Province of South Africa was rising steadily, though not as much as in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa in which 55% of all the clergy were blacks.<sup>423</sup>

On analysis, it is self-evident that the percentage of black ministers in the Zimbabwean Methodist Church was equal to the percentage of black clergy in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa in 1950. The data implies that the indigenisation process was much faster in Zimbabwean Methodism, than in South African Methodism. This is because the Methodist Church of Southern Africa became autonomous in 1883, which is 94 years earlier than the Zimbabwean Methodist Church.<sup>424</sup> The latter only became autonomous in 1977. One would have expected the Methodist Church of Southern Africa to have much more black clergy by 1950 rather than for it to resemble the percentage figures in Zimbabwe.

There could be other reasons for the state of affairs but we suggest that it could have had something to do with the political environment. David Thomas argues that, if you swim in the sea, you cannot avoid getting wet.<sup>425</sup> Thus even strong anti-apartheid bodies in South Africa were not able to escape the consequences of apartheid policies and laws.<sup>426</sup> The slow process to black rule in South African politics resulted in the slow process of indigenization in the church.

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<sup>420</sup> Clarence Thorpe, *Limpopo to Zambesi Sixty Years of Methodism in Southern Rhodesia*, p. 124.

<sup>421</sup> David Thomas, *Christ Divided Liberalism, Ecumenism and Race in South Africa*, Pretoria: University of South Africa, 2002, p.190.

<sup>422</sup> David Thomas, *Christ Divided Liberalism*, p.198.

<sup>423</sup> David Thomas, *Christ Divided Liberalism*, p. 198.

<sup>424</sup> David Thomas, *Christ Divided Liberalism*, p. 192.

<sup>425</sup> David Thomas, *Christ Divided Liberalism*, p. 190.

<sup>426</sup> David Thomas, *Christ Divided Liberalism*, p .190.

1952 was a turning point in the history of education in Zimbabwe. In this year the University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland opened its doors to its first students.<sup>427</sup> When the University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland was established, it had a special relationship with the University of London.<sup>428</sup> The development was not without significance, even in the religious sector. The Methodist Church immediately thought of moving their theological training to Epworth mission so as to give their theological students easy access to the university.<sup>429</sup> The college was to be situated about 11km east of Salisbury (later known as Harare) and 15 km away from the newly established University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland.

### ***3.3.2 Epworth Theological College***

Soon after the opening of the University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland in 1952, the preparations to establish Epworth Theological College began. The vision was great but its execution was severely hampered by lack of both financial and human resources. Be that as it may, the church continued with its preparations and in 1954 Epworth Theological College opened its doors for the first time to Methodist students.

When the college moved to Epworth in 1954, it was manned by two full-time lecturers. These were Robert Forshaw and Shadreck Ushewokunze. The latter, was an indigenous minister. Although Enock Musa had been deployed as a lecturer for evangelists before Ushewokunze, the latter's appointment was important because he was teaching those training to be ordained in the ministry. The fact that a black clergy was deployed to become a lecturer as early as 1954 must be commended. In South African Methodism, the first black lecturer was Simon Gqubule. He was appointed in 1960 at Alice and he described his arrival as follows.

My wife and I arrived at Alice on Christmas Eve, 1960 from Indaleni Missionary Institution, Richmond, Natal Natal where I had been chaplain from 1957 to 1960. Early in 1961 and during 1962, I was involved in a multitude of meetings preparing

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<sup>427</sup>Date of opening of the University College of Rhodesia, [www.wiki.org.UniversityofZimbabwe.com](http://www.wiki.org.UniversityofZimbabwe.com), Accessed on 2 October 2010.

<sup>428</sup>History of the University of Rhodesia, [www.wiki.org.UniversityofZimbabwe.com](http://www.wiki.org.UniversityofZimbabwe.com), Accessed on 2 October 2010.

<sup>429</sup>United Theological College handbook, 1970. Harare: Zimbabwe, p.2.



for the building and establishment of the Federal Theological Seminary of Southern Africa (FEDSEM).<sup>430</sup>

Forshaw had a Master's Degree in Theology whereas Ushewokunze was a graduate of Waddilove Training Institute with a Certificate in Theology.<sup>431</sup> This team had only one student. His name was Caspen Makuzwa.<sup>432</sup>

The efforts to establish Epworth Theological College were linked to an ecumenical effort to improve the training of clergy. Robert Matikiti captures this well when he argues that Epworth Theological College was a child of ecumenism.<sup>433</sup> However, Matikiti misses the point when he states that the college was established at the instigation of the Rhodesian Council of Churches (RCC) which decided to put resources together and build an ecumenical theological college at Epworth farm.<sup>434</sup> This version of events seems to be at variance with the findings of this researcher. I suggest two reasons for this deviation although there might be more. Firstly, Matikiti was writing an article for a journal, specifically devoted to ecumenism and theological training. It is possible therefore, that his account is a deliberate twisting of historical facts in order to lead to a particular desired result. Secondly, it could be that his sources misled him but it is difficult to arrive at this conclusion because he does not cite his sources for this particular claim.

The idea of bringing churches together in the training of ministers goes back to the International Missionary Conference (IMC) of 1938 held in Tambaram, Madras. This conference emphasized the need for an ecumenical ministerial formation. They argued in their report that theological training should not be attempted except on a co-operative basis with a number of churches participating.<sup>435</sup> The Wesleyan Methodist Church was represented at this conference by the Rev. Thompson Samkange.<sup>436</sup>

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<sup>430</sup>Simon Gqubule, *Trials of a Pilgrim Church, the Fedsem Story, a memoir*, East London: University of Fort Hare Press, 2010, p. 3.

<sup>431</sup>Connexional yearly handbook for 1954, file H/B 1910-1959. MCA.

<sup>432</sup>Connexional yearly handbook for 1954, file H/B 1910-1959, MCA.

<sup>433</sup>Robert Matikiti, „United Theological College: A Centre for Ecumenical Education in Zimbabwe’*Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, December 2009 Volume xxxv.p.155.

<sup>434</sup>Robert Matikiti, „United Theological College: A Centre for Ecumenical Education in Zimbabwe,’*Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, December 2009 Volume xxxv.p.155.

<sup>435</sup>International Missionary Council, *„The World Mission of the Church. Findings and Recommendations of the International Missionary Council*, London: IMC, 1938,7, cited in Philippe Denis and Graham Duncan, *The Native School that caused all the trouble: A history of the Federal Theological Seminary of Southern Africa*, Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2011, p.41.

<sup>436</sup>Terence Ranger, *Are We Not Also Men?*, p. 48.

Denis observes that one of the outcomes of the Tambaram Conference was the decision to investigate the state of theological education in Asia and Africa. After five years of preparation, Norman Goodall and Eric Neilsen, two secretaries of the International Missionary Council, visited South Africa in September and October 1953 to study the condition of theological education in the country. They visited different theological centres but they concluded that Fort Hare was meant to be the centre of theological training in southern Africa. Denis is of the view that the establishment of the FEDSEM in South Africa in 1963 was influenced by the work of the International Missionary Council.<sup>437</sup>

Similarly, in Zimbabwe the International Missionary Council influenced the beginning of unity in the area of theological training - not the Rhodesian Council of Churches as alleged by Matikiti. In early 1958, Rev. Fredrick Rea, who was then the principal of Epworth Theological College, attended the plenary session of the International Missionary Conference in the university hall in Accra, when the secretary was presenting his report.<sup>438</sup> The secretary announced the formation of a new movement for raising the standard of ministerial training in all parts of the missionary world. The project was to be backed by a fund of four million dollars.<sup>439</sup> Rea began to speculate vaguely what effect all this was going to have on the future of Epworth Theological College.<sup>440</sup> At first he thought the effect would be limited. He later wrote:

We were on the eve of a union of British and American Methodism in the joint training of our ministers. Each church was to provide a staff of two and funds for a staff house and a classroom block were available. We were not thinking big.<sup>441</sup>

In 1959 a new era was ushered in. The year became a turning point in the history of theological training in Zimbabwe. The American Methodist Church also known as United Methodist Church which had its own theological training in Old Umtali, decided to work together with the Methodist Church by sending three students to train at Epworth Theological College.<sup>442</sup> In January 1960, Rev C.W. Ransom, who had been appointed director of the new

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<sup>437</sup>Philippe Denis and Graham Duncan, *The Native School that caused all the trouble*, p.41.

<sup>438</sup>Fredrick Rea, „Five Years in Retrospect at the Epworth Theological College’, in *The Rhodesian Methodist Quarterly Review of the Methodist Church*, Volume 39 Number 4. p.370, MCA.

<sup>439</sup>Fredrick Rea, „Five Years in Retrospect at the Epworth Theological College’, in *The Rhodesian Methodist Quarterly Review of the Methodist Church*, p. 370, MCA.

<sup>440</sup>Fredrick Rea, „Five Years in Retrospect at the Epworth Theological College’, in *The Rhodesian Methodist Quarterly Review of the Methodist Church*, p. 370, MCA.

<sup>441</sup>Fredrick Rea, „Five Years in Retrospect at the Epworth Theological College’, in *The Rhodesian Methodist Quarterly Review of the Methodist Church*, p. 370, MCA.

<sup>442</sup>United Theological College handbook, 1970, Harare: Zimbabwe, p.2.

Theological Education Fund, visited Epworth Theological College. At his suggestion a conference was convened at the University College of Rhodesia and church leaders from all over the federation were invited. Rea commented that:

It was here that the churches began to have their first stirrings of conscience concerning the inadequacy of their plans for ministerial training. They began to realize that with the imminence of national independence throughout Africa, there would have to be a comparable revolution in achieving self-government in church life. And that meant a new ministry, both lay and clerical, equipped for a new era of leadership.<sup>443</sup>

This observation by Rea is very significant, particularly his claim that there was need to revolutionise the training of the indigenous ministers in anticipation of a time when the indigenous ministers would take over the leadership of the church. This new thrust was obviously going to impact heavily on the curriculum itself.

Two proposals emerged from this first conference. The first proposal was that the Theological Education Fund was to be asked to donate funds to assist in the inauguration of a new Department of Theology at the University College of Rhodesia. The second proposal was that the various churches were to consider the transfer of their training centres to Salisbury with a view to forming a cluster of colleges akin to the Selly Oak Scheme. For this purpose the Methodist Synod offered land at Epworth.<sup>444</sup>

During the two years following on the conference, there was a great deal of discussion in church councils. Eventually it proved to be impossible to achieve the goal of theological coordination in a federal project. This was partly because of the political feeling in the Northern territories of the federation.<sup>445</sup> The proposal was turned down, first by the UCCAR who eventually decided to establish a college at Kitwe. They were followed by the CCAP who established a new Union College at Mkomo in Nyasaland.<sup>446</sup> Both the Anglicans and the

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<sup>443</sup>Fredrick Rea, „Five Years in Retrospect at the Epworth Theological College’, in *The Rhodesian Methodist Quarterly Review of the Methodist Church*, p.371, MCA.

<sup>444</sup>Fredrick Rea, „Five Years in Retrospect at the Epworth Theological College,’ in *The Rhodesian Methodist Quarterly Review of the Methodist Church*, p.371, MCA.

<sup>445</sup>Fredrick Rea, „Five Years in Retrospect at the Epworth Theological College’, in *The Rhodesian Methodist Quarterly Review of the Methodist Church*, p.371, MCA.

<sup>446</sup>Fredrick Rea, „Five Years in Retrospect at the Epworth Theological College’, in *The Rhodesian Methodist Quarterly Review of the Methodist Church*, p.371, MCA.

Dutch Reformed Church took a long time to analyze the pros and cons, but finally turned the proposal down also for varying reasons.<sup>447</sup>

Meanwhile there had been progress among the Presbyterians, the African Methodist Episcopal (AME), the LMS, the American Board Mission and the two Methodists who were already working together. These groups were sending students to Epworth Theological College and some were making substantial contributions towards the building programme. The Congregationalists were invited to appoint a tutor to the staff of Epworth and the Epworth Training Council (ETC) invited three of the churches to appoint representatives to the council.<sup>448</sup> The council was made up of representatives of all participating churches.

It must be noted that the roots of co-operation in theological training in Zimbabwe can be traced to the Tambaram Conference of Madras. The same is true for the establishment of the FEDESM which came into existence a few years after the establishment of Epworth Theological College in Zimbabwe.

In 1962 a second conference of church leaders was held. On this occasion the request for aid for the university was repeated and in addition a sum of £25000 was asked for Epworth. When the Theological Education Fund met in the following August, a sum of £16000 was granted to the university and £20000 to Epworth, provided that both colleges were prepared to raise a further £9000.<sup>449</sup>

More important still was the formation of a theological committee of the churches of Central Africa. Its task was to cooperate in the development of theological studies at the University College of Rhodesia. Its second task was the establishment of a Central African Diploma of Theology (CADT). This provided a study programme and examinations backed by all the churches and available to laypersons as well as ministers at the General Certificate in Education level (G.C.E). The first year saw five students enrolled. Moreover, the Theological Education Fund, made available funds for the salary of a full-time registrar of the course who

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<sup>447</sup>Fredrick Rea, „Five Years in Retrospect at the Epworth Theological College’, in *The Rhodesian Methodist Quarterly Review of the Methodist Church*, p.371, MCA.

<sup>448</sup>Fredrick Rea, „Five Years in Retrospect at the Epworth Theological College,’ in *The Rhodesian Methodist Quarterly Review of the Methodist Church*, p.371, MCA.

<sup>449</sup>Fredrick Rea, „Five Years in Retrospect at the Epworth Theological College,’ in *The Rhodesian Methodist Quarterly Review of the Methodist Church*, p.371, MCA.

was to organize correspondence courses for external students.<sup>450</sup> Rea wrote about the new developments in theological training:

To meet this challenge of a new standard of theological training, in 1964, Epworth commenced with an augmented staff, an „A’ stream course for the students taking the diploma studies. Among the first three students in this class was the first European to be trained, here a new milestone had been passed in the college history.<sup>451</sup>

It is of interest that, before 1964, no European was trained locally. Europeans were always sent to England for their theological training. Meanwhile the construction of buildings continued. In 1960 the £6500 classroom block was finished. The money used had come as a gift from Mr. Perkins of Texas. In December of the same year, a letter from the Rev Ronald Spivey brought the news that he and his wife would donate funds for the construction of a college chapel. The gift was in memory of his late parents. In 1961 the chapel was built. In Rea’s view, its architectural beauty was a permanent reminder of the tremendous help and advice given to the college by Mr. John Capon.<sup>452</sup>

The library was built shortly after 1961. The money for this project came from the friends and the widow of Rev A.E. Aeschliman. He had been expected to become the first American member of staff in 1959, but unfortunately he succumbed to cancer in 1961.<sup>453</sup> Various friends of his provided funds for a memorial to his work of many years as a missionary in China and Rhodesia. The money was used to construct a library. Money from the Theological Education Fund was used to make a start in filling the shelves.<sup>454</sup>

1963 saw the putting up of several buildings which included two staff houses, a residence hall for thirty students, an assembly hall and a kitchen. Rea, writing in 1964, describes the building era as almost over, leaving Epworth a college comparable, as regards both its

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<sup>450</sup>Fredrick Rea, „Five Years in Retrospect at the Epworth Theological College’, in *The Rhodesian Methodist Quarterly Review of the Methodist Church*, p.371, MCA.

<sup>451</sup>Fredrick Rea, „Five Years in Retrospect at the Epworth Theological College’, in *The Rhodesian Methodist Quarterly Review of the Methodist Church*, p.372, MCA.

<sup>452</sup>Fredrick Rea, „Five Years in Retrospect at the Epworth Theological College’, in *The Rhodesian Methodist Quarterly Review of the Methodist Church*, p.372, MCA.

<sup>453</sup>Fredrick Rea, „Five Years in Retrospect at the Epworth Theological College’, in *The Rhodesian Methodist Quarterly Review of the Methodist Church*, p.372, MCA.

<sup>454</sup>Fredrick Rea, „Five Years in Retrospect at the Epworth Theological College’, in *The Rhodesian Methodist Quarterly Review of the Methodist Church*, p.372, MCA.

buildings and its staff, with any other such institution in Africa.<sup>455</sup> It must be noted that Rea was writing in 1964, only one year after FEDSEM had been established. This seminary was founded by the Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational Churches.<sup>456</sup>

By 1964 Epworth Theological College had only 26 students representing five denominations. No more than six of these were Methodists. The enrolment was obviously very low, as noted by Rea.

The era of bricks and mortar and policy making has ended. The next five- year plan must tackle the problem of manpower for the ministry.<sup>457</sup>

In spite of Rea's statement construction work steadily continued in order to accommodate the ever increasing enrolment. Of note is the fact that in 1965 the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Rhodesia became an active participating member of the growing interdenominational institution. Although the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa (UCCSA) was already working with other denominations since the early 1960s, they only became active members of the institution in 1969.<sup>458</sup> In 1976 the name of the college was changed to United Theological College (UTC). The reason for the change of name was to capture the ecumenical thrust and the centrality of the interconnection of the different Christian organizations and practices by replacing „Epworth' with „United.'<sup>459</sup> By 1980 the college infrastructure consisted of an administration block, a women's department, married students' houses, pre-school facilities, and sporting facilities to mention but a few. The college could accommodate 40 students. The questions we now need to answer are: what was the curriculum followed by the institution and which courses were taught, and by whom?

### **3.3.2.1 The study programmes and the members of staff of the United Theological College**

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<sup>455</sup>Fredrick Rea, „Five Years in Retrospect at the Epworth Theological College', in *The Rhodesian Methodist Quarterly Review of the Methodist Church*, p.372, MCA.

<sup>456</sup>See Philippe Denis „Fedsem Ten Years later. The Unwritten History of an Ecumenical Seminary', *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 117 (2003), p. 68-79 and Philippe Denis, „Unfinished Business: The Painful Closure of Federal Theological Seminary of Southern Africa', *Missionalia, Southern African Journal of Missiology*, Volume 37, number 1, April 2009, p.5-20.

<sup>457</sup>Fredrick Rea, „Five Years in Retrospect at the Epworth Theological College,'in *The Rhodesian Methodist Quarterly Review of the Methodist Church*, p.372.

<sup>458</sup>United Theological College Handbook, 2000, p.2.

<sup>459</sup>Robert Matikiti, „United Theological College: A Centre for Ecumenical Education in Zimbabwe', *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, December 2009 Volume xxxv.p.156.

When the training of ministers was moved from Waddilove to Epworth, the operations of the college remained unchanged. It continued to offer a Certificate in Theology, the same as had been offered at Waddilove. Thus, the courses on offer did not change. Change only came in 1964 when the college introduced two streams. The first was „A’ stream which prepared for the Central African Diploma in Theology. Students who enrolled for this diploma were holders of a qualification equivalent to G.C.E level. The second one was „B’ stream entailing continued studying towards the Certificate in Theology.

The curriculum was reviewed for the first time in 1970. New courses were added and the complete list of subjects taught includes New Testament, Old Testament, Church History, Church Administration, Christian Ethics, Sociology of Religion, Psychology of Religion, Homiletics, Pastoral Care and Counseling, Polity, Systematic Theology, Ministry, Mission Theology and Music, African Theology, Black Theology, Christian Worship, Hellenistic Greek, World Religions, African Traditional Religion, Field Education and Christian Education.<sup>460</sup>

The first principal of Epworth Theological College was Robert Forshaw from the Wesleyan Methodist Church. He was principal from 1954 to 1955.<sup>461</sup> Forshaw was in 1956 succeeded by another Methodist minister, Dr Fredrick B. Rea.<sup>462</sup> Rea would be principal of the institution until 1964<sup>463</sup> when Rev. K.E. Erickson from the UMC took over. Rea’s term of office ended in 1966.<sup>464</sup> In 1967, another Methodist Church minister was appointed principal. He was Rev. Thomas C Baird and a year later Rev. K.E Erickson from the UMC was reappointed for the year 1968.<sup>465</sup> In 1969, Rev. Dennis Salmon took up the position of acting principal;<sup>466</sup> he was a Methodist Church minister and his leadership lasted until 1970.<sup>467</sup>

In 1971, the Rev. Michael Appleyard, also a Methodist Church minister, was appointed principal of UTC and he led the institution until 1976.<sup>468</sup> In the same year, Peter Russell from the Methodist Church acted as principal until the arrival of Dr. C.C. Mazobere in the

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<sup>460</sup>United Theological College Handbook, 1990, p. 10.

<sup>461</sup>Chamwaita Machukera interview with Kennedy Gondongwe, on 11 May 2009 at United Theological College.

<sup>462</sup>Chamwaita Machukera, same interview.

<sup>463</sup>Chamwaita Machukera, same interview.

<sup>464</sup>Chamwaita Machukera, same interview.

<sup>465</sup>Chamwaita Machukera, same interview.

<sup>466</sup>Chamwaita Machukera, same interview.

<sup>467</sup>Chamwaita Machukera, same interview.

<sup>468</sup>Chamwaita Machukera, same interview.

same year who took over as principal, the first African principal of the institution.<sup>469</sup> He remained at its helm until he was elected president of the Methodist Church in 1979. In 1980 Rev. L. Dube from the ELCR was appointed principal. Although UTC had become an ecumenical institution in 1959, for the larger part of the period under review principals of the college were from the Methodist Church. This may imply that the ethos of the institution was greatly influenced by Methodism.

Between 1975 and 1978 the composition of the teaching staff was as follows: Max Chigwida MA, John Kurewa PhD, Hugo Soderstrom PhD, Appleyard MA, K.E Erickson MA, Crispin Mazobere PhD, J Kawadza MDiv, Peter Collinghood MA, F Chirisa BA, Culvar PhD and Harlene PhD.<sup>470</sup> During these three years, there were five African lecturers as opposed to six Europeans. The qualifications of the lecturers were very high by Zimbabwean standards of the 1970s. All of the five indigenous lecturers had studied abroad.<sup>471</sup>

In 1965, UTC opened a women's department.<sup>472</sup> The lecturers in the department were the spouses of lecturers teaching at the institution. Ministers' wives were taught courses such as Cookery, Sewing, Leadership, *Ruwadzano*, Homiletics and Practicals.<sup>473</sup> There was another facility for those who wanted to do the Rhodesian Junior Certificate. Finally, there were classes for ordinary level, mainly for ministers who had joined the college without a certificate. Rarely would you find a minister's wife studying for this qualification.

Although the teaching staff at UTC was from across the racial divide, there were very few white students who came to train at the college. The few whites, who studied at UTC, were studying for the Central African Diploma in Theology. Amongst them were Richard Scott and Amanda Shipman.<sup>474</sup> They came from the United Church of Christ of Zimbabwe (UCCZ) (formerly American Board Mission). The majority of white candidates from other denominations were sent overseas for their theological training.<sup>475</sup>

Levee Kadenge, who came to study at UTC in 1977 states that, in 1976, he and Margaret James were accepted as candidates for the ministry in the Methodist Church,<sup>476</sup> James

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<sup>469</sup>Chamwaita Machukera, same interview.

<sup>470</sup>United Theological College yearly handbook, 1978.

<sup>471</sup>United Theological College yearly handbook, 1978.

<sup>472</sup>Chamwaita Machukera, same interview.

<sup>473</sup>United Theological College yearly handbook, 1965.

<sup>474</sup>Chamwaita Machukera, same interview.

<sup>475</sup>Chamwaita Machukera, same interview.

<sup>476</sup>Levee Kadenge interview conducted by Kennedy Gondongwe on 10 October 2010, in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.



became the first woman in the Methodist Church to be accepted as a candidate for ministerial vocation.<sup>477</sup> Kadenge was sent to UTC but James was allowed to do her theological studies through the University of South Africa.<sup>478</sup> (UNISA) The church paid for her learning expenses in full. Because the University of South Africa was non-residential, she was allowed to work as a minister whilst studying.<sup>479</sup> After completion, James graduated with a Bachelor of Theology, a qualification which many indigenous ministers longed to obtain.

When this researcher asked Rev James why she was sent to circuit after candidature, while her colleague who was black was sent to UTC, she pointed out that her going to circuit was because UTC was a hive of political activities during the 1970s and it was deemed unsafe to send a white woman student to a college that was so political.<sup>480</sup> In her view the white lecturers were protected because they were missionaries. It is important for us to explore the political activities at UTC in the 1970s.

### ***3.3.2.2 United Theological College as a centre for social transformation***

The ambiguity of religion is that it can be used to liberate humanity on the one hand and to oppress it on the other. Christian Smith remarks:

But there is another face to the sacred-social phenomena we call religion. For the worldviews, moral systems, theodices and organizations of religion can serve not only to legitimate and preserve, but also to challenge and overturn social, political, and economic systems. Religion can help to keep everything in its place. But it can also turn the world upside down.<sup>481</sup>

UTC became a hotbed of political activities during the 1970s. The results of the liberal education that the missionaries gave to the indigenous ministers started to become apparent

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<sup>477</sup>Levee Kadenge same interview.

<sup>478</sup>Levee Kadenge same interview.

<sup>479</sup>Levee Kadenge, same interview.

<sup>480</sup>Margaret James, interview conducted by Kennedy Gondongwe on 28 April 2010, at Connexional Office, Harare, Zimbabwe.

<sup>481</sup>Christiano Smith, *The Emergence of Liberation Theology: Radical Religion and Social Movement Theory*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991, cited in Jimmy Dube, *A Socio-Political Agenda for the Twenty-First Century Zimbabwean Church, Empowering the Excluded*, Lewison: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2006, p.153.

while they still were students at the college. The political consciousness of the indigenous ministers increased because of their education.

Missionaries who came to UTC in the 1970s were very sensitive to African aspirations. In fact the majority of them covertly supported the nationalists in their quest to put an end to racial segregation. It is because of this that the UTC became a centre of political activities, over and above being a place for the training of ministers. At one time the institution became a home to people who were internally displaced.<sup>482</sup> Moreover, the college was administering a programme to feed political refugees who were staying at a market place called *Mbare Musika*.<sup>483</sup> Appleyard from the Methodist Church was very outspoken on issues of justice.<sup>484</sup> Soderstrom from the ELCR was equally vocal and as a result he was deported in 1976 for criticism of the government's excesses.<sup>485</sup> Political parties would have their meetings at the college.<sup>486</sup>

African lecturers were members of the nationalist parties. As a result students too became heavily involved in politics. Max Chigwida who was a lecturer at the college was secretary-general of the United African National Council (UANC). During his spare time he would be addressing political rallies and attending meetings of his political party. He was from the Presbyterian Church and many students from his church became members of his party. Some students continued with their political activities after leaving the college.

The president of UANC was Bishop Abel Muzorewa. He came from the United Methodist Church. Muzorewa's UANC was a major factor in life at UTC. Many United Methodist students were members of the party. It is noteworthy that at one point Muzorewa became Prime Minister of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia through an internal settlement which was rejected by other nationalist parties. It is important to establish the factors that possibly made Muzorewa turn to politics.

In his autobiography Bishop Muzorewa points out that his stay in the United States had raised his political consciousness.<sup>487</sup> A second factor could have been the legacy of his

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<sup>482</sup>Noah Chimbwanda, interview conducted by Kennedy Gondongwe on 29 March 2010 at United Theological College, Harare, Zimbabwe.

<sup>483</sup>Noah Chimbwanda, same interview.

<sup>484</sup>Aneas Mandinyanya, interview conducted by Kennedy Gondongwe at number 415 Zengeza 4 Chitingwiza on 13 May 2009, Harare. This interview did not last long because the interviewee became very sick in the course of the interview due to old age. He eventually died in 2011.

<sup>485</sup>Noah Chimbwanda, same interview.

<sup>486</sup>Noah Chimbwanda, same interview.

<sup>487</sup>Abel Muzorewa, *Rise and walk*, Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 1978,p.65

predecessor as bishop of the United Methodist Church. This deserves some explanation. Muzorewa became bishop of the United Methodist Church in August 1968.<sup>488</sup> Before his appointment, Bishop Dr. Ralph Dodge had led the church with distinction.<sup>489</sup> Dodge had come to Rhodesia in 1956 to lead the church.<sup>490</sup> He resided in Rhodesia but his area covered Angola, Mozambique, South Africa and Rhodesia.<sup>491</sup> He was well known as a bishop who fraternized and ate with Africans, a thing most missionaries would not do.<sup>492</sup> Dodge's last four years in office were spent as bishop in exile.<sup>493</sup> He had been deemed a *persona non grata* by the Rhodesian authorities because of his belief in justice and equality.<sup>494</sup>

Muzorewa took over as bishop at a time when the church and the black people were admiring the courage of Dodge. In fact the favourite candidate for the office of bishop was John Kawadza, a minister in the same church, but he, surprisingly, lost to Muzorewa.<sup>495</sup> One of the factors that might have worked in Muzorewa's favour was his perceived courage and radicalism. Of course, some members of the church who were comfortable with the status quo did not like Muzorewa to take over as bishop, but because elections are a game of numbers they lost. When he became bishop, Muzorewa was expected to follow in the footsteps of his predecessor. Muzorewa is the author of *Rise up and Walk*.<sup>496</sup> This book was published in 1978. It gives the details of the struggle for Zimbabwe and explains the reasons for the civil war in Rhodesia.<sup>497</sup>

Lecturers like Farai Chirisa supported ZANU.<sup>498</sup> Chirisa did not hold any position in the party but his admiration for the party was no secret.<sup>499</sup> Many students supported ZANU as well.<sup>500</sup> Chirisa was a Methodist minister, educated at Manchester University in the United Kingdom. His highest qualification was a Bachelor's Degree. Students like Claudious Matsikiti were known to be strong supporters of this political party.<sup>501</sup>

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<sup>488</sup> Abel Muzorewa, *Rise and walk*, p.64.

<sup>489</sup> Abel Muzorewa, *Rise and walk*, p.64.

<sup>490</sup> Abel Muzorewa, *Rise and walk*, p.44.

<sup>491</sup> Abel Muzorewa, *Rise and walk*, 1978, p.44.

<sup>492</sup> Abel Muzorewa, *Rise and walk*, p.44.

<sup>493</sup> Abel Muzorewa, *Rise and walk*, p.44.

<sup>494</sup> Abel Muzorewa, *Rise and walk*, p.44.

<sup>495</sup> Abel Muzorewa, *Rise and walk*, p.44.

<sup>496</sup> Abel Muzorewa, *Rise and walk*, p.44.

<sup>497</sup> Abel Muzorewa, *Rise and walk*, p.44.

<sup>498</sup> Noah Chimbwanda same interview.

<sup>499</sup> Noah Chimbwandasame interview.

<sup>500</sup> Noah Chimbwanda same interview.

<sup>501</sup> Noah Chimbwanda same interview.

ZAPU had the privilege of having the college principal as its member. His name was Crispin Mazobere. This man was very influential by virtue of his position. His church was Wesleyan Methodist. He was a well-educated man with a Doctor of Philosophy Degree from Boston University in the United States.<sup>502</sup> The title of his PhD thesis was „Racial Conflict in Rhodesia, 1890-1971.<sup>503</sup>

Mazobere was by this time the chairman of an institution which was called „Coordinating for Friends of Prisoners and Political Victims in Zimbabwe’.<sup>504</sup> He was also chairman of the Harare Christian Action Group, an organization that was concerned with issues of human rights in Rhodesia.<sup>505</sup> At the college he lectured in Ethics and Sociology of Religion.<sup>506</sup> Mazobere was a regular columnist in the then African magazine called „African Parade’ to which he contributed under the title „Politics from the pulpit’.<sup>507</sup> Earlier in 1955, he had written an article in *The Herald*, entitled „No biblical justification for racial segregation.<sup>508</sup> Mazobere was cited in „Men of Achievements’ published in the United Kingdom in 1980.<sup>509</sup> There is no doubt that Mazobere was very conscious of the political environment in which he was operating. Many of his students such as Cephaz Mukandi joined politics on the side of ZAPU of which Mazobere was a member.<sup>510</sup>

Another force to reckon with at the theological college was Ndabaningi Sithole. This man was educated at Andover Newton Theological Seminary in Massachusetts in the United States of America.<sup>511</sup> He was an ordained minister of the Congregational Church of Rhodesia formerly called The American Board Mission.<sup>512</sup> Sithole was the president of ZANU and he led the party until he was removed from his position on the allegation that he had betrayed the struggle. He was succeeded by Robert Mugabe as party leader in 1975. Sithole is the author of *African Nationalism*.<sup>513</sup> This book was immediately banned by Ian Smith’s government for what the regime saw as incitement of the masses to get involved with politics. The students from his church were studying at UTC and the majority of them initially

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<sup>502</sup>Crispin Mazobere’s curriculum vitae in his personal file, MCA.

<sup>503</sup>Crispin Mazobere’s curriculum vitae, MCA.

<sup>504</sup>Mazobere’s curriculum vitae, MCA.

<sup>505</sup>Mazobere’s curriculum vitae, MCA.

<sup>506</sup>Mazobere’s curriculum vitae, MCA.

<sup>507</sup>Mazobere’s curriculum vitae, MCA.

<sup>508</sup>Mazobere’s curriculum vitae, MCA.

<sup>509</sup>Mazobere’s curriculum vitae MCA.

<sup>510</sup>Mazobere’s curriculum vitae MCA.

<sup>511</sup>Noah Chimbwanda, same interview .

<sup>512</sup>Noah Chimbwanda, same interview.

<sup>513</sup>Ndabaningi Sithole, *African Nationalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968.

supported his party. When he was booted out of the party leadership, the students supported him as an individual.<sup>514</sup> This was because of tribal connections.

The other revolutionary lecturer was John Kurewa. He was from the United Methodist Church and one of the few individuals in the United Methodist Church who had had the privilege of doing further studies in America.<sup>515</sup> In fact, when Muzorewa became bishop in 1968, the first African minister that he recommended for further studies was Kurewa.<sup>516</sup> Upon his return, Kurewa was sent to teach at UTC.<sup>517</sup> His major contribution at UTC was his quest to indigenize Christianity. He advocated the use of drums (*ngoma nehosho*) during worship.<sup>518</sup> By 1977, *ngoma nehosho* were forbidden in almost all former missionary churches. Kurewa argued that the gospel had to conduct a dialogue with African culture, if Christianity was to be meaningful for the Africans. For him, the contextualization of the gospel was a significant step towards self rule.<sup>519</sup> He also advocated for the use of African images during worship.<sup>520</sup> If Kurewa's radicalism did not produce political activists, it for sure produced political awareness amongst his students.

There is no doubt that theological education played a major role in creating political awareness amongst the indigenous ministers of the Methodist Church. The education that the indigenous ministers received opened their eyes. Denis concurs with this view, although he has considered, especially the South African context.<sup>521</sup> For instance he writes:

No Christian institution played a more important role in the development of black consciousness than the black seminaries. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, the segregation of clergy training in the South African churches and the differences in working conditions of black and white ministers, a practice in direct contradiction with the anti apartheid discourse of most mainline churches not to mention the egalitarian discourse of the new testament. This form of hypocrisy fuelled resentment among black seminary students. The second was the age of the seminarians: Young people are usually more likely to be inspired by a movement

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<sup>514</sup> Noah Chimbwanda, same interview.

<sup>515</sup> Abel Muzorewa, *Rise and walk*, p.44.

<sup>516</sup> Abel Muzorewa, *Rise and walk*, p.44.

<sup>517</sup> Levee Kadenge, same interview.

<sup>518</sup> Levee Kadenge, same interview.

<sup>519</sup> Levee Kadenge, same interview.

<sup>520</sup> Levee Kadenge, same interview.

<sup>521</sup> See Philippe Denis, 'Seminary Networks and Black Consciousness in South Africa in the 1970s.' *South African Historical Journal*, 62, 1, p. 162-182.

promoting a new social, political and ecclesiastical order. Black Consciousness Movement had an immediate appeal among black seminary students.<sup>522</sup>

In both contexts, the Zimbabwean and the South African, the consciousness of the indigenous ministers was „fertilized’ by the realization that they were in a situation of deprivation. Although the education given to the indigenous ministers was comparatively inferior to the one received by white missionaries, it made the black clergy see what they were deprived off. Ranger, writing about peasants’ consciousness in Zimbabwe, argues that peasants developed a certain level of consciousness as they saw only too clearly with their own eyes the expropriation of land, the use of state violence, and the establishment by the state of discriminatory price mechanisms.<sup>523</sup>

### **3.4 The indigenous ministers’ quest for further education**

Adrian Hastings, writing about the general characteristics of missionaries, argues that many missionaries had very little if any training and even were convinced that training, education and theology were rather pointless. What was needed was a good knowledge of the Bible, a great deal of faith, and a strong voice. The job, as they saw it at first, focused emphatically on preaching.<sup>524</sup> This was true of Methodist missionaries who saw further training for indigenous ministers as completely unnecessary. Although the majority of the Methodist missionaries were properly trained in European universities and seminaries, they never had deliberate policies to allow African ministers to further their education.

Apart from missionaries, the other important impediment for African ministers who desired to further their education was the attitude of their African colleagues. It seems there was so much insecurity amongst black leaders of the church that they interpreted any attempt by an African clergy to study further as a wish to take over the leadership of the church. In 1965 the Methodist Zimbabwean synod had an African leader in the person of Andrew Ndhlela. In 1968 a former Methodist minister who was studying in England wrote a letter to Ndhlela

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<sup>522</sup>Philippe Denis, „Seminary Networks and Black Consciousness in South Africa in the 1970S,’ *South African Historical Journal*, 62, 1, p.167.

<sup>523</sup>Terence Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness*, p.19.

<sup>524</sup>Adrian Hastings, *The Church in Africa 1450-1950*, p.259.

warning him against sending other African ministers to England for further training. The letter was written in Shona and part of it reads:

I am grateful to God for the opportunity that I got to study at the University of Manchester. You will be interested to know that I always pray for you so that you can be granted wisdom like Solomon. My main advice is that you should not send useless people to come and study here in England. If you do that you will be sharpening the spears which will kill you tomorrow. Before you send someone, you need to be sure that he supports you when it comes to church politics...<sup>525</sup>

Before I analyse the contents of this letter, I comment on the use of the indigenous language in this letter by Nemapare. The use of Shona was clearly subversive. It was meant to keep the contents of the letter a secret from anyone who could not read this language. This is what James Scott refers to as „hidden transcripts’.<sup>526</sup> When subordinates use coded language which can not be understood by the dominant group, it is a way of resistance. Scott further argues:

If subordinate groups have typically won a reputation for subtlety - a subtlety their superiors often regard as cunning and deception - this is surely because their vulnerability has rarely permitted them the luxury of direct confrontation.<sup>527</sup>

The fact that the indigenous ministers did not have the luxury of direct confrontation made them use subtle ways of resistance. The letter is a warning from a former Methodist minister who broke away from the Methodist Church to form an Independent African Methodist Church.<sup>528</sup> When he wrote this letter, he was stationed in England, studying at the University of Manchester. He wrote to warn the Methodist Church leader that it was not a good idea to send people to Europe for study. In his view, doing that was synonymous with sharpening the spears that would, some time in the future, kill the leader. It was such thinking that prevented the African clergy from advancing academically. In this regard the enemies of African advancement were Africans themselves. The major problem was that Ndhela was an

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<sup>525</sup>Methodist Connexional Archives, letter from Nemapare to Ndhela, Ndhlela’s personal file. The original reads as follows: Ndinotenda Mwari nemukana wandakawana wekuzodzidza pano pa University yeManchester. Shoko rangu guru nderekuti musatumire vanhu venhando kuti vauye kuno kuEngland. Kana mukadaro munenge muchirodza mapfumo achakubayai mangwana. Musati matuma munhu ikoko vonai kuti munhu wenyu here kana kuti kwete.

<sup>526</sup>James Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, p.136.

<sup>527</sup>James Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, p.136.

<sup>528</sup> Terence Ranger, *Are We Also Not Men?*, p.84.

appointee of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society in England. His appointment was against normal Methodist practice which prescribed that all church positions should be filled through elections. The society justified its actions by stating that Rhodesia was a special case: the Rhodesian conflict had polarized the nation without sparing the church so it would be unwise to elect a leader as this would further polarize the church. Because Ndhlela was simply an appointee, people like Nemapare perceived any indigenous minister's desire to do further studies as a ploy to dethrone Ndhlela.

The opportunities to do further studies were few and far between. The reason is that there were not many universities in Africa. The few that existed did, in the majority of cases, have no programmes related to ministerial education. Many people from Rhodesia were educated in South Africa, especially at the University of Fort Hare. Other universities in the neighbouring country were reserved for whites. The only other alternative was to apply to do further studies in Europe.

The first person to successfully go overseas was Mazobere. When Mazobere applied to go to America, the answer from the church leadership was an emphatic „no‘.<sup>529</sup> Mazobere had done his teachers' training at Waddilove and managed to do the Cambridge ordinary certificate at Goromonzi High School.<sup>530</sup> In 1962 he was sent by the church to work as a minister in England.<sup>531</sup> Whilst in England, he worked in Leicester North Circuit.<sup>532</sup> On his return to Rhodesia he was a lecturer at Epworth Theological College until he left for the United States of America.<sup>533</sup> The church by then had no clear policy concerning further studies, because the phenomenon had never been perceived as urgent.

When Mazobere applied for permission to go overseas to continue his studies, the church refused. He then absconded and left for the United States.<sup>534</sup> He wrote a letter of apology from his base in the United States. The letter reads:

I profusely apologize for my defiance. You will remember that in my entire ministry, I had never been arrayed before a disciplinary committee for any charges. My coming here was necessitated by the fact that I was teaching at the theological college and the skills that I am going to acquire will be ploughed back if you give

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<sup>529</sup>Naison Makwehe same interview.

<sup>530</sup>Mazobere's curriculum vitae MCA.

<sup>531</sup> Mazobere's curriculum vitae, MCA..

<sup>532</sup>Mazobere's curriculum vitae, MCA.

<sup>533</sup>Mazobere's curriculum vitae, MCA.

<sup>534</sup>Naison Makwehe, same interview..



me another opportunity and pardon me. I still believe the Lord has called me and I pray that the Standing Committee will have mercy on me.<sup>535</sup>

The soft stance adopted by Mazobere in his letter could have been a strategy to survive. Scott postulates that the powerless tend to absorb insults without retaliating physically.<sup>536</sup> He further observes:

Nowhere is the training of self-control more apparent than in the tradition of the „dovens’ or „dirty dozens’ among young black males in the United States. The „dozens’ consist in two blacks trading rhymed insults of one another’s family (especially mothers and sisters), victory is achieved by never losing one’s temper and fighting but rather devising ever more clever insults so as to win the purely verbal duel.<sup>537</sup>

Mazobere’s plan was to be calm and devise a plan to survive. He resorted to the use of kind words and extending an apology. His strategy was successful and he was spared from dismissal on the grounds that his education might be needed in future, especially at the theological college. After completing his Masters of Sacred Theology, the church wrote him a letter instructing him to come back immediately.<sup>538</sup> He was accused of seeking employment in the United States since he was now exercising ministry in the Congregational Church. Mazobere responded to this letter in Shona. The letter was addressed to Ndhlela whom he addressed as uncle. The letter reads:

I remember the support that I received from you at the previous Standing Committee when the white missionaries wanted to expel me from the church because they were afraid that if I become educated I will threaten their hegemony. I continue to plead with you my uncle that it will be foolhardy if I am to return without doing PhD when some well-wishers have put together some funding for my studies. I am requesting that the church grant me permission to finish my studies and soon after I will come back home to work for the church. These missionaries say I must come back yet they always denigrate black people for their lack of education. When I complete my studies, I will never contest you on the leadership

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<sup>535</sup>Mazobere’s curriculum vitae, MCA.

<sup>536</sup>James Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, p. 136.

<sup>537</sup>James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, p. 137.

<sup>538</sup>Letter from Ndhlela to Mazobere in Mazobere’s personal file, MCA.

position but instead I will be your faithful advisor. Please help me I am in a very difficult time...<sup>539</sup>

Before I reflect on the contents of the letter, it is critical that I comment on how the letter addressed the leader of the church. The letter insinuates that Mazobere was related to Ndhlela. When I investigated whether the two were actually relatives, it turned out that they were not. In Shona people may use „uncle’, „brother’ or any other respectful designation as a way of communicating their vulnerability. In this particular case, it could have been a case of „hidden transcripts’ between two Africans with one in a position of power and another in a position of weakness. By addressing Ndhlela as „uncle’, Mazobere could have merely been caressing the ego of the one in the more powerful position. Scott helps us to understand this phenomenon when he argues that one of the safest ways of dealing with the dominant group is to flatter the dominant.<sup>540</sup>

In this letter, Mazobere thanks Ndhlela for having stood by him on the previous standing committee which aimed at excommunicating him. He argues that he was aware that the people who wanted to excommunicate him were the missionaries because they were afraid of competition yet they were the ones who often denigrated Africans as uneducated. He pleads with his „uncle’ Ndhlela to spare him. He argues that it would have been foolhardy for him to return with a Master’s Degree when he had been given a place and the funding for his Doctor of Philosophy Degree. He further pledges that upon his return, he would never contest Ndhlela’s position as a leader of the church but would be playing an advisory role.

Mazobere was eventually allowed to finish his degree and in 1976 he came back to Rhodesia where he was appointed to teach at the United Theological College, where he became the first black principal. True to his word, Mazobere never contested Ndhela’s position as a leader. He only took over as head of the Methodist Church when Ndhela retired in 1980.

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<sup>539</sup>Letter from Mazobere to Ndhela 4 September 1972, see Mazobere’s personal file, MCA. The original letter reads: *Ndinorangarira rutsigiro rwamakandipa pamusangano wakapfuura apo varungu vainge vada kundidzinga vachitya kuti ndikafunda ndingazoenzana navo. Ndinoramba ndichikumbira kwamuri sekuru kuti hungava hurema kuti munhu uchere mvura nemukombe ipo pane akupa gate. Ndakatowana rubatsiro rwemari kuti ndipedzise chikoro ndigodzoka kumusha kuzoshanda muchurch. Ivo varungu vanonditi ndidzoke asi ndivo vanogaro tituka vachiti mabhoyi haana kufunda. Kana ndafunda sekuru musatya nekuti handizofi ndakwikwidzana nemi pachigaro asi kuti ndinenge ndava chipanga mazano chenyu. ndibatsirei ndiri parumana nzombe.*

<sup>540</sup>James Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, p.18.

The only other African minister to do further studies was Farai Chirisa. He joined the African ministry in 1965 when he was already a qualified teacher, like many others.<sup>541</sup> He attended Epworth Theological College where he distinguished himself as a potential leader.<sup>542</sup> He was favoured by several missionaries because of his ability to speak English well.<sup>543</sup> After his theological training, he became a school manager.<sup>544</sup> In 1974, he was appointed to represent the church at a youth conference in the United Kingdom. This trip became a watershed in his life since he managed to make contacts with other Methodist ministers in England who later organized a scholarship for him to do further studies at Manchester University. The Standing Committee in Rhodesia refused to sanction his going, citing a shortage of ministers. He was only allowed to leave after those ministers who had organized his scholarship raised the issue with the British Conference. Chirisa studied for a Bachelor of Arts Degree and returned home to serve as a lecturer at the United Theological College. He became the first African secretary of the conference in 1979.<sup>545</sup>

Other ministers who wanted to continue their studies were inhibited by several factors. Firstly the Rhodesian Synod passed a regulation in 1970 that only ordained ministers could apply to do further studies.<sup>546</sup> The difficulty was that many African ministers took long to be ordained and by the time they were ordained their families would have ballooned to such an extent that they could not be left behind without any source of income.

This was compounded by the fact that several African ministers had no homes of their own. They would only start thinking of a home towards retirement because, during the time of service, accommodation was provided and it was mandatory that they stayed with their wives. This made it difficult for many ministers to think of further education; they would have had to find alternative accommodation for their families.

Furthermore, very few African ministers had contacts outside the country. This made it difficult for them to find an entry point in their quest for further education. During the period under review, communication was very difficult and expensive. It was not easy to communicate with universities in Europe, hence very few ministers managed to access further education.

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<sup>541</sup>Farai Chirisa's curriculum vitae in his personal file, MCA.

<sup>542</sup>Summary of Chirisa's life presented at his farewell service in Dombotombo Methodist Church, 12 March 2008.

<sup>543</sup>Chirisa's life presented at his farewell service.

<sup>544</sup>Chirisa's life presented at his farewell service.

<sup>545</sup>Chirisa's life presented at his farewell service.

<sup>546</sup>Minutes of synod 1970, file S/M, MCA.

Ministers such as Charles Manyoba tried in vain to get an opportunity for further studies.<sup>547</sup> He did everything to get permission from the church but he failed. What he lacked was the courage to be more forceful, just like some others.<sup>548</sup> Enos Chibi is another one who struggled hard to continue his studies. He ended up studying through the University of South Africa in the late 1970s, but the church refused to pay his expenses. They only came to his aid when he was about to complete his Bachelor of Theology Degree.<sup>549</sup>

Towards the end of the 1970s, there was an increased interest in further studies on the part of the indigenous ministers. In 1976 there were five applicants for further studies. These were Charles Manyoba, Ishmael Sikimarira, John Jabangwe, Julius Juru and Noah Matanga. All were turned down because of the shortage of personnel.<sup>550</sup>

In 1979, there were six applications. Four of the previous applicants had re-submitted their applications and they were joined by two others. These were Morris Masvanhise and Aneas Mandinyenya.<sup>551</sup>

It is quite clear that the indigenous Methodist ministers viewed further education as a gateway to leadership positions as well as economic independence. They knew that, once they were educated, their chances of promotion in the church would be high and promotion meant higher stipends. The fact, that towards the dawn of Zimbabwe's political independence there was an influx of applications for continued study, is not without significance. African clergy were not sure what position the nationalist government would take with regard to the church, once it had come to power. There was a strong suspicion that the church was going to be banned in accordance with threats previously made by Robert Mugabe, especially to the Catholic Church which had produced a dossier of atrocities committed by his soldiers towards civilians.<sup>552</sup> In any case Mugabe espoused a Marxist-Leninist ideology. Further studies were important since they guaranteed a future for the indigenous ministers, even if the church would be banned.

At the political level, the nationalists' parties were beginning to remove educated soldiers from the front, sending them overseas for further education. They were doing this in

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<sup>547</sup>Enos Chibisame interview.

<sup>548</sup>Enos Chibisame interview.

<sup>549</sup>Enos Chibisame interview.

<sup>550</sup>Enos Chibisame interview.

<sup>551</sup>Minutes of conference, 1979, file M/C, MCA.

<sup>552</sup>Janice McLaughlin, *On the Frontline: Catholic Missions in Zimbabwe's Liberation War*, Harare: Baobab, 1996, p.27.

preparation of what they termed „from bush to office’. It was clear to the indigenous ministers that for educated persons there would be opportunities to take over key responsibilities from the whites. They knew that some missionaries would leave the country after independence, so whether the church would be banned or not, they needed to academically prepare themselves for the takeover.

There is no doubt that theological education played a major role in creating political awareness amongst the indigenous ministers of the Wesleyan Methodist Church. The education that they received opened their eyes. In fact, the indigenous ministers had already developed a certain level of consciousness when they decided to join the clergy. Although, the education they were given was inferior to the one received by the white missionaries in their own countries, it made them see what they were deprived of. When they realized that there were no opportunities for further education it increased their political awareness. Ranger, in a discussion of peasants’ consciousness in Zimbabwe, argues that peasants developed a certain level of consciousness as they saw a series of deprivations against them.<sup>553</sup> Ranger’s analysis is in line with the claims made in this chapter.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

Chapter three explored the church’s policies with regard to the recruitment of indigenous ministers. It established that, for the larger part of the period under review, the road to the African ministry lay in teacher’s training. Furthermore, the chapter traced the history of the training of the indigenous Methodist ministers. First as an in-service kind of training, then at Waddilove Training Institution and finally at Epworth Theological College which was later renamed United Theological College. The chapter took the position that the indigenous Methodist indigenous ministers’ social and political consciousness was increased by their experience as candidates for the ministry and as students at both Waddilove and Epworth theological institutions. This study also established that the situation was not unique to Zimbabwe because even in South Africa seminarians were the major force behind the black consciousness movement. Comparatively speaking, the study does establish that the Methodist Church’s programme of indigenization led to faster results than that of their South African counterparts. It also came out clearly that the indigenous ministers perceived further

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<sup>553</sup>Terence Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness*, p.21.

studies as a prerequisite for economic advancement as well as for gaining church positions. The next chapter will discuss how the indigenous ministers viewed their working conditions which include issues of subsistence. The overarching question is: to what extent did the working conditions of the indigenous ministers precipitate their political awareness?

## **4. CHAPTER FOUR: STIPENDS AND WORKING CONDITIONS OF THE METHODIST INDIGENOUS MINISTERS FROM 1891-1980**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter explored the training of the Methodist indigenous ministers and the impact of that training on their political consciousness and worldview. Chapter four seeks to establish the levels of stipends and the working conditions of the indigenous ministers during the period under review. The major question to be answered is: how did their stipend levels and employment conditions impact on the political consciousness of the Methodist indigenous ministers? In order to satisfactorily answer this question, this chapter looks at stipends from the period when pioneer indigenous ministers were recruited to 1980.

Secondly, the chapter will discuss other benefits associated with the African ministry such as accommodation, transport, medical aid, pension contributions, funeral policy and children's education.

Thirdly, this chapter will examine the various ways in which the indigenous ministers responded to their situation of deprivation. For instance, some of them engaged in passive resistance as a way of expressing their disapproval of the status quo. An example of passive resistance was, what the missionaries referred to as, 'laziness' or the 'stealing' of church money. This study argues that all these acts expressed the indigenous ministers' lack of a sense of ownership of the evangelisation project. What the European missionaries regarded as 'stealing', may have been perceived differently by the indigenous ministers who viewed it as an ethical process whereby goods and commodities exchanged ownership, moving from the one with plenty to the one with none. This was mutual exploitation between the dominant and the subordinate. In this sense the indigenous ministers had a high alertness to reciprocity.

In addition, the indigenous ministers acquired farms and operated businesses as a gateway to upward social mobility. In doing so, they often went against the church's rules and regulations which prohibited Methodist ministers from running businesses.

Finally then, this chapter takes the position that the level of political consciousness of the indigenous ministers increased considerably as a result of the inequitable distribution of resources in the Methodist Church.

## **4.2 Stipends for the indigenous ministers in the Methodist Church from 1891-1980**

The first group of indigenous ministers in the Methodist Church were recruited from the teachers who had accompanied the pioneer Methodist missionaries on their journey from South Africa. This group was not much concerned about remuneration, for their mission was to participate in the conversion of their fellow Africans. What made them volunteer to cross the Limpopo River into Mashonaland was their religious zeal. They were soldiers of Christ determined to leave everything for the sake of the gospel.<sup>554</sup> As mentioned in chapter two of this thesis, two of these early teachers died as martyrs. Both of them could have escaped death, but they were determined to die for the ideals in which they had faith.<sup>555</sup> They earned their living through the generosity of the local people who were socialised in such a manner that they would always provide food to strangers.<sup>556</sup> It was part of Shona culture to be hospitable to strangers. The idea of the Lord's acre (*zunde ramambo*)<sup>557</sup> was meant to take care of the less privileged in society.

With the progression of time, the indigenous ministers began to earn a stipend although it was both inadequate and irregular. They always supplemented their income with the produce from tilling the land.<sup>558</sup> The synod of 1918 made the following resolution with regard to the indigenous ministers' stipends.

The synod while expressing sympathy with any of the African ministers who through special circumstances find it difficult to live on the allowance provided by the church, regrets that the church cannot help in this regard. It is necessary for us to

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<sup>554</sup>Brandon Graaf, *Modumedi Moleli A Martyr to Charity*, Harare: Methodist Church, 1972, p.34.

<sup>555</sup>See Kennedy Gondongwe, „The role of African Agents in the spread of Christianity in Zimbabwe with special reference to Modumedi Moleli and James Anta,‘ unpublished Masters Thesis, submitted to the University of Zimbabwe, 2006, p.62.

<sup>556</sup>Brandon Graaf, *Modumedi Moleli, a Martyr to Charity*, p.34.

<sup>557</sup>This was a system where the entire community was asked to provide labour for the chief's field which was intended to feed the less privileged in the community as well as travellers. *Zunde ramambo* was very helpful, especially during times of drought.

<sup>558</sup>Brandon Graaf, *Modumedi Moleli a Martyr to Charity*, p.34.



point that the amount of grant from England and the sum raised in the district, render it impossible for the synod to make any further increase in their wages.<sup>559</sup>

This statement by the synod needs to be unpacked. Did they believe that under normal circumstances the allowance was enough for the indigenous ministers? If this was the case, what could have been the special circumstances that the synod was referring to? One would think that perhaps the synod had in mind ministers with big families. In the Shona culture, a family includes many relatives. This is true of other African ethnic groups as well. For Europeans, the situation is different. In their minds, a family consists of husband, wife and children, whereas in the Shona culture it also includes distant relatives who for one reason or another are staying in a particular household.

It is important to note the resolution's statement that the church did not have enough money to pay adequate stipends to its indigenous ministers. In 1921, the Methodist synod passed a resolution, forwarded by the Native Committee of Review. The resolution reads:

The synod should consider the possibility of raising the native ministers' and the evangelists' wages. The present allowances being considered inadequate to meet the ordinary needs of life at the present time.<sup>560</sup>

The Native Committee of Review comprised two European clergy, one African clergy and one evangelist.<sup>561</sup> It is both revealing and ironic that a committee whose mandate was to safeguard the interests of the Africans comprised an equal number of missionaries and indigenous ministers. The committee, on the other hand, that oversaw missionary issues was called the European Ministers Committee of Review<sup>562</sup> and had indigenous representatives. The assumption may have been that indigenous ministers had nothing to do with issues pertaining to missionaries, whereas the missionaries were stake-holders in the African ministers' affairs. In any case, the missionaries were the administrators of the Christian project. This was a form of domination by the European missionaries over their African colleagues.

By 1923, the synod made the following resolution with regard to African ministers' stipends.

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<sup>559</sup>Minutes of synod, 1918, file S/M, MCA.

<sup>560</sup>See the resolution from the Native Committee of Review in the synod minutes of 1921, file S/M, MCA.

<sup>561</sup>District of Southern Rhodesia handbook, 1921, file H/B, MCA.

<sup>562</sup>District of Southern Rhodesia handbook, 1921, file H/B, MCA.

Owing to the financial difficulties that face the district, the synod feels compelled to inform all the native ministers, district agents and native evangelists that the bonus granted to them during the war will have to be discontinued after the next synod.<sup>563</sup>

It is important to know what the bonus was for. Why was it given during the war? Which war was the synod referring to? Answers to these questions are conjectural. Firstly, there were only two wars fought between 1891 and 1923. The first was the First *Chimurenga* War between 1896 and 1897. Chances are very slim that the synod was referring to this war because by 1896 the Methodist Church was relying on evangelist teachers from South Africa and had yet to recruit its first indigenous minister. Secondly, this war took place when the Methodist Church was still in the process of organising itself as an institution and there were no salaries to talk about for indigenous ministers.

The other possibility is that the synod referred to the First World War from 1914 to 1918. This is most likely as the 1923 synod took place five years after the end of this war of which the impact was felt the world over. In its 1917 correspondence, the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society actually mentions that, although the First World War was geographically far removed from Rhodesia, its consequences were felt worldwide.<sup>564</sup>

By 1924, the indigenous ministers in full connexion working in rural areas were earning £7 per month whereas those working in industrial areas were earning £9 per month. Probationers working in rural areas were earning £5, 10 per month whereas their counterparts working in industrialised areas were earning £7 per month.<sup>565</sup> The different stipends for indigenous ministers in rural areas and those in urban areas could have resulted from the view that in rural areas expenses were lower than in urban areas. The danger of this practice was that it created two categories of indigenous ministers with different incomes. By 1932, the stipends for the indigenous ministers were still at the same level.<sup>566</sup> Margaret James argued that inflation was low and therefore ministers' salaries remained unchanged for long periods.

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<sup>563</sup>Minutes of synod 1923, file S/M, MCA.

<sup>564</sup>Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society's letter to the district of Rhodesia, 2 April 1917, file MMS/RS, MCA.

<sup>565</sup>Minutes of synod, January 1924, file S/M, MCA.

<sup>566</sup>Minutes of synod, January 1924, file S/M, MCA.

<sup>567</sup>Margaret James same interview.

The Pastoral Committee of 1932 came up with a recommendation to reduce the level of stipends for African ministers and evangelists. Ministers who were earning £9 per month had their stipends reduced by £1, 10.0. Ministers whose stipends were £7 per month had their stipends reduced by £1.<sup>568</sup> The reduction was to take effect from December 1931. The reason was the economic recession in the entire capitalist world. Britain was not spared by it. It is very likely that the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society received less income than before.

While the reasons for the reduction of the stipends were clear, the action affected black ministers more than the white missionaries. The minutes of the synod meeting state that the reduction of stipends for African ministers and evangelists was suggested by James Butler, a European missionary, and ratified by the church's Finance Committee.

The 1932 Finance Committee was made up of ten members.<sup>569</sup> All were Europeans.<sup>570</sup> The composition of the committee might suggest that the stipends for the indigenous ministers were reduced, simply because the committee did not care. But such thinking would be simplistic, because there is evidence that some missionaries spoke out in defence of the dignity of their African colleagues. The question then remains: why did the committee recommend the reduction of stipends for the indigenous ministers and not for the missionaries? By 1934, stipends were still as they were after the 1932 reduction.<sup>571</sup>

To evaluate whether the indigenous ministers were being exploited or not we need to establish the levels of stipends for the Methodist European ministers during the same time. Efforts to do so did not bear much fruit. However, Canaan Banana's 1976 letter protesting the low stipends for indigenous ministers provides us with a clue. As shall be seen later in this chapter, Banana was shocked when he discovered that the stipends for indigenous ministers were five times less than those of the missionaries.<sup>572</sup> Assuming that the gap between the indigenous ministers' stipends and those of the European missionaries in 1976 has remained constant from the onset of the 20th century, the European Methodist missionaries would have been earning about £45 in 1934.

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<sup>568</sup>1932, recommendations from the pastoral session in the minutes of synod 1932, file S/M, MCA.

<sup>569</sup>1932 handbook for the Southern Rhodesia district ,file H/B, MCA.

<sup>570</sup>1932 handbook for the Southern Rhodesia district ,file H/B, MCA

<sup>571</sup>Minutes of synod, January 1934, file S/M, MCA.

<sup>572</sup>Letter from Canaan Banana to Hughes Thomas, secretary of Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, 13 May 1976, Canaan Banana's personal file, MCA.

To make economic sense of the above figures, it will be helpful to consider the salaries paid to government employees in the same period. Franklin Parker argues that the average monthly salary for a trained male African teacher in 1934 was £9.52.<sup>573</sup> These figures may imply that the Methodist indigenous ministers were earning less than an African school teacher.

This is ironic when one considers that, at the time, the Methodist indigenous ministers were all former teachers. It means that their salaries went down upon their acceptance of a call to the Methodist ministry.

Although the indigenous ministers' stipends were low, it seems they did not complain or, if they did, the relevant records were not preserved. Another possibility is that the indigenous ministers did not complain in public. This would have been a strategy to avoid victimisation by those who yielded economic and political power. Supposing that they never complained, the possible reasons for such restraint could be many.

It could for example mean that the stipends were not very high but still adequate. This could be supported by the 1954 report from the Kwenda mission which stipulates that there were very few people offering for African ministry because the salaries were not adequate whereas in the early days they had been more than adequate.<sup>574</sup> The implication of this statement is that the stipends were satisfactory once upon a time but that they failed to keep pace with the rising costs of living. We face the challenge of finding out what exactly the Kwenda people meant by 'early days'.

A second possibility is that the indigenous ministers did not complain because they had been indoctrinated by the missionaries to the effect that their theology was world denying rather than world affirming. The Methodist 'Rules and Regulations for the African work' of 1940 states that every candidate for the African ministry was supposed to be free of any financial liabilities at the time of candidature.<sup>575</sup> This could have been aimed at keeping ministers focussed on their work and not to engage in fundraising activities. It could have been also an attempt to train ministers to be content with the little they were getting. We know for sure that in other circles the gospel was used as a means of keeping people in their place and teaching them to be happy with their lot. In 1814, Cecil Frances Alexander had

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<sup>573</sup> Franklin, P., 'Education of Africans in southern Rhodesia' *Comparative Education Review*. Vol 3, No 2, October., 1959, 27-32, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1186881>. Accessed 29 May 2011.

<sup>574</sup> H. H Morley Wright's letter to the district chairperson, 11 November 1954, file Ms 246, NAZ.

<sup>575</sup> Rules and Regulations for the African Work, 1940, p.18, file R/R, MCA.

written a hymn for the Anglican Church that became popularly known as „All things bright and beautiful.’<sup>576</sup> One of the verses contains the words:

The rich man in his castle,  
The poor man at his gate,  
God made them low and mighty  
And ordered their estate<sup>577</sup>

This hymn was included in the Methodist hymn book but the notorious verse was later removed on the grounds that it compromised the church’s theological position of common humanity and common destiny.<sup>578</sup> The rich used religion to keep the poor in their place, the poor used it as an escape mechanism. They took comfort in the compensation offered by the promise of afterlife. Religion functioned as a cushion against the harsh realities of this life. It inured them to poverty and pain.

James K. Mwangi, discussing why the Pentecostal Church in Nairobi (Kenya) did not pay its pastors enough money for their survival, argues that:

The idea of going to heaven affects the „down here’ aspect of life making the here and now life much less important and not worth any attention because in the words of Jimmy Reeves<sup>579</sup>, „This world is not our home, we are just passing through and our treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue.’<sup>580</sup>

Mwangi further observes that this eschatological conception of reality saturated all spheres of life so that even counselling the sick, the depressed and the bereaved, were all anchored in

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<sup>576</sup>Old Methodist hymn book, hymn 851. London: Methodist Conference Office, p.772.

<sup>577</sup>Old Methodist hymn book, *hymn* 851.London: Methodist Conference Office, p. 772. It is useful to note that this verse was eventually removed from the Methodist Hymn book in the 1933 publication because it was believed that the verse was an affront to the church’s thrust on common humanity and struggle for justice. The worship programme for a Christmas service held at Trinity Church in 1931 shows that the hymn was sung and the controversial verse was still part of the Methodist hymnal. This verse was quoted by Rev. J. Roberts (Methodist missionary) in his article on church and politics published in the Rhodesian Methodist Quarterly review of the Methodist Church. March 1963. It was again quoted by Robert Forest, another Methodist missionary, in his article on the challenges of the church in Zimbabwe. This article was written in the early 1980s.

<sup>578</sup>Margaret James same interview.

<sup>579</sup>Jimmy Reeves’s song this world is not our home, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ndMZqT6i4I](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ndMZqT6i4I) cited in J.K. Mwangi, „Muzzling the Ox that threads out the Cone, A critical analysis of the theology and practice of the full time ministry of the Pentecostal Church in Nairobi District of Kenya with special reference to remuneration’. Unpublished Master’s degree thesis submitted at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 1998, p.108.

p. 109.

<sup>580</sup>James .K. Mwangi, *Muzzling the Ox that threads out the Cone.*, p.108.

this belief.<sup>581</sup> John Bunyan's „Pilgrim's Progress' featured prominently in their theology. A believer was seen as a pilgrim whose ultimate destiny is heaven.<sup>582</sup>

Although, Mwangi is writing about a completely different movement and focuses on a completely different geographical and historical context, his findings dovetail with the situation in the Rhodesian Methodist Church in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

It seems that the Methodist Church was not alone in its quest to influence the indigenous ministers in such a way that they would not adopt a materialistic orientation. The United Methodist Church in Rhodesia had the same aim. Farai Muzorewa holds that the United Methodist missionaries always emphasised that the indigenous ministers were supposed to seek the kingdom of God first and everything else would follow.<sup>583</sup> Muzorewa argues that the problem with this philosophy was that the indigenous ministers realised eventually that, even after they sought the kingdom of God, nothing followed.<sup>584</sup> Muzorewa mentions hymn 303 in the United Methodist hymn book which was popularised in the 1940s and which, by 1980 had become one of the church's most popular songs. It was sung at ordinations, confirmations and other important occasions.<sup>585</sup> One of the verses goes as follows.

If you have some work that I can do

I will be very happy to do it

I will never demand remuneration

I am happy that you called me.<sup>586</sup>

In the 1930s, the indigenous ministers managed to get together for a discussion of issues affecting them as African ministers.<sup>587</sup> Their association started as an unofficial forum aimed at making African ministers speak with one voice on matters which collectively pertained to them. By 1965 it had developed into a well constituted fellowship.<sup>588</sup> It became known as African Ministers' Fellowship. The story of how the association began is very interesting.

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<sup>581</sup> James .K. Mwangi, *Muzzling the Ox that threads out the Cone*, p. 109.

<sup>582</sup> James. K .Mwangi, *Muzzling the ox that threads out the cone*, p.109

<sup>583</sup>Farai Muzorewa, interview conducted by Kennedy Gondongwe through Yahoo chat, 16 October 2010.

<sup>584</sup> Farai Muzorewa same interview.

<sup>585</sup> Farai Muzorewa same interview.

<sup>586</sup> See the United Methodist hymn book. Hymn 303.conference board of publications and communications, 165 Chinhoyi Street, Harare: 1935. The song is sung in Shona and the Shona rendering of that song is *Kana mune basa randingaite, Ndingafare kuriita, Handizodi mubairo,ndinofara kudaidzwa ndimi.*

<sup>587</sup> Naison Makwehe, same interview.

<sup>588</sup> Naison Makwehe,same interview.

The European ministers would try to fraternise with their African colleagues in many ways but the one thing they would not do was to eat at the same table with them.<sup>589</sup> They would attend meetings together but, when it was time to eat, they would go their separate ways.<sup>590</sup> It was at one such occasion that the indigenous ministers were discussing their experiences over lunch, when the radical Esau Nemapare suggested to his fellow African ministers that it might be prudent to occasionally meet and share their experiences.<sup>591</sup> Hence, the association began as a platform for lamentations, but eventually it transformed itself into a forum of planning and plotting.<sup>592</sup> The informal gathering of the African clergy would pass on their concerns to what was known as the Native Ministers Committee. As time progressed, the unofficial African clergy meetings developed into the African Ministers' Fellowship.

The organisation resembled the one known as Black Methodist Consultation (BMC) in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa.<sup>593</sup> The latter organisation was founded in May 1975 when Ernest Baartman called a convention of black Methodist ministers in Bloemfontein,<sup>594</sup> leading to the formation of the BMC.<sup>595</sup> R.S Kumalo observes that in the year of its formation, the BMC ordered the Methodist Church of Southern Africa Conference to examine the unrest in the country and threatened to walk out in protest against the presence of Methodist chaplains in the South African Army.<sup>596</sup> As Darryl Balia sees it, the Methodist Church was controlled by whites and the BMC was an attempt to get rid of ecclesiastical injustices.<sup>597</sup>

The Zimbabwean indigenous ministers were far ahead of their South African counterparts in so far as they came up with the African Ministers Fellowship ten years before the indigenous ministers in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa established the BMC. This is ironic when one considers that the Methodist Church in Rhodesia was an offshoot of the South African Methodist Church. Although the BMC was formed ten years after the Native

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<sup>589</sup> Naison Makwehe, same interview.

<sup>590</sup> Naison Makwehe, same interview.

<sup>591</sup> Naison Makwehe, same interview.

<sup>592</sup> Naison Makwehe, same interview.

<sup>593</sup> Darryl M Balia, *Black Methodists and White Supremacy in South Africa*. Durban: Institute for Black Research, 1991, p. 88.

<sup>594</sup> Darryl M Balia, *Black Methodists and White Supremacy in South Africa*. Durban: Institute for Black Research, p. 88.

Darryl M Balia, *Black Methodists and White Supremacy in South Africa*. Durban: Institute for Black Research, p. 88.

<sup>595</sup> Darryl M Balia, *Black Methodists and White Supremacy in South Africa*. Durban: Institute for Black Research, p. 88.

<sup>596</sup> R. Simangaliso Kumalo, *Methodist with a White History and a Black Future*, p.260.

<sup>597</sup> Darryl M Balia, *Black Methodists and White Supremacy in South Africa*. Durban: Institute for Black Research, p. 88.

Ministers Fellowship in the Methodist Church in Rhodesia, there is no evidence that the South African ministers were copying their Zimbabwean counterparts.

The African ministers' gatherings were meant to allow the indigenous ministers to share their tribulations, but from time to time they forwarded their concerns to the relevant committees of the church.<sup>598</sup> One of their resolutions reads:

We urge this synod to review upwards the level of African ministers' stipends. Furthermore, we request that the African ministers' stipend be paid by the district and not by the individual circuits.<sup>599</sup>

It must be noted that it took the indigenous ministers only a year after the reduction of their stipends to express their dissatisfaction with the remuneration levels. This may mean that the reduction was decided without the approval of the indigenous ministers. The other possibility is that the indigenous ministers approved of it in the synod but changed their position soon after the meeting. The request that their stipends be paid by the district possibly resulted from the fact that many circuits were unable to pay the stipulated stipends. The same synod of 1933 made a very instructive resolution which is as follows:

In view of the fact that it had been found necessary to reduce native ministers and evangelist wages, the Finance Committee recommended that the European ministers make a voluntary subscription to the present DEF. 10/- per month in the case of married ministers and 5/- per month in the case of single ministers.<sup>600</sup>

It must be noted that the resolution concerning the European ministers invites a voluntary contribution whereas the stipend reduction for the African ministers was not voluntary. One wonders whether this was another case of discrimination.

Whilst the church was reducing the stipends for her African ministers, there were remarkable developments in the area of politics. In 1930, the economic decline intensified. In 1931, the Maize Control Act was passed and so was the Cattle Levy.<sup>601</sup> These two Acts represented the heightening of the indigenous people's problems.<sup>602</sup> In this context the question that begs for an answer is, whether what was happening in the country politically, had an influence on

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<sup>598</sup> Naison Makwehe same interview.

<sup>599</sup> See the resolution passed from the Native Ministers resolutions. This resolution was forwarded by Africans ministers meeting, Methodist Synod 1933, file S/M, MCA.

<sup>600</sup> Minutes of synod, 1933, file S/M, MCA.

<sup>601</sup> Terence Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness and Guerrilla War in Zimbabwe*, p.x1.

<sup>602</sup> Terence Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness and Guerrilla War in Zimbabwe*, p. X1.



what occurred in the church. The answer to this question is in the affirmative. After all, the Methodist Church was not operating in a vacuum but in a particular socio-political environment and its functionaries were influenced by society.

Another notable phenomenon is that the year 1932 saw the advent of the Apostles Churches in the eastern districts of Zimbabwe.<sup>603</sup> These churches began as a protest movement against white domination. To be precise, in Makoni rose a prophet by the name of Shoniwa Masedza Tandi Moyo of Gandanzara later to be known as John the Baptist or Johan Masowe.<sup>604</sup> This prophet preached the gospel of withdrawal from participation in the colonial political economy.<sup>605</sup> He emphasised self-reliance and urged people to become artisans and craftsmen rather than farmers.<sup>606</sup> Masowe considered the missionary church as an instrument of oppression.<sup>607</sup> The rise of Masowe demonstrates an increasing degree of political consciousness on the part of the „natives’ in general and one may argue that the indigenous ministers would have enjoyed a similar, or even higher, level of political awareness, given their superior education.

Within the Wesleyan Methodist Church, the first breakaway church was led by Matthew Zvimba in 1915.<sup>608</sup> The story of Zvimba will be dealt with in chapter six of this thesis. However, it is important to mention that he protested against domination by the missionaries.

In the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, one of the earliest breakaway churches was called the Methodist Church in Africa, earlier known as the *Bantu* Methodist Church of South Africa<sup>609</sup>. It was formed in 1933.<sup>610</sup> The factors behind this secession are many and varied. We will highlight only two which are of interest for our study. Firstly, the break-away Christians demanded justice in the administration of the church.<sup>611</sup> Secondly, they protested against alleged financial exploitation in the form of exorbitant levies.<sup>612</sup>

Be that as it may, signs of dissatisfaction with regard to the remuneration of African ministers in the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Rhodesia were on the increase. The indigenous

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<sup>603</sup> Terence Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness and Guerrilla War in Zimbabwe*, p.x1.

<sup>604</sup> Terence Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness and Guerrilla War in Zimbabwe*, p.89.

<sup>605</sup> Terence Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness and Guerrilla War in Zimbabwe*, p. 89.

<sup>606</sup> Terence Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness and Guerrilla War in Zimbabwe*, p. 89.

<sup>607</sup> Terence Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness and Guerrilla War in Zimbabwe*, p. 89.

<sup>608</sup> Terence Ranger, *Are We Not Also Men?*, p. 27-28.

<sup>609</sup> L.M. Taunyane, *The Methodist Church in Africa 1933-2001*, Wellington: Lux Verbi, 2001, p.7,

<sup>610</sup> L.M. Taunyane, *The Methodist Church in Africa 1933-2001*, p.7,

<sup>611</sup> L.M. Taunyane, *The Methodist Church in Africa 1933-2001*, p. 7

<sup>612</sup> L.M. Taunyane, *The Methodist Church in Africa 1933-2001*, p.7,

ministers continued to meet informally. Although their recommendations were always discussed at the synod meeting of every ensuing year, it seems the indigenous ministers never achieved the increment they were lobbying for. The synods of 1936, 1937, 1940, 1944 and 1948 discussed the need to increase the level of stipends for indigenous ministers and evangelists, but a cash flow problem was always cited as the major impediment.

Naison Makwehe postulates that the missionaries had a tendency to look for excuses in the cash flow problem but that the real issue was racism.<sup>613</sup> He points out that, in the early 1950s, one arrogant missionary by the name of Kenneth Underwood argued in a synod meeting that there was no justification for African ministers to want to earn more because they had a variety of cheap food to choose from. He argued that Africans could eat wild fruits, tree leaves and a lot of other things whereas Europeans were limited to a strict diet.<sup>614</sup>

Another missionary by the name of Harold Paget supported that African ministers would be given stipends, sufficient just for their survival. The reason was that Africans did not know how to use money.<sup>615</sup> Paget further argued:

In any case, any extra dollar in the pocket of an African is an incentive for him either to marry more wives or to increase the number of children and yet the victim is always the African women. We must be seen to be protecting these poor women.<sup>616</sup>

If this argument is taken to its logical conclusion, it suggests that keeping an African man scrounging for his needs was in fact a scheme to protect the African woman. One might argue that, to the contrary, by making the indigenous minister scrounge for food, his wife and children were offered no protection but, instead, exposed to hardship.

The argument that Africans did not know how to use money could be seen as a dangerous generalisation. It is worthwhile noting that all the indigenous ministers of the Methodist Church were required to study and pass an examination based on John Wesley's forty-four sermons. Included in those sermons was Wesley's teaching about the use of money.

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<sup>613</sup> Naison Makwehe, same interview.

<sup>614</sup> Naison Makwehe, same interview.

<sup>615</sup> Naison Makwehe, same interview.

<sup>616</sup> Naison Makwehe, same interview.

Additionally, all Methodist theological students were taught basic concepts of financial management.<sup>617</sup>

On 8 July 1954 the district chairman Jesse Lawrence wrote a letter to the entire church, appealing to African young people in the Methodist Church to offer for Christian ministry in the Methodist Church. The entire connexion was made up of 23 circuits.<sup>618</sup> After discussing the matter in their own circuits, 18 circuits forwarded their responses, citing, among other things, low stipends as the reason for lack of interest on the part of Africans to join the Methodist ministry.<sup>619</sup>

It would seem as if the practice of paying low stipends to indigenous ministers was widespread across Africa and across denominations save for prosperity-seeking Pentecostals. Siphon Mtetwa, who was an indigenous minister in the Presbyterian Church in South Africa, lamented that his first stipend as a minister during the 1980s was a paltry 400 rand whereas his white counterpart received more than 900 rand.<sup>620</sup> This situation literally resembled that in the Methodist Church in Rhodesia which stipulated that European missionaries would earn a higher stipend than African ministers. The immediate justification for the disparity was that missionaries were employed by the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society in the United Kingdom. However, if one digs deeper into the system, one might argue that the discrepancy was anchored in racial prejudice.

Margaret James, a retired white Methodist minister born in Rhodesia, postulates that the system of stipends was very unfair to the African ministers.<sup>621</sup> She argues:

It was clear that the system of paying of stipends was unfair. All the European missionaries were supposed to be paid by the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society but they were stationed in white congregations which could afford to pay the stipulated levels of stipends. Those who were stationed in other circuits which could not afford to pay the required levels of stipends for one reason or another, were to have the shortfall paid by the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society. All

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<sup>617</sup> These issues are fully discussed in chapter three of this thesis so there is no need for elaboration.

<sup>618</sup> The Methodist handbook for 1954, file H/B, MCA.

<sup>619</sup> Rev. H. H. Morley Wright's letter to the district chairperson, 11 November 1954, file Ms 246, NAZ.

<sup>620</sup> Siphon Mtetwa, 'Ministering to a bleeding South Africa, the life story of a black Minister during the dirty years of apartheid' in Phillippe Denis (ed.), *Making of the Indigenous Clergy* p.184.

<sup>621</sup> Margaret James, same interview.

the Methodist European missionaries were paid after every three months and the money was always to come in advance.<sup>622</sup>

The argument made by James is very revealing. The first revelation is that, although the European missionaries were regarded as employees of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, their stipends were paid locally with the exception of situations where the circuit or the institution where the missionary was appointed, was unable to raise the full amount. Even in those situations, the local circuit or institution was expected to pay what it could afford. The second important point is that the payment for the European missionaries was made in advance whereas the indigenous ministers were paid in arrears.<sup>623</sup> James further points out that the white ministers who were born in Rhodesia and offered for the Methodist ministry enjoyed the same benefits as the missionaries.<sup>624</sup> In the light of this the argument of different employers as an explanation for differences in stipends falls away.

White ministers enjoyed several other packages which did not extend to the indigenous ministers. James holds that allowances and stipends for white ministers were not discussed in synods.<sup>625</sup> As a result, if there were indigenous ministers who knew about the levels of missionary stipends, it was largely by chance.

From the beginning of September 1969 the stipends for indigenous ministers were increased.<sup>626</sup> This was possibly because of inflation as the economy of Rhodesia tumbled after the UDI in 1966. The stipend of a minister was raised to \$38. This money is reflected in dollars although Rhodesia was still using Pounds in 1969. The reason could have been that the source of information was written in 1970. The currency was only changed to dollars in 1970 after the adoption of the new constitution. Thus, Rev Goodwill Gubudu, who had been in the ministry for 17 years, was earning \$38. By 1971 the levels of stipends were still unchanged.<sup>627</sup> Claire Palley holds that in 1971 salaries for Africans, working in the public sector such as finance, transport and communication, education and health, were \$714, \$626, \$590 and \$579 per annum respectively. The figures indicate that those employed in finance earned \$60 per month. Employees in transport and communication received \$52 a month. Those employed in education got around \$49 and employees in the health sector received \$48

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<sup>622</sup>Margaret James, same interview.

<sup>623</sup>Margaret James, same interview.

<sup>624</sup>Margaret James, same interview.

<sup>625</sup>Margaret James, same interview.

<sup>626</sup>Letter by Frank Noble to the Rev. Goodwill Gubudu, 6 October 1970, Gubudu personal file, MCA.

<sup>627</sup>Minutes of synod January 1971, S/M, MCA.

a month.<sup>628</sup> The figures show that the Methodist indigenous ministers were earning far less than those working in health, education, transport and finance.

In addition, Palley states that non-African employees were earning an average of \$3 104 per annum which translates to \$258 a month.<sup>629</sup> This means that, in comparison with what Africans employed in education earned, Europeans were getting about five times more. As already has been established, a similar gap existed between a European missionary's salary and that of the indigenous minister in the Methodist Church in Rhodesia.

According to the proposed Rhodesian settlement of 1971, „Europeans and Africans who wished to be in the higher roll were supposed to be earning \$1800 per annum during the last two years preceding date of claim for enrolment or ownership of immovable property value of not less than \$3600.’<sup>630</sup> Alternatively, the person was supposed to be earning a salary of not less than \$1200 per annum during two years proceeding the date of claim for enrolment or ownership of immovable property of value not less than \$2400. The other condition was that the person was supposed to have attained four years of secondary education.<sup>631</sup>

These were the conditions required for one to be able to vote in Rhodesia. The monetary requirement translated to \$150 per month. According to the figures given by Palley, only African employees in the category of finance qualified as voters. The indigenous ministers of the Methodist Church did not qualify by virtue of their low stipends.

It is quite clear that the indigenous ministers were being underpaid. This realisation motivates us to examine how money was actually used in the Methodist Church in Rhodesia. In order to establish a fair report of the church's budget priorities, we will analyse its audited accounts from around the middle of the century under review.

In 1947, the Methodist Church in Rhodesia collected a total of £ 681 s7 and d6 for the African ministers' super annuation fund. This amount was made up of a cash balance, subscriptions, interest, assessments and loans repaid. Out of this amount the church used £303 s15 d6 for new loans and investments. A balance of £ 377 s12 and d0 was carried

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<sup>628</sup>Claire Palley, „Time scale for Majority rule,' *African Studies Association, A Journal of opinion*, vol 2, no 2 Summer 1972, p.2-64.

<sup>629</sup>Claire Palley, „Time scale for Majority rule,' *African Studies Association, A Journal of opinion*, vol 2, no 2 Summer, 1972, p.2-64.

<sup>630</sup>Claire Palley, „Time scale for Majority rule,' *African Studies Association, A Journal of opinion*, vol 2, no 2 Summer, 1972, p.2-64.

<sup>631</sup>Claire Palley, „Time scale for Majority rule,' *African Studies Association, A Journal of Opinion*, vol 2, no 2 Summer, 1972, p.2-64.

forward to the next financial year. The money was invested in the Post Office Savings Bank, Presbyterian Church, Bulawayo English and Salisbury 3 ¾% stock.

In the same year, the church collected a total of £ 508 s13 and d0 towards African Ministers' Annuitant Fund. Out of this amount the church spent £ 141 s16 and d0 in annuities, £ 100 s0 and d4 was invested, and £ 0 s6 and d0 on check book cost. A total of £ 266 s10 and d8 was carried forward to the ensuing year.

An amount of £ 118 s5 and d5 was collected under the Synod Benevolent Fund. The only expenditure on this amount were the grants paid to the tune of £ 27 s0 and d0. An amount of £ 25 s0 and d0 was put in investments. The remainder was carried forward. One supposes that these grants were paid to circuits for developmental purposes.

The church collected a total of £ 344 s12 and d1 towards the Evangelists Provident Fund. Out of this fund £ 38 s0 d6 was withdrawn but there is no indication of the purpose. £ 119 s9 d6 was invested. The remainder was carried forward to the next year.

A total of £ 2,663 s19 and d3 was collected under the District Extension Fund. Part of this money came from book room sales but the major contributors to this fund were the African circuits. They contributed £ 2,234 s0 and d0. The major expenditure item of this fund was the „Native' Agency Grants. £ 22 s4 and d3, was spend on an item listed as „various stipends'. The other expenditure items that consumed a substantial amount were the transfer of ministers, printing, synod expenses and a special grant for the Gwaai Circuit

The church received £ 44 s3 and d11 from the John White Memorial Fund. Out of this amount only £ 5 s0 and d0 was given as bursaries at Waddilove Institute. The rest was invested. £ 220 s0 and d0 was collected towards the African Church Building Fund and less than half of this money was used in that particular year. The rest was invested.

£ 237 s16 and d9 was collected for African Ministers House and Furniture Fund. Some of this money was used in the Makwiro, Wedza and Pakame Circuits. Only £ 40 s6 and d9 was carried forward to the ensuing year.

The church collected £ 23 s5 and d8 towards the education of deceased African ministers' children. Out of this amount £ 17 s12 and d7 was given out as grants. The remainder was carried forward.

In addition, the church collected a total of £ 61 s7 and d11 towards the African Medical Fund. Throughout the year only £ 10 s0 and d0 was used from this fund. The rest was carried forward to the following year.

The Manyano collected an amount of £ 218 s7 and d8. The book room managed to register a yearly profit of £ 518 s3 and d1.

It is noteworthy that the major items on the budget were to do with African ministers. For instance, the church had a budget for African ministers' super annuation, „native' ministers annuitant,[sic] funds for evangelists, African ministers house and furniture, education of the deceased African ministers children and African ministers medical assistance provision. This is indicative of a church that has the development of African ministers as its priority.

A second notable aspect is that the church was very much concerned with investments. This characterises it as a forward looking church. It is clear from the budget that stipends for ministers were paid from circuits. It was only in special circumstances that a minister would be paid from the district.

James is of the view that the levels of stipends for the indigenous ministers were pegged by the district.<sup>632</sup> In coming up with the figures for stipends, the district did not consider the cost of living as a principal factor but they looked at what circuits could afford. Many African circuits were struggling and, as a result, the stipends for indigenous ministers remained perpetually low.<sup>633</sup>

An examination of the 1975 audited statements of the district accounts shows the same trend as the 1947 accounts. The only difference is in the figures entered. The church continued to display an investment spirit. One notable difference is that there was mention of a grant from the WesleyanMethodist Missionary Society. This grant was to the tune of £4 000. It was supposed to be used for debt reduction and current expenses.<sup>634</sup>

It is important to point out that, at the 1975 synod, the district chairperson lamented the poor finances of the church. His address reads:

I refer now to the financial position of the district. This is a thorny question in our minds. During the past year the Deployment Commission examined very carefully

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<sup>632</sup>Margaret James, same interview.

<sup>633</sup>Margaret James, same interview.

<sup>634</sup>Minutes of synod, 1975, file S/M, MCA.

recommendations from the area councils regarding the financial position of various circuits. One area suggested regrouping of circuits so that the ministerial staff would be reduced. The commission on deployment agreed that the time was not yet ripe for that particular action. The recommendation if implemented would have taken away our influence in those areas. The people are still there who need to be saved but they are unable to support the work financially.<sup>635</sup>

It seems the major challenge of the church was that its circuits were not financially stable. The address by the chairperson of the district is insightful. He mentions that the people were there but they were not in a position to support the work financially. The suggestion to regroup the circuits was aimed at reducing the number of paid staff in those particular circuits. However, the chairperson was concerned about losing Methodist influence in those areas. What he did not do, was to come up with a way forward concerning the fate of underpaid workers.

After 1975, the church continued to struggle financially. At the same time, the indigenous ministers continued to press for increased stipends.<sup>636</sup> In fact, the issue of stipends became a common topic of discussion at synods and yet very little was done to improve them.<sup>637</sup>

In some cases the indigenous ministers would work for years without receiving any remuneration. A case in point is Gwai Reserve Circuit, where an indigenous minister worked for five years without receiving any pay.<sup>638</sup> In Siabowa Circuit, Naison Makwehe worked for two years without getting adequate pay.<sup>639</sup> In Mount Darwin Circuit, Elliot Hungwe worked for five years without receiving any pay.<sup>640</sup> The cases of indigenous ministers, working for years without receiving adequate pay, are numerous and widespread. What remains to be seen in this chapter is whether these indigenous ministers enjoyed any other benefits to supplement their stipends.

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<sup>635</sup>General Superintendent's review, Methodist Church Rhodesia Synod, 1975, file S/R, MCA.

<sup>636</sup>Naison Makwehe, same interview.

<sup>637</sup>Synods reports on stipends, minutes of synod 1975, 1976 and 1977, Methodist Connexional Archives, file S/M, MCA.

<sup>638</sup>Gwaii Circuit report of 1922, in the synod agenda of 1922, file S/A, MCA.

<sup>639</sup>Naison Makwehe, same interview.

<sup>640</sup>Elliot Hungwe interview conducted by Kennedy Gondongwe on the 19<sup>th</sup> April 2010 at number 5 Green Field Road, Park Meadowlands.



### **4.3 Benefits for the indigenous ministers**

Indigenous ministers were privileged in that they enjoyed many benefits in addition to their stipends - at least in principle. It is important to explore these benefits in order to correctly evaluate their financial position.

#### ***4.3.1 Accommodation for the indigenous ministers***

In the Methodist Church, like in many other denominations, clergy were provided with free accommodation. In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the church had no standard plan for this accommodation. This was rectified in 1976 when the synod of Rhodesia resolved to use a common plan for church's manses. A committee known as Church Manses Committee was appointed to supervise the construction and maintenance of the manses.<sup>641</sup> This committee would make sporadic visits to church manses to assess their suitability for human habitation.<sup>642</sup> The committee was made up of a person with knowledge of construction, two ministers' wives, the district treasurer and two other people appointed by the synod.<sup>643</sup>

Before this development, each circuit was expected to put up a manse as a condition for getting a minister. The church was not really concerned with the standard of the manse, especially those situated in rural areas.<sup>644</sup> In fact circuits were divided into two categories. These were European and African circuits.<sup>645</sup> European circuits without exception were situated either in urban areas or in a commercial farming area. African circuits were situated in African townships and in rural areas. A circuit would be called European when its membership was largely European. The same principle applied to the so-called African circuits.<sup>646</sup> A principle that was never documented was that indigenous ministers would be appointed in African circuits and European ministers in Europeans circuits.<sup>647</sup>

Because there was no standard plan for manses, the accommodation for indigenous ministers differed from place to place, but a common characteristic was that manses in rural areas were

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<sup>641</sup>Minutes of synod, 1976,file S/M, MCA.

<sup>642</sup>Minutes of synod, 1976,file S/M, MCA.

<sup>643</sup>Minutes of synod, 1976, file S/M, MCA.

<sup>644</sup> Naison Makwehe,same interview.

<sup>645</sup> Naison Makwehe, same interview.

<sup>646</sup> Naison Makwehe, same interview.

<sup>647</sup> Naison Makwehe, same interview.

not electrified and had no tap water. It was rare to find an indigenous minister stationed in a European circuit.<sup>648</sup>

It was the church's policy that every minister's house was supposed to be furnished. The synod of 1921 resolved that the following articles of furniture should be given to all indigenous ministers, provided that funds permitted it: one double bed, one single bed, two tables, six chairs, one set of book shelves, one stove and four window blinds.<sup>649</sup> By 1974, the synod had included such items as refrigerators and lounge suites among the goods that every manse was expected to offer. Although these were the requirements, the situation on the ground was completely different. The synod of 1950 was informed that nearly half of the indigenous ministers' manses were without stoves, beds and office furniture.<sup>650</sup>

If one compares the accommodation of indigenous ministers with that of the European missionaries, one comes to the inevitable conclusion that the indigenous ministers were living in poor conditions. By 1921, the missionaries were receiving £75 per year as grant for accommodation.<sup>651</sup> They were also receiving £50 per year as a furniture allowance.<sup>652</sup> These allowances did not mean that the missionaries were not provided with furnished accommodation. The allowances were paid over and above what they were getting. The 1915 handbook of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society relating to missionaries stipulates that 'every missionary is supposed to be allocated a house or a flat.'<sup>653</sup> The regulations read:

Essential furniture is provided. This includes floor coverings, cutlery, crockery, curtains, kitchen equipment and mosquito nets. A small allowance is made for renewals and replacements, and another for minor repairs. Larger items and major repairs can be met by a plant grant request through the established channels.<sup>654</sup>

To be sure, the European missionaries' accommodation was much better than that of the indigenous ministers. Their houses were big and well furnished. Most of these houses had telephone lines. The phone bill was the responsibility of the circuit.<sup>655</sup> However, although the European missionaries' accommodation was good, it would appear to be fairly modest compared to the houses generally occupied by Europeans in farming areas and in towns at the

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<sup>648</sup> Naison Makwehe, same interview.

<sup>649</sup> Joint pastoral session of synod resolutions, 1921, file P/R, MCA.

<sup>650</sup> Minutes of synod, 1950, file S/M, MCA.

<sup>651</sup> Minutes of synod, 1921, file S/M, MCA.

<sup>652</sup> Minutes of synod, 1921, file S/M, MCA.

<sup>653</sup> The handbook of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society relating to missionaries, 1915, p.22, MCA.

<sup>654</sup> The handbook of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society relating to missionaries, 1915, p.22, MCA.

<sup>655</sup> Naison Makwehe, same interview.

time. On 12 July 1945, Walter Howarth, an European missionary who had succeeded Thompson Samkange at the Kwenda mission, wrote a letter to Samkange, instructing him to construct guest houses at his new station which was Pakame mission. Howarth enclosed the plan required for the guest houses. The letter reads:

The purpose of these guest houses is to make the European ministers comfortable in all-weather when helping at the school... Please consider this project urgent.<sup>656</sup>

When Samkange received the letter from Howarth he exploded:

I do not want Europeans visiting my schools anyway. Moreover, when I was at Kwenda, I was moved so that I can make way for a European minister. All the years I stayed at Kwenda I was not allowed to occupy the house you are now living in simply because I am an African. Now you ask me to build guest houses for European ministers so that they may stay in those houses when they visit the schools once a year. When will I be able to stay in that guest house myself? I cannot tell people to build a guest house for people who come once a year when I visit those schools six times a year... I shall not proceed with the building of these houses. For me it is nothing but a matter of colour.<sup>657</sup>

On receiving Samkange's letter Howarth responded:

In England, a blackman slept in my own bed. For me it was not a matter of colour but hygiene. Mr Mather and I are colour-blind when it comes to humans, but to be frank, we are not immune to bugs and diseases.<sup>658</sup>

The Mr. Mather referred to in Howarth's letter was a European school inspector.<sup>659</sup> The exchange between Samkange and Howarth serves to demonstrate that the issue of accommodation could put a strain on people's relationships. Samkange was a revolutionary in thought. We can surely trace this revolutionary spirit to his participation in the Tambaram Conference in India.<sup>660</sup> More about Samkange will be said in chapter six of this study. One thing that is clear is that he came back from the conference with a diminished respect for Europeans. Another complaint about accommodation relates to Naison Makwehe.

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<sup>656</sup>Letter from D. Howarth to T.D. Samkange, 12 July 1945, file MET3/2/1, NAZ.

<sup>657</sup>Letter from T.D Samkange to D. Howarth, 13 July 1945, file MET3/2/1, NAZ.

<sup>658</sup>Howarth to Samkange, 19 July, file MET3/2/1, NAZ.

<sup>659</sup>Methodist Church handbook 1945, file H/B, MCA..

<sup>660</sup>Thompson Samkange's obituary in his personal file, MCA.

Makwehe was stationed in Siabuwa Circuit in 1951. He was not the first African minister to be stationed in the area. Job Mwamukwa had been there before him but had, after only a year, succumbed to malaria.<sup>661</sup> Makwehe was sent to the circuit soon after the death of Mamukwa.<sup>662</sup> Makwehe did not have a problem with how his house was built but he objected to the place where it was situated.<sup>663</sup> The house was in an isolated area where the authorities intended to build a church. At night, elephants would roam around the house and lions could be heard roaring. Makwehe would keep a fire going outside the house throughout the night to scare the animals away.<sup>664</sup> He remembers:

I would only sleep for an hour and then wake up to keep the fire burning. During the first few weeks it was a terrible experience until I got to know some local people who were happy to allow me to stay with their grown up sons who would also take turns during the night to keep the fire burning. In my second year, I was so used that I was no longer afraid. I only stayed at that station for two years because the church was fully aware of the hardship associated with that circuit. I particularly remember 20 July 1952 when I was almost eaten by hyenas. I was coming back home from a mid-week service when they followed me right up to where I was staying. When I was going through a valley the hyenas would accelerate thinking that I was falling down. Consequently, I would make sure that whenever I reached a valley I would start running and make a lot of noise. That is what saved me.<sup>665</sup>

Another case of poor relations between European missionaries and indigenous ministers was that of John Jabangwe and David Bennett. Bennett was the superintendent and staying at Moleli mission. Jabangwe got a sponsorship through one of his missionary friends to drill a watering point at his manse at Chikaka. The reason was that the river was far removed from the area. When the sponsors asked him what he considered to be a priority he singled out water provision. The watering point was drilled and for the first time Jabangwe could access water from his own backyard. When the news got to Bennett, he was furious. His argument was that he had been sidelined as superintendent of the circuit. He came to assess the watering point and condemned it on the grounds that it was located at a place where a classroom would be constructed. The watering point was destroyed and Bennett promised

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<sup>661</sup> Naison Makwehe, same interview..

<sup>662</sup> Naison Makwehe, same interview.

<sup>663</sup> Naison Makwehe, same interview.

<sup>664</sup> Naison Makwehe, same interview.

<sup>665</sup> Naison Makwehe, same interview.

that the circuit would make another watering point at a more suitable place. The promise was never fulfilled and eventually Jabangwe was moved to another station.<sup>666</sup> Mrs Patricia Jabangwe, John's widow, comments:

That year I was so frustrated that I advised my husband that he was supposed to resign and get back to his job as a teacher. In fact my husband had become a headmaster before joining the Methodist ministry but when he changed profession, suffering came. If it was a matter of money alone then one would understand but the conditions of service were very bad. My husband told me that he was not going to be pushed out of ministry by anything. He was convinced that God had called him.<sup>667</sup>

Julius Juru remembers that, in 1970, he once stayed in a house that was still under construction in Zvishavane Circuit.<sup>668</sup> The European superintendent falsely advised the Stationing Committee of the church that there was a house ready for occupation in his circuit. Following this advice, the church stationed Juru in the circuit. Upon his arrival Juru discovered that the house was still being built. It did not have windows, no inside doors, no floors, and it was only partly roofed. Juru had to take his children to his brother's house because he did not want them to experience the hardship associated with African ministry.<sup>669</sup>

Although the indigenous ministers' accommodation was generally poor if compared to that of the missionaries, it has to be noted that the majority of the indigenous ministers were relatively well accommodated compared to indigenous people employed elsewhere. Juru observes:

Not every indigenous minister experienced the pain of living in bad houses. Some indigenous ministers who were obedient and respectful to the missionaries were always posted to good circuits with good accommodation. In the 1960s and early 70s, the outcome of the Stationing Committee had become so predictable. Indigenous ministers would almost know who will go where even before the sitting

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<sup>666</sup>Patricia Jabangwe, interview conducted by Kennedy Gondongwe on 7 May 2010 at the Methodist boardroom, Harare, Zimbabwe

<sup>667</sup>Patricia Jabangwe, same interview.

<sup>668</sup>Julius Juru, same interview.

<sup>669</sup>Julius Juru, same interview.

of the Stationing Committee because of what would have happened in the circuits during the year.<sup>670</sup>

Furthermore, it must be noted that, if the accommodation of the indigenous ministers is evaluated in its own historical context, one finds that the indigenous ministers were generally well accommodated. This is especially so, if one considers their accommodation in the light of the general accommodation for Africans during the same period. It has to be understood that, in the 1950s, very few African families were able to put up a square house. Many indigenous people lived in round houses and to be able to afford a square house, let alone to sleep on a bed, brought with it a profound sense of satisfaction. It is important that we now explore how indigenous ministers were transported when executing their duties.

### ***4.3.2 Transport for the indigenous ministers***

When the first missionaries came to Mashonaland, they used ox drawn wagons as their mode of transport. This situation persisted for some time. There were no vehicles during the early years of colonialism. However, as time passed by, the number of motor vehicles in the country increased. By 1923, the synod of the Methodist Church passed a resolution to the effect that the church would assist European missionaries in buying vehicles and assist those who already owned personal vehicles with the running costs:

We minister in Rhodesia to a scattered population and to reach our people have to travel long distances. It is probably now recognised all over the country that the quickest and probably the most economical method of transport in the majority of our circuits is by means of motor cars. Already four of our European ministers have purchased their own cars, we ask that the synod come up with a vehicle scheme for European ministers and come up with arrangements to assist those with vehicles with the running costs.<sup>671</sup>

This resolution left out the indigenous ministers entirely. Subsequently, many European missionaries managed to purchase vehicles but the indigenous ministers continued to walk. Although it was unthinkable in these early years, that Africans in ordinary employment

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<sup>670</sup> Julius Juru, same interview.

<sup>671</sup> Minutes of synod 1923, file S/M, MCA.

would drive vehicles, the nature of their job required that they would be assisted with some form of transport.

The other important mode of transport at the time was the train. In fact the majority of long distances were travelled by train. The Methodist Synod of 1924 made the following recommendation to the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society.

The synod respectfully desires to call the attention of the committee to the fact that Europeans generally travel first class in Rhodesia. This privilege we believe is granted to the men in the Transvaal District and as we have to travel greater distances under worse climatic conditions, we hope that the society will grant to us this privilege.<sup>672</sup>

This resolution from the synod signposts two pertinent issues: The first is that Europeans in Rhodesia generally travelled first class when travelling by train. The synod of the Methodist Church adopted the standards in the country as applicable to the church. It is common knowledge that the standards in the country were influenced by racial prejudice and it was not proper for the church to be seen to be operating on the same principles.

Secondly, because the European ministers in Transvaal were travelling first class, the Rhodesian European ministers were supposed to enjoy the same benefits. The statement indicates that there was a cross-fertilisation of ideas between South Africa and Rhodesia. Based on this evidence, it may be argued that the spirit of apartheid which was rampant in Zimbabwe was borrowed from South Africa. Makwehe remembers that, when he joined the African ministry in the 1940s and right through to the 1970s, European ministers were allowed to travel first class by train while the indigenous ministers were compelled to travel economy class. This was apartheid as practised in the church. He particularly remembers the journey to Gwelo<sup>673</sup> where he and a European missionary were travelling on church business: he was booked in the economy class and his European colleague was booked in the first class.<sup>674</sup>

That some indigenous ministers were not happy with their means of transport during the execution of their duty is indicated too by Esau Nemapare's case. Nemapare was an ordained

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<sup>672</sup>Minutes of synod, 1924, file S/M, MCA.

<sup>673</sup>This was later known as Gweru.

<sup>674</sup>Naison Makwehe, same interview.

minister of the Methodist Church but seceded<sup>675</sup> because he was always fighting with his European superintendents.<sup>676</sup> This particular case involved Stewart, a European Methodist minister whom Nemapare accused of using repulsive ways in doing African work.<sup>677</sup> Nemapare wrote the following letter to his colleague and friend Thompson Samkange:

You and I must make a good business of this thing. I shall strike and strike very hard. I beg for no mercy from him. Do not fear, your „Stage’ [Nemapare] has a case. The enemy has no case. He depends on his education, civilisation, colour and the fact that he is the superintendent... Your letters have been channels of comforts to my spirit and soul. God bless you and your work and away with *Chipurunyanye*, this enemy of Africans who runs in a car while older African ministers run on bikes. This enemy of Africans’ complete freedom, *Chipurunyanye* thou art repression itself. Why lingerest thou amongst us? Go to the devils whence thou came. You must know and know at once that as far as I am concerned the defensive phase has ended and from now on a new phase is set for life and death, the offensive phase.<sup>678</sup>

It is important that we start by unpacking two coded terms used by Nemapare in his letter. Nemapare had given himself a nickname, „Stage.’ The same name was also used by his friend Samkange. They addressed each other as „Dear Stage’ and each signed his letter „Your Stage’. In an interview with Ranger, Nemapare explained:

Thompson had many friends, I had many friends. But we knew that we were special friends. We shared a position about the Methodist Church. We understood each other and our ideas about the stage in which we were. Both of us knew that we were at the stage when the church was meeting Africans who were beginning to question their position in the church. We saw the thinking of the missionaries, how there were two separate missionary conferences instead of one united conference. It was critical stage in the development of the church...<sup>679</sup>

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<sup>675</sup>I will elaborate on his secession in chapter six of this thesis.

<sup>676</sup> Terence Ranger, *Are We Not Also Men?*, p.83.

<sup>677</sup> Terence Ranger, *Are We Not Also Men?*, p. 83.

<sup>678</sup> Nemapare’s letter written 26 October 1942, file correspondence, 1940 to 1948, Samkange Archives cited in Terence Ranger, *Are We Not Also Men*, p.83.

<sup>679</sup> Esau Nemapare interview with Terence Ranger, cited in Terence Ranger, *Are We Not Also Men?*, p.25.



This shows that Samkange and Nemapare had a very high level of political consciousness. As mentioned, Nemapare was forced to leave the church because of his constant squabbles with the missionaries.<sup>680</sup>

The word *Chipurunyanye* that Nemapare uses in the letter was a nickname given to one of the missionaries by the name of Stewart.<sup>681</sup> The word indicates someone who does not warm up easily and rarely laughs. The use of nicknames by the indigenous ministers needs to be explained. Nicknames amongst the Shona people of Zimbabwe are meant to portray a hidden truth. If that particular truth is said openly, the weaker person in the equation would be victimised. Giving nicknames was a form of dissent against those with ‚political capital.‘ It was a way of fighting back but the fighting would be done off- stage. For an insight in this case, James Scott’s theoretical framework is handy.<sup>682</sup> He argues that the dominated engages in what he called ‚politics of disguise and anonymity‘ that takes place in public view but is designed to have a double meaning or to shield the identity of the actors. Rumor, gossip, folktales, jokes, songs, rituals, codes and euphemisms - a good part of the folk culture of subordinate groups fits this description.<sup>683</sup> Nemapare’s letter contained gossip. He was gossiping about his superior. Scott observes that ‚the character of gossip is that it consists typically, of stories that are designed to ruin the reputation of some identifiable person or persons.‘<sup>684</sup> Moreover, Nemapare’s letter was coded so as to hide the identity of the author. It was signed ‚Stage,‘ a nickname he shared with his friend Samkange as a way of disguise.

The context of the letter is that Esau Nemapare was called stubborn, ‚lazy‘, and accused of other irregularities by missionaries who were younger than he.<sup>685</sup> This letter is a response to the allegations. He complains that a younger missionary is driving a car whilst an older indigenous minister travels on a bicycle.

Nemapare also suggests that the defensive stage was over and that it was time for Africans to be offensive.<sup>686</sup> Was ‚Stage‘ referring to being offensive within the church or was he pointing to something different? Is it possible that he was referring to the armed struggling that the ‚natives‘ engaged in twenty-four years later? All these questions have no definite answers.

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<sup>680</sup> Terence Ranger, *Are We Not Also Men?*, p.83.

<sup>681</sup> Naison Makwehe, same interview.

<sup>682</sup> James Scott, *Domination and the Art of Resistance*, 1990.

<sup>683</sup> James .Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, p.19.

<sup>684</sup> James .Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, p.142.

<sup>685</sup> Terence Ranger, *Are We Not Also Men?*, p.83.

<sup>686</sup> Nemapare’s letter to Samkange, 26 October 1942, file correspondence, 1940 to 1948, Samkange Archives cited in Terence Ranger, *Are We Not Also Men?*, p.83.

„Stage’ states that the enemy depended on his education, civilisation and the colour of his skin.<sup>687</sup> Could it be that the European missionaries were using their education to dominate the indigenous ministers? The answer could be ‚yes’. What is important to note is that, by this time, indigenous ministers were able to identify the ‚weapons’ of the missionaries.

An enquiry was called for, according to the Methodist discipline and procedures.<sup>688</sup> The findings of the investigating team were that there was a *prima facie* case against Nemapare. Hence there was need for the district chairperson to convene a Minor Synod<sup>689</sup> so that Nemapare could defend himself. <sup>690</sup> Nemapare appointed his best friend, Samkange, to represent him in the subsequent trial.

One of the charges, levelled against Nemapare by the missionary, was that he was a very ‚lazy’ minister. Europeans generally believed that black people were lazy. It is possible that blacks were indeed perceived as lazy. But the problem is: who was setting the agenda? Simply put: who came to the conclusion that the blacks were lazy? If it was the missionary, one could question whether the blacks saw themselves as lazy? Oppressed people use all sorts of tricks to express themselves. They may use coded language and coded actions. It could be that the laziness by some indigenous ministers was designed, calculated to slow down the means of production. In such a context perceived laziness could be an expression of passive resistance.

Orlando Patterson, in his admirable work on the sociology of slavery, postulates that one of the mechanisms of resistance to slavery by slaves was refusal to work.<sup>691</sup> Adam Smith comments: ‚A person who can acquire no property can have no other interest than to eat as much and labour as little as possible.’<sup>692</sup> Patterson further observes:

Sometimes this type of resistance was more extreme and manifested itself in an outright refusal to work. Quite often this refusal appeared to have been almost gratuitous. An entire group of slaves would suddenly decide that they had for the

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<sup>687</sup> Nemapare’s letter to Samkange, 26 October 1942, file correspondence, 1940 to 1948, Samkange Archives cited in Terence Ranger, *Are We Not Also Men?*, p.83.

<sup>688</sup> Terence Ranger, *Are We Not Also Men?*, p.83.

<sup>689</sup> Minor synod was a church kind of disciplinary hearing where the accused was put to his defence.

<sup>690</sup> Minutes of Standing Committee of the Methodist Church, 1946, file, S/C, MCA.

<sup>691</sup> Orlando Patterson, *The Sociology of Slavery, An Analysis of the Origins, Development and Structure of Negro Slave Society in Jamaica*, London: Associated University Press, 1969. p.261.

<sup>692</sup> See Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, London: Methuen and Company Limited, 1904, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, cited in Orlando Patterson, *The Sociology of Slavery, An Analysis of the Origins, Development and Structure of Negro Slave Society in Jamaica*, p.261.

moment reached the limit of the endurance and could only be induced to start working again by application of severe punishment. The most popular form of passive resistance was evasion of work under various pretences, the most common was illness...Another form of evasion which had the added function of embarrassing the white supervisor was the frequency with which permission was asked to go to a bush so as to perform basic bodily functions.<sup>693</sup>

Although Patterson was writing about slavery in Jamaica, his analysis is applicable to the circumstances of the indigenous ministers. This is because both scenarios feature exploited individuals. Using this paradigm, I therefore argue that Nemapare might not have been lazy but, rather, was conscious of being exploited and therefore engaged in passive resistance.

It would be interesting to know what could have brought about such a high level of political consciousness in this minister. Among several possible explanations is that it could have been his theological training, or it might have been his experience in the ministry. Nemapare was not expelled under these charges but he later resigned because of increasing conflicts with the missionaries.

There never existed a scheme to help indigenous ministers purchase the vehicles which they so badly needed in their vast circuits. Up to the 1960s, the means of transport for indigenous ministers was at best bicycles and at worst they would travel on foot. The 1973 synod accepted a recommendation from the Finance Committee for church to purchase motorbikes for indigenous ministers stationed in remote areas.<sup>694</sup> This became a source of danger for many ministers who had never driven a bike before and needed to gain experience on the rough roads in the countryside. Makwehe remembers that Enoch Mazhandu had a terrible accident that condemned him to paralysis for a very long time.<sup>695</sup> Even after he recovered, he suffered occasional memory loss throughout his life.<sup>696</sup> He further observes that:

Philemon Mzungwana also had a terrible accident with a motorbike and for a long time he was hospitalised. Even when he recovered he could no longer walk the

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<sup>693</sup> See Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, p.365-6 cited in Orlando Patterson, *The Sociology of Slavery, An Analysis of the Origins, Development and Structure of Negro Slave Society in Jamaica*, p.261.

<sup>694</sup> Minutes of synod, 1973, file S/M, MCA.

<sup>695</sup> Naison Makwehe, same interview.

<sup>696</sup> Naison Makwehe, same interview.

length and breadth of his circuit so that he had to be transferred to a much smaller circuit.<sup>697</sup>

To give another example, Patricia Jabangwe points out that Benjamin Nunu was very frail when he died. The medical report stated that he had been affected by an excessive use of the motorbike and as a result his lungs were diseased, leading to breathing complications.<sup>698</sup>

Although the scheme for motorbikes was available to indigenous ministers serving in the rural areas, it did not become very popular as some indigenous ministers were now beginning to purchase their own cars. People like Aenias Mandinyenya, Arthur Kanodereka, John Wesley Jabangwe, Shadreck Ushewokunze, Naison Makwehe and several others purchased their vehicles in the 1970s.<sup>699</sup> Ministers with personal vehicles were by individual circuits assisted with an allowance for fuel and maintenance of the vehicle.<sup>700</sup>

The issue of poor transport for indigenous ministers also played in the UCCZ. Jairos Hlatshwayo argues that a classical example was the church's first indigenous minister, Mohaza Dube. He used to cycle more than 70 kilometres. When there was a meeting the European missionary, driving his car, would wait for Dube to arrive so that the meeting could begin. Dube would cycle all the way from Mundanda to Chikore which is a distance of about 80 kilometres.<sup>701</sup>

It is clear that transport was a problem for the indigenous ministers, in the Methodist Church as well as in the United Congregational Church of Rhodesia. It is essential that we explore other aspects of the clergy's working conditions.

### **4.3.3 Furloughs**

We have noted that some indigenous ministers walked from village to village in the execution of their duties. The issue of furloughs dominated the synod agenda for a number of years. The context for this was that all the European missionaries working in Rhodesia were entitled to

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<sup>697</sup> Naison Makwehe, same interview.

<sup>698</sup> Patricia Jabangwe, same interview.

<sup>699</sup> Patricia Jabangwe, same interview.

<sup>700</sup> Patricia Jabangwe, same interview.

<sup>701</sup> Jairos Hlatshwayo, interview conducted by Kennedy Gondongwe on 2 January 2011 at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

furloughs after every three and half to five years of service.<sup>702</sup>The same rule applied to missionaries serving in Zambia, India and South Africa. The length of the furlough was between eight to eleven months. It was supposed to be spent in the missionary's own country unless otherwise arranged.<sup>703</sup>

Every missionary was expected to go through a thorough medical examination whilst on furlough.<sup>704</sup> It was thought that the conditions in Africa were a threat to the health of the missionaries. This view was premised on the realisation that the medical facilities in Africa were primitive and that the conditions of life were such as to expose people to disease. Medical examination in Europe would help the administrators to decide whether the missionary concerned was still fit for work overseas or whether he or she had to be called back.<sup>705</sup> The missionary society would pay for all the expenses related to furloughs. During furloughs missionaries were encouraged to engage in various activities that would keep them physically, spiritually and mentally fit.<sup>706</sup> Such activities included attending educative courses on missionary work or on anything else that the particular missionary deemed to be of interest.<sup>707</sup>

The 1964 handbook for missionaries serving overseas indicates that missionaries on furlough had opportunities to study at Selly Oak, Westhill Training College, Wycliff School of Linguistics and William Temple College.<sup>708</sup> The information demonstrates that furloughs were also opportunities for capacity building.

In 1918, the synod passed the following resolution concerning the furloughs for European ministers.

European ministers who are due for furlough will be allowed three months leave of absence at the coast and their railway fares paid. This is because they cannot go to Europe because of war.<sup>709</sup>

It is not stated but the war referred to must have been the First World War.

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<sup>702</sup>Rules and Regulations of missionaries working overseas,1917, p.6, MCA.

<sup>703</sup>Rules and Regulations of missionaries working overseas,1917, .6, MCA.

<sup>704</sup>Rules and Regulations of missionaries working overseas,1917, p.7, MCA.

<sup>705</sup>Rules and Regulations of missionaries working overseas, 1917, p .9, MCA.

<sup>706</sup>Rules and regulations of missionaries working overseas,1917, p.8, MCA.

<sup>707</sup>Rules and regulations of missionaries working overseas, 1917.p.7, MCA.

<sup>708</sup> Handbook and Regulations of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society Relating to missionaries, 1967, p.54, file H/B, MCA.

<sup>709</sup>Minutes of synod 1918, file S/M, MCA..

From as early as 1933, the indigenous ministers recommended to the synod that furloughs be extended to them. Their resolution reads: „We humbly ask for a definite consideration of African ministers’ furloughs.’<sup>710</sup> The synod did not pass this recommendation on the grounds that there was no money for such an expensive venture.<sup>711</sup> The issue was raised again at the synods of 1945<sup>712</sup>, 1948<sup>713</sup>, 1955<sup>714</sup> and 1967<sup>715</sup>. When the matter was raised at the 1974 synod, the response given by the synodis both interesting and instructive:

The synod note with regret that it cannot extend furloughs to our African brothers; in as much as the synod would have wished to extend this helpful facility, it felt constraint since furloughs are meant for missionaries to reconnect with their families and siblings. As a result the missionaries would be staying in their own homes whilst on furloughs. This alone presents us with a difficulty when it comes to the African ministers since the home of African ministers is Rhodesia. Furloughs are also meant for missionaries to make arrangements for their retirement. Surely our African brothers do not retire in England but Rhodesia.<sup>716</sup>

The statement is as deceptive as it is instructive. It belongs to the realm of what Scott calls „the public transcript’. He holds that:

Each command, each act of deference, each list and ranking, each ceremonial order, each public punishment, each use of honorific or a term of derogation- is a symbolic gesture of domination that serves to manifest and reinforce a hierarchical order.<sup>717</sup>

It must be noted that furloughs were either taken in the missionary’s home country or elsewhere.<sup>718</sup> In this regard, furloughs were neither trips to connect with family members nor preparations for retirement as argued by the 1974 synod of the Methodist Church. The main purpose of furloughs was for the missionaries to take a break from their everyday responsibilities. There is evidence that not all European ministers were staying in their own homes when on furlough. Article 49a of the rules governing furloughs states that „each

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<sup>710</sup> Minutes of synod 1933, file S/M,MCA. .

<sup>711</sup> Minutes of synod 1933, file S/M, MCA.

<sup>712</sup>Minutes of synod,1945, fileS/M, MCA.

<sup>713</sup>Minutes of synod, 1948, file, S/M, MCA.

<sup>714</sup>Minutes of synod, 1955,file, S/M, MCA.

<sup>715</sup>Minutes of synod, 1967,file, S/M, MCA..

<sup>716</sup>Minutes of synod, 1974,file S/M, MCA.

<sup>717</sup>James .Scott,*Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, p.45.

<sup>718</sup>Handbook and Regulations of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society relating to missionaries, 1967, file H/B,P.54 MCA.

missionary is responsible for arranging his own accommodation during furloughs.’ Article 49b of the same states that:

Rent allowances are payable when a missionary rents accommodation, or when he stays with relatives or friends and wishes to make a contribution towards overhead expenses in addition to any contribution made towards board. A limited number of houses or flats are available through the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society. As they are usually booked well in advance, early enquiries and application are essential through the area officer.<sup>719</sup>

The Methodist Church annual handbook reflects that in 1931 Jesse Lawrence was on furlough and his address was given as: care of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, 25 Marylebone Road, London, NW1.<sup>720</sup> In 1964, Herbert Carter and Roy Rushworth were on furlough and yet their address remained that one of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society.<sup>721</sup> Based on this evidence, one can conclude that it is possible that those who did not have somewhere to stay in Europe were accommodated at the flats belonging to the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society. However, it is not impossible that the missionaries were staying elsewhere and using the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society address for mail purposes.

Appendix G, on rent allowances for missionaries on furlough provides us with some important insights into the nature of accommodation arrangements during furloughs. Appendix G reads:

Missionaries living in rented accommodation may claim rent allowance as follows:- Married man up to £5.0.0 per week and 5.0 per week per child. Single missionary up to £3.0.0 per week. If a missionary stays with relatives or friends and is not paying rent but wants to make a contribution towards wear and tear in addition to contribution made towards board, allowances may be claimed as follows:- Up to £2.0.0 per week and 5.0 per week per child. Single missionaries up to £1.10.0 per week.<sup>722</sup>

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<sup>719</sup> Rules and Regulations governing furloughs, R/F,1964,p.38, MCA.

<sup>720</sup> Handbook for the Methodist Church, 1931, file H/B, MCA.

<sup>721</sup> Handbook for the Methodist Church, 1964, file H/B, MCA.

<sup>722</sup> Methodist Connexional Archives, see Rules and Regulations governing Furloughs, file R/F, 1964, p.39, MCA.

The appendix confirms that ministers on furlough were allowed to rent accommodation. On the basis of this information one suspects that the refusal by the European missionaries to allow their African counterparts to take furloughs was inspired by other considerations than the proffered reasons. Elliot Hungwe, who became a Methodist minister in 1957 and died in 2011, remembered that on the sidelines of the synod in question, some European missionaries were telling the indigenous ministers that, if they visited England for such a long time, they would all die because of the cold weather. After all, the indigenous ministers did not have warm clothing.<sup>723</sup> Because of these comments, Hungwe hypothesised that the European missionaries did not want the indigenous ministers to travel overseas. They feared that they might look for opportunities to do further studies.<sup>724</sup>

Hungwe's claim that furlough entailed monetary gains was confirmed by Appendix H of the rules and regulations relating to missionaries of 1967. The regulations read:

The Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society will pay for the national insurance and superannuation contributions. A single probationer will be given £545 while a married probationer will be getting £655. A single minister in full connexion who had travelled for 5 years will be getting £655 whilst his or her married counterpart will be given £760...A single minister who had travelled for 31 years and beyond will earn £800 whilst his married counterpart will earn £925.<sup>725</sup>

There is evidence that, although furlough served other purposes, they were also opportunities for holiday making. It is difficult to understand why furloughs were never extended to the indigenous ministers. Only in the late 1970s the indigenous ministers began to get opportunities to visit Europe through exchange and capacity building programmes. This could have been the result of the appointment of the first black leader of the district, Rev Andrew Ndhlela, who became district chairman in 1964. Furloughs were only extended to the indigenous ministers in 1980.

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<sup>723</sup>Elliot Hungwe, same interview.

<sup>724</sup>Elliot Hungwe, same interview.

<sup>725</sup>Handbook and Regulations of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society relating to missionaries 1967, file H/B,P.53, MCA.



#### **4.3.4 Children's education**

From 1921 the indigenous ministers' children were entitled to free education in all Methodist schools. The minutes of the synod read:

We resolve that all the children of the clergy will be educated free of any tuition and boarding fees in all our institutions. This is to try and enhance the education of the children of our ministers whose income we are aware is only enough for subsistence.<sup>726</sup>

However, this provision was soon to be changed as the synod of 1931 ruled that only the first four children of each indigenous minister would be exempted from paying tuition and boarding fees.<sup>727</sup> The church spelt out that the fees for any extra children would be the responsibility of the respective parents.<sup>728</sup> In Rhodesia, like in many other African countries, the average number of children in monogamous marriages would have been about five. Those families who settled for fewer children would do so because of constraints beyond their control.

The fact that the church's policy changed from educating all the children of indigenous ministers to educating only the first four requires some scrutiny. It could be that the church's resources did no longer stretch to providing an education for all children. Or, possibly, the church was discouraging the clergy from having many children.

In January 1936, a report on the work of the church in Southern Rhodesia gives useful insights:

We must confess that the poverty factor amongst Southern Rhodesian natives is registering its effect. The people are poorer today than they were a few years ago. The children cannot therefore be sent to our larger institutions.<sup>729</sup>

The report laments increasing poverty amongst the indigenes. It is possible that this affected the church's finances as well. Amongst the Shona people of Zimbabwe one reproduced in order to have economic security in one's old age. The greater the number of children, the more economically secure a family was. This was the situation in poor rural areas. But in

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<sup>726</sup>Minutes of synod, 1921, file, S/M, MCA.

<sup>727</sup>Minutes of synod, 1931, file, S/M, MCA.

<sup>728</sup>Minutes of synod, 1931, file, S/M, MCA.

<sup>729</sup>Report from the synod to the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, 31 January 1936, file, RS/MS, MCA.

more advanced communities children were no longer an economic investment. Besides, higher incomes lead to a lower fertility rate in women.

For purposes of comparison it should be noted that European missionaries were part of a special scheme whereby their children were educated in Europe. Regulation number 31 of the rules and regulations governing missionary work in the Methodist Church of 1915 reads:

The society accepts responsibility for the boarding and tuition fees at recognised government rates. Special travel allowances are given in some areas where the expense of travelling to school is particularly heavy.<sup>730</sup>

Hence, the education of missionaries' children was catered for by the church. There were no conditions attached as in the case of indigenous ministers. In spite of the fact that indigenous ministers had to pay for the school fees of their children, except for the first four, the majority of the clergy managed to educate their children to university level.<sup>731</sup> The irony was, that the same missionaries who were passing harsh regulations for the indigenous ministers, were the ones who assisted them in paying for children's school fees. They also assisted them to go overseas for purposes of study and exchange programmes.<sup>732</sup>

Enos Chibi notes that most missionaries were difficult and hard-hearted while executing church business, but they became cordial and loving when dealing with individual indigenous ministers.<sup>733</sup> He proffers two reasons for this behaviour.

It could be that the missionaries were playing politics of patronage. They wanted the indigenous ministers to be perpetually grateful to them. This is why they would make things harder for the indigenous ministers when in official meetings but they would soften their hard stance when dealing with individual indigenous ministers. The second reason could have been that missionaries were also human beings. They had compassion for the poor Africans.<sup>734</sup>

By 1980, the regulation on education had changed. The church was now prepared to pay school fees for all the children of the indigenous ministers.

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<sup>730</sup>Rules and Regulations governing missionaries working overseas, 1915, file,RR/M, MCA.

<sup>731</sup> Enos Chibi, same interview.

<sup>732</sup> Enos Chibi, same interview.

<sup>733</sup> Enos Chibi,same interview.

<sup>734</sup> See the minutes of synod, 1968, file S/M, MCA.

The church will pay all educational expenses for the children of its ministers without exception. The cut-off point will be the advanced level but ministers whose children are studying in tertiary colleges and finds themselves in a financial difficulty must approach the Connexional Office for loans.<sup>735</sup>

It is not surprising that the church changed its stance with regard to the education of the clergy's children. 1980 was the year when the country became politically independent and the spirit of liberation was pervading every space including religion. The new government had embarked on an education programme that included free education for primary levels.<sup>736</sup>

#### **4.3.5 Medical aid, funeral policy and pension scheme**

There was no medical aid scheme for the indigenous clergy during the period under review. In fact, the church was responsible for all medical bills, provided the relevant documents were made available by the individual ministers.<sup>737</sup> This system worked well for the indigenous ministers and their immediate families. The same applied to the funeral policy.<sup>738</sup> The church did not have any funeral policy for their indigenous ministers but the tradition was that the church would buy a coffin and provide some food at a minister's funeral.<sup>739</sup> Unfortunately this applied to the minister only. His immediate family members were left out. Again, it may be of interest to mention that the European missionaries had access to medical facilities in Europe with the help of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society.<sup>740</sup> As a matter of fact, the missionaries had sound pension schemes back home as well as funeral cover.<sup>741</sup>

The indigenous ministers were called upon to contribute to their pension through the annuitant fund.<sup>742</sup> The scheme was not well defined as to what the minister would receive upon retirement and the fund was not run by a separate competent institution. Although retired ministers had contributed to the scheme, what they received during retirement

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<sup>735</sup>Minutes of conference, 1980, file C/M, MCA.

<sup>736</sup> Enos Chibi, same interview.

<sup>737</sup>Minutes of synod, 1968, file S/M, MCA..

<sup>738</sup>Minutes of synod, 1968, file S/M, MCA.

<sup>739</sup>Minutes of synod, 1968, file S/M, MCA.

<sup>740</sup>Rules and Regulations governing missionaries working overseas, 1967, file RR/M, MCA.

<sup>741</sup>Rules and Regulations governing missionaries working overseas, 1967, file RR/M, MCA.

<sup>742</sup>Rules and Regulations governing missionaries working overseas, 1967, file RR/M, MCA.

depended on the financial circumstances of the church at that particular time, as well as on the caprices of the specific individual who happened to be in charge of administration. As has already been established, the issue of low salaries and unattractive working conditions of the indigenous ministers was prevalent in many African countries. It is compelling that I explore the various ways in which the indigenous ministers responded to this situation.

#### **4.4 Reaction of the indigenous ministers to their domination**

The indigenous ministers reacted in a multitude of ways to their plight. Many resorted to lodging individual appeals. A few became confrontational. A sizeable number engaged in clandestine self-help projects such as running businesses and farm ownership. The more radical ministers responded by „stealing’ church money or, what I will refer to as, mutual exploitation. Others again responded by leaving the church altogether. There were also those who fraternised with the missionaries as a strategy to gain access to the available resources.

##### ***4.4.1 Appeals by indigenous ministers***

One of the first indigenous ministers to write letters of appeal was Thompson Samkange<sup>743</sup>. In February 1938 he was transferred from Kwenda mission to another manse within the circuit in order to make room for a white missionary. In fact, Samkange had been staying at Kwenda mission but never in the manse reserved for a European minister. When a missionary became available for the post of superintendent, Samkange was asked to move from the station and occupy another house in the circuit. Samkange rejected this arrangement and as a result he was posted to a new station. Following is his reaction:

I am not quite happy with the idea of removing me in order to make way for a white missionary... I do not think Africans will take pride in such arrangements. There will be certain feelings of regret and disappointment...If a European minister is

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<sup>743</sup>An elaborate introduction to this minister shall be given in chapter six of this thesis.

appointed I shall be glad to be moved to another circuit rather than work here as a second minister, I do not want friction.<sup>744</sup>

Samkange's letter shows that he was fully conscious of having been removed from Kwenda because he was an African. He points out that Africans in general were not going to be happy with such arrangements. This perspective is informed by a high level of political consciousness.

In James Scott's view, petitions, demonstrations, boycotts, strikes, land invasions and open revolts are forms of publicly declared resistance.<sup>745</sup> As time moved on, the indigenous ministers continued to petition the church's administration in relation to a variety of issues. In 1966, Rev William Ramushu wrote to the district chairperson complaining about the level of tax.

I think there is an error in the amount of personal tax I am paying every month. I have discovered that ministers who receive the same stipend as me are taxed less. I have seen that children's allowances are not included in the personal tax deduction. Would you please adjust this error and if possible claim back the excess money that I have already paid to the government since the introduction of personal tax.<sup>746</sup>

Although this could have been a genuine mistake by the administrators, the letter throws some light on the way in which the church was administered and the employees' lack of faith in the system. Under a good administration, this kind of a mistake would not have gone unnoticed for a long period of time. The fact that workers were exchanging notes about their remuneration shows that they did not trust the system.

Mazobere, a Methodist indigenous minister wrote a very emotional letter to the Methodist Synod of 1965. In this letter, he congratulates the church on having elected for the first time an African as its district chairperson. He, however, castigates the practice of giving very small stipends to African ministers. The letter was written from the United States of America where he was studying. It reads:

On this historic occasion of the Rhodesia Synod for the first time being chaired by an African brother, I heartily send you cordial and affectionate greetings in the

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<sup>744</sup> See a letter from Samkange to Carter, 25 May 1938, cited in Terence Ranger, *Are We Also Not Men?* p.26.

<sup>745</sup> James Scott, *Domination and the Arts*, p. 198.

<sup>746</sup> Letter from William Ramushu to Ndhela, 29 March 1966, Ndhela's personal file, MCA.

Lord's name... You are also meeting when some Christian souls are in exile in their own land... The Hitlers and Mussolinis have their day, and for a period they may wield great power, spending themselves like a green bay tree, but soon they cut down like the grass and wither as the green herb. No live man kicks forever against the divine pricks. Victor Hugo in *Les Miserables* wrote: Was it possible that Napoleon could win this battle? We answer no. Was it because of Wellington or Bucher? We answer no. It was because of God. Napoleon had been impeached before the infinite, and his fall had been decreed. He vexed God. Waterloo is not a battle; it is the change of front of the universe... Martin Luther King Junior says in his book, *Strength to Love*, in any doctrine of man we must be forever concerned about his physical and material well being. When Jesus said that man shall not live on bread alone he was not saying man can live without bread. This situation whereby African ministers work for next to nothing must change. Humanity's needs are the same, whether white or black. Any religion that professes concern over the spiritual needs of the people but fails to be concerned with social conditions that corrupt and the economic conditions that cripple the soul is a do-nothing religion...<sup>747</sup>

Mazobere speaks out on behalf of African ministers who were receiving very low stipends. His letter exhibits a high level of political consciousness. There is evidence that he was familiar with the writings of people like Martin Luther King Junior and Victor Hugo. The letter was written in 1965 and the 1960s mark the beginning of Martin Luther King Junior's popularity. He was killed in 1968. It seems Mazobere's views were shared by others, such as Canaan Banana.

In 1970, Canaan Banana wrote a letter to the district chairman appealing for equality between the European missionaries and the indigenous ministers.<sup>748</sup> He queried why his stipend was less than that of a European missionary. 'Is there any justification for giving the African ministers such little stipends when European missionaries are earning much more,' he enquired. The district chairperson responded by pointing out that even he, as the head of the district, was earning an African stipend. No one could change the situation.<sup>749</sup>

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<sup>747</sup>Letter from Chrispin Mazobere (2 March 1965) to the Methodist synod of 1965, Mazobere's personal file, MCA.

<sup>748</sup>A letter from Canaan Banana to the district chairperson, 7 June 1970, Banana's personal file, MCA.

<sup>749</sup>A letter from the district chairperson to Banana, 6 July 1970, Banana's personal file, MCA.

The district chairperson did not answer Banana's question why European ministers were paid more than indigenous ministers. Instead he states that he too was earning an African minister's stipend, lower than that of a European minister and yet he was the highest officer of the church in the district. There is a relationship between power and salary. There is a possibility that Ndhlela's authority was compromised by the mere fact of him earning less than his juniors.

On 13 May 1976 Canaan Banana wrote a letter to the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society. The letter complained about monetary issues pertaining to him and other African ministers. The letter reads:

It seems I have received the most unfair treatment from the church and each time I have asked for assistance - needless to remind you that you at one time you had indicated your willingness to assist financially when I was in the States - this was subsequently turned down. ... What kind of a father are you, if your son ask for bread you give him a stone? (Matthew 7 vs 9)<sup>750</sup>... I have already informed Andrew Ndhlela that the existing scale of stipends is totally unacceptable to me. It is a grave insult. I just cannot possibly live on it and be able to support a family. I was shocked to the point of heart attack when I saw the salary scale for our white missionaries. How can anybody, let alone the Christian Church ever justify such gross disparity in salary? African ministers earn less than one fifth of the stipends of their white counterparts.<sup>751</sup>[sic]

Arguably, Banana's letter embodied the views of the majority of the indigenous ministers in the Methodist Church as regards their stipends. However, very few amongst the indigenous ministers had the courage to speak their mind about what was going on in the church.<sup>752</sup> My guess is that Banana's political consciousness was awakened by his prison experience and his stay in the United States of America. Banana highlights another significant issue in the same letter:

This makes a mockery of the church's outbursts against apartheid and racial discrimination. It is an undisputable case of double standards the church is applying

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<sup>750</sup>Letter from Banana to Hughes Thomas secretary of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, 13 May 1976, Canaan Banana's personal file, MCA.

<sup>751</sup>Letter from Banana to Hughes Thomas, secretary of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, 13 May 1976, Canaan Banana's personal file, MCA.

<sup>752</sup>Enos Chibi, same interview.

in this respect. This disparity of stipends can only serve as time-bomb that will destroy the very credibility, effectiveness and relevancy of the Methodist Church in this land. The Mission House is misdirecting itself, if it believes that the white ministers would voluntarily sacrifice their privileged positions or to expect synod to take effective action on this matter would be tantamount to postponing action indefinitely... It is unfortunate that the missionaries are still, by and large, controlling the machinery of decision making. A good many of them are playing havoc with the advancement of the church and our people by openly associating with the iniquities of the present regime. They have embarked on relentless course to systematically eliminate African know-how from influencing the church policy. If this trend is not checked, I am afraid the church is going to be eroded of its qualified indigenous personnel... Some of us now feel we have been oppressed and exploited no less by the church as by the secular forces operative today. The church must examine its own conscience. There can never be any justification for the existence of two churches in one.<sup>753</sup>

Towards the end of his letter, Banana mentions that it is an appeal and he asserts that he would serve the church without a stipend rather than accepting an arrangement that went against his conscience and principles.<sup>754</sup> Banana's letter gives us a glimpse into the self-perception of some of the indigenous ministers. Admittedly, Banana was an extreme case of radicalism but his position was shared by quite a number of African ministers. His use of terms such as exploitation, conscience, oppressed, missionaries' privileged positions, apartheid and racial discrimination indicate a highly developed political consciousness.

Moreover, Banana laments that the synod of Rhodesia was not capable of changing the status quo, because the European missionaries were still very influential in decision making. It was tantamount to stating that the so-called synod resolutions were a reflection of the thought patterns of European missionaries who yielded most of the power in the district affairs. Banana complains that he was exploited by the church as much as by the political regime. Banana, in other words, was aware of what was happening and what needed to be done, but he lacked the coercive power. Was Banana alone in this predicament? Certainly not. The likes of Kanodereka were struggling in a similar way.

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<sup>753</sup>Letter from Banana to Hughes Thomas, secretary of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, 13 May 1976, Canaan Banana's personal file, MCA.

<sup>754</sup>Letter from Banana to Hughes Thomas, secretary of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, 13 May 1976, Canaan Banana's personal file, MCA.



In 1975 Aurther Kanodereka refused to accept a stipend, lower than that of the European missionaries. His argument was that there was no justification for him to earn that little, while a European missionary was earning so much.<sup>755</sup> His letter reads:

It is with a heavy heart that I write this letter to you district chairperson Sir. I deliberately wrote this letter in our mother language so that it can become a private discussion between two African brothers. When I was in my previous station, I was struggling to get my monthly stipend because my circuit could not afford. I am now in town but am still confronted by the demon of discrimination in a church that I call mine. For God's sake, why should I be earning a lower salary simply because of the colour of my skin and yet the missionaries earn much more than me for doing nothing... I refuse to get lower stipend than the one for a European. Sir, I have learnt to live without during my long stay in Siabuwa Circuit and in Mount Darwin therefore I suggest that you take my stipend and add it to the salaries of the missionaries since only they know how to use money...<sup>756</sup>

The district chairperson responded by calling Kanodereka to his office. „Please come to my office as soon as you see this mail so that we can discuss your concerns.”<sup>757</sup> We are not informed about what was discussed between the two African ministers. However, from the district chairperson's response when Banana raised the same concerns, we get the impression that he attempted counselling those of his ministers who had become too radical for his liking. The fact that Kanodereka wrote the letter in Shona was not without significance. He argues that the use of the vernacular was to prevent Europeans from reading the letter. Kanodereka was using coded language for the sake of protecting himself. In fact the letter is not signed although it bears his name in print. It is possible that this was done so as to leave a „window of escape' in case the letter got into the wrong hands. This is another case of

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<sup>755</sup>Letter from Kanodereka to the district chairperson, 4 February 1975, Kanodereka's personal file, MCA.

<sup>756</sup> See a letter from Kanodereka to the district chairperson, 4 February 1975, Kanodereka's personal file, MCA. The original letter reads as follows: *Mwoyo wangu unorwadziwa kwazvo ndichinyora tsamba iyi. Ndanyora mune rwamai kuti igova nyaya yedu sevanhu vatema. Kubasa kwandakanga ndiri ndisati ndauya kuno, ndaishanda ndisingawane mari inondikwanira nekuti vanhu veko vaikonewa. Zvino Ndauya mutown ndowana mune demon rerusaruraganda. Muzita ramwari, chii chikonzero chokuti nditambira mari shoma nokuti ndiri munhu mutema ivo vachena vachitambira yakawanda. Ndaramba kutambira mari shoma ivo vachena vane zhinji saka torai mari iyoyo muwedzere kuvachena nokuti ndivo vanoziva kushandisa mari.*

<sup>757</sup>Letter from the district chairperson to Kanodereka, 18 February 1975, Kanodereka's personal file, MCA.

„hidden transcripts’ as defined by Scott.<sup>758</sup> The district chairperson managed to silence Kanodereka. However, another problem appeared.

In 1976, Rev Julius Juru wrote a letter to the district chairperson asking how much money he was supposed to pay him in order to get appointed as superintendent.<sup>759</sup> It must be clarified that indigenous ministers were not expected to pay any money if they wanted to be considered for promotion. But Juru was mocking the system. Since 1965, the year of his candidature, he had spent eleven years travelling as a minister without being promoted.<sup>760</sup> He felt that his major crime was his outspokenness.<sup>761</sup> It was only after his letter that he was called to the office by the chairperson of the district and he was subsequently appointed superintendent of Mount Darwin Circuit.<sup>762</sup>

The appeals discussed above concern salary discrepancies and inequitable distribution of resources. However, there were also appeals for help in the education of children and some letters requested assistance to cover medical bills. The most revealing one came from Matthew Rusike. On 15 April 1971 Rusike wrote to the district chairperson of Rhodesia, expressing his frustration with regard to his pension funds. Rusike had retired from the Methodist ministry in 1960.<sup>763</sup> The letter reads:

I think you remember that during the last two years, I asked you many times about African ministers’ provident fund. Your answer was that you are writing to the Mission House and ask for \$4000-00 (£2000) and when you got the money you would invest it and then use the interest to pay the supernumerary ministers. Every time I tried to talk to you about it, your answer has been that you are dealing with the Mission House. Few weeks ago I received the lowest amount that has ever been paid to any African minister in the district. This was \$67-50 per year. I do not think there is any minister that ever received as low amount as that. This is lower than what ordinary workers get per week or what a new farm boy gets per month...<sup>764</sup>

This section of Rusike’s letter needs to be analysed. Firstly he accuses the district chairperson of not being an honourable person: he buys time and is not doing anything about

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<sup>758</sup>James Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, p. 19.

<sup>759</sup>Letter from Juru to the district chairperson, 5 August 1976, Juru’s personal file, MCA.

<sup>760</sup>Connexional handbook for ministers, 1976, Juru’s personal file, MCA.

<sup>761</sup> Julius Juru, same interview.

<sup>762</sup> Julius Juru, same interview.

<sup>763</sup>Rusike’s obituary, personal file, MCA.

<sup>764</sup>Letter from Matthew Rusike, 15 April 1971, Rusike’s personal file, MCA.

the situation. Secondly, he describes the insignificance of his retirement pension, considering that his income per year is less than what an ordinary worker gets per week. The next part of the letter reads:

I have been thinking if there is a reason for this but have failed to come up with one. I am sure you know very well that the few African ministers who died during their retirement died very unhappy men. You will know the case of the late Rev Malusalila and a box of matches. I also know that Rev. K Gazi died an unhappy man. The late Rev. Chiota was my best friend but he died angry with the church. He used to tell me all his frustrations... I cannot believe that now I am in a worse situation than these faithful servants. As I write this letter, I have the annuitant fund book in front of me and it indicates that I began to contribute to pension in June 1928. The subscription was £1-10.0 for two years and then it was reviewed upwards to £2-10.0. In 1944 it was raised to £3.0.0. From 1956 to 1959 I was paying £5.0.0 to what they called new scheme. If you look at these figures in the light of our very low wages, you would understand that we were contributing so much... Now sir, you want me to die a very unhappy man and shut my mouth? I will not do that, for I have spent all my life working for the Methodist Church and to the Methodist Church I will complain. I know no other master. To this church I say, it is impossible to live on \$67.50 per year.<sup>765</sup>

This last section of Rusike's letter is significant also in that it points to other indigenous ministers who died in miserable conditions because the church had failed to look after them. Rusike mentions the story of Malusalila and the box of matches. He sheds no light on what the story was about other than that it was a very sad story. It is said that Malusalila had told his family that, upon his death, he would prefer to be buried with an empty matchbox as that was all he could afford from his pension.<sup>766</sup> He indicated that he wanted no coffin because he had never handled sufficient money to be able to buy one. His funeral was an embarrassing moment for the church.<sup>767</sup>

It is not known when exactly the district chairperson got Rusike's letter, but it took eleven days for him to answer. However, on 26 April 1971 the reply was written and it reads:

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<sup>765</sup> Letter from Rusike to Ndhlela, 15 April 1971, Rusike's personal file, MCA.

<sup>766</sup> Julius Juru, same interview.

<sup>767</sup> Julius Juru, same interview..

I write to acknowledge receipt of your letter and advise you that I am considering the whole of it as you have said to me. I shall let you know in due course what action I would have taken. I hope you and your family are well. I would advise you again not to worry yourself about what you shall eat tomorrow. The church will not throw you away, you shall not starve, and the church will look after you.<sup>768</sup>

Rusike responded to the chairperson's letter after seventeen days. He wrote:

In reply to my last letter you did not answer my request; you only said 'the church would not let me suffer.' This is not the answer I am looking for. The other retired ministers suffered and died suffering. May I bring to your attention that I am receiving less than a minister's widow with one child. Mother £2.0.0 and child 15/- per month. The money you had been giving me from 1960 works to 5/- per week and my wife 5/- week. Can a married person leave on 10/- per month? Garden boys live on more than that plus ration... As I said in my last letter, that I spent the whole of my life working for the Methodist Church without a Minor Synod held for me and this the way the church is saying thank Rusike...<sup>769</sup>

Rusike speaks about 'garden boys.' This term was used to refer to black people who were employed to work in the gardens of whites and, in some cases, middle class black people. The term was derogatory. It is an example of how these African clerical elites wished to maintain their status over so called lower orders. If one worked in a garden, one was a 'boy', regardless of one's age. Rusike's letter helps us to appreciate and understand the dilemma the indigenous ministers found themselves in. It seems that quite a number of indigenous ministers died miserably without anyone to hear their stories of exploitation and abuse. The suffering apparently increased during retirement, especially for those indigenous ministers who had tried to build their homes using retirement funds.

On the 29<sup>th</sup> of January 1974, Shadreck Ushewokunze wrote to the district chairperson asking for a grant to build a house in Seke Township.<sup>770</sup> He argued that he had worked for the church all his life without ever earning enough to build a home. His letter reads:

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<sup>768</sup>Letter from Ndhela to Rusike, 26 pril 1971, Rusike's personal file, MCA.

<sup>769</sup>Letter from Rusike to Ndhlela, 13 May 1971, Rusike's personal file, MCA.

<sup>770</sup>Letter from Rev. Ushewokunze to Ndhlela, 29 January 1974 Ushewokunze's, personal file , MCA.

As you know that I have worked for the church with distinction but in real terms for nothing, would you be kind enough to give me a grant of \$1000 for the purposes of building a home for myself and my family...<sup>771</sup>

The district chairperson's response was that the church could only give him his pension and was not in a position to build a house for him as the church had no such policy.<sup>772</sup>

Ushewokunze's letter seems, *prima facie*, unreasonable: he is asking for a grant instead of a loan to build his home. Further analysis might reveal that he felt he had been exploited during his working days.

During the period under review numerous letters were written by indigenous ministers requesting financial assistance from the church. Nine letters did ask for help with paying school fees.<sup>773</sup> However, not all the indigenous ministers tried to solve their problems by writing letters of appeal to the authorities. Instead, some sabotaged the system.

#### **4.4.2 'Stealing' or mutual exploitation? The indigenous ministers' response to poor remuneration and oppressive working conditions**

One of the duties of a Methodist minister was to provide an oversight of the church's finances. In cases where there was evidence of financial impropriety the responsible individual would be made to account. A case in point is Enoch Mapondera who was accused of financial maladministration in the Nenguo Circuit in 1964. Mr Birtles was asked to audit the books and found that there were several irregularities. His report reads:

I have just completed audit of the Nenguo Circuit books to the time of Rev. Enoch Mapondera's departure on 29<sup>th</sup> January 1965. This reveals a very serious discrepancy between the amount of cash which was handed over to the new superintendent and the amount which the books show should have been in hand.

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<sup>771</sup>Letter from Rev. Ushewokunze to Ndhlela, 29 January 1974 Ushewokunze's, personal file, MCA.

<sup>772</sup>Letter from Ndhlela to Ushewokunze, 15 February 1974, Ushewokunze's personal file, MCA.

<sup>773</sup>Letters of request for school fees assistance from S. Chiota, K Gazi, J.C Mashingaidze, S. Sithole, G. Mnyama, H Kachidza, E. Mandinyenya, R. Mnyama and E. Hungwe. These letters are found in the ministers' respective personal files kept at the MCA.

The books show that there should have been £1308, 1.10 whereas the amount given to Makwehe was £920, 19.7., which means a shortfall of £387, 2.3. In addition to this amount there is a shortfall of £59, 14.7, in the miscellaneous account which is used for private payment by the superintendent. The total shortage is £4446, 16.10...<sup>774</sup>

Based on the audit report, the chairman of the district called for a Minor Synod to decide on the fate of the minister. The Minor Synod was made up of six ministers, three of them indigenous and three Europeans. The rule was for the accused to choose two ministers to represent him or her. Mapondera chose Charles Manyoba and N.L. Cilson. The complainant, in this case the district chairperson, also chose two ministers. These were S. Ushewokunze and A.W. Heath. The area chairperson chose two ministers as well, namely R. Rushworth and E. Musa. The area chairperson was R.A. Rabey.

The Minor Synod found Mapondera guilty of misappropriation of church funds. He was asked to repay the sum of £446.16.10. The Minor Synod further directed that he had to repay the money at the rate of £4 per month. On 27 September 1965 Mapondera wrote to the chairperson of the district:

I am writing in connection with the decision of the Minor Synod that I should pay £446.16.10. May I start to do this at the end of October 1965? I do not want to show as if I have despised you and your committee... Though I may be doing this payment, still I am not happy with this decision. I feel I must get permission from you to take legal steps because truth cannot be just suppressed and treated unjustly and expect it to remain there... I would be glad to pay the money if I knew what I bought with that money....The decision of the Minor Synod will not solve this matter, it will just lead me to seek for help outside the church. I will not be happy to pay this amount knowing that I am being robbed by the church. I am putting these facts before you for consideration.<sup>775</sup>

Mapondera uses strong terms such as ‚being robbed by the church,‘ ‚treated unjustly‘ and ‚truth cannot be just suppressed.‘ The words imply a high level of political consciousness. Mapondera apparently saw the decision of the Minor Synod as a negation of justice. As a

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<sup>774</sup>Letter from the Auditor, Mr Birtles to the district chairperson, Rev Ndhlela, 17 February 1965, Mapondera's personal file, MCA.

<sup>775</sup>Letter from Mapondera to Ndhlela, 27 September 1965, Mapondera's personal file, MCA.

result the case was not closed with the decision of the Minor Synod. Mapondera sought the assistance of lawyers without the permission of the church leadership. He contracted a law firm by the name of Danziger and Lardner-Burke Attorneys who on 11 March 1966 wrote to the Methodist Church. The letter reads:

We have been consulted by the Rev Mapondera in regard to certain allegations made against him concerning a shortage in his books. We should be grateful if you would kindly forward these books to us as we would like to peruse the same and we undertake to return them to you once we have done so. We confirm that we will not allow these books to leave our offices...Our client is most concerned at the allegations which have been made against him and we shall be grateful therefore if you would let us hear from you as soon as possible.<sup>776</sup>

The Methodist Church's response to Mapondera's lawyers was that they were not in a position to give out their books because the church had its own internal processes that dealt with matters of this kind.<sup>777</sup> Even the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society added its voice:

The overseas Pastoral Committee received your report on the Rev. E. M. Mapondera. The committee took the view that provided Mr. Mapondera is repaying £4 per month and has not taken action in the civil courts; he may be allowed to continue his ministry... If Mr. Mapondera insists on taking the matter to civil courts the advice of the committee is that you should suspend him immediately and frame charges to bring to a Minor Synod.<sup>778</sup>

The letter was copied to Mapondera and after noting its contents, he decided to withdraw the case from his lawyers. Obviously, his withdrawal of the case could have been based on his knowledge that pursuing it would have led to his dismissal. We will never know for sure whether Mapondera had, or had not, stolen money from the church. Our dilemma is to establish whether he would have seen such an act as stealing or rather as an act of mutual exploitation. Scott is of the view that:

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<sup>776</sup>Letter from Danziger and Lardner-Burke Attorneys, Notaries and Conveyancers, 11 March 1966, Mapondera's personal file, MCA.

<sup>777</sup>A. M Ndhlela's letter to Danziger and Lardner-Burke, 17 March, 1966, Mapondera's personal file, MCA.

<sup>778</sup>Letter from the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society to the district chairman of Rhodesia district, 1<sup>st</sup> July 1966, Mapondera's personal file, MCA.

Resistance like domination fights a war on two fronts. The hidden transcript is not just behind the scenes griping and grumbling; it is enacted in a host of down-to-earth, low-profile stratagems designed to minimise appropriation. In the case of slaves, for example, these stratagems have typically included theft, pilfering, feigned ignorance, shirking or careless labour, footdragging, secret trade and production for sale, sabotage of crops, livestock and machinery arson, and flight and so on.<sup>779</sup>

Social spaces of relative autonomy do not merely provide a neutral medium within which practical and discursive negations may grow. As domains of power relations in their own right, they serve to discipline as well as to formulate patterns of resistance.<sup>780</sup> Chances are that Mapondera's act would have been an act of reciprocity. The vocabulary of stealing may not have existed for him. As observed earlier in this chapter, exploited people employed many ways to resist.

Patterson's observations concerning the sociology of slavery can throw some invaluable light on this matter. His argument is:

As a rule, the slaves rarely missed an opportunity to „steal’ from the stores of the plantation or other sources belonging to the whites. It appears that they genuinely felt no sense of wrong in such forms of theft; or that there was any inconsistency in, at the same time abhorring any form of theft among them. Many writers, both pro- and anti-slavery made mention of this double standard on the part of the slaves.<sup>781</sup>

Stewart wrote that they were strangely addicted to theft. He added:

To pilfer from their masters they consider as no crime, though to rob a fellow-slave is accounted heinous, when a slave makes free with his master's property, he thus ingeniously argues: What I take from my master, being for my use, who am his slave, or property, he loses nothing by its transfer.<sup>782</sup>

It must be kept in mind that the mid 1960s were eventful years. In 1964 for the first time an indigenous minister was appointed to lead the synod. It could be because of this phenomenon

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<sup>779</sup>James .Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance Hidden Transcripts*, p.188.

<sup>780</sup>James .Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance Hidden Transcripts*, p.119.

<sup>781</sup>Orlando Patterson, *The Sociology of Slavery, An Analysis of the Origins, Development and Structure of Negro Slave Society in Jamaica*, p.222.

<sup>782</sup>Stewart cited in Orlando Patterson, *The Sociology of Slavery, An Analysis of the Origins, Development and Structure of Negro Slave Society in Jamaica*, p.222.



that we seem to observe a kind of paradigm shift. Africans were beginning to feature in some important church committees. It appears that this was the period of equal representation across the racial divide. Denis argues that in southern Africa, this period could be referred to as the 'period of power sharing.'<sup>783</sup> He suggests that the period began in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>784</sup>

We now need to establish whether the church experienced many cases of misappropriation of finances by church functionaries. Certainly, during the period under review, some other indigenous ministers were accused of similar mismanagement. On 10 February 1965 a Minor Synod was called to examine the case of J. Tabaziva.<sup>785</sup> He was an ordained indigenous minister in the Methodist Church.<sup>786</sup> He was charged with being responsible for financial mismanagement at Marshal Hartley School.<sup>787</sup> Tabaziva chose N.S. Chiyoka and H. Buckely as his representatives at the Minor Synod. Bennet, who assumed the role of complainant, nominated Roy Rabey and S. Ushewokunze to represent him. The chairperson of the district nominated A.W. Heath and J.H. Roberts. All were ordained clergy of the Methodist Church.<sup>788</sup> The Minor Synod met on 23<sup>rd</sup> of February 1965 and made the following recommendation.

The Minor Synod met to enquire into the shortfall of cash in the Marshal Hartley School fees account for 1964. The total loss is estimated to be £479, 38.6. Owing to the destruction of records it was impossible to assign responsibility for the total amount. Such records as were available showed that the Rev. Tabaziva was responsible for £43.17. Mr Tabaziva admitted this responsibility and undertook to repay this amount at the rate of £2 per month. The Minor Synod agreed that no further action should be taken in respect of the Rev. Tabaziva.<sup>789</sup>

Tabaziva admitted responsibility for the loss of money in the school. What is not very clear is whether he raised any extenuating circumstances during his trial. The question is whether he took money because of the need for subsistence, or because he felt he was underpaid, or was

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<sup>783</sup>P. Denis, 'Introduction' in Philippe Denis(ed.), *The Making of an Indigenous Clergy in Southern Africa*, p.12.

<sup>784</sup>P. Denis, 'Introduction' in Philippe Denis(ed.), *The Making of an Indigenous Clergy in Southern Africa*, p.12.

<sup>785</sup>See notice of Minor Synod in Tabaziva's personal file, 10 February 1965, MCA.

<sup>786</sup> See notice of Minor Synod in Tabaziva's personal file, 10 February 1965, MCA.

<sup>787</sup> See notice of Minor Synod in Tabaziva's personal file, 10 February 1965, Methodist Connexional Archives.

<sup>788</sup> See summarised verdict of the Minor Synod in Tabaziva's personal file, 23<sup>rd</sup> February 1965, MCA.

<sup>789</sup>See summarised verdict of the minor synod held in respect of Rev. J. Tabaziva, 23<sup>rd</sup> February, 1965, Tabaziva's personal file, MCA.

it a mere case of a quest for riches? Only God knows the answer. This was not the last case of financial impropriety in the church.

Jonah Patsika was asked to answer to charges of financial indiscipline in 1968.<sup>790</sup> The church auditor reported that there was gross financial mismanagement in Patsika's Que Que Circuit.<sup>791</sup> The usual disciplinary process of a Minor Synod was followed and Patsika was found guilty of having misappropriated £380.30. 10.<sup>792</sup> He denied the charges and asserted that his offence consisted in not entering all his expenses in the books but that the money he was accused of having stolen was actually in the bank.<sup>793</sup> The Minor Synod however, asked him to repay the money at the rate of £5 per month.<sup>794</sup> The resolution of the Minor Synod reads:

After a careful examination of the submissions by the auditors as well as by the Rev. Jonah Patsika, the Minor Synod of the Methodist Church in its wisdom ruled that Rev. Patsika is responsible for the loss of £380. 30.10. If Rev. Patsika accepts the verdict of the Minor Synod, we rule that he repays the money at the rate of £5 per month and no further action should be taken.<sup>795</sup>

Although Patsika continued to argue that he was innocent, he accepted the ruling of the Minor Synod and repaid the money.<sup>796</sup> Whether his acceptance was a matter of allegiance to the Methodist Church or an admission of guilt remains a matter of conjecture. However, the case of Patsika raises a very important point. He argues that, what was construed as stealing of money was actually caused by his failure to do the books properly. As has been established in chapter three of this study, the indigenous ministers were not thoroughly trained in finances and book keeping.

From 1968 to 1980, four other African ministers had to answer charges of embezzlement of church funds. These were Michael Chidarikire, Wellington Gubudu, Stephen Manguni and Stephen Mkuruba. All appeared before Minor Synods of the church and were found guilty. They were made to repay the church's money at agreed rates. The question remains whether these indigenous ministers were dishonest or if other factors were at play? Juru comments

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<sup>790</sup>District chairperson's letter to Patsika, 18 February 1968, Patsika's personal file, MCA.

<sup>791</sup>District chairperson's letter to Patsika, 18 February 1968, Patsika's personal file, MCA.

<sup>792</sup>District chairperson's letter to Patsika, 18 February 1968, Patsika's personal file, MCA.

<sup>793</sup>Summarised version of the minutes of Minor Synod, 2 March 1968, Patsika's personal file, MCA.

<sup>794</sup>Summarised version of the minutes of Minor Synod, 2 March 1968, Patsika's personal file, MCA.

<sup>795</sup>Summarised version of the minutes of Minor Synod, 2 March 1968, Patsika's personal file, MCA.

<sup>796</sup>Patsika's letter to the district chairperson 27 March 1968, Patsika's personal file, MCA.

that, aftermaking a close analysis, it would seem that many indigenous ministers, accused of stealing church money, had been treated badly by the Stationing Committee of the church. Their appointments were always in rural areas and, more often than not, their circuits were unable to adequately pay them.<sup>797</sup> If Juru's argument is valid, then the ‚stealing‘ of church money by the indigenous ministers may have been a matter of survival on the one hand and an act of reciprocity on the other. Such an act of reciprocity is what I have referred to as ‚mutual exploitation‘. There is a need to elaborate on the concept of mutual exploitation as regards missionariesand indigenous ministers.

The missionary economic structure was such that resources were never equitably distributed. The indigenous ministers were working in mission centres, handling a lot of funds as has been established. The major income items on the 1947 and 1975 budgets were levies from African circuits. However, those funds were not evenly distributed. The indigenous ministers knew that they were being exploited and they may have perceived their usage of church funds as a form of justice. Scott provides some hilarious insights on this matter.

To take the question of slave pilfering as an illustration, how can we tell what meaning this practice had for slaves? Was the taking of grain, chickens, hogs, and so on a mere response to hunger pangs, was it done for pleasure of adventure, or was it meant to chasten hated masters or overseers? It could be any of these and more. Publicly, of course, the master's definition of theft prevailed. We know enough, however to surmise that, behind the scenes, theft was seen as simply taking back the product of one's labour. We also know that the semiclandestine culture of the slaves encouraged and celebrated theft from the masters and morally reproved any slave who would dare expose such theft: [To] steal and not be detected is a merit among [slaves]... And the vice which they hold in the greatest abhorrence is that of telling upon one another.<sup>798</sup>

As Scott's insights make clear, it is difficult to know the precise reasons why some indigenous ministers ‚stole‘ church money. However, the concept of mutual exploitation could have been a dominant motivation.

During the same period the archives do not show that any European minister had to answer before a Minor Synod to accusations of financial impropriety. Possibly, the archives would

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<sup>797</sup>Julius Juru, same interview.

<sup>798</sup>James Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, p.188.

not have captured such an event. The only European minister to appear before a kind of disciplinary committee was Holman Brown.<sup>799</sup> He was accused of a completely different offence: that of taking liquor.<sup>800</sup> The reviewing committee found him guilty, but he was accepted back into the ministry. The report of the reviewers reads:

Revds H. Carter and P. Ibbotson have met Brown and reviewed with him his actions and his explanations of the same. These brethren having received Mr Brown's assurance that he had not consciously broken the pledge he gave in 1926 accepts the same but hereby places on record that the interpretation placed on the pledge by Mr Brown differs from the meaning understood by the chairperson, secretary and some of the brethren associated with him, that he has been discreet in the use he has made of intoxicating drinks, but the synod in the light of the new and comprehensive pledge given by Brown, receives him back into its confidence and affectionate regards being assured that his future actions will accord with his promise and the desires of the synod...<sup>801</sup>

It was not uncommon in the Methodist Church for a person, accused of having committed an offence, to be tried by a committee of selected people. This happened, especially if the case was considered to be not sufficiently important to warrant a Minor Synod. The question is whether the absence of Minor Synods for the European missionaries meant that they did not break the rules of the church. If this was the case, there could be several reasons for it.

Firstly, the tough rules and regulations for missionaries serving overseas may have inhibited them.<sup>802</sup> A missionary could be recalled home for any misdemeanour deemed serious enough by the mission society.<sup>803</sup> No missionary would want to be subjected to such an embarrassment. If we accept that, on the one hand, most financial offences committed by indigenous ministers were the result of poor accounting systems, we may trust that, on the other hand, the missionaries who were better educated and who in some cases had been trained in bookkeeping, managed to keep their books always in order. This would make sense in the light of Patsika's plea that he never stole any money but that he had failed to enter

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<sup>799</sup> Minutes of synod 1933, file S/M, MCA.

<sup>800</sup> Minutes of synod 1933, file S/M, MCA.

<sup>801</sup> Record for synod journal May 1933, file S/J, MCA.

<sup>802</sup> Handbook of Regulations of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society relating to missionaries 1967, file H/B, MCA.

<sup>803</sup> See handbook and Regulations of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society relating to missionaries 1967, file H/B, MCA.

expenditure into the books properly. It is however also possible that the missionaries never stole any money because they were well paid.

The possibility that also missionaries committed financial crimes but that these were overlooked is difficult to sustain, considering that Mr Brown was put to defend himself after his abuse of alcohol. Apart from Minor Synods, some criticisms regarding management by indigenous ministers were solved by a mere explanation from the indigenous ministers concerned. A case in point is that of Kanodereka.<sup>804</sup>

On 7th June 1966, the district chairperson wrote to Aurthur Kanodereka alerting him to the auditor's findings in the circuit where Kanodereka was previously a superintendent. The letter states:

I received a letter from the auditor regarding Siabuwa books. He had quite a lot of queries which needed your explanation. First your expenditure is not supported by any receipts. And secondly there was a sum of £70 paid by the ministry of education for one of the teachers but the teacher did not receive the money. Would you please clear me on these two points...Could you please let me know how you spent the £50 for drought relief because Rev. Siamuntinta would not know and I would like to send a word to the Mission House for how you distributed this money to the people?<sup>805</sup>

Kanodereka responded by pointing out that he had done nothing wrong. The case was simply closed without any further enquiry. However, Kanodereka's integrity appears to have been questionable. On 18 August 1971, the credit manager of Shell Rhodesia, Bindura Depot, wrote a final warning to Kanodereka for failing to settle his debt to them. The letter reads:

We refer you to our previous letters of request for payment in respect of invoice 10478 dated 25 February 1971. In the amount of \$26, 89 relating to illuminating kerosene supplied to you at our Bindura Depot. We trust that you will favourably respond to this final letter of request...<sup>806</sup>

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<sup>804</sup>Kanodereka is a key figure in chapter six of this study and he will be more elaborately introduced in that chapter.

<sup>805</sup>Letter to Aurthur Kanodereka, from the district chairperson, 20 May 1966, Kanodereka's personal file, MCA.

<sup>806</sup>Letter from the Bindura depot credit manager for Shell Rhodesia to Kanodereka, 18 August 1971, Kanodereka's personal file, MCA.

Kanodereka did not take any action after receiving this letter and the depot manager wrote another letter, this time to the Methodist Church, requesting for assistance in ensuring that Kanodereka would pay his debt.<sup>807</sup> Kanodereka only paid the money upon realising that the church had been asked to deal with the issue –with obvious consequences.

This was not the only case of dishonesty from Kanodereka. On 2<sup>nd</sup> of August 1971 he received a letter from the church, urging him to pay his debt to another company from which he had purchased some books for the school.

I have been informed that legal proceedings were about to be taken against you because of your failure after a number of approaches to settle outstanding debts for school books purchased early this year... As it would be detrimental both to you personally and to the whole Methodist Church for you to be involved in court proceedings of this nature, I consider it a matter of considerable urgency that immediate steps be taken to settle this matter before it gets out of our hands...<sup>808</sup>

It seems that Kanodereka lacked the integrity, expected of a person of his vocation. Hungwe alludes to the fact that he was strongly politicised and a nationalist. He would open credit accounts and buy goods on credit which he would distribute to the ‚boys.’<sup>809</sup> Often he would not pay for those goods.<sup>810</sup> This view was corroborated by Kanodereka’s wife who revealed that her husband had been a main supplier of material goods to the freedom fighters.<sup>811</sup> Based on this evidence, Kanodereka’s actions can be seen as subversive. This subversiveness was expressed through other acts of defiance as well, such as engaging in businesses against the church’s laws. Another way of interpreting the actions of some of the indigenous clergy who operated secret businesses is to see these ministers as African elites who were intend on improving their lot within the colonial system rather than overthrowing it. They were sensitive to issues of pay, housing, schooling because these were a source of bourgeois, independence and accumulation.

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<sup>807</sup>Letter from the Bindura Depot manager of Shell Zimbabwe, 1<sup>st</sup> September 1971, Kanodereka’s personal file, MCA.

<sup>808</sup>Letter from the district office to Kanodereka, 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1972, Kanodereka’s personal file, MCA.

<sup>809</sup>The term ‚boys’ was used during the liberation war of Zimbabwe to refer to the freedom fighters.

<sup>810</sup> Elliot Hungwe, same interview.

<sup>811</sup> Gladys Kanodereka, same interview.

### **4.4.3 Indigenous ministers and entrepreneurship**

The Methodist Church passed a resolution at its 1920 synod to the effect that no minister was allowed to engage in any kind of business venture.<sup>812</sup> The rationale was that this would potentially encourage Methodist ministers to devote their time and energy to the management of business ventures at the expense of their ministerial responsibilities. The other reason could have been that, when a person is running a business, the danger of accumulating debt is high and such an ugly situation would have soiled the good reputation of the clergy as well as the church. This embargo on trading by the Methodist Church in Rhodesia was not without precedence in the Methodist tradition. R. Heitzenrater observes:

At the 1770 conference, Wesley reiterated the requirement for preachers to relinquish all trades or be excluded from the itinerancy, and put the preachers on notice that they would be questioned the following year as to whether they had entirely left off their trade or not. The offenders would become local preachers (no longer in full connection), to be sure, many did.<sup>813</sup>

As already has been stated, Methodist ministers were so much exposed to Wesleyan teachings that they were probably aware of this tradition. The Methodist Church in Rhodesia reinforced the position by their 1955 synod resolution.<sup>814</sup> Although this was the regulation, the situation on the ground was completely different. By 1932, two indigenous ministers had already applied for permission to acquire farms. The response of the synod was:

The chairman brought to the notice of the pastoral session that two African ministers had applied for farms under the Land Apportionment Act. The synod impressed upon the African ministers that no other interest must cause them to give less than their whole devotion to their work, and that they must be very careful lest they involved themselves in financial obligations beyond their power to meet.<sup>815</sup>

This statement by the synod is not very helpful because it does neither reveal the names of the ministers nor indicate whether permission was granted. However, Chibi argues that the indigenous ministers were allowed to own farms, but that the majority did not have the

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<sup>812</sup> Minutes of Methodist Synod 1920, file S/M, MCA.

<sup>813</sup> Richard P. Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the people called Methodists*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995, p.235.

<sup>814</sup> Minutes of synod 1955, file S/M, MCA.

<sup>815</sup> Minutes of the synod 1932, file S/M, MCA.

necessary funds.<sup>816</sup> One unnamed indigenous minister owned a farm and the allegations are that the money he used to purchase that farm was stolen from the church.<sup>817</sup> Attempts to get this information verified by other interviewees did not materialise, because all of them professes ignorance about the ways in which some indigenous ministers, managed to purchase their farms.<sup>818</sup>

Kanodereka also owned a farm at 147 Musengezi.<sup>819</sup> According to Gladys Kanodereka, this farm was purchased through funds acquired from Moral Rearmament of which her husband was a member. She claims that it was impossible to buy a farm from one's stipends.<sup>820</sup>

Matthew Rusike owned a farm at 21 Marirangwe purchase area.<sup>821</sup> He bought the farm from the donations he personally received from well wishers when he was the superintendent of Epworth Children's Home.<sup>822</sup> Only three indigenous ministers in the Methodist Church owned farms. We may deduce that the indigenous ministers had a considerable interest in farms, but the problem was affordability. Enos Chibi believes that farm ownership was perceived as a great stride towards economic security.<sup>823</sup>

In addition to farms, there was also much interest in businesses. Lameck Chidhakwa, who had been employed by the National Railways of Rhodesia, joined the African ministry in 1967.<sup>824</sup> Because he was receiving a pension from his former employer, Chidhakwa could, clandestinely, establish a business.<sup>825</sup> By 1975, he had more than seven general dealerships and the leaders of the church called him for an explanation.<sup>826</sup> They charged him with owning some businesses against the church's policy. A second charge was that he was always busy visiting his businesses at the expense of the circuit work.<sup>827</sup> Chidhakwa did not deny the second charge but he denied ownership of the shops and alleged that they were owned by his wife. Chidhakwa was clearly being dishonest because he failed to explain why he was always

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<sup>816</sup> Enos Chibi, same interview.

<sup>817</sup> The names of both the interviewee and the concerned minister are both withheld because of the seriousness and legal implications of the allegation.

<sup>818</sup> Elliot Hungwe, Naison Makwehe, Jane Jabangwe, Julius Juru all claimed ignorance about the indigenous clergy's sources of funds used to purchase farms.

<sup>819</sup> Kanodereka's curriculum vitae, personal file, MCA.

<sup>820</sup> Gladys Kanodereka same interview.

<sup>821</sup> See the last will of Rusike, Matthew Rusike's personal file, MCA.

<sup>822</sup> Enos Chibi same interview.

<sup>823</sup> Enos Chibi same interview.

<sup>824</sup> See Chidhakwa's obituary from his personal file, (the obituary not dated) but Chidhakwa died in 2004, MCA.

<sup>825</sup> Enos Chibi same interview.

<sup>826</sup> Chidhakwa's obituary from his personal file, MCA.

<sup>827</sup> Chidhakwa's obituary from his personal file, MCA.



at the businesses if he did not own them.<sup>828</sup> Chibi asserted that Chidhakwa was a witty character and he would stop at nothing in order to get rich.<sup>829</sup>

The church did not discipline him but encouraged him to close his shops and concentrate on his work as a minister of religion.<sup>830</sup> He later applied for early retirement on health grounds but in essence because he wanted to manage his businesses.<sup>831</sup> His obituary is instructive. It argues that during the colonial period the missionaries were not happy to see indigenous ministers become self sufficient.<sup>832</sup> The obituary praises Chidhakwa for being a champion of black empowerment.<sup>833</sup>

The fact that Chidhakwa pointed that the businesses belonged to his wife needs some further analysis and to assess whether this strategy was copied from elsewhere. As noted in chapter three of this thesis, the indigenous ministers were during their theological training extensively taught about John Wesley's life and his works. Consequently, Chidhakwa could have modelled his strategy on Wesleyan traditions. Wesley's closing remarks at the 1767 conference were: Let us all be men of one business. We live for only this - to save our own souls and them that hear us.<sup>834</sup> Heitzenrater observes that:

At the following conference, Wesley gave the preachers who were following trades one more year to leave their work, reminding them that „every travelling preacher [has promised] solemnly to have nothing else to do, and receives his little allowance for this very end, that he may not need to do anything else.’ He, especially singled out those who sold medicinal drops, saying that it might be all right for a wife to do so but for any preacher to „hawk them about... does not suit the dignity of his calling.’<sup>835</sup>

Chidhakwa was not the only indigenous minister who had a forte for business. Kanodereka was accused of the same.<sup>836</sup> From 1967 to 1974 Kanodereka was stationed in Mount Darwin.<sup>837</sup> It was in this circuit that he became involved in the business of buying cattle in the

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<sup>828</sup> Enos Chibi ,same interview.

<sup>829</sup> Enos Chibi, same interview.

<sup>830</sup> Chidhakwa's obituary..

<sup>831</sup> Chidhakwa's obituary.

<sup>832</sup> See Chidhakwa's obituary.

<sup>833</sup> See Chidhakwa's obituary.

<sup>834</sup> Richard P. Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the people called Methodists*, p.234

<sup>835</sup> Minutes of conference,75,78-79 cited in Richard P. Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the people called Methodists*, p.234

<sup>836</sup> Gladys Kanodereka, same interview.

<sup>837</sup> Gladys Kanodereka, same interview.

rural areas.<sup>838</sup> He would fatten cattle and sell them to butchery owners.<sup>839</sup> By 1972, Kanodereka was running his own butchery in Mount Darwin.<sup>840</sup> The district chairperson warned him in a letter written on 7 July 1972. The letter reads:

It has come to my attention that you are running butchery in Mount Darwin Circuit. You would know that the ministerial vocation requires that you leave everything else and devote your life to the service of God's people. Further, the news that we received is that you are making that butchery a haven for the freedom fighters. Whilst that is your personal choice, I would like to warn you that this kind of practice may compromise your ministry as well as put the name of the church into disrepute...As you would know that it is difficult to discuss in detail issues of this nature in a letter, I will therefore ask that you come to my office as soon as you are able to travel to Salisbury for further reflection.<sup>841</sup>

According to Gladys Kanodereka, her husband visited Salisbury to discuss the matter with the district chairperson but he refused to divulge the contents of the discussions to her, arguing that they were too sensitive.<sup>842</sup> He did however not close his butchery.<sup>843</sup> By the end of 1973 the situation had become dangerous because the country's intelligence officers were tracking his movements as well as monitoring activities at the butchery.<sup>844</sup> On the 12th of August 1973, Gladys Kanodereka wrote a letter to the district chairperson alerting him to the possible danger run by the minister and his family.

I write to alert you that the situation in Mount Darwin has become so dangerous that if you do not transfer us with immediate effect you may have to come and bury all of us. Arthur has been in and out of the hands of the police and intelligence officers because of suspicion that he is a collaborator... My prayer is that you act swiftly on this matter.<sup>845</sup>

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<sup>838</sup> Gladys Kanodereka, same interview.

<sup>839</sup> Gladys Kanodereka, same interview.

<sup>840</sup> Gladys Kanodereka, same interview.

<sup>841</sup> A letter from Ndhlela to Kanodereka, 7 July 1972, Kanodereka's personal file, MCA.

<sup>842</sup> Gladys Kanodereka, same interview.

<sup>843</sup> Gladys Kanodereka, same interview.

<sup>844</sup> Gladys Kanodereka, same interview.

<sup>845</sup> A letter from Gladys Kanodereka to the district chairperson, 12 August 1973, Kanodereka's personal file, MCA. The letter is written in Shona and it reads: Ndino nyora kukuzivisai kutikuno kuMount Darwin kwaipa zvokuti Kana mukasatichinja nekukasika munozongouya kuzotiviga. Arthur ari kugara ari mumaoko amapurisa nevaya vanoferefeta, anofungirwa kuti mutengesi... Ndinonamata kuti dai mangokurumidza kutibvisa munzvimbo ino.

When the district chairperson received this letter, he informed Kanodereka's wife that the church would do everything to protect them.<sup>846</sup> Kanodereka was not immediately transferred from his station as his wife had hoped. He spent the entire 1974 in the Mount Darwin Circuit.<sup>847</sup> In January 1975 he was transferred to Mbare Circuit.<sup>848</sup> Whilst working in Mbare Circuit, he had to close down his butchery in Mount Darwin because he could not keep travelling up and down.<sup>849</sup> However, being used to handling large sums of money, he opened a shop in Mbare which he named *Tichagarika* General Dealer.<sup>850</sup> The name *Tichagarika* has a political as well as an economic meaning. Politically it means 'we shall be free', economically it means 'we shall be rich.'

One wonders whether this name could have been given in mockery of the low level of stipends of indigenous ministers. Among the Shona people of Zimbabwe, it is not uncommon that names communicate some hidden truth. A message can be conveyed through the name of a dog or a cow. It is not unusual to write a name on a piece of property, for example a wheelbarrow might be called 'those who were once poor are now rich' (*chaitemura chava kuseva*). Messages of this nature could be intended for hard-hearted neighbours and relatives, especially if they refused to help or associate with the family while it still was poor.

The establishment of secret businesses by some indigenous ministers could also be put in a different light. Scott sees secret trade as a way of resistance.<sup>851</sup> By implication, the Methodist indigenous ministers who engaged in secret businesses could have been expressing their dissatisfaction with the status quo.

The indigenous ministers possibly perceived farm ownership, business ventures, children's education and the attainment of higher stipends as part of a quest for both political and economic independence.

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<sup>846</sup>Letter from Ndhlela to Gladys Kanodereka, 21 August 1973, Kanodereka's personal file, MCA.

<sup>847</sup> Gladys Kanodereka, same interview.

<sup>848</sup> Gladys Kanodereka, same interview.

<sup>849</sup> Gladys Kanodereka, same interview.

<sup>850</sup> Gladys Kanodereka, same interview.

<sup>851</sup>James Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, p.188.

#### **4.4.4 The 'play the fools' strategy of the indigenous ministers**

It would be an overstatement to argue that all indigenous ministers acted alike in response to low wages and poor working conditions. The responses were as many and as varied as there were indigenous ministers. This chapter has shown indigenous ministers as reacting defiantly to oppression and discrimination. However, some indigenous ministers reacted in ways that were more complex and not easy to comprehend.

The 1932 synod noted that J.M. Matambo, an indigenous minister stationed at Marshal Hartley mission was satisfied with his residence and his allowance of £ 2 per month.<sup>852</sup> The minute reads:

This African minister expresses his satisfaction with his residence and work at Marshal Hartley farm and his allowance of £2 per month. His daughter Christine Matambo is to have her fees paid in respect of her tuition at the Waddilove Training Institution.<sup>853</sup>

It seems ironic that the fact of an African minister being satisfied with his benefits was apparently worth mentioning during a synod session. Moreover, this statement of notice was made at the same synod that recommended the reduction of the indigenous ministers' stipends, as noted earlier in this chapter. Perhaps the notice was intended to demonstrate to other African ministers that it was possible to be happy with small earnings. In the eyes of the authorities Matambo was a virtuous man. It is difficult to know how other indigenous ministers viewed him. Chibi gave us a clue when he argues:

There were always some indigenous ministers who hero worshipped the missionaries in return for some favours. They did not realise that they were being exploited and they were their own liberators.<sup>854</sup>

This view is consistent with the spirit of 'house slaves'<sup>855</sup> in the United States of America. In 1941, Nemapare wrote to his friend Thompson Samkange and his letter sheds light on what was happening in the Methodist Church at the time:

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<sup>852</sup> See the 1932, recommendations from the pastoral session in the minutes of synod 1932, file S/M, MCA.

<sup>853</sup> Minutes of synod 1932, file S/M, MCA.

<sup>854</sup> Enos Chibi, same interview.

The problem that confronts us is that we the African ministers do not speak with one voice when it comes to our concerns. It is probably I, you and few others who continue to voice their concern with regard to the abuse that we have suffered from these young missionaries. They stay in good and well-furnished houses whilst us we stay in semi completed houses. They earn huge stipends yet we are given just enough to keep the breath in our bones. Thompson, I think that we need to engage in a vigorous drive to make other African ministers aware that their friends are us not the missionaries whom they are praising.<sup>856</sup>

It is not clear who these ministers are that endeared themselves to the missionaries. Juru postulates that a number of indigenous ministers supported missionaries in return for certain favours such as a speedy promotion and appointment in town circuits.<sup>857</sup> When the interviewer asked him for examples, he said: „walls have ears’ (*madziro ane nzeve*) meaning this is a secret that must not be heard by anyone.<sup>858</sup> As a result there are no specific examples of indigenous ministers who were patronised by the missionaries, but the fact that there is some reference to their existence provides us with the premise for the argument that indigenous ministers responded differently to domination.

To see the actions of these indigenous ministers as a betrayal of the struggle may be to completely miss the point. Resistance takes many forms and uses a variety of strategies. It is possible that indigenous ministers who identified with missionaries, had chosen to „play the fool’ in order to access the benefits that were available. It could be that they were beating the whites at their own game. What appears to be ’selling out’ may have been a survival strategy. Scott concurs:

It is plain enough thus far that the prudent subordinate will ordinarily conform by speech and gesture to what he knows is expected of him-even if that conformity masks a quite different offstage opinion. What is not perhaps plain enough is that in any established system of domination, it is not just a question of masking one’s feelings and producing the correct speech acts and gestures in their place. Rather it

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<sup>855</sup>House slaves considered themselves privileged because of their access to the master’s food which the field slave had no access to. As a result, the house slaves did not cooperate with the field slaves in their quest for liberation.

<sup>856</sup>A letter from Esau Nemapare to Thompson Samkange, 4 April 1941, Thompson Samkange’s personal file, MCA.

<sup>857</sup>Julius Juru, same interview.

<sup>858</sup>Julius Juru, same interview.

is often a question of controlling what would be natural impulse to rage, insult, anger and the violence that such feelings prompt.<sup>859</sup>

Following Scott's observation, one may argue that the indigenous ministers who adopted a „playing the fool' strategy were not so much naïve as trying to survive under domination.

## **4.5 Conclusion**

This chapter discussed the levels of stipends of the indigenous ministers from 1891 to 1980. It also examined the working conditions of the indigenous clergy in this period. The chapter arrived at the conclusion that the stipends of indigenous ministers were low compared to those of their European counterparts and compared to the salaries of government employees such as teachers and nurses. Moreover, the chapter observed that, although the accommodation of the indigenous ministers was good compared to that of black workers and peasantry, it was relatively poor compared to the houses of missionaries. The chapter also assessed the other benefits of the indigenous ministers such as travel arrangements, medical aid and funeral policy and arrived at the conclusion that these were poor compared to those of the European missionaries. Of particular note is the fact that mostly the indigenous ministers travelled on foot because there was no scheme to provide them with vehicles whereas there was such a scheme for the European missionaries.

The chapter also noted that the issue of poor remuneration for the indigenous ministers was not unique to Methodist indigenous ministers. One of the most popular songs in the United Methodist Church contains lines that espouse a theology of world denial. In the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, the situation was no better. In fact, the Methodist Church had borrowed some oppressive concepts from the Methodist Church in Southern Africa, in particular from the Transvaal District.

The other point made in this chapter is that the indigenous ministers were conscious of their predicament and responded in various ways. Some petitioned the church leaders, whilst others confronted them. A few undermined the regulations and allegedly used church funds in an act I have described as „mutual exploitation'. I also argue that the „stealing' of church funds by the indigenous ministers may represent a high level of alertness to the principle of reciprocity. Others, on the contrary, engaged in, what I referred to as, a „play the fool' strategy, so as to protect themselves from the wrath of the European missionaries and to

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<sup>859</sup> James Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, p. 36.

access the resources under missionary management. The theory that largely illuminates this chapter is: *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*.<sup>860</sup> This chapter took the position that, although the indigenous ministers were not homogeneous in their response to domination by the European missionaries, they shared awareness that this domination was a reality. They perceived the acquiring of farms, businesses and the education of their children as important economic resources that would see them through their darkest hour of need. For them, material wealth was a symbol of political independence. This realisation came about partly as a result of the poor working conditions to which they were subjected by the missionaries.

The next chapter seeks to establish how the indigenous ministers of the Methodist Church perceived African culture. Did they consider adherence to African culture as a significant expression of their sovereignty and cultural independence?

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<sup>860</sup>This theory came from James Scott and it has been fully explained in this chapter.

## **5. CHAPTER FIVE: THE METHODIST INDIGENOUS MINISTERS AND AFRICAN CULTURE**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter assessed the level of stipends and the working conditions of the Methodist indigenous ministers in Zimbabwe. It argued that the ministers were earning low stipends compared to both their European counterparts and black people in government employment such as teachers and nurses. In response to their exploitation, some engaged in passive resistance which took different forms such as „stealing’ church money and acquiring farms and businesses. They perceived such acquisitions as a means to attain upward social mobility.

This chapter seeks to establish how the Methodist indigenous ministers perceived the indigenous culture. It will assess whether the indigenous ministers considered adherence to African culture as an expression of dissatisfaction with the status quo whereby they were culturally and politically dominated.

In order to find adequate answers to the above questions, this study will firstly, establish in general the European missionaries’ socio-religious and cultural presuppositions. This will provide us with a religious context of the missionaries in whose shadow the indigenous ministers operated. The study will discuss the worldview of the missionaries in general, but pay particular attention to the worldview of the Methodist indigenous ministers.

Secondly, this chapter will explore the Methodist indigenous ministers’ views on aspects of African marriage such as polygamy, bridewealth (*lobola or rovara*)<sup>861</sup> and mother’s cow (*mombe yeumai*). It will endeavour to establish the church’s position in this regard. On the basis of this discussion, I will evaluate whether the indigenous ministers were conformists or non-conformists.

Furthermore chapter five will examine the indigenous ministers’ attitude towards ancestor veneration or, what has been arguably termed, ancestor worship. This phenomenon has been highly controversial in the history of Christianity in Africa. I will attempt to establish how the

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<sup>861</sup> Brideprice or bridewealth is known as *lobola* in Ndebele and *roora* in Shona.



Methodist indigenous ministers viewed this practice. More importantly, the study will look for reasons for their preferences.

This chapter will also examine the views of the indigenous ministers concerning witchcraft and traditional healing. Did the indigenous ministers believe in witchcraft and the work of traditional healers? Is there any evidence that some of the indigenous ministers visited traditional healers?

I will explore as well how the Methodist indigenous ministers perceived other aspects of African culture such as the use of totems, the use of the indigenous language and other indigenous knowledge systems.

Under influence of Jean and John Comaroff's *Revelation and Revolution*<sup>862</sup>, chapter five will seek to establish the impact of the conversation between the European and the African culture. Did the indigenous ministers of the Methodist Church absorb European values, such as writing a „Will' before one dies? Did they abandon their rural homes in favour of urban life? Did they abandon the construction of round houses in favour of square ones? According to the Comaroffs, colonisation was a two-way process, with a dialogue between the coloniser and the colonised, although the colonised contributed to this process at a much lower level since the terrain was not even. It is noteworthy, that it is this process that made the Europeans view their culture as closed and the same was true for the Tswanas.<sup>863</sup> By implication, the missionaries also assimilated some aspects of the indigenous culture although to a much lesser degree. Although it is beyond the scope of this study, some attention will be given to these dynamics.

In chapter five I will try to evaluate to what degree the indigenous ministers affirmed African culture. To what extent were they against African culture? There can be no question of this chapter being exhaustive of all aspects of African culture but it has selected just a few that may be considered essential for the purposes of this thesis.

Finally, since there is a very thin dividing line between African culture and African religion, „culture,' as used in this study, will include some indigenous religious beliefs.

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<sup>862</sup>This theory has already been discussed in chapter one of this study.

<sup>863</sup>John and Jean Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, p.18.

## 5.2 European missionaries' socio-religious and cultural presuppositions

Lamin Sanneh postulates in his seminal work, *Translating the Message, the Missionary impact on Culture*<sup>864</sup> that, in the expansion of Christianity, the mission followed two basic directions: mission by diffusion and mission by translation. „Mission by diffusion is when one considers the missionary culture as the inseparable carrier of the message.’<sup>865</sup> „By it, religion expands from its initial cultural base and is implanted in other societies primarily as a matter of cultural identity.’<sup>866</sup> „Mission by translation is when the recipient culture becomes the true and final locus of the proclamation so that the religion arrives without the presumption of cultural rejection.’<sup>867</sup> Of the two directions, mission by translation could have been the desired direction for the mission in Africa, but the problem with Sanneh’s thesis is - as pointed by Maluleke - that it assumes that, when missionaries went to bring the gospel to distant countries, they were able to distinguish between the Christian gospel and the Western culture with which the gospel was „wrapped up.’<sup>868</sup> Maluleke observes that the theory of the translatability of the gospel argues for a disconnection between Christianity and colonialism and, no matter how persuasive it may seem, it does not obliterate the experiences of those who were on the receiving end of colonialism.<sup>869</sup>

This argument by Maluleke found an elaborate expression in Jean and John Comaroff’s persuasive theory which has been discussed in the introductory chapter.<sup>870</sup> For these scholars, the encounter between European missionaries and indigenous people was not a simple matter of the propagation of the gospel. It involved cultural exchange, with the missionaries imposing their Western culture and worldview on the indigenous people. The indigenous people however were not passive recipients of the European culture. They resisted, though at a much lower level because they did lack the political ‘capital’ that their European counterparts enjoyed.<sup>871</sup> According to the Comaroffs, the missionaries did not import pure

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<sup>864</sup>Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message, the Missionary Impact on Culture*, New York: Orbis Books, 1989, p. 28.

<sup>865</sup>Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message, the Missionary Impact on Culture*, p.28.

<sup>866</sup>Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message, the Missionary Impact on Culture*, p.28.

<sup>867</sup>Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message, the Missionary Impact on Culture*, p.28.

<sup>868</sup>Tinyiko Maluleke, „Black and African Theologies in the new world order: A time to drink from our own wells,’ in *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, 1996, p. 4-23.

<sup>869</sup>Tinyiko Maluleke, „Black and African Theologies in the new world order: A time to drink from our own wells,’ in *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, 1996, p. 4-23.

<sup>870</sup>John Comaroff and Jean Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, 1991.

<sup>871</sup>John and Jean Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution Christianity*, , p.198-250.

gospel to Africa but what they brought was a package that involved Christianity, European culture and political prejudices.<sup>872</sup> In relation to these remarks, it is important that I demonstrate, in general terms, how the missionaries viewed Africans and their culture.

A large number of missionaries, like travellers and hunters, had a negative view of Africans and their culture. This spirit was adequately captured by Chidester who argues that:

The discovery of religion arose out of the strange in terms of the familiar, frontier comparatives resorted to analogies between indigenous customs and known religions. During the eighteenth century, European comparatives generally assumed that there were four religions in the world - Christianity, Judaism, Islam and Paganism with the last sometimes divided into ancient, heathen, and diabolical forms.<sup>873</sup>

This is not to repudiate the fact that some missionaries were actually promoters of African culture. John White of the Methodist Church and Arthur Shearly Cripps of the Anglican Church are typical examples.<sup>874</sup> In fact this era is the era of missionary ethnography. However, the majority of missionaries castigated Africans and referred to them as primitive people without a religion. In some cases Africans were labelled animists; at other times they were called pagans.<sup>875</sup> Their religion was rubbished as fetishism, juju, savagery, polytheistic magic and so on.<sup>876</sup> David Chidester's book offers a convincing discussion of this subject and there is no need for repetition.<sup>877</sup> We need not concern ourselves unduly with the general perceptions of European missionaries of African culture, because the indigenous ministers are our focus. However, perceptions held by the European Methodist missionaries will continually be referred to, as they create a context for attitudes of the indigenous ministers.

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<sup>872</sup> John and Jean Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, p.198-250.

<sup>873</sup> David Chidester, *Savage Systems*, p.16.

<sup>874</sup> C.F. Andrew, *John White of Mashonaland*, p.58.

<sup>875</sup> John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, p.7.

<sup>876</sup> John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, p.7.

<sup>877</sup> David. Chidester, *Savage systems*, p.236.

### **5.3 Attitudes of Zimbabwean Methodist indigenous ministers towards African marriage**

Marriage was a very important institution in Shona<sup>878</sup> and Ndebele<sup>879</sup> societies and missionaries from the Wesleyan Methodist Church did not take long to start providing directions in this regard. They came to the conclusion that there was a need to transform the way Africans handled marriage matters. They proposed certain rules to govern the practice of marriage. But, in the main, these rules were not acceptable to African people in general, especially those who had not embraced the Christian faith. The indigenous ministers were born into African religion and had converted to Christianity. This section seeks to establish how they navigated between the two worldviews that are in many respects opposed to each other. To adequately deal with this problem, we need to first explore the character of African marriage as practiced by traditional Shona and Ndebele people of Zimbabwe.

There are several ways of getting married in the traditional Shona and Ndebele culture. Firstly, there is the custom of *musengabere*. This method implies that when a male is old enough to get married, but too shy to approach a girl, he would get some elders to go on his behalf and carry off the girl in question to bring her to his homestead. This would happen without advance knowledge of either the girl or her parents. After about two days the family of the boy would send a delegation to the family of the girl to inform them that a marriage was on the cards. This was a form of socially approved kidnapping. The two families would enter into negotiations and the suggested bridewealth would be paid to the parents of the girl. The practise exhibits the practical nature of Shona society. There was little consideration for the feelings of the female involved. Society emphasised, that only men were supposed to experience sexual pleasure. Janet Mudavanhu, writing about the Shona traditions relating to sex and sexuality, argues that:

Sex seems to be only for male gratification and women sexual pleasure is regulated. The emphasis for females is only for procreation, for which a woman is simply a depository. While facial attractiveness is a desideratum for beauty, plumpness or roundness as well as a jutting backside is highly considered in traditional Shona construction of female beauty. The quest to increase the man's

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<sup>878</sup>Shona is a generic term for a number of dialects spoken by the majority of African inhabitants of Rhodesia.

<sup>879</sup>The Ndebele is the language spoken by a minority group of Zimbabweans whose origins are in South Africa.

sexual pleasure is also evidenced by the custom of increasing the labium majora, virginity testing before marriage, the wearing of beads and reducing the size of the vagina...<sup>880</sup>

*Kuzvarira*<sup>881</sup> was another method which confirmed male dominance in the institution of marriage. This method would see the parents of the girl approaching a particular rich family and ask for assistance, usually in the form of food or cattle. The family of the girl would put forward their child as payment for the services rendered or the commodities given. *Kuzvarira* would happen mostly during times of drought. A girl of six years could under this custom be given in marriage and usually she was given to a much older man, sometimes above fifty years old. *Kuzvarira* involved older man because of the riches required. In cases where the girl was too young to offer conjugal services, the man would have to wait for her to reach a marriageable age.

The other method was called *kutizira*<sup>882</sup>. This would happen if a girl was in love with a particular boy and the two arranged that the girl would escape from her family and join the bridegroom's family as daughter-in-law. Again, after some time, word would be sent to the parents of the girl and arrangements would begin for the two families to meet and negotiate about bridewealth.

The fourth and the most virtuous of getting married was *kukumbira*<sup>883</sup> whereby a man, who was interested in a particular girl would inform his uncles who would from that point onwards act as facilitators. Aenius Chigwedere observes:

The traditional way of doing it was that, if a young man spotted a girl who attracted him, he went back to his elders such as the aunt, the uncle, the grandfather and even the older brother to hint he had feelings for a particular girl. Much of what happened thereafter did not depend on him but the elders.<sup>884</sup>

*Kukumbira* was the most dignified way of marriage amongst the Shona. Over the years, it has been modified but it continued as the initial steps in Christian marriages. I do not claim to have exhausted all the methods of getting married that were used by the Shona and Ndebele

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<sup>880</sup>Janet Mudavanhu, „The Attitude of the Methodist Church to Homosexuality: Towards A Socio-sexological Theological Investigation’, unpublished Doctor of Philosophy thesis submitted to the university of Birmingham, United Kingdom. 2010.

<sup>881</sup>This simply meant to give one's daughter for marriage in exchange for material things.

<sup>882</sup>This simply means elopement.

<sup>883</sup>Getting the consent of the girl's parents to have their daughter's hand in marriage.

<sup>884</sup>A.S. Chigwedere, *The Karanga Empire*, Harare: Books for Africa, 1985, p.25.

people. But I have selected the most common ones for the purposes of this study. In all the four instances, the issue of bridewealth was very important. It must be noted that marriage was to a large extent a religious affair. In fact, Mulago Gua Cikala Musharmina argues:

African marriage is essentially in the realm of the sacred and of religion. There is no such a thing as profane or lay marriage. African marriage is indeed essentially, religious.<sup>885</sup>

Although Musharmina's observation could be an overstatement, it is critical to note that, at the payment of bridewealth, especially cattle, the ancestors were evoked whose responsibility it was to ensure the bride's fertility. It was always the family of the bridegroom, paying the agreed number of cattle, to the parents of the bride. Marriage customs amongst the Shona and Ndebele of Zimbabwe allowed the man to marry more than one wife. This led to continuous conflicts with Christianity in general and Methodism in particular. The Comaroffs, commenting on the encounter between the Nonconformist missionaries and the Tswanas in Mafikeng, hold that:

The confrontation, patently, was between two parties of incommensurate power; their inequality being reflected in, among other things, the awareness of the evangelists that they had the capacity to ‚make’ history - and in so doing to speak of, and for, the uncultivated native. As this suggests, their impact lay as much in their representation of Africa-in both senses of the term-as it did in any of their actions as participants. To those who cared to listen, the Nonconformists would tell a tale of an inert continent slowly awaking to white initiative. Yet the blacks were no less historical actors even though their assertiveness might have lain in the shadow of European self-representation. To be sure they were soon casting the church men in a script of their own making. This first interaction between the Tswana and the whites was thus a dialogue at once poetic and pragmatic. Based on the exchange of words and things - and on profound misconceptions all round - it laid the ground for the long conversation, the drawn out process of colonisation, that was to follow.<sup>886</sup>

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<sup>885</sup> Mulago Gua Cikala Musharmina, *Traditional African Christian Marriage*, Kampala: St Pauls' Publications, 1985, p. 42.

<sup>886</sup> John and Jean Comaroffs, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, p.171.

Immediately upon their arrival in Rhodesia, the Methodist Church missionaries and their entourage were confronted with the challenge of traditional marriage in Rhodesian society. Brandon Graaf, in his book *Mudumedi Moleli, teacher, evangelist and martyr to charity: Mashonaland 1892-1896*,<sup>887</sup> holds that cases of forced marriages were prevalent in Rhodesia, particularly among the people of Nenguo where Moleli was stationed. Moleli was a Methodist teacher and evangelist stationed at Nenguo from 1892 to 1896. Graaf argues that Moleli dissuaded the Africans from their ways of marriage with all his vigour and in a short time the converted began to resist such kind of marriages, of course with the support of Moleli. This is prime example of the mediating role played by African evangelists. However, those who resisted were forced. Graaf observes that:

Though extreme measures may have been rare, they were occasionally resorted to...an adamant daughter might be fastened to the ground and a fire built besides her and fanned until in sheer agony she consented to the arrangements. With the coming of the Christian teacher, the question became more complex and the girls began to ask, „Why should we leave our village with its Christian teacher, where we are each day learning about God who loves us; and go to a man we do not want to marry and live in a village where we will no longer be taught about God.’ One such a girl fled to Moleli for protection.<sup>888</sup>

Moleli became the liberator of girls who were forced into marriages with men they did not like. Moleli was a foreigner. His home country was South Africa. The more he endeared himself with the converted indigenous people, the more strained became his relationships with the custodians of Shona culture. Eventually, he experienced untimely death at the hands of the indigenous people on charges that he was a sellout. We will elaborate on this event in the next chapter.

Graaf argues that Moleli was vehemently against African ways of marriage.<sup>889</sup> He further asserts that many little girls, who had become part of the evangelist and teachers’ congregation, sought refuge at his house whenever their parents wanted to give them away

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<sup>887</sup> *Mudumedi Moleli, Teacher, Evangelist and Martyr to Charity, Mashonaland: 1892-1896*, p.79.

<sup>888</sup> *Mudumedi Moleli, Teacher, Evangelist and Martyr to Charity, Mashonaland: 1892-1896*, p.79.

<sup>889</sup> *Mudumedi Moleli, Teacher, Evangelist and Martyr to Charity, Mashonaland: 1892-1896*, p.81.

for marriage.<sup>890</sup> Moleli was in this supported by Isaac Shimmin who was the missionary in charge at Nenguo Circuit.

The majority of European missionaries were opposed to quite a number of African customs, including marriage. In 1898 John White, a European missionary, became *persona non grata*, when he took a stand against Chief Kwenda who allegedly „was forcing his daughter to marry a wrinkled old wretch against her will.”<sup>891</sup>

Furthermore, another unnamed African teacher and evangelist who accompanied J.W. Stanlake on a mission in Matabeleland in 1898, was reportedly arguing with the villagers after a service. He told them that in order for them to become Christians, they would have to give up all their wives except one.<sup>892</sup> Stanlake, the European missionary who was present as well, argued that the new teaching cut right to the roots of the African people’s domestic economy.<sup>893</sup> He further postulated that:

A man’s ambition is to get as many oxen, sheep or goats as will enable him to buy three or four or more wives. That done he enters the ranks of the leisured class. Only have one wife! Why? That means we shall have to work ourselves!’ No wonder some of them went away with rueful faces. Such a thing as that means the reversal of all the conditions of life.<sup>894</sup>

Stanlake’s observation was partially correct. In a sense, polygamy was a source of labour amongst the indigenous people of Zimbabwe. It must be noted however, that polygamy was significant in many more ways that went well beyond labour provision. There was, for example, the need to produce as many children as possible, not for the sake of labour but to enlarge the family: children, in the age of tribal wars, formed a treasure.

With the passing of time, the Methodist Church transformed itself from a mission into a church. Consequently, it inevitably came up with rules governing behaviour. In 1902, the synod of the Methodist Church passed a series of regulations concerning marriage. The following is an example.

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<sup>890</sup> Mudumedi Moleli, *Teacher, Evangelist and Martyr to Charity, Mashonaland: 1892-1896*, p.81.

<sup>891</sup> Chengetai J. M Zvobgo, *The Wesleyan Methodist Missionaries in Zimbabwe 1891-1945*, p.64.

<sup>892</sup> Chengetai J. Zvobgo, *The Wesleyan Methodist Missionaries in Zimbabwe 1891-1945*, p.66.

<sup>893</sup> J.W. Stanlake, „The Mission Stations of Matabeleland’, *Work and Workers* (1898) vii, 26-7, file W/W, MCA.

<sup>894</sup> J.W. Stanlake, „The Mission Stations of Matabeleland’, *Work and Workers* (1898) vii, 26-7, file W/W, MCA.



A man and a woman married according to heathen custom are required to be married by a minister of the church before they could be accepted for baptism. Members of the church are not allowed to receive cattle on the marriage of their daughters. Payment of cattle is one of the greatest motivations of women's abuse in African marriages... When a polygamous husband turns to God and desires to join the church, he will be required to retain the first wife and to put away others, making due provision for them and their children if any. If a polygamous husband became converted and desires to be married in the church, he could be received as a full member of the church. If the wife remained a heathen and refused to join in the ceremony, the husband would remain on trial until the wife consented to the Christian marriage.<sup>895</sup>

These resolutions reflect the thinking of the missionaries and not that of the indigenous ministers, because in 1902, the Methodist Church had as yet not ordained a single indigenous minister and the views of unordained indigenous ministers could not have carried weight, especially concerning a theological matter of this nature. The indigenous ministers were assistants and had to take instructions from their superiors. It seems that the Methodist Church believed, erroneously, that the payment of bride wealth implied the purchasing of a wife, hence their rule against the practice. The Methodist Synod of 1917 expelled a prominent church member and some local preachers from the church because they had contracted polygamous marriages.<sup>896</sup> In 1920, two evangelists were expelled by the church after they had married second wives.<sup>897</sup> These were J. Nyamsweba and M. Pedza.<sup>898</sup>

In 1921, S. Mhlatuzana, L. Dambili and D. Mavuna, both Methodist evangelists on an scheme to be upgraded and become ministers, resigned from the Methodist Church after they were charged with having married second wives.<sup>899</sup>

In 1923 The Methodist Church dismissed Jeremiah Gono, who was a ministerial student, for having married his late brother's wife.<sup>900</sup> In the same year, the Methodist Church passed the

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<sup>895</sup>Methodist Church, Rhodesia District, Resolutions affecting native customs and work among the natives 1902, file S/M, MCA.

<sup>896</sup>Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society Archives, Biogr Cent. Africa. Cited in C.J Zvobgo, *The Wesleyan Methodist Missionaries in Zimbabwe 1891-1945*, p.110.

<sup>897</sup>Minutes of synod, 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1920, file S/M, MCA.

<sup>898</sup>Minutes of synod, 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1920, file S/M, MCA.

<sup>899</sup>Minutes of synod, 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1921, file S/M, MCA.

<sup>900</sup>Minutes of synod, 1923, file S/M, MCA.

following resolution that in response to the national legislation concerning matters of marriage:

The synod desires to emphasise the importance of extending the Immorality Suppression Ordinance of 1903 to make intercourse between a white man and black woman equally an offence as it is already when committed between a white woman and a black man.<sup>901</sup>

This resolution is very instructive as it reveals the mindset of the missionaries during this time of early colonialism. It shows that the Methodist Church was not necessarily opposed to the Immorality Suppression Ordinance which was discriminatory.

Meanwhile the Methodist Church continued to expel the evangelists and ministerial candidates who were involved in offences related to „improper marriages’ and sexual immorality. Moses Magorimbo was expelled in 1929 for, what the archival records simply refer to as, „sexual immorality.’<sup>902</sup> One suspects that it could have been a matter of adultery or polygamy, or something related.

From the period when the church was established to 1929, the Methodist Church was very clear about the fact that African ways of marriage were not acceptable to the church. To a certain extent, the European missionaries believed that African marriage practices were an evil that needed to be destroyed. The Methodist indigenous ministers were ambiguous in this regard. On the one hand they preached the abolition of the African way of marriage, but on the other hand, they themselves entered into such marriages as evidenced by a number of expulsions during this period. In other words, the indigenous ministers conformed to the teachings of the missionaries in the public arena, but they acted differently in their private space. Their behaviour in this regard was duplicitous. This is consistent with James Scott’s observation that relations between the dominant and the subordinates are characterised by deception.<sup>903</sup>

In 1933, while he was undergoing final training for the ministry, Thompson Samkange was appointed member of a committee, tasked to enquire into bridewealth.<sup>904</sup> Although there is an

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<sup>901</sup> Minutes of synod, 1923, file S/M, MCA.

<sup>902</sup> Minutes of synod, 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1929, Methodist Connexional Archives, file S/M, MCA.

<sup>903</sup> See James Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, p. 136.

<sup>904</sup> Terence Ranger, *Are We Not Also Men?*, p. 44.

elaborate discussion of Samkange's background in chapter six, it is essential to mention at this stage that he was one of the most radical early Methodist indigenous ministers.

The committee convener, H.C. Hugo, believed that bridewealth should be banned or at least be limited by law.<sup>905</sup> Samkange wrote to urge him to rethink:

*Rovoro* [bridewealth] is a native custom which is one of their strong social fibres... *Rovoro* to the native mind is not as some Europeans think. What seems evil to Europeans is ethical and just for Africans; our morals to a certain extent are different. It will be good if all missionaries had learnt algebra, then they could learn to eliminate by substitution not merely by abolition. No rules should be made of Christian Church if we are at all to call ourselves preachers of good news. Rules do not make Christians.<sup>906</sup>

The response of Samkange clearly shows that he was opposed to passing value judgements concerning African religion, especially if those judgements were based on an uncritical comparison of Christianity and African religion. His behaviour is consistent with the Comaroffs' observation. They postulate that „the *Setswana* (Tswana ways) and *Sekgoa* (European ways) -each with its cosmology, customs and conventions - came to be constructed in opposition to one another, as distinct, objectified cultures. And in turn, to be locked in dialectic from which neither could escape.’<sup>907</sup>

Samkange raised some pertinent issues in his correspondence. He claimed that there were no universal ethics because what was ethical to the Europeans was not necessarily ethical to the indigenous people. By implication, each society develops its own socially acceptable code of ethics. What Samkange did not notice was that, even in those days, the code of ethics was also time specific. A society does outgrow some of its cultural practices because of the demands of the time.

Another important aspect, touched on by Samkange's letter, is the failure of the missionaries to develop a corresponding concept to replace the one they wanted to see condemned. He calls it „elimination by substitution’. Robin Horton, writing about conversion in Africa, argues that Christianity developed much faster in Egypt because it capitalised on areas of

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<sup>905</sup>Terence Ranger, *Are We Not Also Men?*, p.44.

<sup>906</sup>Thompson Samkange to H.C.Hugo, 26 April 1933, file *lobola*, Samkange Archives, cited in Terence Ranger, *Are We Not Also Men?*, p.44.

<sup>907</sup>John and Jean Comaroffs, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, p.194.

similarities between itself and indigenous cultures. He refers to this as „the microcosm of the macrocosm’.<sup>908</sup>

Samkange’s views did not outweigh the missionary opinion regarding this matter. He was forced to write another letter to the European Press, this time under his nickname *Matandindaba*<sup>909</sup>:

Many of your correspondences understand very little, if anything at all, of this *Bantu* custom. *Lobola* as an institution was never meant for gain. It was a concrete way of binding two families together. [In seeking to limit it] those who are directing Native Affairs in this country may find that they have made a law which may not be kept. So far as native marriages are concerned I find *lobola* to be right. I am not favouring *lobola* amongst Christian people. What I dislike is the idea of making Christians by law. It is a Christian ideal that a woman is on the same level with the man. Why try to make ‚natives’ adopt Christian ideas before they become Christians?<sup>910</sup>

M.F.C Bourdillon, a Professor of Sociology at the University of Zimbabwe, wrote in 1997 on the Shona concept of marriage in 1997, differing from Samkange. He argues:

When there is a suggestion of marriage without payment of bridewealth, an old man might ask: „Does the young man really want to marry my daughter or not?’ It is inconceivable to him that a young man really wants to marry a girl without paying a large sum of bridewealth to show appreciation... Another point to note is that bridewealth payments by the groom or his family are particularly associated with agricultural societies, women usually do most of the work in the fields and a transfer of a woman from one family to another involves the transfer of much productive labour.<sup>911</sup>

Whereas Samkange argues that bridewealth was not meant for gain, Bourdillon maintains that it was meant for gain. R.P.Hatendi argues that, when we conceptualize bridewealth as

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<sup>908</sup>Robin Horton, ‚African conversion,’ *Journal for Africa*, Volume 41, 1971, www.Google scholar, accessed 15 April 2011.

<sup>909</sup> The term *Matandindaba* meant someone who likes news too much. It was given to Samkange when he was a minister in Wankie Circuit.

<sup>910</sup> I found this letter in the file written *lobola* in the Samkange archives at Samkange homestead at their house in Masasa Park.

<sup>911</sup>M.F.C Bourdillon, *Where are the Ancestors, Changing Culture in Zimbabwe*, Harare: University of Zimbabwe, 1997, p.36.

payment, we are guilty of forcing an essentially Shona system into a Western pattern of thinking. ... „It is true that that a Shona man and woman are not equal but it is not the bridewealth that degrades Shona women. Certainly the Shona regard a woman as a human being, and at death women are feared more than men.’<sup>912</sup>

This argument by Hatendi is as inconclusive as Bourdillon’s. In fact, the debate about the significance of bridewealth has been around for quite some time but no agreement has been reached.

In his own marriage, Samkange accepted the Christian ideal that a woman was on the same level as the man. What infuriated him was that, while whites condemned, and were even prepared to prohibit or constrain traditional ways, they refused to accept that Africans could understand a high ideal of marriage. Hence Rhodesian law did not give adequate protection to African Christians, especially to women.<sup>913</sup> Speaking at the Native Missionary Conference in March 1928, he attacked the state of marriage law:

With the law as it is today it is hopeless to speak of native progress. ‘Natives’ have left many of their good customs and have taken the so called European ways which now is not justifying the idea...Where are we? And where are the native people? [sic] They are now a blank sheet. Old laws have been cast away and the new are not being carried out.<sup>914</sup>

In a similar context, the Comaroffs argue that Rev. A.J. Wookey who worked as a London Missionary Society missionary among the Tlhaping in South Africa, seems to have captured the spirit of the indigenous people in South Africa when he writes:

Missionaries, traders, landjobbers [sic], canteen keepers & c. [sic] have all been put down in the same catalogue as destroyers of the country. I have been told again and again that we are deceivers and only trying as agents of the government to get the country. The way in which Griqualand and much of Janke’s country were taken over by the British Government has given rise to much of this sort of talk.<sup>915</sup>

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<sup>912</sup>R.P. Hatendi, ‘Shona Marriage and the Christian Churches,’ in J.A Dachs (ed.), *Christianity South of the Zambezi*, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1973, p.142.

<sup>913</sup> Terence Ranger, *Are We Not Also Men?*, p.44.

<sup>914</sup>Minutes of the Missionary Conference of Christian Natives, 21 and 22 March 1928, file SRNMC cited in Terence Ranger, *Are We Not Also Men?*, 44.

<sup>915</sup>A. Wookey, Kuruman, 16 July 1878 [CWM, ‘LMS, incoming letters’ (South Africa), 36-3-c] cited in John and Jean Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, p.290.

There seems to be a convergence of ideas between Zimbabwe's Samkange and the indigenes of South Africa. They both lamented the destructive role of the missionaries and their allies. Samkange's remarks were anchored in a deep political consciousness. He complains that the indigenes had abandoned their good customs and embraced the so called European customs. He argues that the 'natives' were like a blank sheet of paper without anything written on it.<sup>916</sup> One can argue that Samkange was demeaning ordinary Africans. On a positive note the identity of the indigenous people was being eroded. Moreover, issues of identity are as political as they are cultural.

In March 1935, Samkange wrote sharply to the *Native Mirror* objecting to the Native Commissioner, Umvuma, who had let off a bigamist scot-free with the argument that „natives' do not understand the oath of Christian marriage and that they should not be pledged to what had taken the white race a thousand years to reach. „To me,' wrote Samkange, „this argument is unfounded and untrue.'<sup>917</sup> In this case, Samkange argues for an African renaissance. He argues that Africans have the mental capacity to understand the meaning of Christian marriage.

Samkange was not alone in defending the morality of African marriages. His friend and colleague Esau Nemapare adds his voice to the debate in a letter written to the district chairperson of the Methodist Church in 1936. The letter reads:

Jesus said he had not come to abolish the customs of the Jews but he had come to fulfil them. The major problem facing our church and indeed others is that we think to be a Christian means abolishing what God has graciously given to African people as a way of life. I do not support polygamy and other vices that characterise African marriage. However, I believe that things such as *lobola* are part of African ways of doing things and should not be abolished.<sup>918</sup>

Gerald West in his *Academy of the Poor, Towards a Dialogical Reading of the Bible*<sup>919</sup>, published in 1999, holds that:

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<sup>916</sup> Minutes of the Missionary Conference of Christian Natives, 21 and 22 March 1928, file SRNMC cited in Terence Ranger, *Are We Not Also Men?*, p.44.

<sup>917</sup> *Native Mirror*, March 1935. The editor of the *Native Mirror* noted that he had deleted one statement in this letter which was far too sweeping', MCA.

<sup>918</sup> Letter from Esau Nemapare to the district chairperson of the Methodist Church in Rhodesia. The letter was copied to Samkange and is preserved at Samkange archives at the homestead in Masasa park.

<sup>919</sup> Gerald West, *The Academy of the Poor: Towards a Dialogical Reading of the Bible*, Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 1999.

Dispossessed and poor people believe that through the bible, reading, praying and acting and the hope it gives to them, they will transform their lives. It is no wonder the Bible is the most popular book in these communities.<sup>920</sup>

Although West wrote in another context, his insights are applicable to the period under review. Whilst the indigenous ministers could have been reading the biblical text from the vantage point of the oppressed, the dominant could have been reading the text from the vantage point of the powerful. It suffices to say there was a theological cleavage between the European missionaries and the indigenous ministers. The question that needs to be answered is: why is it that the indigenous ministers interpreted the Bible in their unique way? Gerald West provides invaluable insight when he argues:

The Bible is clearly one of the primary ways in which God speaks to us; but we often cannot hear what God is saying because we think we know what the Bible says. We have domesticated the Bible; we have tamed it. If we are to hear God speaking into our South African context in these days, then we must be willing to return to the Bible with open ears, eyes, and hearts.<sup>921</sup>

Following West's model it could be that the European missionaries had also domesticated the Bible and were failing to hear God speaking. On the other hand, the indigenous ministers could have been scrounging for texts that spoke about liberation to the oppressed.

In 1955, the Methodist Church in Rhodesia revised its rules and regulations. There were some changes, though not very significant, in their perception of marriage. The regulation reads:

No person may be a member of the Methodist Church who does not accept the Christian view of marriage. All persons converted to the Christian faith who desire to marry must take the Christian vows of marriage, except in the case of a first wife of a non-Christian who may be received on probation and for instruction and afterwards be baptised and received into full membership if her husband refuses, or is not eligible to be married by Christian rites. All male members and Christian workers are required to enter Christian marriage before cohabitation...A male polygamist or the second or subsequent wife of a polygamist may on conversion be received as catechumen and become a member 'on- trial' but may not be received as

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<sup>920</sup> Gerald West, *The Academy of the Poor*, p.9.

<sup>921</sup> Gerald West, *Contextual Bible Study*, Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 1993, p. 7.

a full member as long as polygamous marriages continues... The mother's cow or *mombe ye umai* brings so much fear to our Christians, since it is believed that failure to honour this obligation will bring untold suffering on the family of the offender. We believe this is mere superstition and as such Christian parents must desist from asking for it upon the marriage of their daughters.<sup>922</sup>

This regulation introduces the issue of the mother's cow or *mombe yeumai*. Some elaboration on this practice is needed. *Mombe youmai* was a cow paid to the mother of the bride by the bridegroom as an expression of joy and appreciation for the role played by the mother in the upbringing of the girl. It was believed that if one does not pay this cow, the consequences would be sickness of the children begotten from the union. Also the bridegroom's relatives would be affected by the „transgression'. If the omission was not rectified through the assistance of a traditional healer, it would lead to death in the family.

The Methodist Church discouraged its members from paying this cow on the grounds that the custom was based on mere superstition. When I interviewed Makwehe on this matter, he categorically stated that, as far as he knew, all Methodist indigenous ministers had paid this cow.<sup>923</sup> It is difficult to accept this without reservation given that the payment of the mother's cow is a private family affair, soone wonders how Makwehe would have come by his information.

In the same year, the Methodist Church also came up with some legislation concerning the process of the marriage ceremony and the payment of lobola. It made the following declaration:

Ministers and members of the church should impress on the community by practice and precept the necessity of having simple marriage celebrations. Extravagance in dress and entertainment should be strongly deprecated... Those who wish to marry must see the Native Commissioner of the district and get a certificate which allows the marriage to take place. This certificate should then be handed to a minister who would then proceed by publishing some banns for three consecutive Sundays before the date of the wedding... The Methodist Church while recognising that *lobola* is an integral part of the *Bantu* customs, considers that its true purpose should be to act as a token and pledge of care and proper conduct. It therefore, urges its members to

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<sup>922</sup>The Methodist Church Rhodesia District Rules and Regulations for the African Work, 1955, file R/R, MCA.

<sup>923</sup>Naison Makwehe, same interview.



accept only a nominal amount and to oppose the present practice of excessive *lobola* payments. In the case of a man desiring to marry the daughter of heathen parents, the payment of the *lobola* shall not qualify him from membership in the church.<sup>924</sup>

It is clear that the Methodist Church was undergoing internal development concerning its perception of African marriage. It was outgrowing some of its earlier beliefs such as that *lobola* was evil and was at the centre of women's abuse and that as such there was need to abolish it. In this regulation, there is appreciation that *lobola* was a crucial *Bantu* practice. Writing in the South Africa context, the Comaroffs make the following observation:

The Christians might have believed that they had brought the exclusive truths of civilisation to the „natives’, truths that could not but displace existing heathen customs. But for the Africans, it was quite possible for such bodies of knowledge to exist without threatening each other.<sup>925</sup>

In 1961, Andrew Ndhlela who was by this time the superintendent of Pakame Circuit wrote in his report to the circuit quarterly meeting:

The work of God has taken its rightful position in this circuit. We urge all our members and preachers to take note of the synod resolution of 1955. This resolution implores us all the people called Methodist to refrain from charging exorbitant bridewealth for our daughters given in marriage. This resolution symbolises change of heart by the church where in the past it has advocated for its total abolition. It must be understood that *lobola* is a noble African practice as long it is done responsibly...<sup>926</sup>

The minutes of the same meeting indicate that when the meeting was discussing the superintendent's report, one of the members inquired about the status of the mother's cow or *mombe yeumai*. The issue was discussed at length after which the superintendent provided leadership on the matter. His conclusion was:

We are caught in between theory and practice. The synod which mainly deals with theory passed a resolution in 1955 which says that Methodist members must not be

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<sup>924</sup>The Methodist Church Rhodesia District Rules and Regulations for the African Work, 1955, file R/R, MCA.

<sup>925</sup>John and Jean Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, p.224.

<sup>926</sup> Pakame Circuit Quarterly meeting minutes, superintendent's report 1961, file Pakame Circuit minutes of quarterly meeting, MCA.

linked to payment or receiving *mombe youmai*. Whilst this is the official position, myself as the superintendent of the circuit who deals with practical things put to you that those who are able to abide by this are free to do so but those who feel that they are Africans and as such do not want to break with their heritage must be free to do so without fear of reprisals. However, this situation may change when you receive a new superintendent.<sup>927</sup>

This statement by Ndhlela is pregnant with meaning. He claims that the church was dealing with abstract issues whereas he as the minister on the ground was dealing with practical things. By implication, the rules set by the church where Europeans dominated were abstract and without force. Ndhlela suggested that there was a possibility that his policy might be rejected on the arrival of another minister. In other words, the indigenous ministers were admitting that, although there was a written rule about these matters, individual ministers could choose to stray with impunity.

The other problem that needed to be addressed was whether the indigenous ministers were obliged to stay with their spouses at their place of work, or whether they might be exempted from this rule in order to take care of their traditional family home. The synod of 1962 lamented that quite a number of African ministers were not staying with their spouses at their place of appointment. It was observed that these ministers often leave their spouses at their rural abode so as for them to maintain and keep the homestead. The resolution reads:

We note with dismay a growing practice by some of our African ministers who have resorted to staying without their spouses in circuits. This situation is dangerous as it gives room to temptation to ministers who work with women in the majority of cases. Beside this, the work of *Manyano* or *Ruwadzano* suffers because in every circuit the minister's wife is the automatic leader. We hope those concerned will heed this call and do the correct thing - that of staying with their spouses.<sup>928</sup>

The synod could have been partially correct in thinking that the indigenous ministers were not staying with their wives for reasons of economy. It was indeed part of Zimbabwean culture that wives would remain at the family's rural home in order to preserve it. Otherwise the home might be vandalised and a man without a rural home was nicknamed a *Nyasarandi*

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<sup>927</sup> Pakame Circuit quarterly meeting minutes, matters from the superintendent's report 1961, file Pakame Circuit minutes of quarterly meeting, MCA.

<sup>928</sup> Minutes of synod, 1962, file S/M, MCA.

which simply means ‚a person from Nyasaland’. As people from Nyasaland were perceived as being culturally disoriented as a result of the coming of Europeans, this was a derogatory designation. The Comaroffs argue:

Among the Tswana people of South Africa, every wife had a courtyard, a hut of her own and a field to till.<sup>929</sup> The yield of the field was inalienably hers to use in nurturing her *loumo*, the fruit of her womb.<sup>930</sup>

The call for Methodist indigenous ministers to stay with their families was repeated at the synod of 1963. The resolution that resulted from that debate reads:

The synod strongly urges all our African brothers in ministry to where possible stay with their spouses at their workplaces. Meanwhile we urge circuits to make sure that our ministers are adequately cared for. Although the stipend may not be enough, we always pride in the generosity of our African people, fully aware that they will supply the ministers with other basics. Once that happens there would be no need for ministers’ spouses to visit their traditional homes every ploughing season.<sup>931</sup>

It is clear that some unnamed indigenous ministers were no longer staying with their spouses. The reasons are not explicitly stated but we can conjecture them with a remarkable degree of accuracy. One possibility is that ministers were not staying with their wives as an economic strategy. It is a fact that stipends were not sufficient and at the place of work there would not be enough land to till for the minister and his family. The only viable solution was to send the wife, who was not officially employed by the church, to work in the family’s fields back home. The produce would supplement the little stipend they were earning.

Another possibility is that the reasons were part of traditional culture. The majority of African employees did not stay with their spouses at places of work. This was true of men who went to work in the mines in South Africa, but also of men who worked in towns in their own country. They would visit their spouses once or twice a year, more specifically for purposes of fertilisation, and thereafter return to town. One’s homestead was very important because it was the residence of the family, both living and dead. In African culture the dead are traditionally buried in the backyard and to leave the place unattended was anathema. If this

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<sup>929</sup> John and Jean Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, p. 133.

<sup>930</sup> John and Jean Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, p. 133

<sup>931</sup> Minutes of the synod, 1963, file S/M, MCA.

is the reason why the indigenous ministers were not staying with their spouses, it means that they were to the core attached to their traditional culture.

Gladys Kanodereka, spouse of an indigenous minister said:

Although the indigenous ministers were preachers of the gospel, they were still Africans. They believed so much in the idea of a rural home that some of them even refused to buy houses in towns arguing that they were not Europeans or people from Nyasaland.<sup>932</sup> If a wife argued that she wanted to stay with the husband at the workplace that wife was judged to be „too clever’ a designation that the society had coined to refer to a destructive wife.<sup>933</sup>

Patricia Jabangwe, another widow of an indigenous minister, argues that the majority of the indigenous ministers had embraced some aspects of European culture in so far as they avoided polygamy. However, quite a number of them had a cultural hangover and would continue, privately, to adhere to some aspects of African culture. They saw their wives as unequal partners in marriage.<sup>934</sup> She further contends:

Our husbands always encouraged each other to adhere to the African culture. They would often argue that they were not Europeans and as such they were not supposed to live like Europeans. For them to abandon African culture was a form of colonialism. Quite a number were sending their wives back home every ploughing season. This only came to an end when the church became firm against that practice.<sup>935</sup>

Critical issues emanate from Jabangwe’s observations. One of them is the link between rejection of African culture and colonialism.

Another essential observation by Jabangwe relates to the masculinities of the indigenous ministers. Although this should be a matter for other research, it has to be noted that the indigenous ministers were trapped in the traditional masculinities of the time. They did not treat women as equal partners in marriage. This is the reason why they were sent to rural

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<sup>932</sup>There was a belief that people from Nyasaland were the only ones who needed to purchase houses in towns because they did not have rural homes. If one purchased a house in town he or she was labelled a person from Nyasaland. In fact the context was that, the majority of people working in mines and in the railways were from Nyasaland. The reason was that they were believed to be too lazy to till the land. This allegation is open to contestation.

<sup>933</sup> Gladys Kanodereka, same interview.

<sup>934</sup> Patricia Jabangwe, same interview.

<sup>935</sup> Patricia Jabangwe, same interview.

areas to tend the homestead and to till the family's land. As I flesh this out further, I note that Plumtree Circuit at its 1954 quarterly meeting responded to the question why young people were reluctant to offer themselves for African ministry by observing:

Church workers have no facility for ploughing and as such some have been deprived of their expectation in this direction.<sup>936</sup>

The district evangelism convention held their meeting in August 1954 and also deliberated on why young people were not interested in evangelistic work in the framework of African ministry. They came up with the following answer.

The major setback in this regard related to the conditions of services which were very poor. The other problem is the lack of a retirement home for the African ministers. They spend the rest of their lives transferring from one place to the other and the traditional home will be dilapidated without anyone looking after it. Africans need their rural homes.<sup>937</sup>

Although these reactions came from both ordinary members of the church as well as from some indigenous ministers, there is no doubt that quite a significant number of indigenous ministers shared this sentiment because in a sense the ordinary Africans who formed the African Christian society were the embodiment of the feelings of the indigenous ministers. The above serves to demonstrate that the indigenous ministers were culturally bound. They saw adherence to African culture as an expression of their identity and independence. The fact that they continued to say that they were not Europeans, shows that they were conscious that adherence to African culture was a form of self appreciation.

In 1965, Caspen Makuzwa, an indigenous minister, presented a paper at a ministers' fellowship meeting held at Gwelo Central Methodist Church. In this paper Makuzwa argues that:

It is absurd to think that the Methodist Church believes that every marriage that has not been solemnised by a minister is not according to God. How do you say to an old couple that has spent the rest of their life together and harmoniously for that matter that they have been married for the first time during their Christian wedding when they have been husband and wife for more than 30 years? This makes our

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<sup>936</sup> Reports from circuits and organisation of the Methodist Church, 1954, file MS 246, NAZ.

<sup>937</sup> The report of the district evangelism conversion which met in August 1956, file MS 246, NAZ.

church sound out of touch with reality. We need to learn to build on the good things that form part of African heritage if the church is going to take root in African soil... For instance *lobola* is meant to seal the relationship between the two families and not that it is selling of one's daughter... *Mombe yeumai* is part of the *lobola*. We need to be careful not to try and make Europeans out of our people when our mandate is to make them Christians.<sup>938</sup>

The argument by Makuzwa does not need further elaboration. However, it is remarkable that by 1965 Makuzwa was already able to make a distinction between the Christian religion and European culture. This becomes important when one realises that the majority of missionaries saw no difference between the gospel and the culture in which it was packaged.

Naison Makwehe revealed that all the indigenous ministers, himself included, continued to observe the practice of *lobola*. It was such an important practice that the indigenous ministers could not dispense with it. He pointed however out, that the practice had been affected by Christian teachings. Many Christian families managed to do away with requirements such as the one for the son in-law to provide beer during the process of negotiations. He asserted the following:

I can tell you without hesitation that all the indigenous ministers continued to charge *lobola*. The problem with this practice was that it was believed that the living dead had some stake in it. The oldest within the family would need to inform the spirit world that one of the daughters had changed the totem by marriage and you needed to show the living dead the cattle paid by the in-laws. To ignore this practice would be to risk infertility of the married daughter. However, quite a number of indigenous ministers saw the value of Christian marriage.<sup>939</sup>

Makwehe does indicate an important dimension of traditional marriage. Probably it was the very same reason why the missionaries wanted to disband or reform it, namely the understanding that *lobola* was a religious act with the full participation of the spirit world.

Enos Chibi argues that the Christian gospel failed to convince the indigenous ministers to abandon the practice of *lobola*. He asserts that:

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<sup>938</sup>Paper presented by Caspen Makuzwa at the ministers' fellowship at Gweru Central Methodist Church. 2 November 1977. Makuzwa's personal file, MCA.

<sup>939</sup> Naison Makwehe, same interview.

What the gospel did to some indigenous ministers was to make them reduce the amount of bridewealth required, but still this depended on families. The problem was that in the Shona culture, the immediate parents of a daughter or son being married were excused from leading the marriage proceedings. This was a job for one of the siblings in the father's family and non-Christian families would marry their children according to the dictates of the African culture... I would know for sure that the indigenous ministers abandoned some other practices such as polygamy but no African minister of the Methodist Church in my knowledge abandoned the practice of *lobola*... In fact in the 1970s, there was a revival of African culture.<sup>940</sup>

We must not ignore Chibi's assertion that there was a revival of African culture in the 1970s. He gives no reasons, but we will try and propose a few. Firstly, the liberation war which intensified during the 1970s saw the liberation fighters embark on a programme of mass mobilisation. The programme was characterised by a celebration of patriotism and sovereignty. One way of showing patriotism was by embracing indigenous culture. Secondly, as Terence Ranger and David Lan suggest, between the roles played by mediums like Nehanda and Kaguvi in the First *Chimurenga* of 1896-97 and the roles of contemporary mediums in the Second *Chimurenga*, there was a huge degree of continuity.<sup>941</sup> In the celebration of these spirit mediums traditional religion exercised a positive and consistent influence, but Christianity suffered as a result.<sup>942</sup> Discussing the same religious context Janice McLaughlin argues that the Catholic Church tried to adapt itself to African nationalism, taking inculturation more seriously.<sup>943</sup>

W.R. Peadar, writing in the local series of *Central Africa Historical Association* of 1970 argues that African ministers who had to promise not to accept *lobola* for their daughters, did so tongue in cheek, and took *lobola* anyway.<sup>944</sup>

In 1977, Crispin Mazobere, a principal at the United Theological College, presented a paper entitled *African religion and culture: The stone rejected by builders is the cornerstone*.<sup>945</sup> In

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<sup>940</sup>Enos Chibi, same interview.

<sup>941</sup> Terence Ranger and David Lan cited in Janice McLaughlin, *On the Frontline*, p.238.

<sup>942</sup> Terence Ranger and David Lan cited in Janice McLaughlin, *On the Frontline*, p.238.

<sup>943</sup> Janice McLaughlin on *the Frontline*, *Catholic Missions in Zimbabwe's liberation War*, p.238.

<sup>944</sup> W.R. Peadar, 'Missionary Attitudes to Shona Culture 1890-1923,' *The Central Africa Historical Association*, number 27. 1970, p.35.

<sup>945</sup> See a paper presented by Dr. C. Mazobere at United Theological College on 4 May 1977, Mazobere's personal file, MCA.

this paper Mazobere argues that God had spoken through African traditional religion and culture, just like he had spoken for the Jews through the Jewish religion and for the Greeks he had, before the arrival of Christianity, spoken through philosophy.<sup>946</sup> Mazobere further postulates that the European missionaries' rejection of African traditional religion was tantamount to building a massive structure without a foundation. He particularly identified the issue of marriage and argued that African marriage was good and adequate. He asserts:

Unless and until Christianity begins to acknowledge the efficacy of African marriage, totems and rain making, Christianity will continue to be a day time religion whilst African traditional religion will continue to be night time religion...For God's sake, Christianity has become a tool for colonisation and the rejection of African culture is an act of taking away the identity of African people...If we believe that the appropriation of our land by the colonialists was wrong, then we must believe that the demonization of our culture by some missionaries is wrong too...It is the duty of every proud African to thank the mother in law by paying the mother's cow. We are not like Europeans who are so individualistic and think about themselves. For us if parents give birth to a child, it means their economic base has been widened hence the Shona saying *wazvara wamuka*.<sup>947</sup>

Mazobere seems to be echoing what other indigenous ministers have said before him. He views the rejection of *lobola* by the missionaries as an attempt to detribalise Africans. He also sees it as an attempt to take away the identity of the African people. For him there is no difference between the actions of the colonialists and those of the missionaries. For all intents and purposes they were one. It is important that this study includes a brief survey of how indigenous ministers from other denominations perceived the African marriage institution. The Native Missionary Conference of the Anglican Church of 1918 pointed out that a Christian man was responsible for his relative's widow without enjoying the privilege of cohabitation.<sup>948</sup> This position was considered as exceedingly difficult one by many

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<sup>946</sup> Paper presented by Dr C. Mazobere at United Theological College on 4 May 1977.

<sup>947</sup> Paper presented by Dr. C. Mazobere at United Theological College on 4 May 1977, Mazobere's personal file , MCA.(The Shona saying „wazvara wamuka' simply means that a person who has given birth will not die because his or her children will continue to fend for him or her and perpetuate his or her name. The saying *wazvara wamuka* means that a person who had given birth to children has resurrected himself).

<sup>948</sup> W.R .Peaden, „Missionary Attitudes to Shona Culture 1890-1923,' *The Central Africa Historical Association*, number 27. 1970, p.36.



delegates.<sup>949</sup> An African colleague of Peaden argued that the widow herself would feel deeply insulted if the guardian who had inherited her did not also cohabit with her.<sup>950</sup> R. P. Hatendi, an indigenous minister in the Anglican Church, writing in 1973, argues that polygamy was a social solution for a social problem.<sup>951</sup> It was customary for a man to look after the widow and children of a deceased brother or to beget children in the name of a brother who died without issue. The man, who, for one of those reasons, marries his brother's widow, was playing the part of a kinsman as society expected him to play it.<sup>952</sup> Hatendi observes that:

A Shona polygamist is a humanist. He comes to the rescue of widows and orphans at the hour of need in a cultural environment which does not provide adequately for independent widows with orphans. Those who condemn polygamists do not fully appreciate the service they render to society.<sup>953</sup>

Hatendi's view is highly controversial but it serves to show that, even in the Anglican Church, the indigenous ministers were struggling with the issue of African marriage. His view as a minister and a scholar is particularly significant because of the influence he exerted on his colleagues.

K.S.B. Dhliwayo, an indigenous minister of the United Congregational Church in Zimbabwe (formerly American Board Mission), argued that polygamy was not a bad custom as such and that traditionally a man could marry more than one wife in order to have more children.<sup>954</sup>

Philemon M. Kumalo, a retired bishop of the Brethren Church of Christ, disapproved of polygamy on the ground that it is not biblical. He emphasised that the Bible says that man should have only one wife.<sup>955</sup>

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<sup>949</sup>W.R. Peaden, 'Missionary Attitudes to Shona Culture 1890-1923,' *The Central Africa Historical Association*, number 27.1970, p.36.

<sup>950</sup>W.R. Peaden, 'Missionary Attitudes to Shona Culture 1890-1923,' *The Central Africa Historical Association*, number 27.1970, p.36.

<sup>951</sup>R.P. Hatendi, 'Shona Marriages and the Christian Churches,' in J.A. Dachs (ed.), *Christianity South of the Zambezi*, p. 138-139.

<sup>952</sup>R.P. Hatendi, 'Shona Marriages and the Christian Churches,' in J.A. Dachs (ed.), *Christianity South of the Zambezi*, p. 138-139.

<sup>953</sup>R.P. Hatendi, 'Shona Marriages and the Christian Churches,' in J.A. Dachs (ed.), *Christianity South of the Zambezi*, p. 138-139.

<sup>954</sup>Dhliwayo was born in 1902/1903 at Melsetter. He was ordained in 1945. He retired in 1961. K.S.B. Dhliwayo. Interview conducted by C.J.M. Zvobgo, 12<sup>th</sup> November, 1991. Cited in C.J.M. Zvobgo, *A History of Christian Missions 1890-1939*, p 106.

<sup>955</sup>Rev. P.M. Khumalo was born on the 25<sup>th</sup> June in Filabusi. He trained at Messiah Theological College in Pennsylvania. He was retired in 1979. P. M. Khumalo interview conducted by C.J.M. Zvobgo, 12<sup>th</sup> November, 1991. cited in C.J.M. Zvobgo, *A History of Christian Missions 1890-1939*, p. 106.

S. L. Masuku, an indigenous minister of the Seventh Day Adventist Church, held that polygamy was anathema. He argued that it was unbiblical and unchristian.<sup>956</sup> What is interesting in this small survey is that the indigenous ministers from various denominations were far from homogenous in their perception of polygamy. Some did not approve, others did.

It seems that in the second half of the twentieth century the indigenous ministers of the Methodist Church were going through what could be called a conversion of sorts. In the early days of Methodism in Zimbabwe the indigenous ministers saw Christianity and Western culture as a seamless garment. They absorbed the European missionaries' conception of African culture in general and marriage in particular. However, with the passing of time, they became able to distinguish the good from the bad in African culture. For example, while they all, without exception, spoke out against polygamy and other abuses in African marriage, they managed to uphold the concept of *lobola* which, they thought, was religiously neutral and ideal. That their stance had become more critical became visible in the early 1970s. Possibly the change in attitude had been influenced by the teachings of the liberation politicians who tended to popularise African religion at the expense of Christianity. Remarkable is the fact that indigenous ministers interpreted the rejection of African marriage by missionaries as an act of cultural domination. Mazobere specifically saw African culture as a *preparatio evangelica* (preparation for the gospel), like Judaism for the Jews and Greek philosophy for the Greeks. In this context it is of interest to examine how the indigenous ministers perceived ancestor veneration. However, in order to provide some background for the phenomenon of ancestor veneration, I will first discuss the Shona and Ndebele worldview.

#### **5.4 The Shona and Ndebele view of the world**

The Shona belief systems concerning the spiritual world applied *mutatis mutandis* to those that of the Ndebele. There was the „upperworld' which comprised birds of the air and other sacred living and non-living beings. The second aspect was the „underworld' which consisted of graves, mermaids and other sacred beings. The last one was the terrestrial world which

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<sup>956</sup>S .L.Masuku was born on 26<sup>th</sup> March 1925 in Filabusi District of Matebeleland South Province. He was ordained in 1971 and retired in 1991.W.C from Pastor S.L Masuku, 19 November 1991. P.1-2 cited in C.J.M Zvobgo, *A History of Christian Missions 1890-1939*, p. 106.

was made up of both the sacred and the profane. These include witches (*varoi*), diviners, also misleadingly known as „witchdoctors’ (*nganga*). The term „witchdoctor’ was used by the missionaries to designate African diviners or healers because it was thought that they could heal as well as kill. Although the same was true of European medical doctors, the term applied only to Africans. J.S. Mbiti argues that the term witchdoctor should be buried and forgotten.<sup>957</sup> It is important that I examine the attitudes of Methodist indigenous ministers to African institutions such as ancestor „veneration’, witchcraft and traditional healing.

## **5.5 The social and religious standpoint of the Methodist indigenous ministers in view of ancestor veneration**

This study will discuss ancestor veneration in combination with the „bringing back ceremony’ or *kurova guva* ritual. The two are irretrievably linked to each other. The *kurova guva* is a ritual amongst Shona and Ndebele that seeks to transform the departed souls into ancestors. The ancestors *midzimu* are believed to play a critical role in the lives of the Shona and Ndebele people. Amongst the Tswana, *midzimu* are known as *badimo*. They are guarantors of civil society and centralised political authority...<sup>958</sup>

The role of the *midzimu* is to maintain the family and preserve tribal solidarity.<sup>959</sup> They become angry if neglected and may produce sickness and drought, but in general they are benevolent.<sup>960</sup> They ensure success in any endeavour; in marriage they ensure fertility, in farming they cause bumper harvests, and in hunting a huge catch. More important is the fact that they are believed to protect family members from malicious attacks by neighbours and witches. However, not every dead person becomes an ancestor. The qualification required for becoming an ancestor is that the person concerned has been married, lived a virtuous life, and is buried at a place approved by the living relatives under the performance of the appropriate rituals. The process of „making an ancestor’ involves a ritual known as *kurova guva* or „bringing back’ ceremony. This ritual normally takes place a year after the death of the individual. *Mwari* or the Supreme Being is believed to be removed from the everyday

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<sup>957</sup> John S Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, p.162.

<sup>958</sup> John and Jean Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, p.154.

<sup>959</sup> W.R .Peaden „Missionary Attitudes to Shona Culture 1890-1923,’ *The Central Africa Historical Association*, number 27. 1970, p.2.

<sup>960</sup> W.R .Peaden , „Missionary Attitudes to Shona Culture 1890-1923,’ *The Central Africa Historical Association*, number 27. 1970, p.2.

existence of people. It is thought that Mwari is responsible for issues that affect the entire nation and, even then, he has to be summoned by the national spirits to intervene.

Many missionaries had come to Rhodesia from South Africa, where, in the later part of the nineteenth century, there was a considerable amount of debate in theological circles as to whether *Bantu* religion included any notion of a divine being at all. Most missionaries concluded that it did not.<sup>961</sup> This was corroborated by Chidester in his theoretical framework, known as the *Savage Systems*.<sup>962</sup> He argues:

As was the case on other frontiers, the earliest reports that emanated from the northern border of the Cape Colony denied the existence of any indigenous religion among the Sotho-Tswana people. During 1801 and 1802, the British traveller John Barrow entered the interior of southern Africa, further he claimed, than any European had previously penetrated. There he discovered that the 'Booshuana nation' did not appear to have any form of religious worship. Lacking any notion of a good Supreme Being, they could not have religion 'in the strict sense of the term as applied by Europeans.' Barrow noticed, however, that the 'Booshuaanas' observed certain customs, such as male circumcision and all-night dancing under the moon, which suggested that if they did not have religion, they did have superstition.<sup>963</sup>

When the missionaries came to Mashonaland, they thought that they would be working among people who, if they knew of the existence of God at all, had such small glimmerings of him that they were hardly noticeable.<sup>964</sup> Part of the problem was the apparent lack of worship of the deity on the part of the Shona. It seemed impossible to the missionaries that people could have a firm concept of a divine being and not offer worship to him. From the lack of worship they concluded there was a lack of belief.<sup>965</sup>

Missionaries also linked ethical behaviour with righteousness and soon noticed that Shona moral values were not directly related to their belief in God. For the missionaries salvation

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<sup>961</sup>W. R. Peadar, 'Missionary Attitudes to Shona Culture 1890-1923,' *The Central Africa Historical Association*, number 27, 1970, p.2.

<sup>962</sup>This theory has been fully discussed in chapter one of this thesis.

<sup>963</sup>David Chidester, *Savage Systems*, p.290.

<sup>964</sup>W. R. Peadar, 'Missionary Attitudes to Shona Culture 1890-1923,' *The Central Africa Historical Association*, number 27, 1970, p.2.

<sup>965</sup>W. R. Peadar, 'Missionary Attitudes to Shona Culture 1890-1923,' *The Central Africa Historical Association*, number 27, 1970, p.2.

was externally assessed as it was manifested in visible actions. Any bad behaviour was judged to exclude the offender from the salvation realm. It is their particular understanding of salvation that made the missionaries to be so strict on morality.

The Methodist Synod of 1913 resolved that ancestor worship as well as *kurova guva* (*umbuyiso* in Ndebele), or the „bringing back ceremony’, was not allowed.<sup>966</sup> In 1936 Esau Nemapare wrote a letter to the district chairperson of the Methodist Church in Rhodesia. In this letter Nemapare argues that:

There is nothing wrong with the veneration of ancestors. This was sanctioned by God for the African people. Europeans have their own way of remembering and praising their dead. When they bring flowers at the graves of the departed ones, is it not a religious and cultural act? Why do they impose on Africans that they should stop honouring their departed ones? Is this not a case of colonisation? Mr Chairman Sir, we know that you are very honourable person and I urge you to use your influence to correct this anomaly... I can assure you that what I am saying represents the African viewpoint.<sup>967</sup>

It is not clear on what bases Nemapare claims that he was representing the African viewpoint. It could have been a way of magnifying his case before his superiors. Or he might be trying to escape reprisals by presenting his notion as shared by many.

In South Africa, in the Catholic Church, Nemapare’s assertions were to find expression in what was to become known as the Black Priest Manifesto. G. Mukuka holds that the main focus of this movement was for Africans to rediscover their identity.<sup>968</sup> It was a political movement in so far as it argued for the recognition of black people and their potential in the church.

Not all indigenous ministers subscribed to Nemapare’s perspective. In 1948 S. Chiota, an indigenous minister, wrote a paper on African customs where he argues that *kurova guva* was a bad thing and supposed to be shunned by Christians.<sup>969</sup> The paper reads:

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<sup>966</sup>Synod minutes 1913, file S/M, MCA.

<sup>967</sup>Letter from Esau Nemapare to the district chairperson of the Methodist Church in Rhodesia. The letter was copied to Samkange and is preserved at Samkange Archives at the homestead in Masasa Park.

<sup>968</sup>George S. Mukuka, *The Other Side of the Story, The Silent Experience of the Black Clergy in Catholic Church in South Africa (1898-1976)*, p.183.

<sup>969</sup>See a paper on African customs presented by the Rev Simon Chiota to the Methodist Committee on Customs and Beliefs, 2 February 1948, Chiota’s personal file, MCA.

True Christians should desist from the practice of *kurova guva* and ancestor worship because these two are unbiblical... Some African ministers consult traditional healers and do all sort of bad things...African ministers must demonstrate to their members that it is possible to live without engaging in these things. The problem is that all our African ministers with the exception of myself and one or two others have failed to overcome the fear of the ancestors.<sup>970</sup>

This claim by Chiota is instructive: all African ministers were engaging in ancestor worship with the exception of him and a few others. If the phrase is not used figuratively, then it means that by 1948, when there were nineteen serving indigenous Methodist ministers and (according to Chiota) only three desisted from ancestor worship and *kurova guva*, sixteen continued to observe these rituals. I suspect that Chiota exaggerated his numbers to make his point. He further alleges that the adherence to the ancestors was a result of fear. Although this could be correct, there might have been another dimension to this tendency. Adherence to African culture could have been a form of resistance to domination.

In 1971 Shadreck Ushewokunze wrote a hymn that utilised the lyrics and some of the words of a very famous African religious song named *Mwana Wapfumo Jena*. The song has the following text:

Nokusungwa kwandinako	I am in bondage
Gashu romwoyo wangu richachekwa	the rope of my heart shall be defeated
Zvandarindira Jesu wokumatenga achauya	I wait for Jesus of the heavens he shall come
Yose misungo achaidimura	All the cords, he shall break
Norufaro rwenyika ino,	With all the joy of this world
Nyika yamuona ichatongwa	This country shall be judged
Musi unenge Mwana wepfumo jena ava pano	The day when the son of the king will be here
Zvose zvamunovona zvichapera	All what you see shall vanish
Noupfumi hwamunoona,	With all the riches that you see
Nhaka yenyika ino ichapera	The inheritance of this world shall end

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<sup>970</sup>See a paper on African customs presented by the Rev. Simon Chiota to the Methodist Committee on Customs and Beliefs, 2 February 1948, Chiota's personal file, MCA..

Musi unenge Jesus wokumatenga ava pano	The day Jesus of heaven will come
Zvose zvamunona zvichapera	All that you see shall vanish
Nomutongi wenyika ino	The ruler of this country
Mambo wenyika ino achatongwa	The king of this world will be judged
Musi unenge mwana wokumatenga ava pano	The day when the son of heaven arrives
Jinda renyika richachema	The soldier of the king shall cry
Nhasi pano dzokai mose	Today repent all of you
Mambo wekumatenga ari pano	The king of heavens is here
Watinoreva Jesu wokumatenga ari pano	We mean Jesus of heaven is here
Uyai mose mose muponiswe. <sup>971</sup>	Come all of you and be saved.

The lyrics of this song were adopted from a well-known African religious song which was sung during rituals such as *kurova guva* or during occasional ceremonies designed to appease the ancestors. This song was usually sung when a warrior spirit manifested itself through one of the spirit mediums. The words of the song were adopted with only slight changes. For instance where the original song says „the son of the king’, Ushewokunze substitutes with „Jesus of heaven’. The song exemplifies how the indigenous ministers of the Methodist Church viewed the role of African culture in the propagation of the gospel during the 1970s. A closer exegesis of the song shows that Ushowokunze was engaging in African theology. He wrote eight other hymns that were incorporated in the Methodist hymn book printed in 1972. Some of these hymns utilised African culture as an entry point into Christianity.<sup>972</sup> Furthermore, Canaan Banana made some very controversial remarks concerning the role played by Zimbabwe’s national spirit mediums, namely Kaguvi and Nehanda. He postulated the following:

I strongly believe that the church in Zimbabwe needs to reconfigure itself and adapt to the worldview of the Rhodesian people. It must come up with strategies to

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<sup>971</sup> See the Methodist Shona hymn book, hymn 198, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1972. This song was sung at rituals. The author of the Christian version simply substituted few words and adopted everything as it was found in African culture.

<sup>972</sup> See hymns 46, 130, 197, 219,236, 253, 279, 257, in the Methodist Church hymn book. Gweru: Mambo Press, 1972.

honour our indisputable heroes such as Nehanda, Mukwati, Kaguvi, Chaminuka, Lobengula and others who died in the service of this great country. In fact these are our own heroes who believed in the ideal of self-governance even when they knew that they did not have the cohesive power. They have been totally shunned by history and I propose that the church take a lead in commemorating their lives. These are our national ancestors and I mean they be venerated not worshipped. The name Nehanda speaks to the hearts of the natives in a deeper way than the names Abraham or Jacob do...<sup>973</sup>

Banana's concern seems to have been shared by the Tswana people of Mafikeng in South Africa. When Klaarwater mission station was built, the the indigenous people complained that the mission was subverting local authority and values.<sup>974</sup>

Banana's proposition sparked some heated discussions at the 1974 Methodist Synod.<sup>975</sup> The district chairperson Andrew Ndhlela provided leadership and managed to calm those present by suggesting that Banana's views did not constitute the views of the Methodist Church.<sup>976</sup> Even so, the Methodist Church Synod pushed to have Banana reprimanded because his statements were not only political but heretical. The resolution that was passed by this particular synod reads:

The synod was deeply concerned to learn that Rev. Banana uttered such political and heretical statements that sought to demean the persons of our patriarchs such as Abraham and Jacob. We decided that brother Canaan be reprimanded by the chairman for his claims. We also demand that he expresses an apology to this synod because without that, the synod may find it difficult to receive him back to its confidence.<sup>977</sup>

It is clear that the Methodist Church Synod was not amused by Banana's statements. Although they could have been part of a battle for cultural supremacy, the synod read the remarks as being political and heretical. They thought this constituted wrong teaching. Following up on the synod's recommendation, the district chairperson wrote a letter to

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<sup>973</sup> See a paper written by Canaan Banana entitled „The church for the natives’, 1973, .Banana's personal file, MCA. (This idea was developed in a thesis presented by Banana named „The case of a new bible’. This thesis was presented much later).

<sup>974</sup> John and Jean Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, p. 196.

<sup>975</sup> Minutes of synod, 1974, file S/M, MCA.

<sup>976</sup> See the statement attributed to the chairperson by the minute writer, minutes of synod, 1974, file S/M, MCA.

<sup>977</sup> Minutes of synod, 1974, file S/M, MCA.



Banana of which it is difficult to make out whether it is a reprimand or an advice. The letter reads:

The Methodist Church Synod was not amused by some statements attributed to you. In those statements, you claimed that the figures of Nehanda and others were more important to native Rhodesians than the figures of Abraham and Jacob. May I advise you that you better concentrate on your studies and avoid creating unnecessary tension between you and the church. Remember you left the country without the express permission of the church. Keep your beliefs to yourself until the right time comes. Remember that the last thing you need is to strain your relationship with the church at a time when you are on the government's wanted list. I cannot write much in this letter in case the letter ends up in wrong hands but if you can afford, please phone me after hours at my home number so that we can talk...<sup>978</sup>

The letter raises some important issues. Firstly, it does not refer to the need for the apology that the synod demanded. Secondly, the letter does not reflect the gravity of the matter as expressed by the synod resolution. For instance, it does not mention the synod's threat of expulsion. The letter goes on to advise Banana on his future conduct. The chairperson suggests completing the discussion through a telephone conversation: he fears that the letter may end up in the wrong hands. He even proposes that the telephone conversation should take place after working hours. The reason could have been that he was afraid of some third party overhearing them. All these factors are sufficient to sustain the view that the chairperson was sympathetic either to Banana as a person or to his views. There is no record of how the affair ended. James Scott holds that amongst the dominated people, the concept of mutuality is very important. Subordinates do not betray each other, regardless of the circumstances. They always transfer their resistance to liberated social spaces and in this case the liberated social space was Ndhlela's home.<sup>979</sup> Although Ndhlela was the leader of the church, he was in a way he was subordinate to the missionaries who, in any case, dominated the highest decision-making body which was the synod.

Banana did not give further public expression to his thoughts until the independence of the country. Only on the 6<sup>th</sup> April 1991, more than ten years after independence, he „resurrected’

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<sup>978</sup>A letter written by the chairperson of the district to Canaan Banana. 7 June 1974. See Banana's personal file, MCA.

<sup>979</sup>James Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, p.118.

his idea of the need to include African history and experience in the biblical traditions. This time the thesis was entitled „The case for a new Bible.’<sup>980</sup> It argued that African culture and experience must be allowed to get into dialogue with the divine scriptures.<sup>981</sup>

Banana’s views on the need to preserve African history, in particular Zimbabwean history, were shared by other indigenous ministers such as Petros Lamula in South Africa.<sup>982</sup> Lamula sought to write the forgotten history of Uzuluka Mandela who was one of the founders of the Zulu kingdom. In this book, he politicised the relationship between an imagined African past, Zulu history, and the present. This is what Banana attempted to do when he argued that the foundation fathers and mothers of the Zimbabwean nation should have a special place in the annals of history.<sup>983</sup>

As we have already seen, not every indigenous minister in the Methodist Church was in favour of African culture. They did swing like a pendulum. For example, Ushewokunze<sup>984</sup> presented a paper on African customs and beliefs in 1977. In this paper he elaborately describes the concept of „bringing back’ *kurova guva* amongst the Shona people. As he ended his presentation he noted the following:

Let it be known that when a Christian engages in *kurova guva* ritual he or she imprisons his or her soul in a grave that does not have Jesus and consequently no salvation... We all know the wonderful job that the church did at the funeral of my wife. When the time came that her parents should do the African necessities on her, they performed the *kurova guva* ritual but I said to myself do as it pleases you but the answer shall come from God. They asked me to bring a cow, goat and a black chicken which I did. I also had to pay another cow for remarrying before the *kurova guva* ritual was performed...On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of July during the middle of the night, I saw a vision of a chicken suspended in the air when I got near to see the chicken dropped to the ground and I discovered that it was that chicken that I had given at *the kurova*

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<sup>980</sup>See the paper in Banana’s personal file, MCA and also Mukonyora Isabella, James L. Cox & Frans J. Verstraelen (eds.), *Rewriting the Bible, the real issues, perspectives from within Biblical and religious studies in Zimbabwe Religious and Theological studies*, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1993.

<sup>981</sup> Banana’s thesis in his personal file, MCA.

<sup>982</sup>Paul la Hausse de Lalouviere, *Restless Identities, Signatures of Nationalism, Zulu Ethnicity and History in the Lives of Petros Lamula (1881- 1948) and Lymon Maling (1889-1936)*, Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 2000, p. 98-107.

<sup>983</sup>Paul la Hausse de Lalouviere, *Restless Identities, Signatures of Nationalism, Zulu Ethnicity and History in the Lives of Petros Lamula (1881- 1948) and Lymon Maling (1889-1936)*, Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 2000, p. 98-107.

<sup>984</sup>Ushewokunze was an indigenous minister of the Methodist Church. He has already been referred to in this thesis.

*guva* ritual of my late wife. Near the chicken was the cow that I had paid also. Similarly the goat was there and to me the vision was telling me that all those things could not go to God but they belong to this earth so they were not supposed to have been paid in the first place.<sup>985</sup>

Ushewokunze continued his argument by giving several examples from his own life. He argued that *kurova guva* means that the deceased was dirty and unclean. However, he argues, that what God has made clean no person should label unclean. He concluded his paper by posing a question to the Methodist Church:

Who are you to disregard what God has cleaned and want to clean it through our customs and beliefs? Let everyone who is doing it, be it African clergy or laity, repent.<sup>986</sup>

In an interview with Elliot Hungwe, it emerged that the majority of the indigenous ministers consulted ancestors and participated in *kurova guva* ritual.<sup>987</sup> He argued that the problem was that in the African way of doing things, if some members of one's family engaged in appeasing the ancestors and there was only one who did not believe in that, that particular individual who did not participate in the ritual was vulnerable to a vengeful attack by the ancestors.<sup>988</sup>

The above statement was corroborated by interviewee Enos Chibi. He argues that it is difficult for indigenous ministers to desist from *kurova guva* and ancestor veneration because these rituals had the effect of unifying the family. A person who abandoned these rituals would not be part of the family. Chibi claimed that the majority of the old indigenous ministers engaged in *kurova guva* rituals. However, he noted that because these rituals were usually performed during the night, it was difficult to know who did it and who did not.<sup>989</sup>

It is quite clear that the indigenous ministers of the Methodist Church were involved in ancestor veneration and in the 'bringing back' ceremony. Some, like Banana, perceived ancestor veneration as an expression of loyalty to African praxis and as a negation of the

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<sup>985</sup>Paper presented by Rev S. Ushewokunze on African customs and beliefs. 1977. Ushewokunze personal file, MCA.

<sup>986</sup> Paper presented by Rev S. Ushewokunze on African customs and beliefs. 1977. Ushewokunze personal file, MCA.

<sup>987</sup> Elliot Hungwe, same interview.

<sup>988</sup> Elliot Hungwe, same interview.

<sup>989</sup> Enos Chibi, same interview.

spirit of colonialism. What remains to be seen is whether the indigenous ministers believed in witchcraft and traditional healing.

## **5.6 The attitude of the Methodist indigenous ministers to witchcraft and traditional healing**

This section examines the attitude of the indigenous ministers to witchcraft and traditional healing. We have combined the two because they are related. In the Shona and Ndebele cultures, illnesses are generally believed to be caused by witches and the remedy was found in traditional healing. Another reason why we have combined the two is that the Methodist Church often dealt with the phenomena as a unity and the indigenous ministers responded likewise.

Mbiti maintains that amongst the Ndebele people, one of the responsibilities of the traditional healers or medicine man [sic], as he preferred calling them, was to supply medicated gates for new homesteads.<sup>990</sup> He or she would apply medicine to prevent witchcraft and magic from acting and sometimes to make the evil return to its author.<sup>991</sup> Mbiti's argument can be criticised on the ground that he is not a Zimbabwean and therefore may lack the relevant knowledge. However, this criticism can be considered to be unfair because someone can be a foreigner but very knowledgeable.

The other role of the traditional healer was to cure diseases which were thought to have been caused by witches and other spiritual entities. The traditional healers were imbued with power to cross cosmic regions of life and death. Thus they were able to consult the spirit-world and return to the living with answers to their questions.

Gordon L. Chavunduka<sup>992</sup>, in his book *Traditional Medicine in Modern Zimbabwe*,<sup>993</sup> argues that, before the arrival of colonialists in Zimbabwe, traditional healers enjoyed tremendous prestige.<sup>994</sup> Chavunduka observes:

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<sup>990</sup>John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, p.164.

<sup>991</sup>John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, p.164.

<sup>992</sup>Gordon Chavunduka is a Zimbabwean Sociologist. He is a former vice chancellor of the University of Zimbabwe.

<sup>993</sup>Gordon L. Chavunduka, *Traditional Medicine in Modern Zimbabwe*, Harare: University of Zimbabwe, 1994.

<sup>994</sup>Gordon L. Chavunduka, *Traditional Medicine in Modern Zimbabwe*, p.1.

Not only were they regarded as the only medical specialists but they were also expected to deal with a wide range of social problems as well. In fact much of the healer's time was spent trying to help people to come to terms with their social problems. Thus, in addition to being a medical practitioner, the traditional healer was a religious consultant, a legal and political advisor, a marriage counsellor, a political detective and a social worker.<sup>995</sup>

In addition, traditional healers played a central role in African society. They were expected to find answers to all kinds of personal problems. If for example, a person was to undertake a long journey he would ask a traditional healer if he would reach his destination safely.<sup>996</sup>

Parents who were disappointed because their children were girls asked for medicine to ensure that the next child would be a boy.<sup>997</sup> The responsibilities of the traditional healers were many and varied but an exhaustive discussion of their roles not within the scope of this research.

According to Chavunduka, the colonial government and early Christian missionaries despised African traditional medicine and therefore attempted for many years to discourage its use.<sup>998</sup> There are a number of reasons why they suppressed traditional healing. Firstly, many colonial governments and missionaries did not know that traditional medicines offered effective cures for many illnesses.<sup>999</sup> They considered traditional healers as deceivers who prevented people from visiting hospitals where they could access Western medicine.<sup>1000</sup> Secondly, many missionaries felt that the traditional healers promoted witchcraft which the missionaries regarded as the greatest stumbling block for to the spread of Christianity.<sup>1001</sup> Thirdly, because of their association with ancestral spirits, the healers were seen as agents of the devil who encouraged people to engage in „ancestral worship'.<sup>1002</sup> It is clear that the church's leadership did not approve of the work of traditional healers. We now need to define and examine the role of witches. We also need to examine the attitude of the colonial government to witchcraft.

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<sup>995</sup>Gordon L. Chavunduka, *Traditional Medicine in Modern Zimbabwe*, p.1.

<sup>996</sup>Gordon L.Chavunduka, *Traditional Medicine in Modern Zimbabwe*, p.1.

<sup>997</sup>Gordon L. Chavunduka, *Traditional Medicine in Modern Zimbabwe*, p.1.

<sup>998</sup>Gordon L. Chavunduka, *Traditional Medicine in Modern Zimbabwe*, p.5.

<sup>999</sup>Gordon L. Chavunduka, *Traditional Medicine in Modern Zimbabwe*, p.5.

<sup>1000</sup>Gordon L. Chavunduka, *Traditional Medicine in Modern Zimbabwe*, p.5.

<sup>1001</sup>Gordon L Chavunduka, *Traditional Medicine in Modern Zimbabwe*, p.5.

<sup>1002</sup>Gordon L.Chavunduka, *Traditional Medicine in Modern Zimbabwe*, p.5.

A witch (*muroyi* or *umthakathi*), was a man or woman who used the power of the universe, which he or she had learned to employ, creating magic for anti-social ends.<sup>1003</sup> He or she invoked these powers to do evil aimed at society. Once discovered, the witch was shown no mercy but got rid of as speedily as possible.<sup>1004</sup> Africans were so afraid of witches that they constantly fortified themselves using medicine prescribed by traditional healers as well as through regular appeasement of the ancestors who were believed to possess protective powers.

We are aware that the term witch (*muroyi*), was in the past as ambiguous as it is today in independent Zimbabwe. It has been used to refer to trouble-makers in society. Persons who were thought of as anti social were often considered as witches. Chavunduka argues:

In some parts of the country a person who is habitually surly, who builds his house in the bush far away from other people, who neither invites others to eat with him nor accepts invitations from neighbours to share their food and drink is likely sooner or later to be accused of witchcraft... he is accused of witchcraft because he is deviant.<sup>1005</sup>

Witchcraft could also be invoked as a concept for explaining the deeper or indirect cause of events which seemed unnatural.<sup>1006</sup> It could besides refer to the act of poisoning someone although technically this should be referred to as sorcery.<sup>1007</sup> This section will employ the term witchcraft in its multiple meanings. However, alluding to witches we will mainly refer to people who are said to eat corpses, dance in the fields at night and cause sickness, death and other misfortunes.<sup>1008</sup>

The reality and existence of witches has been seriously questioned by missionaries and academics from Europe, mainly because of the ideas they inherited from 18<sup>th</sup> century Europe. They have accepted the doctrine of the unreality of witches which developed in Europe mainly because of the inhuman treatment inflicted upon persons accused of witchcraft. In fact in the 17<sup>th</sup> century all political and ecclesiastical leaders firmly believed in

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<sup>1003</sup>Chengetai J.M Zvobgo, *The Wesleyan Methodist Missions in Zimbabwe 1891-1945*, p.14.

<sup>1004</sup>Chengetai J.M Zvobgo, *The Wesleyan Methodist Missions in Zimbabwe*, p. 14.

<sup>1005</sup>Gordon L. Chavunduka, *Traditional Medicine in Modern Zimbabwe*, p. 86.

<sup>1006</sup>Gordon L. Chavunduka, *Traditional Medicine in Modern Zimbabwe*, p. 86.

<sup>1007</sup>Gordon L. Chavunduka, *Traditional Medicine in Modern Zimbabwe*, p. 90.

<sup>1008</sup>Gordon L. Chavunduka, *Traditional Medicine in Modern Zimbabwe*, p. 90.

witchcraft. Hundreds of alleged witches were put to death. Erivwoo gives a very instructive analysis of the phenomenon in his paper entitled, *The Christian attitude to witchcraft*.<sup>1009</sup>

The Southern Rhodesia Government promulgated what was known as the Witchcraft Suppression Act of 1899. In this Act, the legislature made it very clear that the practice of witchcraft was pretence and a sham and it did in actual fact not exist.<sup>1010</sup> This Act made it into an offence to accuse someone of being a witch. Traditional healers were also affected by this Act. The Act spelt out that ‚any person who names or indicates any other person as being a witch and is proved at his trial to be by habit and repute a witchdoctor or witch-finder faces a heavy sentence.’<sup>1011</sup>

Again it is clear that the colonial government tried to suppress witchcraft in Southern Rhodesia. However it may be useful to explain that the practice of witchcraft is a reality and many Europeans past and present accept the reality of witchcraft. It is witchcraft accusation which was and is problematic. This was the political context in which the Methodist Church operated. What remains to be seen is if the church embraced the government’s attitude towards traditional healing and witchcraft or whether came up with its own independent position.

The missionaries of the Methodist Church responded decisively to the social problem of traditional healers and witchcraft by establishing a medical hospital in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This was designed to have a multiple effect. Firstly, hospitals were meant to alleviate the suffering of indigenous people. Secondly, healing was meant to subserve theological interests. Thirdly hospitals were intended to neutralise the centrality of traditional medicine. I can give many more reasons. In fact, Michael Gelfund is of the view that the Livingstone concept of a missionary in Africa was broad. It included not only the teaching of Christianity, but Western knowledge and skills in general as well as the introduction of medical services.<sup>1012</sup> In pursuit of this vision, the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society sent Dr. Sidney Osborn in May 1913 to Rhodesia. On arrival he began a hospital at Kwenda mission. Whilst Kwenda hospital was being constructed, the Anglicans were building St.

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<sup>1009</sup> Dr Erivwoo, ‚The Christian Attitude to Witchcraft’ in L. Lagerwerf (ed.), *Witchcraft Sorcery and Spirit Possession: Pastoral Responses in Africa*, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1985, p.14.

<sup>1010</sup> Gordon L. Chavunduka, *Traditional Medicine in Modern Zimbabwe*, p. 90.

<sup>1011</sup> See section seven of the *Witchcraft Suppression Act* of 1899.

<sup>1012</sup> Michael Gelfand, ‚*Medicine and the Christian Missions in Rhodesia, 1857-1930*,’ in J.A Dachs (ed.), *Christianity South of the Zambezi* voll, p.112.

Faith's mission in Rusape.<sup>1013</sup> Kwenda hospital became operational but, as already has been noted in chapter two of this study, throughout the whole year only 128 patients visited the hospital. There was no other hospital in the district. It is highly improbable that people were not getting sick. The reasonable explanation is that they were being treated elsewhere, most probably by traditional practitioners.

Before the attempt to build a hospital, the Methodist Church had already come up with some rules and regulations concerning the consultation of traditional healers. The church also forbade the making of witchcraft accusations by the indigenous people. The Methodist Synod of 1902 made the following resolution:

Any individual seeking Methodist baptism shall be required to make a promise that he would desist from consulting witchdoctors and affirm that he is not afraid of superstitions such as witchcraft and ancestor worship.<sup>1014</sup>

In 1924, a local preacher in Epworth Circuit was struck off the list of local preachers for drinking beer and consulting traditional healers.<sup>1015</sup> In fact, this was not the only case recorded in the Methodist Circuits during this early period of church planting. In the same year, four preachers and one evangelist in Nenguo were struck off the list of preachers for the same offence.<sup>1016</sup> Although these were not clergy in the conventional sense of the word, their affinity to the indigenous ministers in terms of responsibilities sheds some light on the general view of indigenous people working for the church.

In 1935 an evangelist in Nenguo Circuit was suspended for delivering a sermon that not only affirmed the existence of witches, but also confirmed that only traditional healers could effectively deal with ailments caused by witchcraft.<sup>1017</sup>

In 1947, J. Patsika, an indigenous minister in the Methodist Church wrote to the district chairperson requesting for a transfer on the grounds that his family was being haunted by witches in Mhondoro area.<sup>1018</sup> He lamented:

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<sup>1013</sup>Michael Gelfand, *Medicine and the Christian Missions in Rhodesia, 1857-1930*, in J.A. Dachs (ed.), *Christianity South of the Zambezi vol 1*, p.112.

<sup>1014</sup>The Rules and Regulations of the Methodist Church of 1902, file R/R, MCA.

<sup>1015</sup>Epworth Circuit quarterly meeting minutes, 24 April 1924 at Epworth mission, file, Epworth Circuit, MCA.

<sup>1016</sup>Nenguo Circuit quarterly meeting minutes, 28 October 1924 at Waddilove mission, file Nenguo mission, MCA.

<sup>1017</sup>Minutes of quarterly meeting Nenguo Circuit, 26 October 1935, file Nenguo circuit quarterly meeting minutes, MCA.

<sup>1018</sup>A letter from Rev. Patsika dated 7 July 1949, Patsika's personal file, MCA.



My situation became bad when I challenged people at the funeral that God's power was greater than the power of witches, ancestors and traditional healers. I informed them that I was not afraid of them because their power was limited as compared to that of Jesus...<sup>1019</sup>

The acting chairperson of the district of Rhodesia, Robert Forshaw, a European missionary, did not spend much time answering Patsika. He wrote the following:

My dear brother... Whilst I commend your bravery and act of devotion to Christ as you courageously challenged the people of Mhondoro, I am at loss why you would want to be transferred on the basis of fear of the same things that you said you were not afraid of. May I point to you that what you need may not be a transfer but the prayers of all of us. This is because you are doing a wonderful job in that circuit... Please may I remind you that nothing should separate us from the love of Christ even fear of death...<sup>1020</sup>

What Patsika had failed to realise was the fact that his request for a transfer confirmed that he was actually afraid of the threat of witches. Patsika reacted to the chairperson's letter by declaring that he was not afraid of these forces but that the forces were attacking his family which was spiritually vulnerable.<sup>1021</sup> What followed is of little interest. What is important to note is that Patsika recognised the power of witches, even if only implicitly.

Patsika was not alone in expressing his fear of witchcraft. In 1958, J. Tabaziva wrote a revealing letter to the district chairperson, stating his unwillingness to continue working in the Victoria/ Shabani Circuit. He cited a threat to his life as the reason for his request of an immediate transfer. The letter reads:

I know our government has declared that witches do not exist. We as a church have been caught in the same snare when we believed and taught that witchcraft was just a powerless superstition. You as a European may not understand this but ask any African minister privately, he will tell you that witchcraft is real and a menace. I have not been sleeping for a couple of months now because witches are troubling me and my children. My request is for an immediate transfer from this circuit. I

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<sup>1019</sup> A letter from Rev Patsika dated 7 July 1949, Patsika's personal file, MCA.

<sup>1020</sup> A letter from Forshaw to Patsika 26 August 1949, Patsika's personal file, MCA.

<sup>1021</sup> Letter from Patsika to Forshaw, 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1949, Patsika's personal file, MCA.

have done my best for the past six years when I was stationed here; it is now time for me to move to somewhere else...<sup>1022</sup>

The district chairperson responded to Tabaziva's letter thanking him for the work he was doing in the circuit but expressing his disapproval of the request for a transfer:

It is a shock that you request for transfer on the grounds of fear of witchcraft. I have known you to be a spiritual giant and that you can fall on the threat of a powerless superstition is unbelievable... Even if witchcraft was powerful, remember that the one who called you instructed us to carry our cross everyday... Unfortunately it is not the church's policy to transfer people on such terms... I would however want to thank you for the great work that you have done in the Victoria/ Shabani Circuit since your appointment in 1952. When the time comes you will be transferred and should you have any difficulty with this position please come and let us discuss about this.<sup>1023</sup>

This response did not please Tabaziva. He responded on the 2 February 1959 writing of his frustration:

I received your letter with much disappointment. It seems the church does not care about its African workers. This situation can be likened to a European minister who may request for a transfer because in that particular circuit there would be a threat of volcano. We as African ministers cannot argue and say that is a superstition simply because we have never experienced a volcano. I am telling you that there are spiritual volcanos in my circuit but you tell me it is superstition... Do as it pleases you but if I die the church must not come and make speeches over my dead body because it had the chance to avert this danger.<sup>1024</sup>

The above is evidence of Tabaziva's strong belief in witchcraft. Apart from belief in witchcraft, the indigenous ministers also believed in African ways of healing.

In 1959, Paul Mwazha,<sup>1025</sup> stationed at Kwenda mission left the Methodist Church to form his African Apostolic Church.<sup>1026</sup> This breakaway was the culmination of a plethora of

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<sup>1022</sup>Letter from Jacob Tabaziva to the district chairperson, 6 September 1958, Tabaziva's personal file, MCA.

<sup>1023</sup>Letter from the district chairperson to Tabaziva, 9 December 1958, Tabaziva's personal file, MCA.

<sup>1024</sup>A letter from Tabaziva to the district chairperson, 2 February 1959, Tabaziva's personal file, MCA.

<sup>1025</sup>Paul Mwazha was a Methodist Evangelist and teacher. He resigned from the Methodist Church to form his own Apostolic Church in 1959.

events, all bordering on the wish for healing using water, eggs and other symbols as indicated by the spirits.<sup>1027</sup> Paul Mwazha was born on the 25<sup>th</sup> of October 1918 at the Holy Cross mission.<sup>1028</sup> He was baptised in the Roman Catholic Church by father Schmidt.<sup>1029</sup> He was educated at Kwenda mission which was run by the Methodist Church in Rhodesia. He received his higher education at Howard Institution which was a Salvation Army project.<sup>1030</sup> By 1941 he was already a qualified teacher. In 1948 he was sent to Chideme as headmaster and evangelist of the Methodist Church. From this point onwards his life was characterised by visions and he began to pray for the sick, using methods which were unwelcome in the Methodist Church.<sup>1031</sup> It must be noted that visions are not peculiarly African. They happen within Western Pentecostalism. Catholics and Anglicans use holy water. He claimed to have power to heal diseases such as asthma, diabetes, rheumatism, anaemia, anorexia, migraine, period pains and post natal depression.<sup>1032</sup> This set him on a collision course with the European missionary- in-charge called Morley Wright. He accused Mwazha of using demonic ways of healing in the church.<sup>1033</sup> The hostilities between the missionary and his evangelist continued unabated and when the situation became unbearable, the evangelist left the church to form his African Apostolic Church.<sup>1034</sup>

Mwazha was a minister in the Methodist Church and his case helps us to understand how the indigenous ministers in the Methodist Church saw themselves. The use of eggs and water for healing was of course a complete departure from the Methodist way of doing things. It is important to note that Mwazha had links with the Catholic Church, the Salvation Army and the Methodists. He could apparently not find satisfaction in any of these denominations and hence he established his Apostolic Church for Africa which utilised African categories of healing. The establishment of his church may have been the result of a quest for belonging.

The Comaroffs point out that the struggle between the European missionaries and the indigenous people for the control of water was a spiritual affair. The missionaries accused the indigenous; rainmakers; of lack of power and using demonic powers in bringing rain whilst

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<sup>1026</sup> Ernest Paul Mwazha, *The Divine Commission of Paul Mwazha of Africa*, Harare: African Apostolic Church, 1997, p.97.

<sup>1027</sup> Ernest Paul Mwazha, *The Divine Commission of Paul Mwazha of Africa*, p.1-97.

<sup>1028</sup> Ernest Paul Mwazha, *The Divine Commission of Paul Mwazha of Africa*, p.1.

<sup>1029</sup> Ernest Paul Mwazha, *The Divine Commission of Paul Mwazha of Africa*, p. 1.

<sup>1030</sup> Ernest Paul Mwazha, *The divine commission of Paul Mwazha of Africa*, p.1.

<sup>1031</sup> Ernest Paul Mwazha, *The Divine Commission of Paul Mwazha of Africa*, p.1.

<sup>1032</sup> Ernest Paul Mwazha, *The Divine Commission of Paul Mwazha of Africa*, p.1.

<sup>1033</sup> Ernest Paul Mwazha, *The Divine Commission of Paul Mwazha of Africa*, p.1.

<sup>1034</sup> Ernest Paul Mwazha, *The Divine Commission of Paul Mwazha of Africa*, p.1-48.

the indigenous people accused the missionaries of contaminating their apparatus for bringing rain.<sup>1035</sup> In one case a missionary's 'long black beard' was perceived to be preventing a positive response to a ritual request for rain.<sup>1036</sup> In a similar context Mwazha criticized the missionaries's disdain for African culture because it acted as a barrier to people regaining their health.<sup>1037</sup>

Another case involved Crispen Mazobere. As already noted, Chrispin Mazobere presented a paper at United Theological College. He said in this paper that traditional healers were central to the life of the African people and that they were consulted every now and then.<sup>1038</sup> He also reaffirmed that witchcraft is a reality and stated that anyone, denying its existence, was living in a fictitious world. For Mazobere, African traditional healers were an amazing revelation of God. Their wisdom came from the spiritual world whose hierarchy ended with God.<sup>1039</sup> Missionaries who demonised the institution of traditional healing were tainted by their denial to the extent that there was no role for them in postcolonial Rhodesia.<sup>1040</sup> This viewpoint of Mazobere seems to be in agreement with the policy that pervaded mission studies during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This philosophy was called the moratorium and it sought to banish the missionaries from Africa and Asia.<sup>1041</sup> E. M. Uka, in his work, *Missionaries go home*, argues that part of the reasons for 'moratorium' was the need for a dialogue of the gospel with African culture.<sup>1042</sup>

Also in 1977, Ushewokunze narrated his experience with regards to witchcraft and traditional healing:

In the traditional way of life, witches driven by jealousy would cause harm to innocent people. When this happens, true traditional healers will be able to treat this easily. True healers are those imbued with a spirit of foretelling. In my own case, as you know I have been sick for a very long time. A traditional healer who stays 200 kilometres away from Salisbury went to my friend who stays in the vicinity. The

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<sup>1035</sup>John and Jean Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, p. 212.

<sup>1036</sup>John and Jean Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, p. 212.

<sup>1037</sup>Ernest Paul Mwazha, *The Divine Commission of Paul Mwazha of Africa*, p.1-48.

<sup>1038</sup>See a paper presented by Dr. C. Mazobere at United Theological College on 4 May 1977, Mazobere's personal file in the MCA.

<sup>1039</sup> Paper presented by Dr. C. Mazobere at United Theological College on 4 May 1977, MCA.

<sup>1040</sup> Paper presented by Dr. C. Mazobere at United Theological College on 4 May 1977, MCA.

<sup>1041</sup>E.M. Uka, *Missionaries Go Home? A Sociological Interpretation of an African Response to Christian Missions*, p. 21.

<sup>1042</sup>E.M. Uka, *Missionaries Go Home? A Sociological Interpretation of an African Response to Christian Missions*, p. 21-45.

healer informed my friend about my illness and what I needed to do in order to be healed although he did not know me or heard about me. My friend came to inform me about it and I told him that I was going to think about it. Few days later the Lord spoke to me about it and I send a word to my friend that the will of God must happen so I was not going to follow the traditional healer. More often than not, these traditional healers mislead people and directed them to ancestor worship. I refused this. Traditional healers can foretell and do other things but do not follow them...<sup>1043</sup>

Ushewokunze in this presentation demonstrates that witchcraft exists and he points to the powers of traditional healers. It seems his paper was an exhortation for other African ministers to shun traditional healers and witchcraft, but in the same breath he affirms the efficacy of the two phenomena.

Julius Juru in an interview argued that the majority of the Methodist indigenous ministers were scared of witchcraft. They themselves would visit traditional healers for various reasons.<sup>1044</sup> He provided a list of indigenous ministers who were suspected of being frequent visitors of traditional healers. The list includes the names of some prominent ministers and as a result I have decided to withhold the names in spite of the fact that Juru had signed an interview release agreement form. After all, these accusations have not been proved in a Minor Synod nor were they confirmed by a number of other sources. When the writer enquired if these were the only ones visiting traditional healers, Juru said that they were many more, but these were the best known.<sup>1045</sup> He revealed that:

The most surprising case was that of a very educated clergy (name supplied). With all his education he continued to believe firmly in witchcraft. He too was a regular customer of traditional healers.<sup>1046</sup>

Elliot Hungwe concurs with Juru that many indigenous ministers recognised the power of witches and traditional healers. He mentioned in this context two names of Methodist indigenous ministers.<sup>1047</sup> He commented:

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<sup>1043</sup> Paper presented by Rev S. Ushewokunze on African customs and beliefs, 1977, Ushewokunze's personal file, MCA.

<sup>1044</sup> Julius Juru, same interview.

<sup>1045</sup> Julius Juru, same interview.

<sup>1046</sup> Julius Juru, same interview.

It is not fair for me to give you the names of the indigenous ministers who were known to consult traditional healers because this was always done in secret. However, Chitanda (real name withheld) was well known even by the church leadership. Chitanda's involvement in politics made him rely on African traditional healers so much. He was arrested several times and like many nationalists of the time they would consult traditional healers to get concoctions for luck and safety. Mbudzi (real name withheld) believed so much that Africans must adhere to African way of life. He also knew several traditional medicines such as the one to neutralise snake poison.<sup>1048</sup>

Naison Makwehe argued that many Methodist indigenous ministers believed in witchcraft and would consult traditional healers at one point or another.<sup>1049</sup> Makwehe believed that, because they were ministers of the gospel, many witches would want to test their powers, so that ministers were vulnerable targets. In order to stay in the manse they strengthened themselves using prescriptions from traditional healers.<sup>1050</sup>

The Methodist indigenous ministers seem to have duplicitous in the way they dealt with witchcraft and traditional healing, just like they were duplicitous in their dealings with ancestral worship and *kurova guva*. However, there is enough evidence that they recognised the existence of these phenomena and that they believed in their effects on human beings. Because this position went against the beliefs of the Methodist church, many indigenous ministers concealed their trust in these traditional institutions.

## **5.7 The indigenous ministers and other aspects of African culture**

The indigenous ministers demonstrated in several ways that they approved of the use of African instruments in worship. From the outset, the church did not have a position in relation to the use of African instruments in worship. Other churches such as the United Methodist had legislated against African instruments being used in worship. What the

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<sup>1047</sup>These names were supplied and are in the interview transcript but I have decided not to publish them in this study because the allegations are serious and yet they were not proven through a Minor Synod.

<sup>1048</sup> Elliot Hungwe, same interview.

<sup>1049</sup> Naison Makwehe, same interview.

<sup>1050</sup> Naison Makwehe, same interview.

Methodist Church in Rhodesia did legislate against in 1904 were African dances such as the Jerusalem dance.<sup>1051</sup> They also ruled that instruments that formerly featured in traditional ceremonies should not be used during Christian worship: The resolution reads:

The synod laments the proliferation of the so called African night dances which have become a hindrance to the spiritual advancement of the African people. Many times our people even after hearing the gospel still go back to participate in these practices. We judge that no instrument that had been used in these pagan practices could be used in church for purposes of worship.<sup>1052</sup>

This was the only time the Methodist Church in Rhodesia made a judgement with regard to African instruments being used in Christian worship. The Methodist African circuits continued to use African instruments such as drums in their religious services. However, when Kurehwa, a United Methodist indigenous minister, arrived at the United Theological College as a lecturer, he revolutionised the whole concept of worship, forcing the United Methodists to accept the use of African instruments in worship. This had an amazing impact on the Methodist Church in Rhodesia and young ministers, who were trained at the UTC in the 1970s, became avid lovers of the African way of worship.<sup>1053</sup>

As taught by Kurehwa, African ministers began to use African proverbs as introduction to their sermons. Although some missionaries would do the same, the latter's knowledge of the same was limited. African representations of the Supreme Being were used.<sup>1054</sup> A case in point was Mazobere who, like others, was using African symbols of God to refer to God such as *Mazivazvose* and *Mutangakugara*.<sup>1055</sup> Mazobere celebrated the African language as the language of the people.<sup>1056</sup>

In 1973, Canaan Banana, who was by then studying at the Wesleyan Theological Seminary in the United States of America, made his contribution with regard to the relationship of African culture and the Christian gospel. He argued that:

The time to make the church indigenous has come. The political events unfolding in Rhodesia point to the fact that soon Rhodesia will achieve a majority rule through

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<sup>1051</sup> Minutes of the Methodist synod, 1904, file S/M, MCA.

<sup>1052</sup> Minutes of the Methodist Synod, 1904, file S/M, MCA.

<sup>1053</sup> Levee Kadenge, same interview.

<sup>1054</sup> Levee Kadenge, same interview.

<sup>1055</sup> These were African names for the Supreme Being. They point to the fact that God is all knowing and eternal.

<sup>1056</sup> Levee Kadenge, same interview.

one man one vote. I am sure the Methodist Church does not want to remain a Western church in a country belonging to the native people...The indigenisation of the church has to be accelerated, for instance when administering the Holy Communion instead of using wine and bread which are both products of foreign industries why not use *sadza* and *maheu*.<sup>1057</sup> Jesus used the most readily available commodities and for Zimbabweans these two are the most accessible commodities.<sup>1058</sup>

Banana's view demonstrates that the use of African culture by some indigenous ministers was not a theological issue but a political one. Banana suggested the change of elements in the Holy Communion in favour of home grown elements.

In 1977, Mazobere wrote a book entitled „Beer is both food and drink' (*Doro kudya uye kunwa*).<sup>1059</sup> At a glance one might think that Mazobere was encouraging beer drinking in this book. Instead, Mazobere was castigating alcohol abuse, arguing that in the traditional Shona society beer was not abused. It was taken as both food and drink.

According to Naison Makwehe, before the advent of evangelism in the Methodist Church, the indigenous ministers lived double lives where, in the presence of the missionaries, they had to pretend that they had left their old ways of life behind. But under the cover of darkness they engaged in *kurova guva* as well as in other prohibited African practices.<sup>1060</sup>

Nelson Ralaphata contends that all the indigenous ministers he worked with were deep admirers of certain aspects of African culture. He remembers that, for example, Canaan Banana, Crispin Mazobere, Caspen Makuzwa, Julius Juru, Enos Chibi, Aenias Mandinyenya and others, all loved preaching using examples from African culture.<sup>1061</sup> He asserts the following.

In fact to my knowledge all the indigenous ministers called each other by their totems. They would also call their parishioners in the same way. Mazobere was an extreme case because even when he was driving he would buy some oranges and when he arrived at places where monkeys were, he would stop and throw some

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<sup>1057</sup> Sadza is the staple food in Zimbabwe and Maheu is a traditional drink prepared using sorghum.

<sup>1058</sup> See a paper written by Canaan Banana entitled „The church for the natives', 1973, .Banana's personal file, MCA. (This idea was later on developed in Banana's book entitled *Come and Share* which was published after 1980.)

<sup>1059</sup> See Mazobere's book, *Doro Kudya uye Kunwa*, Harare: Methodist Publications, 1977.

<sup>1060</sup> Naison Makwehe, same interview.

<sup>1061</sup> Nelson Ralaphata, same interview.



oranges to the monkeys. The reason was that his totem was monkey (*soko*). He would actually recite his totem in such a way that it became clear that he occasionally paid his respect to it. It is rumoured that at one time, he had to abandon his journey because he met some monkeys and upon his arrival the monkeys did not clear the way for him and in the African culture if that happens it is a warning that the journey would have problems.<sup>1062</sup>

Although there were indigenous ministers who simply believed in the mysteries of African culture, there were others who adhered to African culture as a way of showing their allegiance to their country. It was an expression of African identity. It was a cry for belonging in a social setting that sought to erase the memory of the indigenous' cultural origins. It was a form of defiance by the indigenous ministers. As discussed earlier, the Comaroffs' theory illuminates in a profound way the story of the Methodist indigenous ministers and their culture. In a nutshell, colonialism took many forms in South Africa and indeed in Zimbabwe. One of these forms was cultural domination. The indigenous people responded accordingly, although at a different level, because they lacked the machinery at the disposal of missionaries and colonialists.

Janice McLaughlin holds that, during Zimbabwe's war of liberation, Catholic peasants on the whole opted for a co-existence of African culture and Christianity, consulting their ancestors as well as praying to Jesus Christ and the Christian saints.<sup>1063</sup> She singled out an indigenous Catholic priest, Joseph Kumbirai from the Gweru Diocese, as one of the leaders who called for openness with respect to African religion.<sup>1064</sup> He warned that Christianity would be rejected, together with colonialism, unless it adapted to African culture.<sup>1065</sup> This again shows that the issue of African culture was interpreted politically in other denominations too.

To overemphasise the Methodist indigenous ministers's allegiance to African culture would be to impoverish the outcome of this study. There may, after all, have been other indigenous ministers who whole heartedly appropriated European culture and who would answer to the label 'European' with a profound sense of joy. It is important to establish whether such clergy existed.

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<sup>1062</sup> Nelson Ralaphata ,same interview.

<sup>1063</sup> Janice McLaughlin, *On the Frontline*, p.238.

<sup>1064</sup> Janice McLaughlin, *On the Frontline*, p.238.

<sup>1064</sup> Janice McLaughlin, *On the Frontline*, p.238.

<sup>1065</sup> Janice McLaughlin, *On the Frontline*, p.238.

## **5.8 The Methodist indigenous ministers as ‘black Europeans’**

Not all the indigenous ministers identified with African culture at all times. Some dangled like a pendulum: when it suited them they identified with African culture but when it did not suit them they rebelled against it. Some did continually identify with European culture. They had swallowed the missionary tradition hook, line and sinker. One minister was nicknamed ‚the black European’ because of his love for European culture.<sup>1066</sup> He liked everything that Europeans had brought with them, including tea, the English language and spectacles. Julius Juru said it was rumoured that the same minister’s spectacles had never been prescribed for him by medical doctors but that he just loved to wear them.<sup>1067</sup> Possibly this was due to the fact that he was culturally uprooted.

Enos Chibi echoed the same sentiments when he argued that some indigenous ministers like were ‚white’ ministers in black skin.<sup>1068</sup> They were well known for their preference of the English language. For them English was the language of heaven. If God spoke then he would speak only English. They themselves had also mastered the language very well.

The story went that, when one of these ministers died, he did not allow people to stay at his house after her burial. He informed the mourners that they were supposed to vacate his premises because the funeral was over. He argued that he needed some solitary moments so that he could process the passing on of his wife.<sup>1069</sup>

Manyoba’s actions were unacceptable in a Shona or Ndebele society. The norm was that people remained at the homestead of the deceased for about three days after the burial. What Manyoba did, was anti-social. He was possibly influenced by Western culture.

Another indigenous minister who transcended the confines of African culture was Matthew Rusike. In 1950, he began the first African children’s home in his own house with one girl. ‚In 1960, Rusike retired from the Methodist ministry before his time, in order to build the

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<sup>1066</sup> Julius Juru, same interview.

<sup>1067</sup> Julius Juru, same interview.

<sup>1068</sup> Enos Chibi, same interview.

<sup>1069</sup> Julius Juru, same interview.

first African children's home for Africans from Cape Town to the Congo.'<sup>1070</sup> The whole idea of a children's home was European. In Africa in general, and in Zimbabwe specifically, orphans are the responsibility of the relatives and the community. It is a disgrace for any family to ignore orphans left by their kith and kin. There were no cases of child-headed families because the African network of relationships, or the extended family, would take care of those who had unfortunately been orphaned. Although Rusike was responding to a need, his concept of a children's home was foreign.

Furthermore, Rusike is the only indigenous minister who managed to draft a 'Will' that spelt out how his estate would be distributed. The „Will' is dated 19<sup>th</sup> September 1977. By this date very few indigenous people in Zimbabwe would put their „Will' in writing. C40 One could argue that writing a „Will' was a necessity in a bureaucratic society such as the one in which the indigenous ministers were compelled to live. However this view can be contested. It is also noteworthy that African culture is not static and writing a „Will' is a way in which bureaucratic societies sort out complex financial matters. Rusike's „Will' was deposited with Sawyer and Mkushi legal practitioners for safety. It reads:

This is the last will and testament of me, Matthew Alias Jacha Rusike R.c.x2 Salisbury, presently of Marshal Hartley mission, Hartley. I appoint and nominate the Native Commissioner for the time being of Hartley, to be the executor of this my will and administrator of my estate hereby granting to him all such power and authority as required or allowed in law, especially power of the assumption.(1) I bequeath half of my estate excluding immovable property to be shared in equal shares, share and share alike absolutely between my wife Jessica Rusike and my daughters Silvia Pasi, Dorcas Mtete, Freda Rusike and Patricia Rusike.(2) I bequeath the other half of my estate excluding immovable property to be shared in equal shares, share and share alike absolutely between my sons Abiatha Benjamin Rusike, Agrrey Rusike, and Caleb Rusike.(3) My farm number 21 Marirangwe A.P. Area Salisbury District and buildings therein to be taken over by my eldest son Abiatha Benjamin Rusike, on condition that my wife and any other member of my family be allowed to live there during their lifetime.(4) On the death of my eldest son, the farm shall go to my eldest grandson and thereafter to my eldest grand grand son. He my eldest grand grand son if he so desires may sell the farm but the money

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<sup>1070</sup>Matthew Rusike's obituary. Rusike'd personal file, MCA.

as realised must be paid to the Methodist Church of Rhodesia for the benefit of African Education.<sup>1071</sup>

This „Will’ is revealing. For one thing, in writing a „Will’ Rusike did something that was not part of African culture. In African culture one does not distribute his or her estate; that was the responsibility of the survivors. If a person had spoken about what would happen after his or her death, the community would have thought that death was calling that person. In Shona they say *rufu rwanga rwuchimudaidza*. This means that death is something not to be discussed because discussing it would accelerate its arrival.

Secondly, the mere depositing of the „Will’ with lawyers was unheard of. In African culture, one does not share the family dynamics with a stranger because it would have the effect of opening the doors for witches and other malicious persons.

Thirdly, of all people it was the Native Commissioner who Rusike appointed as executor of his estate. The Native Commissioner was a political appointee. In African culture only traditional chiefs could intervene and adjudicate whenever there were dilemma’s or quarrels to be solved, be it in families or in society.

In the fourth place, it was unheard of that daughters would receive a share of the estate of their maiden parents. The belief in Shona culture was that anything given to a girl child was wasted. The thinking went that the girl child would eventually be married and would surrender her wealth to her husband who was a foreigner to the family. For the same reason girl children were, for a long period, not sent to school.

Lastly, in his „Will’ Rusike prescribes what should happen to his estate during three following generations. Only then the farm could be sold but, even at that late stage, the proceeds have to be given to the Methodist Church. This practice was common among Europeans, not among Africans. In African culture, one can only bequeath some material things to one’s relatives, but not to strangers or institutions. Because of all this one may conclude that Rusike was highly Europeanised. As I close this chapter, it is of interest for me to examine why the majority of the indigenous ministers adhered to African culture.<sup>1072</sup>

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<sup>1071</sup> See Matthew Rusike’s „Will’ which was kept with the Sawyer and Mkushi Lawyers. A copy was given to the Methodist Church After his death in 1977, Rusike’s personal file, MCA.

<sup>1072</sup> Although Rusike exhibited that he was greatly influenced by European culture. It must also be noted that the act of appointing his grandson is evidence that the *Dzinza (tribe) concept* or *family tree* in Zimbabwean culture was operating sub-consciously.

The assimilation of European aspects is, what the Comaroffs regard as, the result of a ‚conversation’ between two distinct cultures. They hold that some indigenous people began to appreciate the European way of life. They further note:

Much to the gratification of the Nonconformists, then there slowly arose a small, heterogenous population who sought the skills of Sekgoa and were happy to listen to the word.<sup>1073</sup>

Evidently, although the majority of the indigenous ministers at the majority of times opposed European culture, a few others accepted European culture. It is important to note is that some were simply ambivalent and would at any given time take a position that was expedient.

## **5.9 Reasons for the indigenous ministers’ adherence to African culture**

It seems there were some indigenous ministers who were europeanised like Ramushu, Manyoba and Rusike. This puts paid to the view of the Comaroffs who argue that the exchange between missionaries and indigenous people affected both sides. It is clear from the findings of this chapter that indigenous ministers were ambivalent and duplicitous in the way they related to African culture. However, there is enough evidence that those who adhered unambiguously to African culture did so because they believed that adherence to African culture was a form of resistance against what they saw as cultural and political domination. It seems that the early indigenous ministers subscribed to the missionary culture but those who joined the ministry later turned from passive admirers into overt critics of European culture.

Moreover, adherence to European culture was by the indigenous ministers seen as a sign of cultural defeat. In other words, by preferring African culture the indigenous ministers sought to gain culturally what they had lost politically. They perceived the act of returning to African culture as an act of patriotism.

There are two main reasons why African culture was so desirable in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The first reason is that the indigenous ministers experienced hardships from within and outside the church. The effect of the hardship was that it increased the indigenous

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<sup>1073</sup>John and Jean Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, p.240.

ministers' political consciousness. This consciousness found its expression in, among other things, adherence to African culture. Granted, there were other indigenous ministers who believed in African culture simply because they were Africans. But the actions of the majority were undergirded by a degree of realisation, that the gospel culture was not the European culture.

The second reason is that, in the 1970s, the freedom fighters became visible and their programme of mass mobilisation did not leave anyone out, including the clergy and especially the indigenous ministers. Enos Chibi argues that the indigenous ministers were active participants at the night vigils, called *pungwes*, where the „natives' were given political education.<sup>1074</sup> As has already been stated in this chapter, Christianity suffered whereas African culture was the beneficiary of these night vigils.

In South Africa, organisation such as the Black Consciousness Movement represented a new wave of African nationalism.<sup>1075</sup> In the words of the founder of this movement, Steve Biko, the seeds of black consciousness were group pride and determination of the black to rise and attain the envisaged self. Black consciousness represented the ultimate reaction to the old idea of superior and inferior races and culture. Black consciousness was an aggressive assertion by blacks of their equality and human worth, summed up in the statement „black is beautiful'. The movement was very active in theological colleges and it encouraged the indigenous ministers in this country to cherish and adhere to their culture.<sup>1076</sup>

Adherence to African culture was a political issue. A person who identified with African culture was considered to be imbued with ancestral authority. David Lan in his book, *Guns and Rain Guerrillas and Spirit Mediums in Zimbabwe*, argues that, when the chiefs were absorbed by the state during the liberation struggle, they lost authority. The guerrillas achieved their status as legitimate leaders and successors of the chiefs who had forfeited their ancestral authority by preaching the „gospel' of African culture.<sup>1077</sup> Using this model, the indigenous ministers could have absorbed African culture as a way of remaining relevant to a society that had been conscientised and politically educated by the freedom fighters.

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<sup>1074</sup> Enos Chibi, same interview.

<sup>1075</sup> David Thomas, *Christ Divided, Liberalism*, p. 202.

<sup>1076</sup> David Thomas, *Christ Divided, Liberalism*, p. 202.

<sup>1077</sup> David Lan, *Guns and Rain, Guerrillas and Spirit Mediums in Zimbabwe*, London : Currey, p. 166.

## 5.10 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the attitudes of the indigenous Methodist ministers to African culture. It established the European missionaries' socio-religious and cultural presuppositions. It emerged that, with few exceptions, European missionaries were critics of African culture. The chapter discussed the indigenous ministers' points of view with regard to African marriages and all its facets. It is revealed that in the early years of missionary endeavours the indigenous ministers castigated the concept of African marriage in its totality. However, with the passing of time, the indigenous ministers began to appreciate some aspects of African marriage and even defended it. This chapter examined the attitude of the Methodist indigenous ministers to ancestor veneration.

Additionally, the attitudes of the indigenous ministers to witchcraft and traditional healing are assessed. It is established that the indigenous ministers were afraid of witchcraft and believed in traditional healing. Lastly, it is shown that the indigenous ministers adhered to some other aspects of African culture, simply because they saw it as a gateway to freedom and to an African identity. Whilst others did this overtly, some were duplicitous. The chapter also demonstrated that not all the indigenous ministers adhered to African culture because some became „black Europeans.’ Others had restless identities. They dangled between African culture and European culture.

The next chapter will investigate the role played by the indigenous ministers in politics. It will assess the contribution of indigenous ministers to the emergence and sustenance of resistance to political domination

## **6. CHAPTER SIX: THE ZIMBABWEAN INDIGENOUS METHODIST MINISTERS AND POLITICS OF PROTEST IN RHODESIA**

### **6.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter explored the attitude of the indigenous ministers to African culture. It noted that the majority of the indigenous Methodist ministers perceived adherence to African culture as an expression of patriotism. This perception was influenced by their high level of political consciousness. Political awareness gave birth to a radical spirit amongst the indigenous ministers. The main task of chapter six is to assess the degree of political involvement of the indigenous Methodist ministers. In order to achieve an adequate assessment it is critical to firstly, explore how the indigenous ministers responded to major political events and ideologies in the Wesleyan Methodist Church as well as in the country as a whole during the period under review.

Secondly, the chapter will examine the relationship of the indigenous ministers with the liberation movements and political personalities. This includes the personal involvement of indigenous ministers in the struggle for the liberation of the country. The chapter will further closely study the contribution of two prominent indigenous ministers to the actual process of the war. These are Arthur Kanodereka and Canaan Banana. They have been selected because of their outstanding contribution to the struggle for Zimbabwe.

Additionally, this chapter will discuss the pastoral ministry of the indigenous ministers to political detainees while it will look at the association of indigenous ministers with mass mobilisation and at their roles in relation to war logistics.

The chapter takes the position that the indigenous Methodist ministers have contributed immensely to the liberation of Zimbabwe. The level of their political consciousness was very high, especially in the second half of the century due to the increasing hardship they suffered. The chapter noted that some indigenous ministers were patriotic in some instances, whereas in other cases they behaved as „sellouts.‘ Lastly, the study observed that certain indigenous ministers were key allies of the freedom fighters and without them the struggle for the independence in Zimbabwe could have taken a different direction.



## **6.2 Responses of the Methodist indigenous ministers to major political events and ideologies in Zimbabwe**

This section examines the involvement of the indigenous ministers in historic events in church and country. These events include the First *Chimurenga* War of 1896 and 1897,<sup>1078</sup> the case of the two Zvimba brothers, the sermon that caused the dismissal of Mfazi who was an indigenous minister, the position of the indigenous ministers as regards the Land Apportionment Act, Esau Nemapare and the birth of the African Methodist Church, the appointment of the first indigenous ministers to the leadership of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, the Unilateral Declaration of Independence, the World Council of Churches and its 'Programme to Combat Racism' and the Wesleyan Methodist Church's deployment of chaplains to the Rhodesian forces.

### **6.2.1 The First Chimurenga War: the first two indigenous ministers to become victims**

The story of Zimbabwe's First *Chimurenga* has been extensively published, so there is no need to repeat it. Terence Ranger, in a work entitled *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia 1896-7; A study in African Resistance*,<sup>1079</sup> presents new and fascinating insights on this matter. He argues that the war was caused by, among other things, the insensitivity of the police towards the indigenous people's worldview. Lawrence Vambe rubbished the idea that the Shona people were incited by the Ndebeles to revolt against the whites.<sup>1080</sup> He contends that 'the people of Mashonaland took up arms in a genuine desire to recover the freedom which they had always enjoyed until 1890.'<sup>1081</sup> This was the sole reason for undertaking a task which they knew, even before they began fighting, 'would entail colossal sacrifices in men, sweat and blood'.<sup>1082</sup> Although this study will not elaborate on the nature and causes of the

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<sup>1078</sup> This was the first war of resistance by the indigenes against the occupying forces of the British South African Company. It was fought between 1896 and 1887. The indigenes lost the war giving way to a rapacious period of looting and stealing by the colonialists.

<sup>1079</sup> Terence Ranger, *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia 1896-1897, A Study in African Resistance*, London: Heinemann, 1971.

<sup>1080</sup> Lawrence Vambe, *An ill-fated people Zimbabwe Before and After Rhodes*, London: Heinemann, 1972, p. 114.

<sup>1081</sup> Lawrence Vambe, *An ill-fated people Zimbabwe Before and After Rhodes*, p.114.

<sup>1082</sup> Lawrence Vambe, *An ill-fated people Zimbabwe Before and After Rhodes*, p.114.

*Chimurenga*, it is necessary to give a brief overview of the war.

The arrival of the Pioneer Column saw the Shona people becoming victims of land banditry, police thuggery, forced labour and the hut tax to mention only a few of their grievances.<sup>1083</sup> Vambe observes that „had it not been for the Shona spirit mediums that went around galvanising people, the Shona people would have borne all the injustices indefinitely, with stoic patience”.<sup>1084</sup> The two principal spirit mediums, who stirred up revolt among the indigenous people, were Kaguvi and Nehanda. Both were executed on charges that they had killed officers of the government. The story awakens us to the role played by African religion in politics. Christianity was not to be outdone and the Jesuit priest F. Richartz of Chishawasha mission in Fort Salisbury tried to coax and cajole Nehanda, when she was already facing death on the scaffold, to repent to accept baptism and to die fortified by the last rites of the church.<sup>1085</sup> Nehanda absolutely refused and died without even the least hint of a compromise with the church.<sup>1086</sup> Kaguvi, on the contrary, accepted the Christian baptism moments before his execution and thus he died a Christian.<sup>1087</sup> It is important to establish the position of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in the then Southern Rhodesia concerning the war.

The Wesleyan Methodist Church did not make its position with regard to the First *Chimurenga* War known. What we have are statements by individual missionaries and those statements are not homogenous. For instance, George Eva, a Methodist missionary writing to the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society on the 9<sup>th</sup> of April 1896, argues:

In the last war the Matabele were not beaten, the only real victory was at Bembesi, the first Shangani battle was more or less a draw and the second was a decided defeat for our forces which were totally inadequate to cope with them, so that the Matabele had never been thoroughly beaten by the white man; until we give them a thrashing we may expect periodic outbursts such as this and many of us will lose our lives.<sup>1088</sup>

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<sup>1083</sup> Lawrence Vambe, *An ill-fated people Zimbabwe Before and After Rhodes*, p.114.

<sup>1084</sup> Lawrence Vambe, *An ill-fated people Zimbabwe Before and After Rhodes*, p.114.

<sup>1085</sup> Lawrence Vambe, *An ill-fated people Zimbabwe Before and After Rhodes*, p.114.

<sup>1086</sup> Lawrence Vambe, *An ill-fated people Zimbabwe Before and After Rhodes*, p.114.

<sup>1087</sup> Lawrence Vambe, *An ill-fated people Zimbabwe Before and After Rhodes*, p.114.

<sup>1088</sup> Letter from Eva to Hartley, the secretary of Wesleyan Missionary Society, 29 April 1896, file E/H, MCA.

Eva's letter is very informative. He refers to the European Army as „our forces'. He clearly shows that he is in support of the Europeans in this war. Another Methodist missionary, named J.W. Stanlake, writing on the 19<sup>th</sup> of May 1896 argues:

The Matabele have of course brought this war upon themselves but they have been hardly dealt with and now the only way to put down the rising is by the help of the sword or our own lives will be in great danger, force is the only power they have any respect for.<sup>1089</sup>

The statement expresses Stanlake's support of the use of force against the indigenous people. He judges that they are responsible for the war and there is no mention at all of the behaviour of government officers. Another Methodist missionary by the name of Isaac Shimmin also wrote several letters in support of the war. However, missionaries were not all the same. Some, like John White of the Methodist, and Arthur Shearly Cripps of the Anglican Church were well known for their unwavering support for the indigenous people. Concerning the same war, White writes in 1894:

You might be interested to hear how things are going in this part. Things are far from being satisfactory in the native affairs... It seems to me that the whole explanation of the matter is in the inefficiency of the agents of the Chartered Company acting in that district. I enclose a document written by a prospector who understands these things and who takes a very fair view of the case. It was written before the slaughter of the chiefs...Unworthy or inefficient fellows are sent out there, they do practically what they like and these affairs occur. The Chartered Company ought to be held responsible for the action of their servants. Some of them think less when they shoot a Mashona than they do of shooting their dog. The burning of huts, stealing of meal and raping of their women are common occurrences. Our protest here is simply ignored. We are now waiting to see what will be done to these policemen who have been engaged in this last expedition before we take further action.<sup>1090</sup>

This letter by White represents a departure from the perspective of other missionaries. White puts the blame on the behaviour of the company officials. His assertion that some Europeans would think less about shooting a Mashona than about shooting their dog was not

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<sup>1089</sup>Letter from Stanlake to Hartley, the secretary of Wesleyan Missionary Society, 19 May 1896, file S/H, MCA.

<sup>1090</sup>Letter from John White to Hartley, 10 November 1894, file W/H, MCA.

farfetched. Stanlake Samkange,<sup>1091</sup> writing much later on a related subject, argues that sub-inspector Hopper once said „My dog had been worrying the fowls again, I am sorry there was nothing I could do about it’.<sup>1092</sup> This shows that Hooper put considerable value on his mischievous dog, hence White’s claim. The indigenous ministers were operating in this context while their superiors could not agree about the causes of the war. We now need to tell the story of two indigenous ministers who died during the First *Chimurenga*.

The first is Mudumedi Moleli. In the course of the rebellions, James White,<sup>1093</sup> a European farmer, was attacked on 21 June 1896 by Shona. White was a very close friend of Moleli. They lived about three miles apart. When Moleli was alerted to the attack on White, he immediately went there to investigate. He discovered that White was badly injured and that another European inside the house had been murdered. Moleli was determined to save the life of his wounded friend, so he went back to get a couple of his oxen, for White had a small cart. Moleli’s wife tried to dissuade him but she failed. When he got to White’s place, he lifted the wounded man into the cart and set off for home. Mrs Moleli reported that she was so anxious that she stood near the church waiting for his return. She saw three men running towards her husband, killing both him and the man in the cart. They also killed Moleli’s child. His wife escaped with two other kids and hid for a week in a field, living on pumpkins.

The death of Moleli was a well-planned deed by indigenous people. His crime was to befriend a European. This was compounded by his attempt to save his friend from the wrath of the rebellious indigenes. Moleli, who had been a teacher in South Africa and was fluent in English, was able to talk to Europeans without a language barrier. The indigenous people took this for an act of betrayal. Because Moleli was from South Africa, he was considered a foreigner. It is difficult to know with any degree of certainty whether he supported the Europeans during the war but it is clear that the indigenous people thought so. The second indigenous minister to die in this period was James Anta. Very little is known about him. Even at the Methodist centenary celebrations he was only once or twice referred to. We know that he was an unmarried young Zulu man. He came to Zimbabwe as part of the missionaries’ entourage. He was stationed at Lomagundi where he would meet his death.

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<sup>1091</sup> Stanlake Samkange was a professor of history. He was the son of Rev. Thomposn Samkange who has already been referred to in this study.

<sup>1092</sup> Stanlake Samkange, unpublished paper entitled „James Anta Martyr to integrity’, Samkange private Archives. This paper is not dated.

<sup>1093</sup> This White was not the same as John White, the missionary.

During the First *Chimurenga*, the Europeans' aim was to make indigenous people go to towns to seek employment so that they could pay taxes. The indigenous people did not like to pay tax, so they refused to go to work. In response the company went around confiscating cattle in lieu of tax, but the method of collection was haphazard. Terence Ranger holds that it was because of hardships such as these that the level of political consciousness of indigenous people increased.<sup>1094</sup>

George Eva's report on the fateful day is the only lead concerning Anta's death. The report is dated 13 October 1897 and reads:

I was at my station at Zvimba in the Lomagundi District on Sunday September (date not clear). I had arrived there from the Civil Commissioner's camp on the Saturday. We succeeded after much persuasion and a good deal of trouble to get most of the people in the district to come together on our station. Those who had arrived numbered about 500 or 600 souls and some chiefs or indunas. We had gathered them together for service. All had come to the service with the exception of one woman who had a sick child. I was just finishing my address when James the teacher saw a policeman following the woman who had a sick child and who was making as fast as she could for our meeting place. I turned around and saw James going to the policeman. I immediately broke up my address and went to get the native constable to keep watch. I found out from the constable that there were a number of policemen coming up the vlel. I told the teacher we might close the service and gather the children together to sing the closing hymn. They were in the midst of this, when sub-inspector Hopper arrived with Mr Arthur Eyre, Mr Kenny and three policemen. Mr Hopper got off his horse and called Mr Kenny to interpret for him...<sup>1095</sup>

Eva further reports that Hopper called together all the chiefs and told them to follow him because the government wanted them to assist the police who were looking for Mzimbagupa, the murderer of Trooper Cooper of the Lomagundi District.<sup>1096</sup> Mzimbagupa had shot dead a police officer who had come to collect cattle.<sup>1097</sup> Next, the police announced that the chiefs

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<sup>1094</sup> Terence Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness*, p. 48.

<sup>1095</sup> George Eva's report to Hartley, 13 October 1897, file E/H, MCA.

<sup>1096</sup> George Eva's report to Hartley, 13 October 1897, file E/H, MCA.

<sup>1097</sup> George Eva's report to Hartley, 13 October 1897, file E/H, MCA

were now prisoners and instructed them to walk in the direction of the village.<sup>1098</sup> Eva's report continued verbatim:

We immediately heard a rifle shot. The teacher said what is that Sir? I replied, „Oh I suppose they have seen a buck,’the teacher turned to me and said,,they are shot Sir.’ We rushed down to where the police were encamped to find only three of the seven chiefs remaining. I saw sub-inspector Hopper and spoke to him and he said to me, „your Indunas have run away’ and he was sorry for what had happened but there was no other alternative. Whilst we were talking I heard a shot fired close to where we were standing and it was followed by a cry in Mashona „*Maiwe, Ndabaiwa*’ Oh I am shot’ and a policeman returned saying „I have done for him’. Three of the four who ran away were shot, the fourth could not be found. I saw him in the evening after the police had gone... The chiefs were absolutely innocent of the Cooper’s death, to this I am prepared to take oath. For when it occurred, I was amongst them and speaking to them about coming together on our station and several of them had not heard of the murder until I told them.<sup>1099</sup>

There are many things that could be said about this incident but, because it falls outside the focus of this study, we will highlight only a few. Firstly, the police acted as judge and jury. Secondly, why would George Eva close a church service, just because policemen were coming? Thirdly, how could the police arrest people and fail to make sure they couldn’t escape? Lastly, we can infer the alertness of James Anta from this story. He realised what was happening while the missionary was oblivious. When Anta heard the sound of the gun, he became suspicious but the missionary suggested that they were shooting a buck.

When the rebellion broke out, people arranged to kill Anta because they thought that it was because of him that the chiefs were killed. Anta’s killers came when the congregation was singing beside the camp fire and shot him. It seems the role of Anta at the time of the killing of the four chiefs was misunderstood by the indigenous people. Anta died because he was suspected of having been in complicity with the Europeans.

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<sup>1098</sup> George Eva’s report to Hartley, 13 October 1897, file E/H, MCA

<sup>1099</sup> George Eva’s report to Hartley, 13 October 1897, file E/H, MCA

Stanlake Samkange argues that Anta was against the actions of the police officers and that, at one time, he had taken his gun to fight them.<sup>1100</sup> I suspect that the killing of Anta was the result of propaganda stories that went around Mashonaland at that time, depicting all Europeans and their associates as enemies. Consequently, indigenous ministers from various denominations were targeted. One victim was Bernard Mizeki of the Anglican Church, killed in a cold blooded murder.<sup>1101</sup> We now turn to the second group of indigenous ministers.

### **6.2.2 Matthew and Meshek Zvimba: Precursors of militant resistance to colonial domination**

The First *Chimurenga* ended with the historic defeat of the indigenous people by the Europeans. The majority of indigenous ministers of the Wesleyan Methodist Church continued to conform to the teaching and the expectations of the majority of missionaries. In other words, they were subservient to their European superintendents and accepted that blacks were inferior to whites. However, a lone strident voice was raised in protest. It was the voice of a man who utterly refused to act the stereotype student and who was a nonconformist of the highest order.<sup>1102</sup> He was Matthew Zvimba and had been converted to Christianity in 1900 as a migrant worker in Salisbury.<sup>1103</sup> Zvimba had first been educated at Epworth mission and went in 1905 to the Nenguo Institute.<sup>1104</sup> He became a Methodist teacher and was sent to a Methodist station in 1909.<sup>1105</sup>

Zvimba had the reputation of not wanting to work under the supervision of a white person. According to Banana, Zvimba alleged that the white man had supplied the ‚natives’ with a poisonous dip that killed their cattle.<sup>1106</sup> This was said when the villagers’ cattle died after licking their bodies.<sup>1107</sup> Zvimba argued that the white people did not use the same dip for their own cattle and that they had tried to invade Mashonaland in earlier times. The Great

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<sup>1100</sup>Stanlake Samkange’s unpublished paper entitled ‚James Anta Martyr to Integrity’, Samkange’s private Archives.

<sup>1101</sup>Kennedy Gondongwe, ‚The role played by Methodist African agency in the propagation of the gospel in Zimbabwe with special reference to Moleli and Anta,’ unpublished Masters of Arts thesis submitted to the University of Zimbabwe, 2006.

<sup>1102</sup>Canaan Banana, *Politics of Repression and Resistance*, p.142.

<sup>1103</sup> Terence Ranger, *Are We Not Also Men?* p.26.

<sup>1104</sup> Terence Ranger, *Are We Not Also Men?* p.26.

<sup>1105</sup>Chengetai J. M. Zvobgo, *The Wesleyan Methodist Missionaries in Zimbabwe 1891-1945*, p.63.

<sup>1106</sup>Canaan Banana, *Politics of Repression and Resistance*, p.142.

<sup>1107</sup>Canaan Banana, *Politics of Repression and Resistance*, p.142.

Zimbabwe ruins were proof of this attack but they had been repelled by the indigenous people.<sup>1108</sup> The indigenous people were going to drive the whites out again.<sup>1109</sup> He went even further calling the indigenous people who had died during the First *Chimurenga* saints.<sup>1110</sup> He became a fierce critic of the authority of the missionaries and the Native Commissioner.<sup>1111</sup> Banana argues that Zvimba, as the son of a chief, reacted sharply to the way in which his father and his people were marginalised by colonial land policy.<sup>1112</sup> The missionaries and the colonialists felt challenged and instituted investigations. The result was that the indigenous minister was found guilty of making disparaging remarks about white men and their laws.<sup>1113</sup>

On 7 August, 1915 he applied to the administrator for permission to form the Original White Bird Mission, *Shiri Chena Church*, but the department refused to support his application.<sup>1114</sup> Ranger reports in *The African Voice in Southern Rhodesia*:

Matthew now founded the very interesting original White Bird Mission, the first of the Shona Independent Churches... The Christian solution for Zvimba was now to be carried out in defiance of the whites rather than co-operation with them...<sup>1115</sup>

Ranger considers the formation of African Initiated Churches as one of the first signs that the indigenous people became increasingly aware of being dominated. He notes:

Masowe Apostoles confronted the African Agents of both the colonial administration and the mission churches - you are not true ministers of the word because you sell it for money. Our Lord did not do that nor his Apostles but you do. Our Lord cast out devils and evil spirits and you cannot... Masowe criticized not only the worldliness of the missions, their corrupting participation in the colonial political economy but also the superficiality of their faith. Obsessed with the gospel of the plough and with literacy, both now rendered useless by the depression, the

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<sup>1108</sup> Canaan Banana, *Politics of Repression and Resistance*, p.142.

<sup>1109</sup> Canaan Banana, *Politics of Repression and Resistance*, p.142.

<sup>1110</sup> Chengegai J.M. Zvobgo, *The Wesleyan Methodist Missionaries in Zimbabwe 1891-1945*, p. 82.

<sup>1111</sup> Terence Ranger, *Are We Not Also Men?*, p.26.

<sup>1112</sup> Canaan Banana, *Politics of Repression and Resistance*, p.142.

<sup>1113</sup> Canaan Banana, *Politics of Repression and Resistance*, p.142.

<sup>1114</sup> Chengegai J.M. Zvobgo, *The Wesleyan Methodist Missionaries in Zimbabwe 1891-1945*, p. 82.

<sup>1115</sup> Terence Ranger, *African Voice in Southern Rhodesia, 1898-1930*, p.21.



missions had sought to apply the power of Christ and of the Holy Spirit to the real problems of the rural areas<sup>1116</sup>

In 1928, Zvimba wrote a letter to the Chief Native Commissioner. In this letter he asserted that he himself was the de facto government official and demonstrator.<sup>1117</sup> He also refused to pay the dipping tax arguing that:

I am the Lord of Lords and King of Kings... The priest and the prophet, and who is now able to be against me about such obligation and taxing me? Can a servant tax his master?<sup>1118</sup>

In the view of the government Zvimba had now gone too far. He claimed to have the powers of the highest officers of government. He presented himself as the de facto master. In response, the government sentenced him to corporal punishment under the Goal Regulation for refusing to pay the dipping tax.<sup>1119</sup>

Eddison Zvobgo contends that African militancy, which was to characterise African resistance to foreign rule from the 1960s onwards, originated with the likes of Zvimba.<sup>1120</sup> Banana observes that in Malawi, at about the same time, John Chilembwe was voicing his criticism of the European Church leadership in Malawi and the colonial policies of recruiting Africans for the British forces in the First World War. Chilembwe had established his Providence Industrial mission in 1900, one of the first independent African churches in the southern region.<sup>1121</sup>

There were striking similarities between the actions of Matthew Zvimba and those of his brother Meshek. Meshek offered for Methodist ministry in 1923 after having been a Christian since 1900.<sup>1122</sup> For seven years he had been on trial and his results were unsatisfactory. At the synod of 1930 Meshek's superintendent, Holman Brown, a white missionary, presented a very negative report on Meshek's character and abilities. Meshek's ordination was deferred because he had been awarded 5% for his trial service. His sermon was on John 3 vs14-15.

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<sup>1116</sup>Terence Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness*, p.90.

<sup>1117</sup>Matthew Zvimba, letter to the Chief Native Commissioner, 4 January and 14 February 1927, files 138.22, NAZ.

<sup>1118</sup>Matthew Zvimba, letter to the Chief Native Commissioner, 22 June 1928, file S138.22, NAZ.

<sup>1119</sup>The Chief Native Commissioner, letter to Zvimba, 21 September, file S138.22, NAZ.

<sup>1120</sup>Cited in Cnaan Banana's *Politics of Repression and Resistance*, p.142.

<sup>1121</sup>Cnaan Banana, *Politics of Repression and Resistance*, p.145.

<sup>1122</sup>Terence Ranger, *Are We Not Also Men?*p.28.

The reviewer commented: „the prayer he gave was too short to be in any way adequate’.<sup>1123</sup>  
The reviewer was the same Holman Brown.<sup>1124</sup>

Acting on this report, the synod voted against his ordination as well as against keeping him any longer on trial. After his dismissal, he went to Zvimba<sup>1125</sup>, his home area, and formed his own African independent church called „We shall not be governed’ (*Hatitongwe*). Like his brother’s church, *Hatitongwe Church* remained a tribal church.

The Zvimba brothers exhibited an extraordinary level of political consciousness when the majority of the indigenous ministers were still naive. It must be noted that by 1930, the Wesleyan Methodist Church had very few indigenous ministers. The majority of these conformed to the demands of the missionaries. However, there were some who engaged in „hidden scripts’,<sup>1126</sup> as James Scott would call it. The Zvimba brothers were „born before their time’. Their high level of political awareness could have been the result of the fact that they came from a chieftainship. At the time, chiefs were both political and religious leaders. Not long after the episode of the Zvimba brothers, the Moses Mfazi problem surfaced.

### ***6.2.3 A sermon or a political speech? Moses Mfazi’s dismissal from the Wesleyan Methodist Church***

The Methodist *Manyano* organisation rose to become very powerful throughout the entire district of Rhodesia. The power structure of the organisation was such that the district president was the wife of the European district chairperson and the circuit presidents were the wives of circuit superintendents who until the mid-1930s were exclusively white.<sup>1127</sup> With the passing of time, African ministers developed a keen interest in the affairs of *Manyano*. One such minister was Moses Mfazi.

In January 1926 Mfazi acted as interpreter for a group of women during a church meeting. Mfazi’s wife was one of the speakers. His wife brought up a series of complaints against the white missionary circuit superintendents who made *Manyano* members pay exorbitant fees.

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<sup>1123</sup>Minutes of synod 1929, file S/M, MCA.

<sup>1124</sup>Minutes of synod 1929, file S/M, MCA.

<sup>1125</sup>It must be noted that Zvimba was both the name of certain persons and of a place in Mashonaland.

<sup>1126</sup>This has already been explained in this study.

<sup>1127</sup>See the Methodist Connexional handbooks of up to the 1930s, file H/B, MCA.

She also accused the white missionary superintendents of changing the structure and rules of *Manyano* which did generally hurt the feelings of the *Manyano* committee and which came close to damaging their work.<sup>1128</sup>

The *Manyano*'s convention held at Tegwani School in 1928 became the "Waterloo"<sup>1129</sup> of Mfazi. It is alleged that he was invited to preach at this convention and that in his sermon he vehemently opposed the appointment of a European organising secretary, arguing that this was indicative of a struggle between whites and blacks.<sup>1130</sup> It seems that, before these outbursts, Mfazi had preached a sermon in Bulawayo where he castigated the appointment of young white probationers to the position of superintendent while there were senior ordained black ministers serving as assistant ministers. Frank Noble, the district chairperson, wrote to Mfazi in March 1928:

Please note that you are in the habit of abusing the pulpit talking about issues that put the name of the church into disrepute... In Bulawayo, you castigated the church for its current stationing patterns. Please note that it is the duty of the Stationing Committee of the church to station ministers... Because of the manner in which you have misused the pulpit, I summon you to a Minor Synod on a date you shall be informed shortly. I have enclosed a charge sheet which must assist you in preparing your defence.<sup>1131</sup>

Upon receiving the charge sheet from Frank Noble, Mfazi offered to resign in a letter, dated March 1928. In this letter of resignation he states that the day will come when the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Southern Rhodesia will be in the hands of its rightful owners.<sup>1132</sup> Mfazi was a proponent of the idea of a church for Africans and by Africans. Although he was by the missionaries perceived as preaching politics, it must be noted that he was preaching a gospel that was relevant to the challenges of his own time. He advocated for a church that was 'colour blind' when it came to the appointment and promotion of ministers. The whites, both inside and outside the church, were not yet ready for this. To demonstrate their racial supremacy, the colonialists came up with a Land Commission in 1925.

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<sup>1128</sup>Report of the humble delegates of *Manyano* of the Matabeleland section, in Mfazi's personal file, March 1926, MCA.

<sup>1129</sup>Waterloo, used figuratively, is the famous place where Napoleon was defeated.

<sup>1130</sup> Frank Noble's notice of intention to hold a minor synod against Mfazi for failing to preach the doctrine and beliefs of the Methodist Church, March 1928, Mfazi's personal file, MCA.

<sup>1131</sup> Frank Noble's notice of intention to hold a minor synod against Mfazi for failing to preach the doctrine and beliefs of the Methodist Church, March 1928, Mfazi's personal file, MCA.

<sup>1132</sup>Mfazi's resignation letter in his personal file, MCA.

## **6.2.4 The indigenous ministers and the Land Apportionment Act**

While the Wesleyan Methodist Church was struggling to contain its group of nonconformists, the colonial government was busy finding ways to entrench its policy of racial segregation. On 8 June 1925, the government appointed the Carter Commission.<sup>1133</sup> The work of this commission was to explore the possibilities of designating land outside the reserve areas where only „natives’ were to be allowed to own land and, similarly, to find areas where only whites would be allowed to own land<sup>1134</sup>

This commission led to the adoption of the Land Apportionment Act. This Act formally decreed that blacks could not own land in areas designated for whites. It also reserved fertile and arable land for whites. Blacks got a very bad deal in this Act in so far as 6 851 876 acres were reserved as „native’ purchase areas, 17 423 815 acres were reserved as European purchase area and 17 793 300 acres were left unallocated.<sup>1135</sup>

John White of the Wesleyan Methodist Church was disappointed with the outcome of the commission’s exploration because he felt that the areas recommended for ’native’ purchase consisted largely of inferior granite soil.<sup>1136</sup> Cripps of the Anglican Church was also disappointed with the report. He alleged that there was no guarantee that the undesignated land would not be taken by the whites, since the allocating authority was parliament.<sup>1137</sup> At the Missionary Conference of 1926 White and his friend Cripps tried to persuade their colleagues to reject the Land Commission report, but they were unsuccessful.<sup>1138</sup>

According to Ranger, indigenous people were moved from Makoni Area and settled in Tanda Area in Manicaland. Although the indigenous people were initially happy with their newly found land, they began to grumble when the land was no longer producing good harvests, due to the fact that the rains had washed away the finer and more fertile particles of clay, silt and

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<sup>1133</sup> P.Mason ‚Land policies’ in R. Gray, *The two Nations: Aspects of the Development of Race Relations in the Rhodesias and Nyasaland*, London: Oxford University Press, 1960, p.43.

<sup>1134</sup> P.Mason ‚land policies’ in R. Gray, *The two Nations: Aspects of the Development of Race Relations in the Rhodesias and Nyasaland*, p.43.

<sup>1135</sup> Chengetai J.M. Zvobgo, *The Wesleyan Methodist Missionaries in Zimbabwe 1891-1945*, p. 146.

<sup>1136</sup> Chengetai J.M. Zvobgo, *The Wesleyan Methodist Missionaries in Zimbabwe 1891-1945*, p.147.

<sup>1137</sup> Chengetai J.M. Zvobgo, *The Wesleyan Methodist Missionaries in Zimbabwe 1891-1945*, p.147.

<sup>1138</sup> Chengetai J.M. Zvobgo, *The Wesleyan Methodist Missionaries in Zimbabwe 1891-1945*, p.147.

humus.<sup>1139</sup> The result of the process was the rise of discontent among the indigenous people.<sup>1140</sup> Paul Gundani, writing about the land crisis in Zimbabwe and the role of churches, argues that:

The systematic balkanisation of the land on the basis of race, the unforgettable forced movements, the loss of property concomitant with shifting the suffering caused by colonial conservation policies, the general land despoliation, and the degraded, denuded and uninhabitable native reserves, were the major reasons for the conscientisation process of the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) under Robert Mugabe. The Second *Chimurenga* was in the main a peasant revolution.<sup>1141</sup>

Gundani, like Ranger, postulates that the Second *Chimurenga* came as a response of the peasants to economic and political domination by the whites. Gundani's rich analysis compels us to cite his work at length.

During the second *Chimurenga*, political re-education through song and dance fed off the people's experiences of forced movements, the loss of the land of the ancestors to the white settlers, the forced sale of cattle to whites at giveaway prices since 1941, depleted resources due to congestion, and the degrading treatment at the hands of agricultural officers in an attempt to conserve poor soils which could not withstand the pressure of running water. This type of soil was called *rukwenyashuro* in Shona, only fit for growing *pfiripfiti*, (poor soils favoured by hares and a small type of mushroom called *pfiripfiti*.) The song *nhamo yemakandiwa takaiona* (we experienced the suffering associated with contour ridging) became a rallying war-cry during the *pungwe*.<sup>1142</sup>

The bottom line of this argument is that deprivations were at the center of peasant consciousness. These deprivations were not exclusive to the peasants: land was an important economic resource for the indigenous people in general, including the indigenous ministers. Amongst the latter, the only voice to be heard with regard to this matter was that of Matthew

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<sup>1139</sup>Terence Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness*, p.146.

<sup>1140</sup>Terence Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness*, p.146.

<sup>1141</sup>Paul Gundani, „The land crisis in Zimbabwe and the role of the churches towards its resolution,‘ in *STUDIA HISTORIAE ECCLESIASTICAE*, December 2002 Volume xxv111, No 2, p.136.

<sup>1142</sup>Paul Gundani, „The land crisis in Zimbabwe and the role of the churches towards its resolution,‘ in *STUDIA HISTORIAE ECCLESIASTICAE*, December 2002 Volume xxv111, No 2, p.136.

Rusike of the Wesleyan Methodist Church. He was asked to give evidence before the Land Commission and his input was the following:

I would tell the commission that it would be a very good thing to allow the natives to purchase some land between the reserves and the farms but I do not think that the natives should be mixed up with the white farmers. In years to come the natives will have their own schools and it will not do to have them among the white people. I therefore think it is very good to have the natives separated from the white people... Those natives who can afford it should be allowed to buy land on terms. It should not be necessary for them to put all the cash down at once. They should be permitted to pay so much per year until they have completed the payment of the purchase price. Then the land should belong to them for all time, and it should descend to their children and so on...<sup>1143</sup>

According to Banana, at a glance Rusike's statement seems to be supportive of segregation, but the reality was that he had realised that an open policy would worsen the position of blacks. It was, he thought, a case of how much the blacks could salvage out of the unequal land apportionment.<sup>1144</sup> To demonstrate that he was a firm believer in African ownership of land, Rusike became one of those Methodist indigenous ministers who purchased farms in an African purchase area the details of which were delineated in the last chapter.

With the advance of time discontentment among the indigenous people increased as a result of increasing hardship. I will now explore the socio-political conditions in the last two decades before the 1950s which were characterised by intensifying political activity of the indigenous clergy.

### **6.3 The breeding of political radicals: 1930-1949**

The years between 1930 and 1949 saw the escalation of hardship suffered by the indigenous people. In 1923 the 'Responsible Government' was established and transfer of power from the British South African Company to the settler parliamentary government took place. 1930 was a watershed year in the politics of the then Southern Rhodesia in that the enactment of

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<sup>1143</sup> Rusike's evidence to the Carter Commission, file ZAH 1/1/3, NAZ.

<sup>1144</sup> Cnaan Banana, *Politics of Repression and Resistance*, p. 126.

the Land Apportionment Act,<sup>1145</sup> discussed earlier in this chapter, became a fact. Still in the 1930s, the economic depression intensified and legislation was passed to benefit white farming. The Maize Control Act was passed into law in 1931, so was the Cattle Levy Act.<sup>1146</sup> The Sedition Act was passed in 1936; it was designed to suppress expressions of political and religious discontent. 1941 saw the passing of the Natural Resources Act which gave conservation officers the power to use their judgement for the sake of preservation of natural resources. In 1942, the government passed the Compulsory Labour Act. This Act introduced the provision of conscripted African labour, especially for European farmers. Africans now began to live on slave wages. The oppressive legislation led to a strike by African Railway workers in 1948 as already has been mentioned. Robin Palmer describes the situation in the following manner:

By the end of the 1930s, the agricultural economy of the Shona and the Ndebele...like that of the Kikuyu and most South African peoples had been destroyed. The struggle between the European farmer seeking to reduce the African to a proletarian and the African seeking to retain the maximum amount of economic independence had been won conclusively by the Europeans...The reasons for the European triumph fall into three categories. In the first place, after 1908 European agriculture was heavily subsidized while African agriculture was utterly neglected. Secondly, the competitiveness of the African peasantry was reduced by increasingly forcing them off European land... Once settled in the reserves they could aspire to be little more than subsistence cultivators. Thirdly as if the earlier financial discrimination were not enough, came the repressive legislation of 1930...<sup>1147</sup>

Whilst the government was busy devising strategies that reduced Africans to mere labourers in the country of their birth, the missionaries of the Wesleyan Methodist Church were acting as land-lords to the inhabitants of their farms under a scheme known as Christian villages. They came up with numerous rules to regulate the right to stay at these villages. In 1930 the synod of the Wesleyan Methodist Church passed a rule that all residents of Methodist farms should suspend all work on Sundays. They introduced a dipping fee of 2/- per head per annum for all cattle on the farms. Each individual was allowed ten head of cattle to graze free of charge. A grazing fee of 1/-per head per annum was to be paid for every beast over that

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<sup>1145</sup> Terence Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness*, p. 1x.

<sup>1146</sup> Terence Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness*, p. x1.

<sup>1147</sup> Robin Palmer, 'The Agricultural History of Rhodesia,' in Robin Palmer and Neil Parsons (ed.), *The roots of Rural Poverty in central and Southern Africa*, London: James Currey, 1977, p.55.

number. No visitors were allowed on the mission station without permission of the missionary in charge. All residents of the farm were discouraged from building round houses but instead they were implored to build square houses. Drinking of alcohol was strictly prohibited. The position of the kraal and the resting place for the dead was to be decided by the missionary in charge.<sup>1148</sup> In Shona culture only the head of the family could determine where a dead relative would be buried and the accompanying rituals performed. These regulations affected the indigenous ministers because in most cases their relatives were resident in the Christian villages.

In this period the term *Chisvina* was profusely used by the missionaries to refer to the Shona language. The indigenous people were called Kaffirs.<sup>1149</sup> The term *Chisvina* is derogatory and was used by the Ndebeles to refer to the Shona people. It means „dirty language’. The term *Kaffir* was largely used by the settlers to denigrate the indigenous people.

The church increased its unpopularity by passing a resolution that encouraged the government to ban cinemas in 1931. Cinemas enhanced social cohesion but, in the eyes of the missionaries, cinemas posed a moral danger to the indigenes.<sup>1150</sup>

In 1934 the synod passed a resolution that the government should consider to ban the sale of alcohol to the indigenes.<sup>1151</sup> What became clear as already been noted is that the missionaries perceived salvation as something that was externally determined.

Although the missionaries often exhibited a dominating attitude, they did in principle continue to engage the government on the need for social justice. For instance, Herbert Carter called for an end to racial policies and for the recognition of the African as an integral part of Rhodesian society, entitled to equal opportunities. Speaking at the annual synod of 1941, he argued:

If we fight the idea of German racial dominance in Europe, we must not continue to preach and practice unending British dominance in Africa. The powers of government belong to the governed in the true democratic principle. The real battle for Africa is not being fought against German Nazism and Italian Fascism but in the

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<sup>1148</sup> Minutes of synod, 1930, file S/M, MCA.

<sup>1149</sup> See minutes of synod of 1930, 1931.1933, file S/M, MCA.

<sup>1150</sup> Minutes of synod, 1931, Methodist Connexional Archives, file S/M, MCA.

<sup>1151</sup> Minutes of synod, 1934, Methodist Connexional Archives, file S/M, MCA.



minds of white native races in British controlled Africa against racial and selfish prejudice.<sup>1152</sup>

The above statement by Herbert Carter confirms that the missionaries had different approaches to politics. Some were in support of the indigenous people, while others were completely against. It seems that Carter admits that the missionaries were preaching unending British dominance in Africa whereas he pleaded for a paradigm shift.

Another important social phenomenon that could have enhanced the indigenous ministers' political consciousness was the liberal education offered by some missionaries to the indigenous people. As to whether the missionaries consciously or unconsciously provided such liberal education is a matter of conjecture. The famed mission boarding institutions had their greatest influence in the 1940s. In Zimbabwe, the majority of the people who supported early nationalism were either products of mission schools or theologians. Robert Mugabe was trained by the Jesuits at Kutama mission, Abel Muzorewa was a United Methodist minister, Joshua Nkomo was a Wesleyan Methodist lay preacher, Thompson Samkange was a Wesleyan Methodist minister and the list continues. This also explains why the educated African was seen as a threat by the white settler.<sup>1153</sup> Schools and colleges were sites of radicalism because the majority of teachers and lecturers were Christians and they shared a liberating ethos of the Christian gospel.

Moreover, events on the world stage could have impacted on the political events in Rhodesia. In this context a first point to consider is Adrian Hastings' view that the Second World War had important consequences in that many Africans who fought in that war returned with a wider experience of the world and a much-diminished respect for the European.<sup>1154</sup> The loss of respect was caused by the Africans' experience of fighting and dying side by side with their European counterparts. It dawned on them that Europeans were not superior to Africans. Yet, when the war ended, the Europeans received superior gratuities such as farms and houses, while Africans were given minor tokens such as bicycles and, in some cases, nothing at all. This treatment of the indigenous people, compounded by the hardship of the 1930s and „40s, ignited anger among blacks, regardless of religion and creed. The anger led to resistance, which became apparent in various ways.

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<sup>1152</sup> Herbert Carter's address to synod 1941, minutes of synod, 1941, file S/M, MCA.

<sup>1153</sup> A. Hastings, *The Church in Africa, 1450-1950*, p.542.

<sup>1154</sup> A. Hastings, *The Church in Africa 1450-1950*, p.546.

A second point is the crucial role played by the Fort Hare factor in the politics of Zimbabwe. Many Zimbabweans studied at Fort Hare University and it is there that they came face to face with the essence of political activism. Griffith Malaba, a Methodist indigenous minister, was secretary general of the Students Representative Council at Fort Hare. . He was, together with the entire Students Representative Council, suspended from the university for his role in the 1949 student strike. Malaba argues that:

The whole Students Representative Council was suspended for a month by the then principal, Mr Dent. We were told to vacate the university premises within forty eight hours. Mangosuthu Buthelezi was part of the students during that time and he addressed students in the dining hall castigating the university authorities for giving egg and bacon to white students during breakfast and yet this privilege was not extended to the black students.<sup>1155</sup>

During the same 1950s, Zimbabweans such as Robert Mugabe studied at Fort Hare and rubbed shoulders with the radicals of the day such as Mangosuthu Buthelezi. Stanlake Samkange, the son of Methodist indigenous minister Thompson Samkange, graduated in 1949 with an Honours Degree from Fort Hare University. The experiences of Zimbabweans at Fort Hare increased their political consciousness and many of the graduates were destined to become leaders of nationalist parties. Robert Mugabe, Griffith Malaba and Stanlake Samkange are cases in point.

The above and other occurrences which took place immediately after 1950 impacted on the turn of events in Rhodesia. One example of such an occurrence is Gold Coast that became independent and was renamed Ghana in March 1957.<sup>1156</sup> The independence of Ghana gave nationalism in southern Africa a strong impetus. Along with other international events it did lead to a greater political awareness of indigenous people. Ranger states that the political consciousness of the Makoni people in Manicaland was strengthened because of a series of deprivations.<sup>1157</sup> Similarly the political consciousness of the indigenous ministers intensified because of the hardship they encountered. A case in point is Esau Nemapare.

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<sup>1155</sup>Griffith Malaba interview conducted by Kennedy Gondongwe on 5 January 2011 at number 5, Edinburgh Flats, Harare.

<sup>1156</sup>Adrian. Hastings, *The Church in Africa, 1450-1950*, p.548.

<sup>1157</sup>Terence Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness*, p.145-148.

## 6.4 Esau Nemapare and the birth of the African Methodist Church

Esau Nemapare joined the Methodist African ministry in 1928. He trained at Waddilove Theological Institute. After his training, he worked in Zvishavane under a European superintendent by the name of A. Health. He was ordained in 1935 and thereafter worked in Bulawayo and Gwai Circuits.<sup>1158</sup> He was a radical and constantly revolted against what he perceived to be excessive dominance by whites over blacks.<sup>1159</sup> His thinking was so advanced because of his association with Samkange.

In 1943 Nemapare proposed the idea of founding a quasi-autonomous African Missionary Society. Nemapare's major motivation was that he did not want to work under European superintendents. An African Missionary Society would have allowed him to break free and to carry out evangelical work in areas that were not known to the Wesleyan Methodist Church. The district chairperson, Herbert Carter, did not even present Nemapare's proposal to the synod which was bound to reject it.<sup>1160</sup> Frank Noble who was the district chairperson of Zimbabwe from 1928-1938 had a very progressive policy with regard to African superintendence.<sup>1161</sup> However, his policy was continually undermined by the settler government's insistence that Africans could only work under European supervision.<sup>1162</sup> The situation riled Nemapare. He could not reconcile himself to any form of restriction of African leadership on the grounds of colour.<sup>1163</sup> On 1 September 1945, Nemapare wrote a strongly worded letter to the *Bantu Mirror*. In 1944 the Prime Minister, Godfrey Huggins, had outlined in parliament his intention to replace African voting rights on the common roll with a scheme for representation of African interests by appointed Europeans.<sup>1164</sup> The Africans were divided on this issue and Nemapare took the position that Africans must have a say in the running of the country. To defend this position he wrote:

We Africans have proved our loyalty to the Empire and the king by our own blood... Destruction of the Empire means destruction of our peace. The Empire is our house... Those who legislate for taking the franchise from Africans are not

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<sup>1158</sup>Chengetai J.M. Zvobgo, *The Wesleyan Methodist Missionaries in Zimbabwe 1891-1945*, p.118.

<sup>1159</sup>Canaan Banana, *Politics of Repression and Resistance*, p.62.

<sup>1160</sup>Terence Ranger, *Are We Not Also Men?*p.83.

<sup>1161</sup>Canaan Banana, *Politics of Repression and Resistance*, p.63.

<sup>1162</sup>Canaan Banana, *Politics of Repression and Resistance*, p.63.

<sup>1163</sup>Canaan Banana, *Politics of Repression and Resistance*, p.64.

<sup>1164</sup> Terence Ranger, *Are We Not Also Men?*p. 102.

interested in the solidarity of our Empire but in their own purses. ..Let us all say one thing together, equal rights for civilised persons south of the Zambezi.<sup>1165</sup>

Nemapare was not alone in this struggle. In 1941 Herbert Carter who, in 1938, had succeeded Frank Noble as the district chairperson of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Southern Rhodesia, criticized the Prime Minister for stating that Africans should not participate in politics until there was a larger number of intelligent Africans with a capacity for politics. Carter responded, saying that one cannot learn to swim by staying out of the water.<sup>1166</sup> Africans would become politically competent if given responsibilities in „Native’ Councils.<sup>1167</sup> Eventually, in 1945, the government did pass a law that allowed Africans to be represented in parliament by two Europeans. Carter responded to this in his synod address of January 1945:

Africans should be allowed to elect their own representatives to parliament on a restricted franchise if necessary. The government proposal to take away franchise from those Africans who had already qualified for the common voters’ roll is unacceptable because there are many Africans who by education and by intelligence and service to their country deserved full citizenship. This group of Africans should be treated differently from the mass of Africans for whom special arrangement is needed.<sup>1168</sup>

Carter’s statement portrays him as a white liberal advocating for particular rights for Africans while retaining the view that it was not yet time for total unconditional equality between whites and blacks. But his assertion that there were blacks who had served their country with distinction could not be disputed. People such as Matthew Rusike were examples of such selfless service. Rusike would in 1958 be awarded the member of the order of the British Empire (MBE) in recognition of his outstanding service.<sup>1169</sup> Nemapare was already talking the language of equal rights as early as 1945. This tells us something about his political consciousness. Nemapare had continuous disagreements with the European missionaries and

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<sup>1165</sup> Esau Nemapare, „Franchise or Nothing’, *Bantu Mirror*, 1 September 1945, the paper is kept in Nemapare’s personal file, MCA.

<sup>1166</sup> Carter’s address to synod January 1941, minutes of synod 1941, file S/M, MCA.

<sup>1167</sup> Carter’s address to synod January 1941, minutes of synod 1941, file S/M, MCA.

<sup>1168</sup> Carter’s address to synod January 1945, minutes of synod 1945, file S/M, MCA.

<sup>1169</sup> Matthew Rusike’s obituary, personal file, MCA.

he left the church in May 1947 to begin his African Methodist Church.<sup>1170</sup> Ndabaningi Sithole in his work *African Nationalism* contends that:

Nemapare broke away from the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Southern Rhodesia and established an indigenous church of his own. He was seriously accused of breaking the body of Christ and in his defence, he stated: „no protestant has any right to accuse me of breaking the body of Christ. It is my protestant right to protest and I do not see what is wrong with exercising my birthright’.<sup>1171</sup>

Banana argues that, what most probably contributed to Nemapare’s breaking away, was his unique brand of biblical passage interpretation, obviously divergent from the conventional approach he had been exposed to during church history lessons.<sup>1172</sup>

Nemapare was a symbol of resistance against colonial domination. He did not spare any effort in fighting European domination, both in and outside the church. In an interview with Ranger, he argued that he left the Wesleyan Methodist Church because he could not get along with the whites.<sup>1173</sup> Nemapare’s actions were similar to those of his friend and colleague, Thompson Samkange.

## **6.5 Thompson Samkange: A nationalist par excellence**

Samkange was one of the earliest African voices to be heard in the 1930s and 1940s. His bravery and his political alertness resembled those of Matthew Zvimba. However, Samkange’s contribution like Zvimba’s was unique in that it defied the ecclesiastical confines. We will explore the character and thought of Samkange in considerable detail.

He was born in 1893 as Muzorewa, son of Mawodzewa, in the Chipata area of Zvimba.<sup>1174</sup> His family belonged to the Gushungo royal clan.<sup>1175</sup> He was a blood relative of Matthew Zvimba whom we have already discussed in this chapter. Samkange’s father, Mawodzewa, was a

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<sup>1170</sup>Chengetai J. Zvobgo, „The Rev. E.T.J. Nemapare and the African Methodist Church in Southern Rhodesia, 1930-1950’, *Rhodesian History*, 1975, volume 83-7, p.2.

<sup>1171</sup>Ndabaningi Sithole, *African Nationalism*, p.91.

<sup>1172</sup>Canaan Banana, *Politics of Repression and Resistance*, p.63.

<sup>1173</sup> Nemapare interview with Terence Ranger, 1 August 1992, Bulawayo.

<sup>1174</sup> Terence Ranger, *Are We Not Also Men?*, p.1.

<sup>1175</sup> Terence Ranger, *Are We Not Also Men?*, p.1.

great hunter, famous for the success of his magic.<sup>1176</sup> He scorned both church and school.<sup>1177</sup> As noted earlier, Zvimba area was the place of the infamous murder of four chiefs in 1894.<sup>1178</sup> They were gunned down by the police when they resisted arrest.<sup>1179</sup> The four chiefs had been called together by a Methodist missionary, George Eva, and an indigenous minister, James Anta. In an act of retaliation indigenous people killed James Anta in 1896 because they suspected that he had caused the death of the four elders. Against this background the Gushungo clan had always remained suspicious of the new religion.<sup>1180</sup> John White, writing about Zvimba area in a letter to Marshal Hartley in November 1894, argues:

I do not think there is a more difficult portion on the whole of South Africa mission field. The worst obstacle is the lack of respect for and the utter disbelief in the white man that they no longer accept even the Englishman's statement.<sup>1181</sup>

Samkange came from an area that had bad experiences with Europeans. In spite of his father's opposition to Christianity, Mushore was converted and baptized in the Wesleyan Methodist Church. In 1928 he was accepted as a candidate for the African ministry in the Church after having worked for six years as an evangelist.<sup>1182</sup> He interacted closely with John White who was a champion of human rights in his own right. Samkange eventually became a minister in the Methodist Church. However, once he was a minister of religion, he continually endeavoured to regain religiously what his forefathers had lost politically. That was the right to self-determination.

When the Maize Control Act was signed into law in 1931, Samkange was a fierce critic of this piece of legislation. He was supported by another Methodist indigenous minister, namely Matthew Rusike.<sup>1183</sup> The two indigenous ministers directly opposed the government's directive to the churches to encourage the growing of wheat as opposed to maize.<sup>1184</sup>

When Samkange was stationed at Kwenda mission, he wrote to the then district chairman complaining that he, as an African minister, had no powers of discretion to reward a highly performing teacher with a bonus whereas a European minister did. Herbert Carter, who was

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<sup>1176</sup> Terence Ranger, *Are We Not Also Men?*, p.1.

<sup>1177</sup> Terence Ranger, *Are We Not Also Men?*, p.1.

<sup>1178</sup> Terence Ranger, *Are We Not Also Men?*, p.1.

<sup>1179</sup> Terence Ranger, *Are We Not also Men?*, p.1.

<sup>1180</sup> Terence Ranger, *Are We not Also Men?*, p.1.

<sup>1181</sup> A letter from John White to Marshal Hartley, 10 November 1894, file JW/MH, MCA.

<sup>1182</sup> Terence Ranger, *Are We Not Also Men?* p. 1.

<sup>1183</sup> A cutting from a newspaper called '*The Bantu Mirror*' of 2 July 1938, Samkange's personal file, MCA.

<sup>1184</sup> A cutting from a newspaper called "The Bantu Mirror" of 2 July 1938, Samkange's personal file, MCA.

chairman of the Rhodesia District, simply answered: „I think you wrote when you were not feeling well.’<sup>1185</sup>

This arrogance on the part of the missionary infuriated Samkange. At a later stage, when he was told that a missionary would take his position at Kwenda mission and that he would be moved to an outpost in the same circuit where he would act as assistant minister to the missionary, Samkange registered his discontent with the church leadership. The reason for his transfer was that, at Kwenda mission, there was a large European house that was unoccupied because Samkange, as a black minister, was not allowed to live in it. Samkange responded:

I am not quite happy about the suggestion of removing me in order to find room for a white missionary...I do not think Africans will take pride in such arrangements, there will be certain feelings of regret and disappointment...if a European minister is appointed I shall be glad to be removed to another circuit rather than work here while some one is in charge; because I do not want frictions.<sup>1186</sup>

Obviously, Samkange was no push-over and stood for his rights. In 1938 he was invited to attend the International Missionary Conference at Tambaram in Madras from 12 to 29 December of that year.<sup>1187</sup> He went there on behalf of the Southern Rhodesia Missionary Conference. Samkange had been a member of the institution for a great number of years. He was elected, along with A. A. Louw, to represent the Conference at Tambaram.<sup>1188</sup> While at Tambaram, he met key figures like Albert Luthuli, Nehru and Gandhi.<sup>1189</sup> The meeting was a watershed in his life because it entrenched in him values of justice and equality. He was, as it were, „remade’. He got to know theologians from all over the world.<sup>1190</sup>

Back from India, Samkange reported in great detail about his experiences in the *Bantu Mirror*.<sup>1191</sup> He repeatedly reminded his audience that they should emulate the African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa.<sup>1192</sup> The core of his message was that Africa must

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<sup>1185</sup> Herbert Carter’s letter to Samkange, 11 February 1938, file MS293/5/21/1, NAZ.

<sup>1186</sup> A letter from Samkange to Carter, 25 May 1938, Samkange is personal file, MCA.

<sup>1187</sup> An invitation from the International Missionary Conference, 8 March 1938 for a conference to be held in December 1938, Samkange’s personal file, MCA.

<sup>1188</sup> Terence Ranger, *Are We Not Also Men?*, p.63.

<sup>1189</sup> Terence Ranger, *Are We Not Also Men?*, p.64.

<sup>1190</sup> Terence Ranger, *Are We Not Also Men?*, p.64.

<sup>1191</sup> A *Bantu Mirror*, Cutting in Samkange’s file, 5 June 1939, Methodist Connexional Archives.

<sup>1192</sup> Samkange’s short notes of the address delivered at Waddilove Institute, 12 June 1940, Samkange’s personal file, MCA.

be self-propagating, self-governed and self-supportive. Ranger describes Samkange as a one-eyed man in the land of the blind.<sup>1193</sup>

On 12 July 1943, Samkange was elected president of the Southern Rhodesia *Bantu* Congress.<sup>1194</sup> According to Aaron Jacha's reminiscences, Samkange was chosen in order to make the congress more radical.<sup>1195</sup> And indeed, he radicalised the institution through his speeches. His determination to awaken the African people attracted the attention of intelligence officers.

One of the objectives of the congress was to campaign for full democratic rights,<sup>1196</sup> Joshua Nkomo, past president of the congress, had labelled it a weak organisation and quite inadequate as a channel for mass resentment.<sup>1197</sup> However, under the leadership of Samkange the congress made great strides in achieving radicalism.. On 12 November 1944, the congress passed a resolution that opposed the amalgamation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland.<sup>1198</sup> It contributed immensely to the staging of the 1948 general strike of African workers in Bulawayo, Salisbury and other towns. After the strike, government officials attempted to arrest the organisers but Samkange denied any involvement. He argued that, indeed, his organisation had made initial plans for the strike, but decided to cancel it after the government had promised to look into the workers' grievances which centered on wages. At that stage, the people at grassroots levels had refused to listen to the leadership and continued with the strike.<sup>1199</sup>

Samkange's denial may have been based on fear of arrest. It seems that, although he was a courageous man, he did not consistently stand by what he believed in. Facing the threat of arrest he denied involvement in mass protests. This double mindedness was not unique to the indigenous ministers. Even the nationalists sometimes backtracked when the situation demanded it. An example is Aaron Jacha who was secretary of the congress but resigned upon being offered a job as editor of the police magazine *Mapolisa*.<sup>1200</sup> Samkange led the congress for five years, until his resignation in January 1949.<sup>1201</sup> When he relinquished his

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<sup>1193</sup> Terence Ranger, *Are We Not Also Men?*, p.76.

<sup>1194</sup> Terence Ranger, *Are We Not Also Men?*, p.87.

<sup>1195</sup> Aaron Jacha, interview with Ranger, 16 June 1945, file aoh/14, transcript kept at NAZ.

<sup>1196</sup> A Letter from Jacha to Samkange in Samkange's personal file, 18 March 1944, MCA.

<sup>1197</sup> Joshua Nkomo, *The Story of My Life*, London: James Currey, 1984, p.45.

<sup>1198</sup> Aaron Jacha interview with Ranger, 14 July 1977, file AOH/14, transcript kept at the NAZ.

<sup>1199</sup> A report written by Samkange to Carter, who was on leave during the time of the strike, 26 June 1948, Samkange's personal Archives, MCA.

<sup>1200</sup> Terence .Ranger, *Are We Not Also Men?*, p.109.

<sup>1201</sup> Terence .Ranger, *Are We Not Also Men?*, p.123.



position as president, Enoch Dumbutshena, a graduate from Fort Hare, took over and Stanlake Samkange, another graduate from Fort Hare and a son of Thompson Samkange, took over as secretary of the congress.<sup>1202</sup> Although Thompson retired from the leadership of the congress, he continued to be a thorn in the flesh of missionaries and government officers.

During his stay at Pakame mission, where he was appointed school manager, he became the embodiment of the story of black emancipation. Naison Makwehe remembers that the first time he heard a minister of religion talking so strongly about the evils of the government, was at Vungwi School where he worked as a school teacher.<sup>1203</sup> He listened to Samkange discussing the need for equal rights in Zimbabwe. Samkange particularly urged teachers to refuse to be served, according to the rule, from windows when they visited the district administrator's offices. Only whites were allowed to enter the office of the district administrator.<sup>1204</sup>

Samkange died on the 27<sup>th</sup> of August 1956 after suffering a heart attack. His funeral was attended by 4000 mourners.<sup>1205</sup> His death was reported in the *Bantu Mirror* of 28 August 1956.<sup>1206</sup> He had laid the foundation for the struggle for human dignity. He was far ahead of many of his compatriots. He knew what society's problem was. His contribution to the raising of political consciousness among black people was without precedent in the Wesleyan Methodist Church. His association with people like Albert Luthuli made him a radical Christian politician. People like Samkange were outspoken and knew what they stood for, but the real resistance could only take off in the 1960s. The origins of Thompson Samkange's political awareness can be traced back to three factors: his background, his experience in the church, and his international experience, particularly his visit to the International Missionary Conference in South India in December 1938.<sup>1207</sup>

The domination of the indigenous people continued and issues of race relations kept haunting the Wesleyan Methodist Church and Rhodesian society until the Church decided to define its position.

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<sup>1202</sup> Terence Ranger, *Are We Not Also Men?*, p.123.

<sup>1203</sup> Naison Makwehe, same interview.

<sup>1204</sup> Naison Makwehe, same interview.

<sup>1205</sup> Terence Ranger, *Are We Not Also Men?*, p.68.

<sup>1206</sup> Samkange's tribute, 28 August 1956, Samkange's personal file, MCA.

<sup>1207</sup> Terence Ranger, *Are We Not Also Men?*, p.1.

## 6.6 The Wesleyan Methodist Church's position concerning race relations

The Wesleyan Methodist Church's position on race relations has been ambiguous. As noted earlier in this chapter, missionaries such as Watkins, Shimmin, Eva and others, were very close to the colonial administration and, consciously or unconsciously, got caught up in supporting the colonial administration in its heinous attack on the indigenous people during the First *Chimurenga*. John White represented a unique breed of missionaries with respect for African people.

Although at times, a sense of „kith and kin' appeared to be at play between missionaries and colonialists, the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society was clear on its policy with regard to race relations in Southern Rhodesia. In 1896, the society wrote to congratulate John White on his stance in support of the „natives'. The letter reads:

It is with great thankfulness that I read of the firm stand you have taken on behalf of the natives against a vicious white man. Unpleasant as it might be to deal with such a matter, it is the simple duty of a missionary and I rejoice that you are not found wanting when the need arises.<sup>1208</sup>

The above statement tells us that the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society stood for justice. It congratulated John White for supporting the natives.

Shimmin on the other hand, writing in „The work and workers in the mission field' celebrates the raising of the British flag as if it were the Christian cross. He writes:

Surely the fact that our flag is now waving within a few days' of our arrival is sufficient to intensify the enthusiasm of every earnest worker in the Kingdom of Christ. Our flag is there and we must never be seen to be deserting it, rather we will fight up to it and beyond it until we cross the Zambezi.<sup>1209</sup>

This evidence reinforces the perception that some of the missionaries shared the views of the colonialists. Subsequent years saw the arrival of other missionaries with a varied, and sometimes complex, outlook. Enoch Musa, who joined the Methodist African ministry in 1937, points out those missionaries such as G.H.B. Sketchly tended to call all African men

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<sup>1208</sup> A letter from Methodist Mission House to John White, 24th June 1896, file WMMS/W, MCZ.

<sup>1209</sup> Isaac Shimmin's article on the work and workers in the mission field, p.107, MCA.

„boys’.<sup>1210</sup> This practise was based on the belief that, no matter how old Africans were. Their level of thinking remained that of boys. This view was rife among the colonialists and held by some missionaries as well.

There is more evidence of racism.C.C. Mazobere, a former principal of the United Theological College and a past president of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, observes:

The idea of the black and white worshipping in the same building as members of the same congregation on a common register of membership was not to be for many years. There were some white Christians, even some ordained ministers, who could not sit at a table with Africans. Some missionaries even openly called Africans baboons. When some of the white superintendents brought their white families or friends to African services which they were duty-bound to conduct their racism was obvious. They often sat apart. If the service included communion, the whites would go first so that their lips would not touch the chalice after those of the inferior Africans. At infant baptisms, some whites Methodist ministers would not hold African babies in their hands.<sup>1211</sup>

Although some Methodist missionaries were racist in thought and practice, the Wesleyan Methodist Church stood for racial justice and equality of all in principle. In his 1935 synod address, Frank Noble, the district chairperson, lamented the polarisation of Zimbabwean society on the grounds of race.<sup>1212</sup> He repeated this in his valedictory message to the Zimbabwean Synod when he was stepping down as district chairperson.<sup>1213</sup>

His successor, Herbert Carter, on several occasions implored the synod to embrace each other and to shun actions that divided the people of God. To reinforce this, his addresses to the Zimbabwean Methodist Synods of 1942, 1943, 1945 and 1948, all centred on the need to accept each other as children of God.<sup>1214</sup>

These addresses by chairpersons of the synod culminated in 1951 in the production of a Methodist statement on race relations. The statement reads:

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<sup>1210</sup>Terence Ranger interview with Enoch Musa, 30 July 1992, Bulawayo cited in Terence .Ranger,*Are We Not Also Men?*, p.123.

<sup>1211</sup> Chrispin C. Mazobere, „Christian Theology of Mission’ in C. Banana (ed.), *A Century of Methodism*, p.166.

<sup>1212</sup> Frank Noble’s address to the synod January 1935, minutes of the Methodist synod 1935, files S/M, MCA.

<sup>1213</sup> Frank Noble’s address to the synod January 1938, minutes of the Methodist synod 1938, files S/M, MCA.

<sup>1214</sup> See the address by Carter to the Methodist synod 1942, 1943, 1945 and 1948, file, S/M, MCA.

Each country has its own special problems arising from lines of cleavage between the different groups which compose the community. Our special problem is race: It arises from the attempt to wield together into one nation two groups of people, differing greatly in language, in culture and in progress towards civilisation. The first step towards solving this or any other community problem is the frank recognition of the common humanity of both groups. Each must begin by recognising the other as part of the human family. We are created from one common stock, by one and the same God who loves and cares for all equally and who has prepared the same ultimate destiny for all alike...<sup>1215</sup>

The statement continues to explore what the synod referred to as Christian principles concerning race. The first principle is that „God has made from one common stock every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth’.<sup>1216</sup> The second principle is that „God is therefore the father of all men. With him there is no favoured nation. He loves and cares for all and seeks to raise them to the full stature of Christian manhood’.<sup>1217</sup> The third principle is that „God sent his son Jesus Christ to be saviour of the world’.<sup>1218</sup> Fourthly, „the Christian church was established by our Lord and we carry on the work begun by him. Within this community, first of all the problems of race must be faced and solved, as Christians we must put our house in order before we attempt to pass judgement to the world at large’.<sup>1219</sup>

Conspicuous by its absence from this statement so far is the real cause of racial conflict. The Christian principles concerning race fall short of providing a ‘solid’ basis for racial equality. The first principle is particularly telling because it argues that God allows every created human being to dwell on all the face of the earth. Robert Mugabe, in one of his speeches, contends that God created Africa for Africans and Europe for Europeans.<sup>1220</sup> The implication of all this is that there was a difference of opinion between the Wesleyan Methodist Church and the nationalists. The nationalists were protesting that the Europeans had „crossed over’ and had taken over their land. The Methodist statement continues:

A word to the Christian European is that in the task of reconciliation, each group has its own contribution to make. The Christian Europe will recognise frankly the

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<sup>1215</sup>Methodist statement on Race relations of 1951, files 1/1/6, NAZ.

<sup>1216</sup>Methodist statement on Race Relations of 1951, files 1/1/6, NAZ.

<sup>1217</sup>Methodist statement on Race Relations of 1951, files 1/1/6, NAZ.

<sup>1218</sup>Methodist statement on Race Relations of 1951, files 1/1/6, NAZ.

<sup>1219</sup>Methodist statement on Race Relations of 1951, files 1/1/6, NAZ.

<sup>1220</sup> Address to the nation by Robert Mugabe in 1976. Video entitled why we are fighting?

tendency of all men to allow their judgements to be coloured by their own racial heritage. He will therefore endeavour to be scrupulously fair in his judgement at all times. He will apply no standard of criticism to members of another race that he would not apply to those of his own...To the African Christian; he too will maintain a standard of unbiased judgement and restraint in criticism. He will learn to distinguish between those inequalities that have been occasioned by unjust discrimination and those that spring unavoidably from the previous backwardness of his race. He will recognise gladly how much has already been done on behalf of his people in the brief period of recent history both by private and public enterprise...Wages and standards of living can only improve if hard work, honest service and good production are given in return. The employee who gives poor labour is no less guilty than the employer who gives poor wages...<sup>1221</sup>

This statement by the Wesleyan Methodist Church Synod is revealing. Firstly, the statement is littered with language that is not gender inclusive. However, I am not oblivious to the fact that the statement was written in 1951 when gender equality was not yet an important subject. Secondly, the statement seems to be imploring black Christians to be content with the status quo. It encourages black workers to work hard in industry. This was in the wake of the strike by African railway workers in October 1945.<sup>1222</sup> This strike extracted some concessions from the government and stimulated workers' organisation. In 1948 there was a general strike of African workers in Bulawayo, Salisbury and other towns.<sup>1223</sup> One may argue that the Wesleyan Methodist Church wanted to cultivate a peaceful society. However one could also comment that to preach peace in the absence of justice is like building a structure without a foundation.

The Wesleyan Methodist Church advocated hard work. It is probable that Africans, employed by white owned companies, did not work at the maximum of their capacity because in their view, doing so for an oppressive master would perpetuate the domination. As noted in the previous chapter, dominated people always try to reduce the means of production so as to paralyse the system. In this context, absenteeism, „laziness’, „theft’ and similar excuses are common occurrences.<sup>1224</sup>

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<sup>1221</sup> Methodist statement on Race Relations of 1951, file 1/1/6, NAZ.

<sup>1222</sup> Terence Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness*, p.x11.

<sup>1223</sup> Terence Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness*, p.x11.

<sup>1224</sup> See James Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, p. 136.

It has been established that the Wesleyan Methodist Church tended to swing between support for the Africans and a veiled support of the status quo. We will now focus on the reactions of the Methodist indigenous ministers to the appointment of the first African minister as chairperson of the Rhodesian District.

## **6.7 The appointment of Andrew Ndhlela as district chairperson**

Since its establishment the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Zimbabwe had been operating as an extension of the British Conference. This meant that the leadership of the Rhodesian District was also appointed by the British Conference. Sensing that it would not be long before the indigenous people attained political independence, the British Conference appointed Andrew Ndhlela as the first black chairperson of the district.

Ndhlela was born in 1913 in the Mhondoro area. He was educated at Waddilove Training Institution from 1928 to 1933.<sup>1225</sup> He did his Standard Six and Elementary Teachers' Course at Tegwani Training Institution.<sup>1226</sup> In 1938 and 1939 he worked as an evangelist. He was accepted as a candidate for the Methodist African ministry in 1940.<sup>1227</sup> Between 1940 and 1941 he worked in Bulawayo as a pre-collegiate. From 1942 to 1943 he was chaplain to the Rhodesian forces. Between 1944 and 1945 he followed theological training at Waddilove Training Institute. From 1946 onward, Ndhlela worked in various circuits including Harare, Shurugwi and Pakame. In 1964 he was appointed district chairperson. This appointment saw him being the first African to occupy such an important position.<sup>1228</sup> He was then appointed the first president of the conference when the Rhodesian District became autonomous in 1977.<sup>1229</sup>

Ndhlela took over from Jesse Lawrence as district chairperson. He may have seemed a natural choice for the British Methodists because of his history as a chaplain in the armed forces and his record of being a neutral person as far as race issues were concerned. His experience as a leader in the army had exposed him to working with whites and it was this

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<sup>1225</sup>Obituary for Andrew Ndhlela, 23rd November 1984, Ndhlela's personal file, MCA.

<sup>1226</sup>Obituary for Andrew Ndhlela, MCA.

<sup>1227</sup>Obituary for Andrew Ndhlela, MCA.

<sup>1228</sup>Obituary for Andrew Ndhlela, MCA.

<sup>1229</sup>Obituary for Andrew Ndhlela, MCA.

experience that the British Church valued. In addition, Ndhlela came from a small tribe called Ndau. It was a minority tribe in Zimbabwe and it did not participate in the rivalry that characterised the Zezuru and the Ndebele. His appointment may well have been based on a correct reading of the situation by the British Wesleyan Methodist Church.

In fact, the Wesleyan Methodist Church was following a path that had been charted by politicians. Following tribal complexities within the potent political party ZAPU, in 1962, the majority of politicians from Mashonaland secretly gathered at Enos Nkala's house in Highfields and formed a rival party, ZANU. This party attracted a few sympathisers from Matabeleland and, as a strategy to retain this constituency; the meeting elected a Ndau who was also a clergyman as leader of the party. His name was Ndabaningi Sithole. This took place in 1963 and hardly a year later had the Wesleyan Methodist Church followed suit.

The Ndau people were a minority in Zimbabwe and fully aware that they were bound to fail if they played the tribal card. For the two dominant tribes it was better to be led by someone from a minority group, rather than by a representative from a rival tribe. The situation benefitted the minority groups in Zimbabwe - at least for the time being.<sup>1230</sup> The British Wesleyan Methodist Church, thinking along similar lines, feared that, if someone from the two warring tribes was appointed, it could divide the church.

The Methodist missionaries were not happy with the appointment of Ndhlela. In fact, the Bulawayo Area Council wrote a letter to the British conference expressing its disappointment. The letter reads:

We note with much dismay that you have decided to appoint Andrew Ndhlela as district chairperson without consulting us. Actions such as this do not build the church but work against it. If we were consulted we were going to give our advice as people who are on the ground...<sup>1231</sup>

The Wesleyan Methodist Church in Britain, in a letter to the Rhodesia District, reacted as follows:

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<sup>1230</sup>It must be noted that with the progression of time, the Shona tribes began to disintegrate into even smaller ethnic groups. There was rivalry among the Zezuru, Karanga and Manyika. Herbert Chitepo, chairperson of ZAPU, was assassinated in 1975 and the explanation given by a commission of enquiry was that he was killed by the Karangas in a power struggle. In the same 1975, Ndabaningi Sithole was deposed as the leader of ZANU in a prison reshuffle.

<sup>1231</sup>Letter from the Bulawayo Area Council to the Methodist Church in Britain, 2 February 1965, Ndhlela's personal file, MCA.

It is a matter of sorrow that events which have led to the nomination of the new district chairman [sic] have caused distress and misunderstanding among our members. We recognise that relationships between the society and the district have suffered a severe strain, not only this year but over a considerable period of time. We are sorry that so many have expressed their belief that the society has acted without sufficient consultation and care for the view of the district. We ask to remember the great difficulty of the society in knowing the true mind of the church of Rhodesia. The barriers which divide men [sic] from another within the country as a whole are not easily broken down in the life of the church. In the best interest of the work of Christ, it has been our feeling that in certain matters it is wiser to use other ways of consultation in arriving at an understanding of the will of God for the church.<sup>1232</sup>

Whilst part of the church in Rhodesia expressed its disapproval of the appointment of Ndhlela, some of the indigenous ministers were very excited about this development. Mazobere wrote a letter to congratulate Ndhlela on his appointment. The letter was written in Shona language. It reads:

Uncle I would like to congratulate you on your appointment as district chairman [sic]. You are now ruling those arrogant whites with all their education. This is not your own victory but it is a victory for all the African people. Do not be intimidated by anyone because God has appointed you and we will support with our blood...<sup>1233</sup>

Another letter came from Caspen Makuzwa:

I would like to congratulate you for being elected as the new district chairman [sic]. May the Lord guide you in your new responsibility? I know you have what it takes to lead the district. We pledge our support.<sup>1234</sup>

Green Mnyama also sent congratulations and pointed out that the appointment of Ndhlela as the leader of the church heralded the liberation of the black ministers who had endured unspeakable abuse at the hands of the whites.<sup>1235</sup>

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<sup>1232</sup>A letter from the British Methodist Church to the Rhodesia District, 1965, Ndhlela's personal file, MCA.

<sup>1233</sup>A letter from Chrispin Mazobere to Ndhlela, 8 February 1965, Ndhlela's personal file, Methodist Connexional Archives. The letter reads in Shona: *Sekuru ndonda kukukorokotedzai nekusarudzwa kuva mutungamiriri wedunhu. Zvino mava kuzovatonga vachena vaye nekufunda kwavo kwese nekuzvida. Kukunda kwenyu kukunda kvedu tese vanhu vatema. Musavhunditsirwa nani zvake nokuti ndimwari akakugadzai, isu tichamira nemi kusvika pakufa.*

<sup>1234</sup>A letter from Caspen Makuzwa to Ndhlela, 2 February 1965, Ndhlela's personal file, MCA.



There were five other congratulatory letters from indigenous ministers. These were from Enoch Musa, Charles Manyoba, Elliot Hungwe, Naison Makwehe and Enoch Mazhandu.<sup>1236</sup> In addition to letters conveying congratulations, there were also quarterly meeting reports concerning the appointment. One report came from Stephen Mkuruba. He writes:

The Lord has appointed one of Africa's sons to lead the district. We wish him well and he deserves our cooperation and prayers so as to disprove the myth that Africans cannot lead.<sup>1237</sup>

All the congratulatory messages found in Ndhlela's file were from African ministers with the exception of one which came from his predecessor, Jesse Lawrence. This shows, to a considerable extent, that the election of a black minister to the position of district chairperson divided the church on racial lines. Immediately after the appointment of Ndhlela as district chairperson, the Rhodesian authorities published their Unilateral Declaration of Independence. It is necessary that we examine how the indigenous ministers responded to this event.

## **6.8 The indigenous ministers and the Unilateral Declaration of Independence**

On the 11<sup>th</sup> November 1965, after failing to secure independence from Britain, the Zimbabwean government under the radical Ian Smith announced its independence from Britain. He stated:

We have struck a blow for the preservation of justice, civilisation and Christianity, and in the spirit of this belief, we have this day assumed our sovereign independence. God bless you all.<sup>1238</sup>

For Banana, UDI represented a travesty of justice, bastardisation of civilisation and an irreclaimable erosion of Christian values and traditions and its only claim to fame was that it opened the way for purportedly legitimate exploitation of the already oppressed African.<sup>1239</sup>

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<sup>1235</sup> A Letter from Mnyama to Ndhlela, Mnyama's personal file, MCA.

<sup>1236</sup> For these letters, see Ndhlela's personal file, MCA.

<sup>1237</sup> Mkuruba's report to the quarterly meeting, Nenguo Circuit, 1965, Nenguo Circuit reports, Methodist Connexional Archives.

<sup>1238</sup> A lake, *The Tar Baby Option*, New York: Colombia University Press, 1973, p.11.

The Wesleyan Methodist Church on the occasion of its 1966 synod made the following statement.

The conscience of the Church in Rhodesia was deeply disturbed by the unlawful declaration of independence towards the end of 1965, we were called to prayer to seek God's mind in guiding the minds of the British and Zimbabwe Christians...<sup>1240</sup>

This statement by the church was so mild that it was inconsequential.<sup>1241</sup> There is no doubt that the church was overcautious. The only indigenous minister in the Wesleyan Methodist Church to respond to UDI was Andrew Ndhlela. Although UDI took place a year after he was appointed chairperson of the district, it took him four years to respond to it. At the annual synod of 1969, Ndhlela made the following statement:

The fruits of UDI are tension, frustration, unemployment, separate development, mistrust and discrimination. The situation can be solved by new constitutions and new legislations, but a change of heart will bring a just settlement to the situation.<sup>1242</sup>

It was quite courageous for Ndhlela to condemn UDI, given his political context. The source of his courage could have been the realisation that the Wesleyan Methodist Church in the United Kingdom was behind him over the matter. In a message to the Rhodesia District Synod of 1969, the Wesleyan Methodist Church in the United Kingdom asserts:

The conference sends affectionate greetings to the Christians of Rhodesia and assures them of its continuing support in seeking justice and peace for all the peoples of Rhodesia. The conference re-affirms its support for the policy of United Nations mandatory sanctions and urges her majesty's government to continue to use its influence to persuade the nations of the world to withhold recognition of the Rhodesian regime.<sup>1243</sup>

The Wesleyan Methodist Church's overseas division was not alone in its condemnation of the prevailing situation in Zimbabwe. The officers of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society added their voice in a letter dated December 1969. The letter reads:

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<sup>1239</sup> Canaan Banana, *Politics of Repression and Resistance*, 1996, p.87.

<sup>1240</sup> Minutes of the Methodist synod 1966, file S/M, MCA.

<sup>1241</sup> Canaan Banana, *Politics of Repression and Resistance*, p.87.

<sup>1242</sup> Minutes of the district synod 1969, chairperson's address to synod, file S/M, MCA.

<sup>1243</sup> Methodist Church in Britain's 1966 letter to the Rhodesian Synod, December 1969, file MCOB/RD, MCA.

Anyone who tries to be a world citizen knows that justice and peace can only be bought at a very high price. Today 22% of the world's peoples enjoy 73% of the world's wealth and the 22% consists almost entirely of the white peoples. Thus the three symptoms of the world's distress are brought together in a single sharp question: How can there be peace if black men are poor and whites are rich?<sup>1244</sup>

The indigenous Methodist ministers did not speak out clearly with regard to UDI. The sensitivity of the matter possibly inhibited them from making public statements. Meanwhile, soon after UDI, the nationalists began to prepare for an armed struggle. The first major combat was fought between guerrillas of ZANU's Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) and government forces in April 1966.<sup>1245</sup> The battle took place at Chinhoyi and signalled the beginning of what was to become a protracted struggle. The development gave rise to another challenge for the Wesleyan Methodist Church. Was this a just war or not? Could the church deploy its personnel to work as chaplains with the government troops? The next section will explore these questions.

## **6.9 Methodist indigenous ministers and the deployment of chaplains to government troops**

The government responded to the Chinhoyi battle by extensively preparing for war. The preparations included the recruitment of chaplains to serve in the Rhodesian Army. The Wesleyan Methodist Church was confronted with this need for chaplains at its Bulawayo Area Council meeting of 1969. Bill Blackway, a Methodist missionary, moved the following motion:

I urge this Area Council to recommend to synod that the Wesleyan Methodist Church allows its ministers to exercise chaplaincy among the Rhodesian Security Forces.<sup>1246</sup>

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<sup>1244</sup>A letter from the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society to the district of Rhodesia, December 1966, file MMS/RD, MCA.

<sup>1245</sup>Terence Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness*, p.x11.

<sup>1246</sup>Minutes of the Methodist District Synod, January 1970. Appendix: Minutes of Bulawayo Area Council 1969 MCA. It must be noted that the Methodist Church introduced four Area Councils to work under the Synod.

Blackway urged the church to separate religion and politics and fulfill its pastoral responsibilities to the armed forces, regardless of their defence of apolitical system that was clearly repugnant to the church.<sup>1247</sup> Canaan Banana opposed the motion and argued that „it was not possible to separate the two, and that the church had condemned UDI and its ministers could not pay allegiance to a regime that was not only illegal but one that had no semblance of a mandate to govern’.<sup>1248</sup> He further argued that the church was not to be found on the wrong side of history and that, if the church was to take sides; it was supposed to take the side of justice and minister to the freedom fighters who in his opinion were fighting for equality, respect of human dignity and the sacred values of social justice.<sup>1249</sup>

The synod was divided on this matter for a long time until, in the late 1970s, it was left to individual ministers to decide.<sup>1250</sup> Fred Rea, in an act that surprised many black people, given his impeccable record of protest against injustice, defended the call to provide chaplaincy to the government troops. His argument was:

It is my conviction that the Christian Church, no less than the medical profession has its ‚Hippocratic Oath’ of responsibility to all who are in need. If it were possible to give spiritual help to the guerrilla forces, the church should do so. Where it is possible - namely through the prison chaplaincy - the church is doing so. That we will be accused of identifying ourselves with the establishment is a risk we must be prepared to take. I would point out that it is a risk that the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society itself, when placed in comparable circumstances, was prepared to take, namely when it fulfilled non-combatant needs of the militant nationalists and was accused of identifying itself with violence... We will be happy if the synod will not oppose the granting of permission by the chairman [sic] to any minister who in his conscience felt that he should offer for this work...<sup>1251</sup>

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<sup>1247</sup> Minutes of the Methodist District Synod, January 1970. Appendix: Minutes of Bulawayo Area Council 1969 MCA.

<sup>1248</sup> Minutes of the Methodist District Synod, January 1970. Appendix: Minutes of Bulawayo Area Council 1969 MCA.

<sup>1249</sup> Minutes of the Methodist District Synod, January 1970. Appendix: Minutes of Bulawayo Area Council 1969, MCA.

<sup>1250</sup> Josphat Manyakaidze interview conducted by Kennedy Gondongwe on 16 December 2010 at number 7 Russel Avenue Greendale, Harare. Manyakaidze was appointed Chaplain to the Zimbabwe national Army in 1980 where he rose to become the Chaplain General with the rank of Colonel.

<sup>1251</sup> A letter by Rea to the Methodist Church in Britain, 3 August 1976, copy sent to the district chairperson, Ndhlela’s personal file, MCA.

Bill Blackway, the proponent of the proposal to second ministers to work as chaplains in the Rhodesian forces, offered to work in the same institution as chaplain. He did however not relinquish his circuit responsibilities.<sup>1252</sup> He rose through the ranks in the army and by the time Zimbabwe attained political independence in 1980, Blackway was the deputy chaplain general in the Rhodesian forces with the rank of lieutenant colonel. He left the country for South Africa at the dawn of Zimbabwe's independence.<sup>1253</sup>

Several other Methodist white ministers left the country when Zimbabwe became independent. The majority relocated to South Africa whereas some left for the United Kingdom. Gary Strong formed his own organisation.<sup>1254</sup> A matter that almost divided the synod was the issue of the World Council of Churches' Programme to Combat Racism.

## **6.10 The reaction of the indigenous ministers to the World Council of Churches' Programme to Combat Racism**

As the war raged on in Rhodesia, many humanitarian organisations became interested in the unfolding events. One such organisation was the World Council of Churches.<sup>1255</sup> In an expression of this interest, the World Council of Churches convened a consultative meeting in Notting Hill, England in October 1969.<sup>1256</sup> Among those invited was Garfield Todd, a former Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia and a missionary of the Church of Christ. Banana contends that by this time Todd had become sympathetic to the nationalist cause.<sup>1257</sup> The other invitees were Nathan Shamuyarira, an exiled nationalist who was at the time professor of history at the University of Dar Es Salaam in Tanzania, and Canaan Banana, the outspoken Methodist minister. Banana could not attend the conference because the government impounded his passport to prevent him from travelling to the UK.<sup>1258</sup>

Meanwhile the meeting in Notting Hill recommended the setting up of a Programme to Combat Racism. The programme was meant to provide financial support to the Civil Rights Organisation and nationalist organisations including the Zimbabwe African National Union

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<sup>1252</sup> Josphat Manyakaidze, same interview.

<sup>1253</sup> Josphat Manyakaidze, same interview.

<sup>1254</sup> Josphat Manyakaidze, same interview.

<sup>1255</sup> Canaan Banana, *Politics of Repression and Resistance*, p. 168.

<sup>1256</sup> Canaan Banana, *Politics of Repression and Resistance*, p.169.

<sup>1257</sup> Canaan Banana, *Politics of Repression and Resistance*, p.169.

<sup>1258</sup> Canaan Banana, *Politics of Repression and Resistance*, p.169.

(ZANU) and the Zimbabwe African People's Union ZAPU.<sup>1259</sup> The World Council of Churches was very clear that the money had to be used to purchase medicine, provide shelter and pay for education.<sup>1260</sup> The decision by the council sparked widespread condemnation by missionaries, especially from the Wesleyan Methodist Church. Ndhlela issued a very confusing statement which appeared in the *Rhodesian Herald* of November 5, 1970:

If the World Council of Churches has spare funds to help overseas people, the money should be used for church projects. The World Council of Churches action did not seem to accord with the Christian teaching of peace and harmony among nations...<sup>1261</sup>

The statement by Ndhlela is surprising, given that he used to speak out against the status quo. It demonstrates that some indigenous ministers did not have a specific position concerning politics in Zimbabwe. In some cases they seemed to support the government of the day and, in other instances, they castigated it. They were not „either...or’ but they oscillated between positions. Meanwhile, three ministers in the Trinity Circuit of the Wesleyan Methodist Church authored and distributed a circular, reacting to the action of the World Council of Churches. These were Bob Forest, Keith Horton and Brandon Graaf. The contents of the statement were as follows:

We want to make it clear that we are unequivocally opposed to the use of violence for the attainment of political ends in this country and express our great concern for the rightful aspirations of our African people.<sup>1262</sup>

This statement by the three missionaries was in essence against the actions of the World Council of Churches’ Programme to Combat Racism. The circular triggered a radical reaction from the indigenous Methodist ministers. On 18th November 1970, three Methodist laity, namely Canaan Banana, Stephen Manguni, Philemon Mzungwana and Dr. Herbert Ushewokunze, published the following statement in the *Rhodesian Herald*.

“The silence of many leaders on the issues of injustice in Rhodesia makes nonsense of their current outbursts against the PCR and WCC. When did these gentlemen

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<sup>1259</sup> Canaan Banana, *Politics of Repression and Resistance*, p. 169.

<sup>1260</sup> M. O’ Callaghan, *Southern Rhodesia: the effects of a conquest society on education, culture and information*. Paris: UNESCO, 1977, p.178-182.

<sup>1261</sup> A statement for the press, 5 November 1970, Ndhlela’s personal file, Methodist Connexional Archives.

<sup>1262</sup> Circular authored by Forest, Horton and Graaf, November 1970, copy of the statement was put in the personal file of the district chairperson Ndhlela, MCA.

(white church leaders) use the pulpit to condemn oppression, injustice, and even the violence inherent in our own society? Their silence on these issues makes nonsense of their current outbursts and one can only assume that maintaining the status quo is more important to them than fighting for justice and peace.”<sup>1263</sup>

This attitude, as expressed by some indigenous ministers, fits well into what James Scott refers to „as declared refusal to comply, which is a public declaration of Hidden Transcript”.<sup>1264</sup> By this Scott means that, although the dominated would try to conceal their resentment in the presence of the dominant, there comes a time when they could no longer hide their feelings and they then declare their opposition to the system.

This issue of the World Council of Churches almost threatened the unity of the church. The district chairman Andrew Ndhlela was forced to call an extraordinary synod of the Wesleyan Methodist Church aimed at finding common ground between the warring parties. The discussions were very fruitful, but no resolution on the conflicting views was reached.<sup>1265</sup> A resolution was to come from the Methodist Synod of January 1971. It stated:

The Synod of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Rhodesia believes that Christians ought not to support violence in any form. Violence will only create further mistrust between races and amongst the people. In considering the World Council of Churches’ Programme to Combat Racism, we note that the Council Executive has made it clear that it is not supporting the military purposes of the organisation to which it made grants but rather political aims namely justice, equality, human dignity and freedom...The church should speak out against all those things which are barriers between race and between God and man, because it preaches peace and harmony among all people.<sup>1266</sup>

This resolution by the Wesleyan Methodist Church Synod had far reaching consequences. It prompted Banana to write a very painful letter of resignation to the chairman of the district. The letter reads:

My concept of the role of the church in society is well known to you, and the views expressed at our recent Waddilove retreat not only shocked me...as so many of my

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<sup>1263</sup> A statement for Press by Banana, Manguni, Mzungwana and Ushewokunze, 18 November 1970, copy of the statement inserted in Ndhlela’s and Canaan Banana’s personal files, MCA.

<sup>1264</sup> James Scott. *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, p. 202.

<sup>1265</sup> Canaan Banana, *Politics of Repression and Resistance*, p. 169.

<sup>1266</sup> Minutes of synod, Bulawayo 1971, file S/M, MCA.

brethren seemed to be unable or unwilling to hear Christ calling to them through the needs of his people. I believe that the action of the WCC was deliberately...misrepresented and that instead of understanding their motives and joining them in fighting the evils of racism and injustice we have surrendered to these very evils which motivated their action. The events at Waddilove were a great burden to me...during the days that followed...I now find myself unable to reconcile the gospel of Christ... with the official pronouncements of my church...I find it impossible to exercise my special ministry with a church which has to my conscience denied Christ...<sup>1267</sup>

The essence of Canaan Banana's letter was that he resigned from the Methodist ministry. Because the Rhodesia District was part of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, Ndhlela was compelled to forward Banana's resignation to the officers of the British Conference. The secretary of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, Godfrey Thackay Eddy, wrote about the matter to Ndhlela as follows.

The Pastoral Committee of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society at its meeting on the 7<sup>th</sup> April considered the reported resignation of the Rev. Canaan Banana, and I gave them a resume of our correspondences on the subject. The committee was deeply concerned by this resignation. It took note that Banana is a man of outstanding ability and promise who would be a very great loss to the church in Rhodesia and indeed to the Wesleyan Methodist Church as a whole. It endorsed my suggestion that you might try to invite Banana to meet an advisory panel before finally tendering his resignations, and we hoped that care would be taken to include some ministers likely to be sympathetic to this point of view....<sup>1268</sup>

Ndhlela followed up on the suggestions of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society. A meeting was organised to discuss the matter. In that meeting Banana decided to withdraw his resignation. He later on confirmed this position in a letter that he wrote to Ndhlela on 6 May 1971. The letter reads:

Following our meeting last Monday, May 3<sup>rd</sup> and appeals from the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society and many of our people to me to reconsider my

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<sup>1267</sup>A letter of resignation from the Methodist ministry from Banana to Ndhlela, 7 January 1971, Banana's personal file, MCA.

<sup>1268</sup>G.T. Eddy to Ndhlela, 19 April 1971, Banana's personal file, MCA.



resignation from the Methodist ministry. While maintaining my conviction on the matter of the World Council of Churches aid programme to liberation movements combating racism, I am delighted to inform you that I have decided to reconsider my resignation from the Methodist ministry and do look forward to exercising my ministry once more.<sup>1269</sup>

It must be noted that the initial decision of Banana to resign from the Wesleyan Methodist Church had a double effect on his person. Firstly, it put him in the limelight within the country as well as in the outside world. Secondly, it boosted his own confidence as a politician as shall be seen in this chapter.

Although Banana and others were resolute and unflinching in their support of the activities of the guerrilla forces, there were indigenous ministers who saw things differently. Lamuel Mubaira, a Methodist indigenous minister, castigated violence whether it was committed by the nationalists or by the government forces.<sup>1270</sup> This position was supported by James Dabengwa, also a Methodist indigenous minister, who at the same synod argued:

The policy of our church in this country is multi-racialism. Its political stand is the deploring of violence by any means and by whomsoever. Its message is reconciliation.<sup>1271</sup>

Although some indigenous ministers did not believe in the armed struggle as a way of ending the injustices in Rhodesia, one thing they seemed to collectively agree on was that Africans were dominated. This realisation increased the determination of many other indigenous ministers to fight for equality. It must be noted that the development in the church did not affect the theological realm in a notable way. Although they might have developed a particular hermeneutic paradigm, this remained hidden. Be that as it may, the fight for equality took various forms as we will discuss in the next section.

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<sup>1269</sup> A letter from Banana to Ndhlela, 6 May 1971, Banana's personal file, MCA.

<sup>1270</sup> Minutes of synod, January 1974 Salisbury, file S/M, MCA.

<sup>1271</sup> Minutes of synod, January 1974 Salisbury, file S/M, MCA.

## **6.11 The involvement of the indigenous ministers in the liberation struggle for Zimbabwe**

The indigenous Methodist ministers got involved in the struggle to liberate the country in various ways. Some joined political parties as members, whilst others occupied positions of leadership in those political parties. Some worked underground, providing support and logistics to the nationalist forces, whilst others provided counsel to the nationalists. Others again provided chaplaincy to the political prisoners and detainees. It is noteworthy that the indigenous ministers became more involved in the resistance towards and during the second half of the century. One outstanding contribution came from a Wesleyan Methodist Church minister who eventually paid the ultimate price for his belief in self-rule.

### **6.11.1 Arthur Kanodereka: A martyr to self-rule**

Any account that endeavours to explore the contribution of the indigenous Methodist ministers to the liberation of the country and leaves out Arthur Kanodereka is incomplete. Kanodereka was born in Chegutu in June 1930.<sup>1272</sup> He trained at Waddilove Training Institute as a teacher and, in 1956, as a Methodist minister at Epworth Theological College. He married Gladys in August 1956.<sup>1273</sup> After his training he worked in various circuits, including Masvingo, Siabuwa, Mount Darwin and Mbare. He spent four years in Siabuwa and seven years in Mount Darwin. These were known as some of the most difficult Methodist circuits where, more often than not, ministers would go without stipends.<sup>1274</sup> This experience, coupled with factors already discussed in this chapter, could have contributed to the awakening of his political consciousness.

Kanodereka joined Abel Muzorewa's African National Congress (ANC)<sup>1275</sup> when he was still working in Masvingo Circuit.<sup>1276</sup> He often argued that it was not prudent for him to

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<sup>1272</sup>Gladys Kanodereka, same interview.

<sup>1273</sup>Gladys Kanodereka, same interview.

<sup>1274</sup>Gladys Kanodereka, same interview.

<sup>1275</sup>This party was known as African National Congress when it was formed in 1971 but it changed its name to United African National Congress in September 1976 when it purported to embrace all other nationalist parties. For this see Abel Muzorewa, *Rise up and walk*, p268. There ANC and UANC are used interchangeably.

<sup>1276</sup>Gladys Kanodereka, same interview.

preach to the oppressed people without helping them to liberate themselves.<sup>1277</sup> He quarrelled with the white missionaries who were his superiors. He was transferred from Masvingo at the behest of his superintendent, H.H. Morley Wright, for what was described as intolerable behaviour.<sup>1278</sup> From Masvingo he went to Siabuwa where he worked without stipend for the larger part of his stay. In a way this added to his political awareness. From Siabuwa, he was moved to the Mount Darwin Circuit.<sup>1279</sup> In Mount Darwin he became fully involved in politics and an integral part of the war effort.<sup>1280</sup> His stay in Mount Darwin coincided with the beginning of the war. Mount Darwin lies on the border with Mozambique and it is known that the war was particularly intense in that part of the country, as the government tried to prevent the freedom fighters from using the border to cross from Mozambique into Zimbabwe.

At one time Kanodereka was arrested on allegations that he had assisted school children at St Albert mission to cross over to Mozambique for military training. He was later released because of lack of evidence. However, it was true that he had addressed school children and after his address the kids decided to cross over to Mozambique for military training.<sup>1281</sup> Among the people whom he helped to cross the border was Teurai Ropa Nhongo who after the war was to become known as Mujuru. She eventually rose through the ranks to become Zimbabwe's first female vice-president after independence. One day, there was a battle between the government soldiers and the freedom fighters. During that battle the government soldiers saw someone whom, they suspected, was Arthur Kanodereka. In the night they surrounded the church manse. Gladys Kanodereka remembers the following.

We were staying at the manse in Karuyana in Mount Darwin. One day there was a fierce fight between the two warring parties. The soldiers thought that one of the freedom fighters they had identified was Kanodereka. They surrounded the manse and after that contact and one of the white soldiers could be heard saying „let's fire'. Our salvation was a black soldier who pleaded and said „let us not kill the children and the wife'. They examined the engine of our car and they saw that it was very cold which meant that it had not travelled recently. They took my husband with

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<sup>1277</sup> Gladys Kanodereka, same interview.

<sup>1278</sup> Superintendent's report on Arthur Kanodereka, 26 June 1963, Kanodereka's personal file, MCA.

<sup>1279</sup> Gladys Kanodereka, same interview.

<sup>1280</sup> Gladys Kanodereka, same interview.

<sup>1281</sup> Gladys Kanodereka, same interview.

them and he stayed there for two weeks. I thought they had killed him but was happy to see him coming back alive.<sup>1282</sup>

Kanodereka was a very important figure for the freedom fighters. He would occasionally travel to Mozambique to meet commanders such as Josiah Tongogara.<sup>1283</sup> He also assisted the freedom fighters with clothes and money, since he was running butchery. His office was used as a venue for political meetings.<sup>1284</sup>

The moment the security agents became aware of Kanodereka's activities, his life was in mortal danger. Gladys Kanodereka made a request to the church to have her husband transferred because she feared that his death was imminent. In 1974, they were transferred to the Mbare Circuit. While in Mbare, he was elected national treasurer of the African National Congress.<sup>1285</sup> He started a school to teach African children in Mbare. This school was a haven for combatants who disguised themselves as school pupils. Gladys Kanodereka remembers that the combatants would often come to her home, asking for money and other essentials.<sup>1286</sup>

Kanodereka's life was on several times in danger. One day „comrades' had visited him in his office, not knowing that the security forces were monitoring his movements. When these „comrades' as they were known left his office, they were all shot dead. Kanodereka was arrested and for three weeks nobody knew where he was and he was presumed dead. It was Fred Rea, a Methodist missionary who phoned Gladys to inform her that Arthur was alive and that he would soon come home. When he eventually arrived, it turned out that he had been severely tortured.<sup>1287</sup>

Although Glads Kanodereka does not know what caused Kanodereka to be spared, this researcher concluded from Fred Rea's personal file that it was he who had pleaded with the officer in command of Law and Order to release Kanodereka. The relevant letter reads:

Following our discussions at your office, and subsequent discussions over the phone, may I thank you for agreeing to release Arthur Kanodereka. As I have already indicated, Kanodereka is a minister in the Wesleyan Methodist Church and our policy does not allow him to venture into politics. I pledge that we will counsel

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<sup>1282</sup> Gladys Kanodereka, same interview.

<sup>1283</sup> Gladys Kanodereka, same interview.

<sup>1284</sup> Gladys Kanodereka, same interview.

<sup>1285</sup> Gladys Kanodereka, same interview.

<sup>1286</sup> Gladys Kanodereka, same interview.

<sup>1287</sup> Gladys Kanodereka, same interview.

with him and subject him to the disciplinary processes of the church. If he repeats this kind of behaviour then we will surrender him to you for your suitable judgement.<sup>1288</sup>

Kanodereka was brought home by Rea and one government intelligence operative, called Ken flower.<sup>1289</sup> No doubt, Kanodereka was a very courageous man. In 1975 he was appointed area chairperson of Harare at a meeting in Chibero. The missionaries wanted to oppose his appointment on the grounds that he was not suitable for church leadership because of his involvement in politics and as a minister he was not allowed to be involved in politics. He answered that even they were involved in politics. He particularly pointed out that Bill Blackwell was a minister of religion during the day but at night he was a soldier and could often be seen in camouflage.<sup>1290</sup> Blackwell was a chaplain in the Rhodesian government forces, as we have seen.

In 1977, Kanodereka joined the Moral Rearmament. This was an organisation that espoused the values of integrity, peace, justice and equality. It seems Moral Rearmament refined his character and increased his resolve to fight for his motherland. In Moral Rearmament, he met the stepson of Ian Smith, Prime Minister of Rhodesia. The son was called Alec. It was well known that he was a drug addict. He had always been left locked in the house for security reasons, while his parents were busy with the affairs of the country.<sup>1291</sup> This led him to resort to drugs but he later repented and was made to join Moral Rearmament as a way of reintegrating him into society. It was through Alec, that Kanodereka paid several visits to the Smith's residence and even held discussions with the Prime Minister.<sup>1292</sup>

Kanodereka became an international figure as he was well travelled, both on political and Moral Rearmament business. He called himself a nationalist. James Scott holds that, when the frontier between the „hidden transcripts’ and the „public transcripts’ has been decisively breached, subordinates begin to openly defy the authorities. He gave the example of President Nicolae Ceausescu of Rumania who, on December 21, 1989, in Bucharest, tried to prove that he was still in command after a series of demonstrations in the outlying city of Timisoara. Scott relates:

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<sup>1288</sup> A letter from Fred Rea, to the Officer Commanding Law and Order, 6 June 1975, Rea's personal file, MCA.

<sup>1289</sup> Gladys Kanodereka, same interview.

<sup>1290</sup> Gladys Kanodereka, same interview.

<sup>1291</sup> Gladys Kanodereka, same interview.

<sup>1292</sup> Gladys Kanodereka, same interview.

The young people started to boo. They jeered as the president, who still appeared unaware that trouble was mounting, rattled along denouncing anti-communist forces. The booing grew louder and were briefly heard by a television audience before technicians took over and voiced- over a sound track of canned applause. It was a moment that made Romanians realise that their all-powerful leader was in fact vulnerable.<sup>1293</sup>

Kanodereka began to openly defy the system. As a consequence, several attempts were made on his life by security agents. At one time he went to Mozambique with Byron Hove who was to become minister of government during Smith's internal settlement.<sup>1294</sup> In Mozambique he met Robert Mugabe and other senior members of ZANU. Consequently, during the Geneva Conference of 1976, he defected to ZANU from the ANC. This was the beginning of his demise. ANC members wanted to eliminate him for ditching them. While in Mozambique he was broadcast live on radio Mozambique which was a ZANU propaganda mouth piece, saying he had denounced Muzorewa because he was a visionless leader.<sup>1295</sup>

In December 1978, Kanodereka paid the ultimate prize for his zeal to liberate his country. He was abducted early in the morning by unknown people and taken to a secluded place near Beatrice where they tied him to a tree and pumped eleven bullets into his stomach. It is thought that he was murdered by the security forces, working hand in glove with Muzorewa's people. This suspicion is premised on the fact that, by this time, Muzorewa had entered into an alliance with Smith and other black nationalists. The arrangement was that the country's premiership would be rotated under the presidency of Ian Smith. The arrangement was rejected by ZANU and ZAPU. Kanodereka's car was found near his body with sixty bullet holes in its body. *The Rhodesian Herald* of 21 December carried a headline: „Horror at minister's murder'.<sup>1296</sup> The newspaper went on to say that the president of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, Andrew Ndhlela, had described the death of Kanodereka as a deplorable politically motivated assassination.<sup>1297</sup> He went further:

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<sup>1293</sup> James Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, p. 204

<sup>1294</sup> Gladys Kanodereka, same interview.

<sup>1295</sup> Gladys Kanodereka, same interview.

<sup>1296</sup> See *The Rhodesian Herald* of 21 December 1978. The paper was kept at Grace Kanodereka's residence among memories of the life of her husband.

<sup>1297</sup> *The Rhodesian Herald* of 21 December 1978.

Kanodereka's political activity was a result of deep and sincere concern for the people of all races in Rhodesia.<sup>1298</sup>

ZANU's publicity secretary, James Dzvova, described the death of Kanodereka as a cold blooded murder.<sup>1299</sup> The publicity secretary for ZUPO, Gibson Magaramombe, said his party extended its deeply felt sympathy to the Kanodereka family. He said his party believes violence which begets violence was not the answer to the problem. A party conference was called for.<sup>1300</sup> Many other organisations sent messages of condolence.<sup>1301</sup> Moral Re-  
armament's representatives, Cyril Hatty, Alec Smith, John Musekiwa and Steven Sibare, in a joint statement said: „Kanodereka spoke to the world, demonstrating the miracle working power of God by his own example. His death will not be in vain if enough of us take up the challenge with the same courage’.<sup>1302</sup>

Kanodereka's funeral was attended by more than five thousand people. The children of his young brother, born soon after his death, were given names with political meanings as a way of remembering him. One was called *Nhamo dzenyika* which means „problems of the country’. The other one was called *Tichatonga nyika* or „we will rule this country.’<sup>1303</sup> In as much as these names commemorated Kanodereka, they were also prophetic in their own right as independence came two years down the line. In addition to Kanodereka, the Wesleyan Methodist Church produced another political giant: Canaan Banana.

### **6.11.2 Canaan Banana and the road to the State House**

The contribution of Canaan Banana to the advent of majority rule in Rhodesia has already been explored in this thesis. What still needs to be discussed is his relationship with the liberation movements and how he ended up being the first president of the Republic of Zimbabwe. To unravel all this, we first turn to his biography. Although Banana was a very prominent figure, both in the Wesleyan Methodist Church and in the country, he did not write an autobiography. Much of what I gathered about him comes from the archives. I have also benefitted from Paul H. Gundani's convincing article, entitled „Canaan Banana's Encounter

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<sup>1298</sup> *The Rhodesian Herald* of 21 December 1978.

<sup>1299</sup> *The Rhodesian Herald* of 21 December 1978.

<sup>1300</sup> *The Rhodesian Herald* of 21 December 1978.

<sup>1301</sup> *The Rhodesian Herald* of 21 December 1978.

<sup>1302</sup> *The Rhodesian Herald* of 21 December 1978.

<sup>1303</sup> Gladys Kanodereka, same interview.

with Colonialism and Apartheid in Rhodesia (1963-1980)' <sup>1304</sup> and from Ezra Chitando's article 'Canaan Banana and Religious Studies in Zimbabwe: A review.' <sup>1305</sup>

Canaan Sodindo Banana was born on 5<sup>th</sup> March 1936 at Esiphezini in the Essexvale District, now Esigodini in Matabeleland North. <sup>1306</sup> He was the fifth in a large family of fourteen children, born to one father and mother. His parents were ordinary peasants and members of the Wesleyan Methodist Church. His father was a local preacher in the church. Canaan went to Mzinyati mission and Tegwani High School. He embraced Methodism and in 1960 went to Epworth Theological College. <sup>1307</sup> He was ordained at the end of 1962. <sup>1308</sup> After his theological training at Epworth, he worked as a manager of schools in the Wankie and Plumtree areas. Thereafter he was appointed chaplain of Tegwani High School. In this period, he became a founder member and supporter of the Student Christian Movement (SCM). Gundani argues that it was in this ecumenical movement that he got the opportunity to discuss with young men and women 'the political situation and the social and economic development in Rhodesia'. <sup>1309</sup> The missionaries were not amused by these activities and in 1967 they transferred him to Masvingo, at the time known as Fort Victoria, to minister to the African section of the circuit. <sup>1310</sup>

In an interview, conducted by Gundani, Banana states that he came face to face with colonialism in Masvingo. He elaborates:

I remember one incident when driving between Masvingo and Ngundu. It was raining and in front of us was a white man, I believe a farmer in an open van. He was sitting with his dog in front while the black fellow at the back was being rained upon. I said to the white minister: 'What do you make of that?' He answered, 'I am thoroughly ashamed of my skin'. There could be no better way of describing this

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<sup>1304</sup>For the article see Paul H. Gundani, 'Canaan Banana's Encounter with Colonialism and Apartheid in Rhodesia (1963-1980)', in Philippe Denis (ed.), *Orality, Memory and the Past, Listening to the Voices of Black Clergy under Colonialism and Apartheid*, Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2000.

<sup>1305</sup>Ezra Chitando, 'Canaan Banana and Religious Studies in Zimbabwe: A review,' in *STUDIA HISTORIAE ECCLESIASTICAE*, June 2004 Volume xxx, No.1, p. 187-203.

<sup>1306</sup> Canaan Banana's curriculum vitae kept in his personal file, Methodist Connexional Archives.

<sup>1307</sup> Canaan Banana's curriculum vitae kept in his personal file, MCA.

<sup>1308</sup>Paul H. Gundani, 'Canaan Banana's Encounter with Colonialism and Apartheid in Rhodesia (1963-1980)' in Philippe Denis (ed.), *Orality, Memory and the Past, Listening to the Voices of Black Clergy under Colonialism and Apartheid*, p.178.

<sup>1309</sup>Paul H. Gundani, 'Canaan Banana's Encounter with Colonialism and Apartheid in Rhodesia, (1963-1980),' in Philippe Denis (ed.), *Orality, Memory and the Past, Listening to the Voices of Black Clergy under Colonialism and Apartheid*, p.178.

<sup>1310</sup>Paul H. Gundani, 'Canaan Banana's Encounter with Colonialism and Apartheid in Rhodesia, (1963-1980)', in Philippe Denis (ed.), *Orality, Memory and the Past, Listening to the Voices of Black Clergy under Colonialism and Apartheid*, p.178.



phenomenon which we both knew was quite common in Rhodesia. So really there was a time when dogs would sit at a table with the white people but blacks were considered to be less than dogs. So given his daily humiliation blacks had no choice but to try and mobilise themselves to break loose the chains of economic exploitation, political subjugation and cultural bastardisation. As a young minister I perfectly understood why blacks had to fight colonialism.<sup>1311</sup>

In 1969, he was transferred to Bulawayo, but again to work in the African section of the circuit.<sup>1312</sup> During his stay in Bulawayo, the clergy appointed him chairperson of Bulawayo Council of Churches for the period 1969 to 1971. Additionally, he became a member of the World Council of Churches Advisory Committee ( WCCAC) from 1970 to 1974. At the same time, he was the chairperson of the Southern Africa Content Group at the Industrial Mission of the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) from 1970 to 1973.<sup>1313</sup> The business of this organisation made it necessary for Banana to travel far and wide.<sup>1314</sup>

He was nominated chaplain at the American University in Washington DC from 1973 to 1975.<sup>1315</sup> But all this does not explain why, at Zimbabwe's political independence, Banana became its first ceremonial president.<sup>1316</sup> Banana's journey to the presidency was long and arduous.<sup>1317</sup>

As mentioned, Banana rose to prominence in the early 1970s. In 1970 he entered a public toilet in Gwelo which he knew was exclusively for whites. Some whites who saw him enter immediately alerted the police. When the police arrived, they did not wait for him to finish but dragged him out, half naked, and in the process hit him several times.<sup>1318</sup> The police released him after two days in the prison cells, but laid no charge. Banana's act was clearly one of defiance.

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<sup>1311</sup> Paul H. Gundani, „Canaan Banana's Encounter with Colonialism and Apartheid in Rhodesia (1963-1980),’ in Philippe Denis (ed.), *Orality, Memory and the Past, Listening to the Voices of Black Clergy under Colonialism and Apartheid*, p.178.

<sup>1312</sup> Paul H. Gundani, „Canaan Banana's Encounter with Colonialism and Apartheid in Rhodesia (1963-1980),’ in Philippe Denis (ed.), *Orality, Memory and the Past, Listening to the Voices of Black Clergy under Colonialism and Apartheid*, p.178.

<sup>1313</sup> Paul H. Gundani, „Canaan Banana's Encounter with Colonialism and Apartheid in Rhodesia (1963-1980),’ in Philippe Denis (ed.), *Orality, Memory and the Past, Listening to the Voices of Black Clergy under Colonialism and Apartheid*, p.178.

<sup>1314</sup> Canaan Banana's curriculum vitae kept in his personal file, MCA.

<sup>1315</sup> Canaan Banana's curriculum vitae kept in his personal file, MCA.

<sup>1316</sup> Robert Mugabe was the executive Prime Minister whilst Banana was a ceremonial President.

<sup>1317</sup> Canaan Banana's curriculum vitae kept in his personal file, MCA.

<sup>1318</sup> Elliot Hungwe, same interview.

It is reported that, also as a student at the United Theological College, he several times clashed with law enforcement agents. On one occasion, on his way to Ruwa, taking a short cut, he passed through a white person's farm. He was arrested for trespassing, but he argued that the word „trespass' did not apply in his case because the land belonged to the black people and no European had brought land from Europe.<sup>1319</sup>

Banana's fight with the Wesleyan Methodist Church missionaries in 1971 over the World Council's Programme to Combat Racism has been adequately documented in this chapter. Also in 1971, Banana was elected vice-president of the United African National Council.<sup>1320</sup> President of the organisation was Abel Muzorewa, a bishop of the United Methodist Church.<sup>1321</sup> Janice McLaughlin, in her work *On the Frontline*, argues that Muzorewa's and Banana's United African National Council (UANC) resolutely condemned the Pearce Commission's proposals for a settlement in 1972.<sup>1322</sup> Ranger writes that the United African National Council transformed itself into a political party and organised a 'no' verdict on the constitutional proposals in 1972.<sup>1323</sup> On 16 April 1972, Banana wrote to Andrew Ndhela to ask for permission to travel to Britain on United African Nationalist Council business. The letter reads:

Thank you for your letter I received this morning. It is my intention to use part of my holiday visiting Britain. I have been asked to lead an important delegation to see the British Government and certain members of the British House of Commons to put our case before the final verdict of the Pearce Commission. I reckon this will take about a week in all.<sup>1324</sup>

This letter allows us a glimpse of the role Banana was playing in the politics of the country. Apart from working as vice-president of the United African National Congress, Banana cooperated closely with the Mambo Press and Moto Magazine which were in the forefront of voicing the African opinion and of employing and training African journalists. Some journalists who were trained by Mambo Press and Moto are Simbi Mubako, Dzingai Mutumbuka, Paul Chidyausiku, Stan Mudenge and Justin Nyoka. All these, with the

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<sup>1319</sup> Elliot Hungwe, same interview.

<sup>1320</sup> Elliot Hungwe, Interview

<sup>1321</sup> Elliot Hungwe, same interview.

<sup>1322</sup> Janice McLaughlin, *On the Frontline*, p.20.

<sup>1323</sup> Terence Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness*, p.xlv.

<sup>1324</sup> A letter from Banana to Ndhela, 16 April 1972, Banana's personal file, MCA.

exception of Paul Chidyausiku, became ministers of government in 1980. Banana was responsible for the sales in Matabeleland.<sup>1325</sup>

In April 1972 the police impounded Banana's passport to prevent him from travelling abroad.<sup>1326</sup> He was coming from an Organisation of African Unity (OAU) meeting in Addis Ababa where he had represented the UANC. The government was afraid of him telling the Rhodesian story to the international community. He was also banned from entering police stations for fear that he would influence police officers.<sup>1327</sup>

Banana skipped the country without passport and in 1973 went to the United States. He did this without permission of the church. On 21<sup>st</sup> May 1973, he wrote a letter to the district chairperson Andrew Ndhlela. The letter reads:

I regret that following the refusal of the Rhodesian Government to return my passport and for security reasons, I have had to leave the country earlier than I anticipated. I have now been issued with a British passport here in Botswana and the Botswana Government have given me a resident permit until such time I complete all the arrangements to leave for the States. I want to assure you Sir that on completion of my studies I shall return home and continue with my ministry. I look forward to a sympathetic treatment of my situation...<sup>1328</sup>

Banana cites security reasons as one of the factors that made him escape without advance notice. There is no doubt that, seeing his role in politics, he was under surveillance from the government's intelligence officers. The letter also tells us something about the kind of person Banana was. In response to Banana's request, the district chairman wrote:

I am writing to inform you of the decision of the synod regarding your absence from the district...Synod considered your situation sympathetically but decided that the manner in which you left the district was not good. You will remember giving a false statement that you could not come to the ministers' retreat because you were not feeling well and the doctor had recommended that you stay indoors. Thereafter, I and others saw you travelling towards Salisbury when we were on our way to the Baptist Seminary in Gwelo. Your Brethren felt it was going to be good if you had

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<sup>1325</sup>Janice McLaughlin, *On the Frontline*, p.20.

<sup>1326</sup> Canaan Banana's curriculum vitae kept in his personal file, MCA.

<sup>1327</sup> Canaan Banana's curriculum vitae kept in his personal file, MCA.

<sup>1328</sup> Letter from Banana to Ndhlela, 21<sup>st</sup> May 1973, Banana's personal file, MCA.

spoken to me in confidence about your plans...As it was, it was difficult for ministers to believe that I did not know anything about your plans.<sup>1329</sup>

In my view, Banana had the propensity to lie to his colleagues. He was not at liberty to discuss his impending journey which may indicate that he did not trust his colleagues. This is consistent with what James Scott refers to as politics of disguise. The other explanation could be that he was just being disrespectful. Banana answered Ndhlela's letter as follows.

I deeply regret that I was unable to inform you of the precise date or nature of my departure from Rhodesia owing to circumstances beyond my control. I want to assure you and the Standing Committee that this was not a reflection upon you.<sup>1330</sup>

Whilst in the United States, he studied for a Masters in Theology at the Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington DC.<sup>1331</sup> J. Philip Wogaman, the Dean of the Wesley Theological Seminary wrote a letter to the Wesleyan Methodist Church on 17 January 1974. In this letter he mentions the achievements of Banana. The letter reads:

Moreover, during the period before Christmas, he twice made a strong impression upon representatives of different countries at the United Nations in New York.<sup>1332</sup>

This serves to show that, although Banana was on study leave, he continued to play his role as a representative of the people of Zimbabwe. After his studies in the United States, Banana returned to Zimbabwe. He was arrested upon his arrival at the airport. Ndhlela wrote a letter to the Minister of Justice on 18<sup>th</sup> June 1975:

As General Secretary of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Rhodesia (UK), I address to you the following appeal, concerning the detention of the Rev. Canaan Banana, who is one of our ministers...Clemency on the part of government would make it easier for members of the Wesleyan Methodist Church to continue to play a reconciling part in the life of the country at the present moment.<sup>1333</sup>

It is clear that Ndhlela wanted to use his office to have Banana released. The Minister of Justice responded as follows:

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<sup>1329</sup>Letter from Ndhlela to Banana, 20 February 1974, Banana's personal file, MCA.

<sup>1330</sup>Banana's letter to Ndhlela, 19 March 1974, Banana's personal file, MCA.

<sup>1331</sup>Canaan Banana's curriculum vitae kept in his personal file, MCA.

<sup>1332</sup>Letter from J Philip Wogaman, the Dean of Wesley Theological Seminary, 17 January 1974, Banana's personal file, MCA.

<sup>1333</sup>Letter from Ndhlela to the Minister of Justice, 17 June 1975, Banana's personal file, MCA.

The Rev. Banana was recently prosecuted for leaving Rhodesia illegally. He was sentenced to three months imprisonment which he is now serving. You are probably also aware that the Rev. Banana was detained for activities other than the above-mentioned criminal offence and therefore his conviction does not materially affect the question of his detention... Bearing in mind Mr. Banana's previous activities, the minister has yet to be convinced of the reconciliatory part he may play in the community... One cannot escape the thought that if he had adhered to his spiritual activities he would not find himself in his present predicament...<sup>1334</sup>

Ndhela was not the only one to seek the release of Banana from prison. John L. Knight, the president of the Wesley Theological Seminary, wrote to the Prime Minister of Rhodesia. The letter reads:

An important consideration to which we would draw your attention is Mr. Banana's commitment to nonviolence in accordance to his Christian faith... It is our belief that the detention of such an important person is not in the best interest of your country and that the situations of stress and conflict in Africa today desperately need such apostles of nonviolence...<sup>1335</sup>

Banana was released in January 1976 but restricted to his home area. The restriction was later lifted so that he could attend the Geneva Conference as part of Muzorewa's delegation. At this conference he snubbed his party and joined the ZANU team. After the Geneva Conference, Banana was elected publicity secretary of the internal co-ordinating wing of ZANU, the people's movement.<sup>1336</sup>

In January 1977, he was arrested and detained at Gatooma Prison. From there he was moved to Whawha Detention Camp in May 1978 where he remained until his release on 26 November 1979. At Zimbabwe's independence he was appointed senator and president of the Republic of Zimbabwe and Chancellor of the University of Zimbabwe.

It is impossible to trivialise the role, played by Banana in the struggle for Zimbabwe. Chitando argues that the radicalism of the nationalists, including Banana, could be traced to their Christian background. He observes:

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<sup>1334</sup>Letter from N.H. Linnel, secretary for the Minister of Justice, Law and Order to Ndhlela, 28 June 1975, Banana's personal file, MCA.

<sup>1335</sup>Letter from Wesley Theological Seminary to the Prime Minister of Rhodesia, 3 June 1975, Banana's personal file, MCA.

<sup>1336</sup>Canaan Banana's curriculum vitae kept in his personal file, MCA.

It is significant to note that most of the leading nationalists in Zimbabwe had Christian backgrounds. James Chikerema, Joshua Nkomo, Robert Mugabe, Ndabaningi Sithole and others had attended mission schools and they identified with Christianity. Christianity was the religion of modernity and upward social mobility. Banana's background within the church had prepared him for the political role he now assumed.<sup>1337</sup>

Although Samkange, Kanodereka and Banana stand out as the most prominent indigenous ministers in terms of politics, several other indigenous ministers played quite significant roles in the struggle. One area in which they excelled was in providing pastoral care to political detainees.

### ***6.11.3 Pastoral care to political detainees and the restricted***

The years preceding the UDI saw the suppression of political activities in Rhodesia. ZAPU, which up to this point was the sole nationalist organisation with a very wide support, was banned in 1962.<sup>1338</sup> ZAPU decided not to form another party but to operate underground. Immediately after this decision, tension arose within the ZAPU leadership, chaired by Joshua Nkomo. This tension led to the formation of ZANU in 1963 under Ndabaningi Sithole as president, Leopold Takawira as vice-president and Robert Mugabe as secretary general.<sup>1339</sup>

After the formation of ZANU, fierce competition erupted between ZAPU and ZANU, leading to the banning of ZANU in August 1964.<sup>1340</sup> The banning of the Nationalist political parties was accompanied by mass arrest of political activists. Ndabaningi Sithole, Robert Mugabe, Leopold Takawira, Edgar Tekere, Joshua Nkomo, Josiah Chinamano and many others were put in detention camps. During their stay in the camps, the indigenous Methodist ministers ministered to them in various ways. One politician who enjoyed pastoral care from the indigenous Methodist ministers was Josiah Mushore Chinamano.

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<sup>1337</sup>Ezra Chitando, 'Canaan Banana and Religious Studies in Zimbabwe: A review', in *STUDIA HISTORIAE ECCLESIASTICAE*, June 2004 Volume xxx, No.1, p.187-203.

<sup>1338</sup>Terence Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness and Guerrilla War in Zimbabwe*, p. xiv.

<sup>1339</sup>Terence Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness and Guerrilla War in Zimbabwe*, p. xiv.

<sup>1340</sup>Terence Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness and Guerrilla War in Zimbabwe*, p. xiv.

Chinamano was born of humble peasant parents on 20 October 1922 at Epworth mission. Owing to his excellent performance at school, he was awarded a John White bursary in 1937, tenable at Waddilove Institute.<sup>1341</sup> He trained as a teacher and taught in various schools before enrolling at the University of Fort Hare where he graduated in 1950. In 1955 he was invited as guest lecturer by Selly Oak College in Birmingham in England. After his return he became a lecturer at Waddilove Institute.<sup>1342</sup>

In April 1964 he joined politics, together with his South African wife Ruth. Although this date is what is on his curriculum vitae it is contested because it is a known fact that they housed the National Democratic Party office at the back of their shop in Highfield. He rose to become vice-president of ZAPU. The couple was arrested, together with many other politicians, later in 1964. They were detained at Gonakudzingwa.<sup>1343</sup> Joshua Nkomo, in his book *The story of my life*, describes Chinamano as the most reliable of friends and a devoted patriot.<sup>1344</sup>

During their detention their young children were left without parental care. Chinamano was constantly moved around the country's different detention camps to prevent the church and the international community from offering him help. At independence, he was appointed a government minister. Upon his death he was accorded hero status by the government of Zimbabwe.<sup>1345</sup>

On the 19<sup>th</sup> December 1969 Chinamano wrote the following letter from Whawha Restriction Camp. The letter was addressed to Andrew Ndhlela who was by then the district chairperson and general superintendent of the District of Rhodesia.

Please know that Rev. Fred Rea is making passport arrangements for my son Chaitezvi who will travel to United Kingdom. Before his departure Rev. Patsika will bless the son and well-wishers will take him to the airport.<sup>1346</sup>

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<sup>1341</sup>Obituary for Josiah Chinamano, Josiah's personal file. The obituary is not dated but Josiah died after Zimbabwe's political independence, MCA. The church kept Chinamano's file because he was initially employed by the Methodist Church at Waddilove and Marshal Harley as a teacher.

<sup>1342</sup>Obituary for Josiah Chinamano, MCA.

<sup>1343</sup> Gonakudzingwa was a Detention Camp located near the border with Mocambique. It was well known as a place of detention for many African politicians including Joshua Nkomo.

<sup>1344</sup>Joshua Nkomo, *The Story of my Life*, p.120.

<sup>1345</sup>Obituary for Josiah Chinamano, MCA.

<sup>1346</sup>Letter from Chinamano to Ndhlela, 19 December 1969, Chinamano's personal file, MCA.

It is important to note that Rea, as a European missionary, was working on the passport of Chinamano's son. Rea was also the man who had secured the release of Kanodereka from detention. It shows that there were also white missionaries who played key roles in the struggle. The son of the nationalist Chinamano was blessed by Patsika, a minister who was not known to be involved in politics. In a letter, written on the 21 December 1972, Chinamano states that he was very pleased to have been visited by Patsika.<sup>1347</sup>

Writing from Marandellas Prison on 5<sup>th</sup> March 1973, Chinamano expresses his appreciation to the district superintendent:

We were very happy to see you and Rev. Brandon visiting us. Your love and care sustains us. We realise you have a very busy schedule but you always find time to visit us in this time of need. I was told that you also managed to visit other nationalists at Gonakudzingwa and Whawha. You may want to know that without your services we would have been crushed a long time ago. Your words of wisdom and encouragement on your last visit to us were of great value...<sup>1348</sup>

It is interesting that another European missionary came with Ndhlela when he visited Chinamano. Another noteworthy fact, pointed out by Chinamano, is Ndhlela had visited other detainees incarcerated in various prison centres. He also alludes to the fact that Ndhlela's words of wisdom were very useful to the detainees. One wonders what kind of words these were, but obviously they had encouraged the detainees. Ndhlela wrote several letters to Chinamano. In one of his letters he argues:

The majority of black people believe that you are fighting for a just cause. As a church we are against the racial discrimination that abounds. We will continue to pray for you and from time to time we will make sure that you receive Holy Communion. As a church we will do everything to support your children...<sup>1349</sup>

Interesting is that some of Ndhlela's letters to Chinamano were either signed nor written using the letterhead of the church. A few letters were written in Shona. One had to infer from the contents who the writer was. Similar copies of the letters were found both in Chinamano's and Ndhlela's files. The letters were coded in the extreme which made it not easy to understand some parts of the content. In an interview with Makwehe, one of the

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<sup>1347</sup>Chinamano's letter to Ndhlela 21 Decemeber 1972, Chinamano's personal file, MCA.

<sup>1348</sup>Chinamano to Ndhlela, 5<sup>th</sup> March 1973, Chinamano's personal file, MCA.

<sup>1349</sup>Letter from Ndhlela to Chinamano, 9 April 1973, Chinamano's personal file, MCA.



indigenous ministers who is cited in Chinamano's letters, it transpired that the letters were never sent through the post but smuggled into prisons, mostly by the clergy. They would hide the letters in the covers of their bibles.<sup>1350</sup> The fact that these letters were written in Shona and not signed exemplifies what Scott refers to as „hidden transcripts’, a notion already discussed in this thesis.

On 14 June 1973, Chinamano wrote a very long letter in which he thanked the Wesleyan Methodist Church for a gift that was sent to his family. He also thanked the Rev. Makwehe who had just visited him and administered Holy Communion to him and other prisoners.<sup>1351</sup> Besides Chinamano, Nkomo also enjoyed frequent visits from the indigenous Methodist ministers.

Griffith Malaba reminisced that he used to visit Joshua Nkomo who was detained at Gonakudzingwa in 1964.<sup>1352</sup> He claimed that Nkomo would give him letters to deliver to members of his organisation. Malaba related:

It was not easy to be allowed to visit political detainees but we always argued that they were members of our churches. We made sure that we befriended members of prison services within our localities. More often than not, permissions to see these politicians were granted by members of the local police stations who knew us. They sometimes did that without consulting authorities at their head offices as was required by the law...<sup>1353</sup>

Moreover, according to Malaba's reminiscences, many indigenous ministers of the Wesleyan Methodist Church used to organise collections in their congregations and send the proceeds to the families of the detainees.<sup>1354</sup> This was always done through Ndhlela's office. He also remembers that Ndhlela told the indigenous ministers to be very careful in their ministry among detainees.<sup>1355</sup>

It could be argued that the indigenous Methodist ministers only provided prison ministry to politicians who were members of their church. While this may be true, it does not minimise the fact that the indigenous ministers offered assistance to prisoners. Besides, visits may have

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<sup>1350</sup> Naison Makwehe, same interview.

<sup>1351</sup> Letter from Chinamano to Ndhlela, 14 June 1973, Chinamano's personal file, MCA.

<sup>1352</sup> Griffith Malaba, same interview.

<sup>1353</sup> Griffith Malaba, same interview.

<sup>1354</sup> Griffith Malaba, same interview.

<sup>1355</sup> Griffith Malaba, same interview.

been limited to church members because of the stringent conditions for such visits, put in place by the Rhodesian Government.

#### **6.11.4 The indigenous Methodist ministers and mass mobilisation**

The Methodist indigenous ministers played a vital role in the mobilisation of the masses towards the war effort. Malaba, who was a principal at Tegwani, managed to influence many students who later became prominent politicians. He remembers that:

Many students who went out of the country for military training came through our mission stations. At Tegwani students such as Eddison Zvobgo and Webster Shamu<sup>1356</sup> always came to ask about politics. Even the children of government employees did not support the government as it were. In 1955, Joshua Nkomo and James Chikerema visited the school with a request to address the students. I could not grant them permission but I suggested that they could informally meet the boys in their hostels during the night. After their talk, the students spent the whole week asking about the latest political developments in the country. It was quite a risk for me but that was the way I could contribute to the struggle.<sup>1357</sup>

According to Malaba, many other ministers both missionaries and indigenous ministers, were very active during the war. They were involved in underground work in support of the freedom fighters. Makwehe concurs with Malaba and recounted his personal involvement:

In 1976, I was stationed at Sandringham mission as a chaplain. Students and teachers always looked up to me to inform them about what was happening in the political terrain. I was the only one who owned a radio so I would make it a point that I listen to radio Mozambique which was broadcast by ZANU. This radio was a counter to the Rhodesian propaganda. I would then inform the students and the teachers on the latest developments concerning the war. No one knew my sources of

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<sup>1356</sup> Eddison Zvobgo and Webster Shamu later on left the country as members of ZANU. At independence, Zvobgo was appointed as government minister and a bit later Shamu later was also appointed to minister in the government.

<sup>1357</sup> Griffith Malaba, same interview.

information. I did not want them to know because it was a crime to listen to that radio station.<sup>1358</sup>

It is clear that Makwehe was a source of political information at Sandringham mission, but the activity remained underground in so far as that he did not want his source of information to become known. However, other indigenous ministers were more open about their activities.

In 1976, ZANU set up structures in Selukwe. The Methodist indigenous minister, stationed in Selukwe, was Alexander Chirisa.<sup>1359</sup> At a gathering to choose provincial officials, Chirisa was elected treasurer of Midlands Province. He also was chosen as chairperson of Selukwe District. His responsibility as chairperson was to set up lower structures of the party and to provide political education throughout the district.<sup>1360</sup> Chirisa related:

In Selukwe I would address political meetings, I would attend night vigils called by freedom fighters and prominent politicians like Simbarashe Mumbegwegwi and Richard Hove who were my friends. They would constantly visit me to update me and receive reports about the process of mass mobilisation. The Rhodesians soldiers got wind of my activities through sellouts in 1978. I immediately contacted Baba Ndhlela who advised me to run away and he organised accommodation for me and my family in Gwelo. When the soldiers arrived they found me gone. They however took Simon Sithole who was my superintendent for questioning. They kept him for a month at Donga Camp. He was later released but as for me I stayed in Gwelo until the coming of independence. Even then very few close people knew where I was staying.<sup>1361</sup>

Chirisa was not the only indigenous Methodist minister who was active in the grassroots political structures. Sonny Matemavi, another indigenous minister, rose to become chairperson of ZANU in Murombedzi District during the years 1977-1980. At the time ZANU was non-existent in the Zvimba area. The political party, popular in the district was Abel Muzorewa's United African National Congress.<sup>1362</sup> Matemavi argued:

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<sup>1358</sup> Naison Makwehe, same interview.

<sup>1359</sup> Alexander Chirisa, interview conducted by Kennedy Gondongwe on 28 April 2011 at Gweshe Methodist Church.

<sup>1360</sup> Alexander Chirisa, same interview.

<sup>1361</sup> Alexander Chirisa, same interview.

<sup>1362</sup> At this point the party was now known as United African Nationalist Party.

Party cadres were sent from Chinhoyi to plant ZANU in Zvimba. They arrived at Mpumbu<sup>1363</sup> looking for anyone of the following: a minister of religion from either Wesleyan Methodist Church or Roman Catholic Church, a businessman, health worker or agricultural extension worker. They were told that there was a Methodist minister at Chikaka. I saw them arriving and I was very scared because many of my sermons were political. They introduced themselves and made their request known to me which was to act as chairperson of ZANU in Zvimba. I tried to refuse on the grounds that as a minister of religion I was not supposed to hold any political office. After much persuasion I agreed. This was the beginning of an arduous task of mobilising people and making sure that they are fed with the correct information about why Africans were fighting in the war.<sup>1364</sup>

It is evident that the indigenous ministers were involved in mobilisation of the people of Zimbabwe. They used their position of trust and respect to mobilise the masses.

The role of mobilising the masses was not played by the indigenous Methodist ministers alone. Ngwabi Bhebhe in his book, *The ZAPU and ZANU guerrilla warfare and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe* argues that the Evangelical Lutheran Church first got involved in politics through the activities of some radical pastors and lay workers who joined the United African National Council (UANC) of Abel Muzorewa and Canaan Banana and campaigned for the rejection of the constitutional agreement between the British Conservative Government and Smith's Government in 1971-72.<sup>1365</sup> He argues:

The radicals' parish postings made them to be strategically well placed to influence nearly all the communal areas of the southern districts. The Rev. Elias Masiane at Shashe and Arote Vellar at Buvuma campaigned in the Gwanda communal areas, while the Rev. Nkane Alfred Ramakgapola at Beit Bridge operated in that district and parts of Mwenezi. Rev Masiane even became secretary for education in the UANC.<sup>1366</sup>

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<sup>1363</sup> Mpumbu is an area in the Zvimba District.

<sup>1364</sup> Sonny Matemavi interview conducted by Kennedy Gondongwe on 26 April 2011 at Harare West District Offices.

<sup>1365</sup> Ngwabi Bhebhe, *The ZAPU and ZANU Guerrilla Warfare and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe*, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1999, p. 158.

<sup>1366</sup> Ngwabi Bhebhe, *The ZAPU and ZANU Guerrilla Warfare and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe*, p. 158.

The theme of church in liberation war was dealt with by Bhebhe and Ranger in their *Soldiers in Zimbabwe's liberation War*.<sup>1367</sup> The Catholic Church was heavily involved in the struggle, with some of its priests and sisters staying in the ZANU Camps in Mozambique. Sister Janice McLaughlin published extensively on the involvement of the Catholic priests in the war of liberation.<sup>1368</sup>

While some indigenous ministers of the Wesleyan Methodist Church were involved in mass mobilisation, others were involved in logistical support. It is important that we examine their role in this respect.

### **6.11.5 Logistical support to the freedom fighters**

An important aspect of the liberation war was the need for logistical support. Without this the war effort would have been considerably less effective and perhaps delayed. A major contribution to logistical support was made by Naison Makwehe, an indigenous minister.

When Makwehe was stationed at Chibero mission, he endeared himself to the freedom fighters by driving them from place to place. One day the freedom fighters asked him to drive them to a far away place. As usual, they would not tell him where exactly they wanted to go. He drove through the farming land from Chibero to the Beatrice road through Skyline. They packed very heavy ammunition inside sacks and covered these with manure. When they got to Beatrice road they asked to be dropped off in an area between the farms. They thanked Makwehe and told him that there would be „a very huge war' during the night. Indeed, in the morning it was reported that fuel tanks had been attacked by people with very sophisticated weapons.<sup>1369</sup> Makwehe could not be sure, but it seemed very likely that these were the people he had transported, or that they were part of the group that attacked the fuel tanks.

In Wedza, Enos Chibi who was nicknamed „comrade' because of his devotion to the struggle, narrowly escaped death on several occasions. One memorable event was when he had been asked by the freedom fighters to buy them some clothes. He drove his car without any problems to Harare. But coming back he was stopped at a road block by Smith's soldiers. His

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<sup>1367</sup> Ngwabi Bhebhe and Terence Ranger, *Society in Zimbabwe's war of Liberation*, Harare: University of Zimbabwe, 1994.

<sup>1368</sup> See for instance the work of Janice McLaughlin, *On the Frontline*, p. 20 – 58.

<sup>1369</sup> Naison Makwehe, same interview.

car was full of supplies. He told himself that this was the end but, when the white police officers saw his clerical collar, they instructed him to wait while they searched another car that had arrived behind him. At that moment a black soldier told him to go through, and to be quick. He had noticed what Chibi was transporting.<sup>1370</sup> In this case, Chibi was saved by a black soldier. There is no way that he could have explained why he drove a truck full of clothes and groceries. The indigenous ministers would often take advantage of their clerical collars as a cover for subversive work.

In addition, many indigenous ministers kept freedom fighters in their homes. They would be sent as spies to a particular area and were hosted by indigenous ministers. Crispin Mazobere had to flee Kwenda because the government soldiers had heard that he did hide freedom fighters in his home.<sup>1371</sup> Freedom fighters would often request watches or radios and sometimes they asked to use telephones belonging to the church.<sup>1372</sup>

The activities of the indigenous Methodist ministers in the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century manifest a high level of political consciousness. It is clear that they were central to the struggle for Zimbabwe. Reasons for this have already been explored in this chapter. It is noteworthy that the Methodist clergy in general had good relations with the state, as can be witnessed by correspondence between the church and government officials. The Methodist indigenous ministers took ‚shelter’ in this relationship while they began to support the war effort.

The fact that the Wesleyan Methodist Church had a few chaplains in the army made the government authorities trust the church, so they did not closely watch the activities of the clergy. It is also possible that the state was too busy monitoring the activities of the Roman Catholic priests who were known to be involved in politics and that this gave ministers from other denominations a chance to play their own subversive key roles. A question that at this stage needs to be answered is whether there were indigenous ministers who fraternised with the government security forces.

It seems that the indigenous Methodist ministers identified with the freedom fighters. There were a few, though, who remained inactive. We could not establish any cases where indigenous ministers had evidently been on the side of the government. Chibi said that there

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<sup>1370</sup>Enos Chibi, same interview.

<sup>1371</sup> Enos Chibi, same interview.

<sup>1372</sup> Enos Chibi, same interview.

were sporadic allegations against a few indigenous ministers of being „sellouts’, but, upon investigation, these proved to be untrue.<sup>1373</sup>

## **6.12 Conclusion**

This chapter sought to assess the contribution of the indigenous Methodist ministers to the struggle against domination, both inside and outside the church. In pursuit of that objective, the chapter discussed the reactions of the indigenous ministers to various political events and ideologies during the period under review.

It seems that from the beginning until circa 1930, the indigenous ministers were not much involved in politics. However, some untypical cases, involving the Zvimba brothers and Mfazi, are discussed. Possible reasons are proposed for the high degree of political awareness of these figures. Generally, the indigenous ministers were happy to work under the European missionaries. From 1930 to 1949, the social conditions in Rhodesia became very hard, both inside and outside the church, and this awakened a spirit of rebellion among the indigenous ministers. The effects of hardship, experienced by the indigenous ministers, coupled with international events, became apparent in the years between 1950 and 1980 when the political consciousness of the indigenous ministers increased. They got involved in the liberation struggle. Some became office bearers in political parties. Others worked with the freedom fighters to the extent that they were nicknamed „comrades.’ These „comrades’ provided political education to the masses, offered logistical support to the war effort such as acting as informers and providing shelter to freedom fighters on a spying mission.

The chapter argued that the indigenous Methodist ministers were not alone in their involvement in the struggle. The Catholic priests, both white and indigenous, were also involved in the war effort. The Evangelical Lutheran Church’s indigenous ministers only became involved in politics in the 1970s so that, in this regard, the Evangelical Lutheran Church was behind the Wesleyan Methodist Church.

It is established in this chapter that the consciousness of the indigenous ministers was increased by their deprivations, similar to the process that, according to Ranger, brought the peasants in Zimbabwe to political awareness. It also emerged that the indigenous ministers

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<sup>1373</sup> Enos Chibi, same interview.

engaged mostly in „hidden scripts’ throughout the period under review, with the exception of few radicals like Nemapare, Samkange, Kanodereka and Banana. However with the passing of time the hidden transcripts became public transcripts.

It is critical to note that it is very difficult to classify particular indigenous ministers as patriots and others as sellouts because the same individuals crossed these boundaries time and again.

Lastly, this chapter took the position that the indigenous Methodist ministers made a huge contribution to the political independence of Zimbabwe. Testimony to that fact is the appointment of Canaan Banana as the first ceremonial president of Zimbabwe in 1980 and the appointment of Rev. Josphat Manyakaidze as the first indigenous chaplain-general to the Zimbabwe National Army.



## **7. CHAPTER SEVEN: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS OF THE THESIS**

### **7.1 Introduction**

This chapter summarizes the thesis. It lists and discusses the answers presented to the set of research questions.

### **7.2 Main findings**

The overarching objective of this study was to assess the degree of political consciousness of the Zimbabwean indigenous Methodist ministers from 1891 to 1980. The hypothesis which was put to the test argued that the indigenous ministers of the Wesleyan Methodist Church became more politically aware in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This increased awareness was caused by the changing socio-economic and political environment. To test this hypothesis, the study focussed on how the indigenous clergy were trained, what their responses were to issues of economic wellbeing, how they viewed African culture and, lastly, what their involvement in politics amounted to. An exploration of these questions led to the following findings.

#### ***7.2.1 Missionaries and colonialists were strange bedfellows***

Most Methodist missionaries were closely linked to the colonial administrators. In fact, the Wesleyan Methodist Church came to Zimbabwe on the „wings’ of colonialism. Had it not been for Cecil John Rhodes, a flamboyant businessman and colonist who donated the initial £100 and vast tracks of land to the Methodists so that they could start work in Zimbabwe, the history of the church might have been very different. It is noteworthy that most mainline churches in Zimbabwe benefitted from Rhodes’ generosity. They were given land and money to start missions. This ushered in a model of church and state relations which saw churches being subservient to the state for a long time.

During the First *Chimurenga* a sizeable number of Methodist missionaries supported the colonists. During the Second *Chimurenga* some Methodist missionaries offered to work as chaplains for the beleaguered regime. However, to overemphasise this cooperation is to miss the point because there were also missionaries such as John White who consistently opposed the excesses of the regime. Missionaries from other churches were also divided on this issue. In the Anglican Church Shearly Cripps was well known for his support for the indigenous people's rights. Hugo Soderstrom from the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Zimbabwe was eventually deported because of his principled stance against human rights abuses.

### ***7.2.2 There was an unequal power relation between missionaries and indigenous clergy***

European missionaries generally had a negative view of the indigenous ministers. Although they were colleagues in the ministry, the missionaries would not eat at the same table with the indigenous ministers. They considered Africa and its people as primitive. It was also observed that some missionaries had a very low opinion of African traditional religion. They castigated the traditional religion as mere superstition. As time progressed, missionaries began to acknowledge that African religion existed, but they still labelled it as animism and Africa continued to be regarded as a dark continent. Chidester's book, entitled the *Savage Systems*, provides the philosophical explanation of this phenomenon.<sup>1374</sup> In this book Chidester laments the fact that missionaries in South Africa initially designated indigenous people as people without a religion.<sup>1375</sup> And even later when they realised that there was religion in Africa, they described it as bizarre.<sup>1376</sup>

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<sup>1374</sup>The theory of David Chidester has already been discussed in this thesis.

<sup>1375</sup>David Chidester, *Savage Systems*, p.11.

<sup>1376</sup>David Chidester, *Savage Systems*, p.11.

### **7.2.3. Indigenisation of the church**

The first indigenous minister to lead the synod was Andrew Ndhlela who was appointed by the WMMS in 1965.<sup>1377</sup> When the church became autonomous in 1977, Ndhlela retained his position as leader.<sup>1378</sup> In the Methodist Church of Southern Africa the first black leader was appointed in 1963.<sup>1379</sup> The church had become autonomous in 1882.<sup>1380</sup> Compared to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe, the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Zimbabwe was much faster in its indigenisation programme. The ELCZ got its first indigenous leader in 1975.<sup>1381</sup> The first indigenous minister in the Wesleyan Methodist Church was ordained in 1910. His name was Josias Ramushu. This was quite early, considering that the first indigenous minister in Zimbabwe was ordained in 1898.<sup>1382</sup> The ELCZ ordained its first indigenous minister in March 1937<sup>1383</sup> and the Catholic Church ordained its first priest from Chishawasha in 1947.<sup>1384</sup>

The Wesleyan Methodist Church appointed its first indigenous lecturer in 1954. His name was Shadreck Ushewokunze. This too was quite an early date in view of the fact that in the MCSA the first African lecturer was appointed only in 1960 at Alice. His name was Simon Gqubule. In this regard, the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Rhodesia was ahead of its South African counterpart in the process of church indigenization. The slow pace of indigenization in the MCSA reflects how deep and widespread the spirit of apartheid was.

### **7.2.4 The Wesleyan Methodist Church and social responsibility**

In the field of healthcare, the church attempted to establish a hospital which however did not survive long. One of the reasons was that African people trusted in the traditional ways of

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<sup>1377</sup>Ndhlela's personal file, MCA.

<sup>1378</sup>Ndhlela's personal file, MCA.

<sup>1379</sup>Philippe Denis, 'Introduction' in P. Denis (ed.), *The Making of Indigenous Clergy in Southern Africa*, p.9-13.

<sup>1380</sup>John Weller and Jane Linden, *Mainstream Christianity to 1980 in Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe*, p.81.

<sup>1381</sup>Canaan Banana, *Politics of Repression and Resistance*, p.18

<sup>1382</sup>Philippe Denis, 'Introduction', in Philippe Denis (ed.), *The Making of the Indigenous Clergy in Southern Africa*, p.11.

<sup>1383</sup>Hugo Soderstrom, *God Gave Growth, The History of the Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe, 1903-1980*, Gweru: Mambo Press, p.80.

<sup>1384</sup>Hugo Soderstrom, *God Gave Growth, The History of the Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe, 1903-1980*, p.79.

healing. While the Methodists did not do well in this area, the Catholics, the Salvation Army, the Anglicans and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Zimbabwe excelled in health care. However, the Methodists did well in education and came up with numerous schools some of which, such as Waddilove and Tengwani, became respected centres of learning. Many indigenous ministers and politicians were educated in these schools, and so were prominent personalities in government and industry. These include Eddison Zvobgo, Josiah Chinamano, Webster Shamu, Chengetai Zvobgo, Donato Mugabe, brother of Robert Mugabe and many others. Thus, the Wesleyan Methodist Church has contributed immensely to the education of the indigenous people, as well as to capacity building with many of its former pupils ending up in leadership positions in both the private and public sector.

### ***7.2.5 The theological training of indigenous ministers increased their political awareness***

The establishment of the UTC demonstrated the commitment of the Methodists to liberal quality education. UTC was affiliated to the University of Zimbabwe which was then known as College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. The training of the indigenous ministers at UTC increased their level of political consciousness. For a start, the indigenous ministers were required to know the works of John Wesley including his forty-four sermons, his work on slavery, and his preferential option for the poor. All these writings were revolutionary in their own context. It must be noted however, that John Wesley was politically conservative. He supported the monarchy in England as well as Britain's war in America. This means that the indigenous ministers focused on certain Wesleyan traditions which supported their cause and ignored others which negated it. However the suggestion that Wesley was conservative could be disputed on the grounds that the entire English society including its most radical elements was monarchist. Republicanism was only a seed of an idea then.

Secondly, the example set by some of the missionaries and indigenous clergy who were lecturers at UTC, exposed the theological students to politics. Missionaries such as Michael Appleyard, Fredick Rea and Hugo Soderstrom of the ELCZ were very active in politics. They were human rights activists and Soderstrom was eventually deported because of his political radicalism.

Thirdly, the indigenous ministers who were lecturers also contributed to the increase of the level of political consciousness of the indigenous ministers in training. Max Chigwida was both a lecturer from the Presbyterian Church and secretary general of the United African National Council which was led by another indigenous minister by the name of Abel Muzorewa. John Kurehwa was a radical and emphasized the need to „Africanise’ the church by introducing African instruments in worship. This was at a time when the UMC, to which he belonged, was still negative about the use of African instruments in worship. Crispin Mazobere from the Wesleyan Methodist Church was also politically radical. He studied at Boston University in the USA in the 1960s and that is where he absorbed the spirit of Martin Luther King Junior. Farai Chirisa from the same church was politically minded. With this team of lecturers, UTC became a political hotbed. Leaders of political parties used the college as a sanctuary where most of their meetings would take place. This may well have impacted on the increasing political consciousness of the indigenous ministers.

Fourthly, churches seldom sent European students to UTC. More often than not they were sent to European seminaries and universities. This discriminatory treatment also led to the indigenous ministers becoming critical thinkers about politics.

In addition, opportunities for further training were very scarce for the indigenous ministers and yet they perceived further education as the gateway to upward social mobility. This was another factor contributing to greater political awareness. It emerged that UTC compared very well with FEDSEM in South Africa. The formation of both institutions was influenced by the International Missionary Council. UTC was established in 1954 but became ecumenical in 1959 and FEDSEM was established in 1963 at Alice. Zimbabwean churches were ahead of South African churches in fostering an ecumenical spirit in theological training.

The training of the indigenous ministers was an important aspect of their growth to deeper political insight. Their political consciousness particularly increased in the second half of the century, partly under the influence of UTC. The liberal education and the political environment offered by the institution, together with the absence of opportunities to do further studies or to study abroad, all these affected the indigenous ministers’ political consciousness.

### **7.2.6 The indigenous clergy were generally not well paid**

It is evident that the indigenous ministers of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Zimbabwe were comparatively underpaid. This was true of the indigenous ministers in southern Africa in general. In the case of the Zimbabwean indigenous ministers, their stipends were relatively low. They also were low enough to prevent them from voting. Their stipends did not meet the minimum levels of income, prescribed for indigenous people who wanted to be registered as voters.

This study also established that the stipends of indigenous ministers were lower than the salaries of other professionals such as teachers, nurses and those working in the field of finance. This was quite a tragedy because, up to the 1960s, the route towards the African Methodist ministry led via the teaching profession. One needed to become a teacher in order to qualify for indigenous ministry. By implication one's salary dropped upon moving from a teacher's post to that of an indigenous minister. The missionaries' situation however was different. They were paid at another scale, allegedly five times higher. In fact, the salaries of the missionaries were pegged by the WMMS. Some missionaries are known to have uttered racist remarks such as that the indigenous ministers had no legitimate claim to higher stipends because they could eat cheap things such as tree leaves and *sadza*.<sup>1385</sup>

The indigenous ministers were poorly accommodated when compared to missionaries, but in comparison to other African employees of their time their accommodation was much better.

It emerged that indigenous ministers were not provided with vehicles during the execution of their work. They had to cover long distances on foot and as a result some of them developed health problems. In the majority of cases, indigenous ministers travelled by bicycle. When travelling by train on church business, they were expected to travel economy class like other Africans. The economy class was for Africans and animals. Europeans travelled first class. In the Wesleyan Methodist Church, missionaries travelled first class, like their counterparts in the secular world. The situation was the same in Transvaal. In fact, the Zimbabwean missionaries claimed that this was the practice in Transvaal. This serves to show that South Africa was not only a source of Methodism in Zimbabwe but that it also exported the spirit of apartheid.

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<sup>1385</sup>Already alluded to: the staple food of the Zimbabwean indigenous people.

Indigenous ministers were not allowed furloughs. In fact the outcry by black ministers for a furlough to Europe and not to their home communities may be interpreted in two ways. Firstly if interpreted from an economic point of view then it reflects a high consciousness on the part of the indigenous ministers but if interpreted from an ideological point of view then their zeal to visit Europe and not their home communities was a reflection of their low consciousness. Besides being financially profitable, furloughs would have given the indigenous ministers opportunities for networking.

Rules regarding children's education continued to fluctuate. Initially the church was paying for the education of ministers' children. With the passage of time, perhaps because of financial crisis in the church, the number of children per minister who qualified for assistance with school fees was limited to four.

There was no medical aid policy. Ministers who needed help in this area would approach the connexional office which might decide to assist or not to assist, depending on the availability of funds and other factors. Although ministers began to contribute towards the retirement fund in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the scheme was up to 1980 not professionally administered. Individual ministers would make appeals for help. It was in this context that Matthew Rusike claimed in a letter that his pension was less than the wages of a 'garden boy.'

There was no funeral policy for employees of the Wesleyan Methodist Church. Many indigenous ministers died in abject poverty, as testified by Rusike's letter. It is clear that the indigenous ministers were working under relatively poor conditions. They used the Bible as a resource for liberation, like their white counterparts used the Bible as a tool for domination. Thus, the Bible was used for different purposes by different interest groups. The indigenous ministers cited Biblical texts which had to do with justice and equality whereas missionaries cited texts urging conversion and obedience.

Conscious of their domination, in 1963 the indigenous ministers formed the African Ministers Fellowship. This could be compared to, what was known as, the Black Ministers Consultation in the MCSA, formed in May 1975 as a response to political and economic domination of the indigenous ministers by their European counterparts. The Wesleyan Methodist Church in Zimbabwe was ahead of MCSA in this regard, but there is no evidence that the South African indigenous ministers copied the idea from the Zimbabweans.

Some indigenous ministers made numerous appeals for financial assistance. Others engaged in 'stealing' church money. I however argue in this thesis that, what the missionaries refer to as 'theft' could have been interpreted differently by the indigenous ministers. For them, as oppressed people, it could have been seen as a case of mutual exploitation. Some were accused of being 'lazy'. A case in point was Nemapare but, again, it could have been a way of slowing down the means of production. Scott refers to this as infrapolitics.<sup>1386</sup>

In the second half of the century, seven indigenous Methodist ministers had to answer charges of embezzlement of funds. In the same period no European minister was charged for such an offence. However, it is possible that reports of such cases, if they occurred, were not kept in the archives. The one European missionary, charged in the same period, was accused of abusing alcohol.

Some of the indigenous ministers started to operate businesses, on the quiet and against the provisions of the church. They obviously saw such sidelines as a gateway to upward social mobility. Three indigenous ministers acquired farms. Two established business enterprises.

The indigenous ministers largely responded to their situation of deprivation by staging various forms of resistance. Some engaged in a 'play the fools' strategy, in order to access available resources. By doing this, they were beating the missionaries at their own game. This was another form of resistance.

There are four possible reasons for the poor economic position of the indigenous ministers. Firstly, it could be that the church's financial position was poor, hence the small stipends. Secondly, European missionaries were employed by the missionary society whereas the indigenous clergy fell first under the local synod and, later, the conference. This accounted for differences in levels of salaries. Thirdly, racism played a part and, lastly, the church prioritised investments as becomes evident from its audited accounts. Investment was pursued at the expense of the indigenous ministers' welfare.

James Scott's theory on domination and resistance, set out in *Domination and the Arts of Resistance Hidden Transcripts*,<sup>1387</sup> was central to my understanding of the behaviour of missionaries as the dominant group, and of indigenous ministers as the dominated. The dominated engaged in 'hidden transcripts'. They sometimes engaged in politics of disguise or

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<sup>1386</sup> James Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, p.183.

<sup>1387</sup> As explained in this thesis.



„infrapolitics’. However, when they could not bear the hardship anymore, they made their dissatisfaction public.

The theory of *Peasant Consciousness*<sup>1388</sup> by Ranger was equally important in this context. Its implication is that the deprivation, experienced by the indigenous ministers, increased their level of political consciousness.

In a nutshell, the indigenous ministers’ level of stipends and working conditions increased the level of their political consciousness. They realised that they were economically dominated and sought to reverse the situation.

### **7.2.7 Indigenous ministers swinging like a pendulum**

Chapter five seeks to establish how the indigenous Methodist ministers perceived indigenous culture and to assess whether they perceived adherence to African culture as an expression of dissatisfaction with the status quo, namely cultural domination.

The word culture is deployed to include religious aspects. It emerges in this chapter that the Europeans missionaries in general had a very low opinion of the indigenous culture. They wanted to replace African culture with Christianity. David Chidester’s *Savage Systems* and John and Jean Comaroff’s *Of Revelation and Revolution*<sup>1389</sup> provided the basis for an understanding of this phenomenon. The Comaroffs argue that the Nonconformist British missionaries saw conversion as including a negation of cultural aspects.<sup>1390</sup> Chidester holds that European missionaries doubted the existence of a proper religion amongst the indigenous people of South Africa.<sup>1391</sup>

In the early years of missionary endeavour, the indigenous ministers seem to have assimilated the missionary worldview and rubbished several aspects of African culture. For example, the practice of paying bridewealth (*lobola*) was demonised by both the missionaries and the early indigenous ministers. With the passage of time, and especially in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the indigenous ministers and some missionaries seem to have outgrown their disdain of African culture.

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<sup>1388</sup>This theory has been discussed in this thesis.

<sup>1389</sup>Both theories discussed in this thesis.

<sup>1390</sup>John and Jean Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, p. 44-58.

<sup>1391</sup>See David Chidester, *Savage Systems*, p. 80 -92.

The Methodist missionaries were intolerant of the indigenous cultures, particularly in the first half of the 20th century. As they apparently overcame their negative perception, they began, in the second half of the century, to accept certain aspects of African culture such as bridewealth (*lobola*).

In the second half of the century, some indigenous clergy began to perceive African culture in two ways, both significant. Firstly, they were ambivalent, swinging like a pendulum, from one extreme to another. When they were politically inspired, they ‚preached‘ adherence to African culture, only to negate their traditions when that was more expedient. But overall, they tended to perceive adherence to African culture as an affirmation of their ‚Africanness‘ and an expression of patriotism. Banana’s thesis on rewriting the Bible which was popularised in the 1990s was conceived in the 1970s.

Others opposed African culture and embraced certain European practices such as the writing of a ‚Will‘. A few indigenous ministers like Ramushu were nicknamed ‚black Europeans‘ because of their love and appreciation of European ways of life. But even the detribalised indigenous ministers continued to express a subconscious adherence to African culture. For example, Rusike wrote a ‚Will‘. The practice was un-African but in that ‚Will‘ he bequeathed his farm to his first born son, ahead of his spouse. In the way of distributing his estate he was African.

In cases where indigenous ministers felt that African cultures needed to be reformed, they still argued that it was not the business of the European missionaries to try and do so: African culture should be reformed by Africans themselves. This demonstrates the degree to which the issue of African culture was politicised. Indigenous ministers from other denominations shared these viewpoints, for example, Bishop Hatendi of the Anglican Church. However, there were sections among the indigenous ministers in other denominations who condemned African culture.

Simply put, it is noted that, although there were variations, to the greater extent the indigenous ministers of the Wesleyan Methodist Church adhered to African culture, especially in the second half of the 20th century. This adherence to African culture was a consequence of an increased level of political consciousness. The Second *Chimurenga* that began in the 1960s celebrated the role of traditional culture and this could have impacted on how the indigenous clergy perceived African culture.

### **7.2.8 Indigenous ministers: patriots, sellouts or both?**

Two indigenous ministers died as martyrs during the First *Chimurenga*. These were Moleli and Anta. The chapter observes that Matthew Zvimba, Meshek Zvimba and Moses Mfazi were the earliest African voices to be raised against European domination. As a result, the Zvimba brothers seceded and formed their own African Independent Churches whilst Mfazi left the ministry altogether. During the period under review, five African independent churches were formed, splitting from the Wesleyan Methodist Church. These were led by Matthew Zvimba, Meshek Zvimba, Esau Nemapare, Paul Mwazha and Mai Chaza. The number of secessions was high compared to other mainline churches. For instance, in the ELCZ there were grumblings but these did not lead to breakaways.<sup>1392</sup> In the Anglican Church there were two breakaways led by John Masowe and Nyabadza of Saint Faith Mission.<sup>1393</sup> Masowe was born Shoniwa and he came from an area called Gandanzara which means place of hunger. His prophethood originated in the context of deprivation after the 1930 economic depression. The high level of secessions in the Methodist church reflects the high level of political consciousness of its indigenous clergy

The indigenous ministers continued to play critical roles in the life of the church and country. They opposed the Land Apportionment Act. They also supported the appointment of the first indigenous leader for the synod. They opposed UDI in Zimbabwe. When the church deployed chaplains to the government forces, some of the indigenous ministers such as Banana condemned this practice. More importantly, when the WCC was criticised for supporting nationalist parties through its Programme to Combat Racism, some indigenous ministers supported the WCC's decision.

After the hardship of the period from 1930 to 1950, the indigenous ministers became more politically oriented. Chapter six deliberately selects particular indigenous ministers for a closer analysis. These are chosen because of their outstanding contributions to the eventual independence of Zimbabwe. They include Thompson Samkange, Arthur Kanodereka and Canaan Banana. I am aware that Canaan Banana was a controversial figure and that he was later withdrawn from the Methodist ministry. This did not prevent me from exploring his legacy, because he was defrocked only in 1997, well after the period under investigation. The indigenous ministers' contribution to the struggle for independence was immense. In fact,

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<sup>1392</sup>Dr. Anois Moyo of ELCZ, telephone interview, 7 November 2011.

<sup>1393</sup>Conversation with Rev Michal Mbona of the Anglican Church, 7 November 2011.

their contribution puts the role, played by religion in the struggle for liberation, into the public sphere.

Besides these selected three, there were other indigenous ministers who played pivotal roles in the war of liberation. Some, such as Makwehe and others exercised pastoral ministry to the political detainees. Some engaged in mass mobilisation, an activity that was synonymous with the name of Alexander Chirisa. Some indigenous ministers supported the liberation war materially; others provided accommodation to „spies’. The indigenous Methodist ministers fulfilled a central role in the struggle for independence, as did indigenous ministers from other denominations. Evidence that the Wesleyan Methodist Church contributed immensely to the liberation struggle includes for example the eventful life of the activist Arthur Kanodereka, whose death was described as cold blooded murder by the Wesleyan Methodist Church.

The fact that Banana became the first ceremonial president of the country in 1980 is a testimony to the contribution made by the Wesleyan Methodist Church to the realisation of independence. An answer is needed to the question whether the indigenous clergy were patriots or sellouts or somewhere in between. The answer is: they were all these things. Some adhered to African culture, some did not. The same individual would at one time follow African culture and at other times condemn it. Politically they also had somewhat restless identities. For instance, Banana and Kanodereka started as members of UANC but they defected to ZANU. In the perspective of the UANC the two were sellouts but from ZANU’s viewpoint they were patriots. In another example the radical Thompson Samkange was accused of not being aggressive enough. When he faced possible arrest on allegations that he had organised an industrial strike that put Bulawayo to a halt, he responded by apportioning the blame on others.<sup>1394</sup>

### **7.3 Conclusions of the study**

On the basis of the findings in this research this thesis concludes that the level of political consciousness of the indigenous clergy increased in the second half of the century.

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<sup>1394</sup> See evidence of T.D. Samkange, 5 August 1948, file S1561/19, volume one , NAZ.

### **7.3.1 Why did increased political awareness in the second half of the century?**

This resulted from a variety of factors such as increased hardship suffered in Christian villages as well as in public life. Also the Second World War had a significant effect. One consequence was that indigenous people returned from the war with a diminished respect for whites. They had fought side by side and experienced the human side of whites, especially their fear of death.

UTC was established in the second half of the century and its influence had far reaching consequences for the political consciousness of the indigenous clergy. Economic deprivation continued to be felt in the second half of the century with increased industrialisation and expropriation of arable land. This led to an increased number of strikes in industrialised areas as well as to the formation of African initiated churches.

### **7.3.2 Why indigenous clergy of the Methodist Church?**

Other denominations such as ELCZ also played a part in the liberation war, but to a lesser degree than the Methodists. However, arguably the Catholics played the most significant role as documented by Janice McLaughlin in her book *On the Frontline Catholic Missions in Zimbabwe's liberation War*.<sup>1395</sup>

The Catholics have a long tradition of ministry of justice and peace. But, compared to protestant churches, the Wesleyan Methodists were ahead. I will suggest four reasons why the Methodists took a unique place in the struggle for independence. Firstly, they came from a nonconformist tradition like the missionaries who worked amongst the Tswana, described in the Comaroffs' *Revelation and Revolution*.<sup>1396</sup> The nonconformist spirit led to a tendency to refuse to adapt and to resist the status quo. Their tradition was built on rebellion. Wesley's teachings opened their eyes. Although, John Wesley was conservative in terms of politics, his social concerns were revolutionary. It is possible that the indigenous ministers of the Wesleyan Methodist Church focused on certain constructions of Wesley which supported

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<sup>1395</sup> Janice McLaughlin, *On the Frontline Catholic Missions in Zimbabwe's Liberation War*.

<sup>1396</sup> This book has already been discussed in this thesis, see chapter one.

their participation in politics, and ignored other Wesleyan constructions that negated their cause.

A second reason could be that the Wesleyan Methodist Church employed a greater number of indigenous ministers than ELCZ and other Protestant churches. A large number of indigenous ministers could have meant a large degree of activity. This was certainly the case in South Africa.<sup>1397</sup>

The history and theology of the church possibly provides us with a fourth reason. Although the Anglican Church was bigger than the Methodists, its historical close association with the colonial master made it more difficult to participate in the struggle. This is not to suggest that there were no Anglican indigenous ministers who fought against the system. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe could have been limited by Luther's doctrine of two kingdoms which was, until recently, interpreted as meaning that governments are instituted by God and under his jurisdiction and therefore they have to be uncritically obeyed.

A final reason is perhaps linked to pastoral practice. Other denominations were, more than the Methodists, inclined to focus on spiritual than on material matters. This could have inhibited them from engaging in politics.

## **7.4 Historiographic observation**

This study uses the Kingdom of God approach. As has been established, the approach is ecumenical in nature. It tries to accommodate everyone concerned; hence the study discusses missionaries even though its focus is on the indigenous clergy. Because of its ecumenical approach, the thesis develops a comparative perspective, discussing other denominations as well. More importantly, it assesses the actions of both missionaries and indigenous ministers in the light of ethical values embodied by the Kingdom of God approach, including mercy, love, compassion and justice.

It emerges then, that both missionaries and indigenous ministers were people with strengths and weaknesses. The weaknesses of the missionaries were exalted because they were the

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<sup>1397</sup> See the denominational statistics given by David Thomas, *Christ Divided Liberalism, Ecumenism and Race in South Africa*, p.198.

dominant party and the weaknesses of the indigenous clergy hidden because they were dominated. Under oppression, it can be argued, what is immoral becomes moral.

## **7.5 Research gaps and recommendations for future research**

In the course of this study I have identified a few knowledge gaps that could become the focus of future research. Firstly, there is need for a study on the contribution of the spouses of the indigenous ministers of the Wesleyan Methodist Church to the struggle for political independence in Zimbabwe. Secondly, a study could be undertaken on the masculinities of the indigenous clergy. Such a study would have to assess among other things the extent to which the indigenous clergy were wife beaters? Were they circumcised? These and others such questions could contribute to our knowledge of the development of early Methodism in Zimbabwe. Another study of great interest could be conducted on the role played by the Methodist indigenous clergy in the development of democracy from 1980 to the present. And, finally, the roles, played by the indigenous clergy of other denominations in the struggle for political freedom, would be a worthwhile topic to pursue.

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## **Interviews**

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Hlatshwayo, Jairos, interview conducted by Kennedy Gondongwe on 2 January 2011 in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.

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## **Private conversations**

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Moyo Ainos, telephone conversation with Kennedy Gondongwe, 7 November 2011.

Raymond, Kumalo, private conversations held at the School of Theology in Pietermaritzburg,  
8 May 2011.



## Appendix 1

## UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

*University of KwaZulu-Natal  
Research Office  
Govan Mbeki Centre  
Westville Campus  
University Road  
Cluillern Hills  
Westville  
3629  
South Africa  
Tel No: +2731 2603587  
Fax No: +27 31 260 2384  
E-mail : [naidoo4\(3\)@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:naidoo4(3)@ukzn.ac.za)*

05 December 2009

Rev. KGondongwe 26  
Chamberlain Lane  
Scottsville,  
PIETERMARTIZBURG,

Dear Rev. Gondongwe

PROTOCOL: African Clerics and the Emergence of Resistance to Colonial Domination. The development of Indigenous clergy in the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Zimbabwe from 1891-1977. ETHICAL APPROVAL NUMBER: HSS/0835/2009: Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Sciences

**In response to your application dated 20 November 2009, Student Number: 208529369 the Humanities & Social Sciences Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been given FULL APPROVAL.**

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years.

**I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.**

Yours faithfully

Professor Steve Codings (Chair) HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES ETHICS COMMITTEE SC/s

**cc: Prof. P Denis cc: Ms B Jacobsen**

Founding Campuses:

™ Edgewood Howard College Medical School Pietermaritzburg Westville

## **Appendix 2: A transcribed interview**

Interviewee Rev Naison Makwehe (initials NM)

Interviewer Kennedy Gondongwe (initials KG)

Transcriber Kennedy Gondongwe (initials KG)

Venue- House Number 10684 Zengeza 4, Chitungwiza, Zimbabwe

Date 5 April 2010

Accessibility Digital recording

Ethical issues Interview consent form and interview release form signed

K G: Please tell me about yourself and you came to be a minister in the Methodist Church

NM: My name is Naison Makwehe. I was born in the early 1920s but I am not sure of the exactly date I was born. My parents were not educated. I was born in Chipinge District of Zimbabwe. My father was a polygamist. I went to school, when I was already above 10 years old. I was educated at Mount Selinda in Chipinge and after school I was working in the farms in order to help raise money. When I completed standard six, I trained as a teacher and taught for quite some years before I joined Methodist ministry. I trained at Waddilove Institute and after my training I travelled length and breadth of this country taking Methodist appointments. I worked in various circuits which include Siabuwa, Masvingo, Nenguo, Chibero and Makwiro where I spent 10 years. I was at one time district chairperson. I worked in various church committees. My wife had been a teacher and she supported me throughout our ministry. We were blessed with five children.

KG: How did you become a minister?

NM: After I trained as a teacher, I also trained as an evangelist and my interaction with ministers and missionaries made me to desire to join ministry. I offered myself for ministry and was sent to Waddilove for training.

KG: How would you evaluate the theological training that you received?

NM: As I have said I was trained at Waddilove and missionaries who were in charge of training never emphasised theological knowledge instead their interest was to equip African ministers for ministerial tasks as preaching and bringing sinners to God.

KG: To what extent were the indigenous clergy allowed to do further studies, especially at overseas universities?

NM: The church particularly some missionaries were not interested in sending indigenous clergy to study overseas. The first person to successfully go overseas was Crispin Mazobere. When he initially applied to go to the United States for further studies, the answer was emphatically no.

KG: How did he end up going there if the answer was a no?

NM: Mazobere absconded and went without the church's permission. He was almost excommunicated.

KG: How would you characterise the relationship between the European missionaries and the indigenous clergy from the time the church developed the indigenous ministers?

NM: European missionaries would try to fraternise with their African colleagues in many ways but one thing they would not do was to eat at the same table with them. They would attend the meetings together but when it was time to eat, they would separate themselves. It was during one of those occasions that the radical Esau Nemapare suggested that the indigenous clergy occasionally meet to share their experiences. This became the beginning of an association which began as a platform for lamentation but transformed itself into a planning and plotting platform. In fact, the association began in 1930s when the native [sic] ministers managed to come together to discuss issues affecting them as African ministers. The association developed into an official fellowship in 1965.

K G: What was the purpose of these meetings?

NM: After the meeting we would send our concerns to the church's relevant committee on top of being platforms for sharing.

KG: How prevalent were cases of racism in the church?

NM: They were plenty although not by all missionaries. For example the tradition was that after infant Baptism a minister would be expected to kiss the child who would have been baptised but some missionaries such as Bill Blackway and John Roberts would only kiss white children and refuse to kiss black children whom they baptised.

KG: What was the level of stipends and allowances for the indigenous clergy?

NM: Missionaries always hid behind the question of money but we know it was about racism. In the 1950s a missionary called Kenneth Underwood argued in a synod meeting that there was no justification for African ministers to want to earn more money because they had a variety of cheap food to choose from. They could eat wild fruits, tree leaves and lots of other food stuffs whereas the Europeans were limited to a strict diet. This was racism. The level of stipends was always very low especially for people who had been teachers and used to earn higher.

KG: How prevalent were views such as the one by Underwood?

NM: Quite a number of missionaries subscribed to this. Harold Paget supported that African ministers were supposed to be given money only enough for their survival because Africans did not know how to use money. If I can quote him correctly he said: “ In any case any extra dollar in the pocket of an African is an incentive for him either to marry more wives or to increase the number of children and yet the victim is always the African Women. We must be seen to be protecting these poor women.”

KG: How were you personally affected by the church's poor financial position?

NM: After 1975, the church continued to struggle financially on the other hand the indigenous clergy continued to press for an increase in the stipends. In Siabuwa I worked for two years without getting a full pay.

KG: How would you characterise the issue of accommodation for the indigenous clergy?

NM: Each circuit was expected to build a house before they were given a minister. The church was not really concerned with the standard of the manse,

especially those situated in the rural areas. In fact, circuits were divided into two categories, these were African and European. Indigenous ministers would always be appointed to African circuits although this was never documented. All manses in rural areas were not electrified and were without tap water. It was rare to find an indigenous minister stationed in a European circuit. Personally, I was appointed to Siabuwa circuit as from 1951. I was not the first minister to be at this place. Job Mwamukwa had been there before me. He stayed there for only one year and succumbed to malaria. I was sent to this place soon after the death of Mwamukwa. For me, it was not so much about how the house was built but it was about where it was built. The house was built in an isolated area where the church intended to build a church. During the night, elephants would roam around the house and lions would be roaring. I would put up fire outside the house throughout the night to scare animals away.

KG: What was the mode of transport for the indigenous clergy as they executed their duties?

NM: I remember that when I joined ministry in the 1940s right through to the 1970s, European ministers travelled first class when travelling by train. Indigenous clergy travelled economy class. I remember the journey to Gweru, when I was travelling on church business in the company of a European missionary. I was booked economy class whilst the missionary was booked first class. There was never a scheme to help the indigenous ministers purchase the vehicles which they so much needed in their vast circuits. Up to the 1960s, the means of transport for the indigenous clergy was at best bicycles and at worst they would travel on foot. Later on in the 1970s the synod accepted that the church purchases motor cycles and give them to the indigenous ministers stationed in remote areas. This became a source of danger for many of them who had never driven a motorbike before and had to gain experience on the country side's rough roads. Enoch Mazhandu had a terrible accident that condemned him to paralysis for a very long time. Even when he recovered, he still had to live with occasional memory loss in his life. Philemon Mzungwana also had a terrible accident with a motorbike and for a long time he was hospitalised. Even when he

recovered he could not walk the length and breadth of his circuit that he had to be transferred to a much smaller circuit.

KG: To what extent were European missionaries given nicknames by the indigenous clergy?

NM: Quite a number of missionaries had nicknames. Stewart was nicknamed *Chipurunyanye* because he would rarely laugh.

K G: What was the attitude of the indigenous clergy to the payment of the mothers' cow?

NM: As far as I remember, all indigenous Methodist ministers paid this cow. Aaaaa perhaps yaaa but all.

KG: What was the attitude of the indigenous clergy to the payment of bridewealth *lobola*?

NM: You I know you are married. If you have not finished paying do so. All the indigenous clergy including myself continued to observe the practice of *lobola*. It is such an important practice that the indigenous clergy could not dispense of. This practice was affected by Christian teachings. Many Christian families managed to do away with requirements such as one for the son in-law to provide beer during the process of negotiations. I can tell you without hesitation that all the indigenous clergy continued to charge *lobola*. The problem with this practice was that it was believed that the living dead had some stake in it. The oldest person within the family would need to inform the spirit world that one of the daughters had changed the totem by marriage and you needed to show the living dead the cattle paid by the in-laws. To ignore this practice would be to risk infertility of the married daughter. However, quite a number of indigenous clergy saw the value of Christian marriage.

KG: What were the attitude of the indigenous clergy to traditional healers and the existence of witches?

NM: Many indigenous clergy were afraid of witches and visited traditional healers to fortify themselves from the harm that could be caused by the witches. On the other hand witches targeted the indigenous ministers because they wanted to prove their power over them.



KG: To what extent did the indigenous clergy engage in bringing back ceremony (*kurova guva*?)

NM: Before the advent of evangelism in the Methodist Church, the indigenous clergy lived double lives where in the presence of missionaries they pretended to have left cultural issues but on their own they engaged in *kurova guva* as well as other practices.

KG: In your view, who was the most political indigenous minister in the Methodist church and why?

NM: The first time that I heard an indigenous minister talking so strongly about the evils of the government was at Vungwi School where I was working as a teacher. I heard Samkange talking about the need to achieve equal rights in Zimbabwe. He urged teachers to refuse to be served through a window when they visited district administrators' offices as was the rule. Only whites would enter into the office of district administrator.

KG: How were the indigenous clergy involved in the struggle?

NM: The clergy smuggled letters from nationalists into and out of prisons. The indigenous clergy would hide the letters in their Bible covers. This was the most important role played by the indigenous clergy but others contributed differently. Myself in 1976, I was stationed at Sandringham mission as a chaplain. Students and teachers always looked up to me to inform them about what was happening in the political terrain. I was the only one who owned a radio so I would make it a point that I listen to radio Mozambique which was broadcast by ZANU. This radio was a counter to the Rhodesian propaganda. I would then inform the students and the teachers on the latest developments concerning the war. No one knew my sources of information. I did not want them to know because it was a crime to listen to that radio station. I also made good friendship with the freedom fighters and as a result I would always drive them to one point and another. In the following years I think it was in 1978 or 1979 freedom fighters asked me to drive them to a place which was a little bit far. As usual, they would not tell me where exactly they wanted to go. I drove my car through the farms from Chibero to Beatrice road through Skyline. They put very heavy ammunition inside sacks and put manure to cover the weapons. When we got to Beatrice

road they asked to be dropped in an area within the farms. They just thanked me and told me that there was going to be a very huge war during the night. True to their word, in the morning it was reported that the fuel tanks had been attacked by people with very sophisticated weapons. I would not know if the attackers were the ones I had transported or not. However, the possibility is high that these were the same people or they were forming part of the group that attacked the fuel tanks.

KG: Do you have anything else that you want to share?

NM: Only say I feel proud of the role that we played to remove injustices during our time. My heart bleeds because you young ministers who have taken over from us are so quite when the country is dying like this. We will rest in our graves if we know that you will continue with the prophetic role which we inaugurated for you.

K G: We will do our level best but pray for us. Thank you very much for your time and agreeing to share your experiences with me.

NM: It is always a pleasure.

The End

**Appendix 3: Consent form**

My name is Kennedy Gondongwe. I am a PhD student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. I am engaged in a research as a part of my studies on the Zimbabwean indigenous Wesleyan Methodist ministers and the emergence of resistance to political domination. I am requesting you to participate in an interview which will be conducted by me.

There are no monetary benefits in participating in this interview. However, the results of the interview will help the church and other bodies to understand the history of the indigenous Methodist ministers.

Your acceptance to participate in this interview will mean that you participate in an interview which will last about an hour. An interview is simply a session where I will be asking some questions and you will be answering to the best of your knowledge. This interview will be recorded.

Your participation in this interview is voluntary and you are free to withhold some information or to with draw from the interview at any given time. You are free to ask any question.

**Authorisation**

I have read and understood the paragraphs above and I understand the nature of this study. I also understand that by agreeing to participate in this study I have not forfeited any legal or human right. I do understand that should I have any queries with regard to the manner the interview was conducted or any other matter I would contact the researcher on [kmuseyamwa@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:kmuseyamwa@yahoo.co.uk) or his supervisor [denis@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:denis@ukzn.ac.za) both based at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

It is clear to me that I have the right to refuse to participate or I may withdraw from such at any given time without prejudice. I also agree that my name and the details of the interview will be used for the purposes of the researcher’s studies as well as any other publication that the researcher may engage in.

I agree to the above.....

Participant’s Names.....Date .....

Researcher’s Names.....Date.....

## Appendix 4

Source: Methodist Connexional Archives

Banana's personal file



RHODESIA

Office of the

MINISTER OF JUSTICE AND LAW AND ORDER

PRIVATE BAG 7704,  
CAUSEWAY,  
RHODESIA.

28th June, 1975.

The Rev, A. M. Ndhlela,  
The Methodist Church in Rhodesia,  
P.O. Box 8298,  
Causeway.

Dear Sir,

I have been instructed by the Minister of Law and Order to reply, to your letter dated 18th June, 1975, and to inform you that, as you are now no doubt aware, the Rev. Banana was recently prosecuted for leaving Rhodesia illegally. He was sentenced to three months<sup>1</sup> imprisonment which he is now serving.

You are probably also aware that the Rev. Banana was detained for


activities other than the above-mentioned criminal offence, and therefore his conviction does not materially affect the question of his detention.

It is noted from your letter that you believe that Mr. Banana's release would make it "easier for members of the Methodist Church to continue to play a reconciling part in the life of our country. "It is also observed that you "do not believe that Mr. Banana's influence is such that his release would materially influence the present course, of political events." Bearing in mind Mr. Banana's previous activities, the Minister has yet to be convinced of the reconciliatory part he might play in the community. Moreover, it must be pointed out that political activities alone are not a ground for Mr. Banana's detention, but one cannot escape the thought that if he had adhered to his spiritual activities he would not find himself in his present predicament,

Finally, I have to advise, you that your undertaking to accept him for a Ministerial appointment provided that he devotes himself to the work of the Ministry, will be borne in mind by the-Minister when the time comes that the .Minister is able to consider his release.

In the meantime, his case will be considered by the Review Tribunal in the normal course.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink on a yellow rectangular background. The signature is cursive and appears to read 'N. H. Linnell'.

N. H. Linnell Private Secretary to  
the Minister of Law and Order

## Appendix 5

### Letter from Wesley Theological Seminary to the Prime Minister of Rhodesia

Source: Banana's personal file, Methodist Connexional Archives

June 3, 1975

The  
Honorable  
Ian Smith  
Prime Minister  
Salisbury,  
Rhodesia

Dear Sir:

We, the faculty and administration of Wesley Theological Seminary, have been profoundly disturbed to learn of the detention by your government of the Reverend Canaan Banana. We should like to communicate our convictions regarding his Christian character and peaceful purpose.

Mr. Banana came to Wesley Seminary at our invitation and with scholarship support from the Seminary and church bodies. He was given a British passport, his Rhodesian passport having previously been confiscated by your government. He was a diligent student, faithfully fulfilling all of our academic requirements. He impressed both faculty members and fellow students with his mature Christian attitude, and he proved himself a kind and warm friend to many persons in this community. He worked as an assistant chaplain at The American University here, and in this capacity showed himself to be a concerned pastor, genuinely interested in the people to whom he ministered.

An important consideration to which we would draw your attention is Mr. Banana's commitment to non-violence in accordance with his Christian faith. It is our belief that the detention of such a person is not in the best interest of your country and that the situations of stress and conflict in Africa today desperately need such apostles of non-violence. The removal of witnesses to non-violence inevitably polarizes a conflict and increases the possibility of violence. We therefore respectfully request that you free Mr. Banana so that he can resume his Christian ministry and pursue his vocation in peace.

John L. Knight,  
President J. Philip  
Wogaman, Dean for  
the Faculty and  
Administration

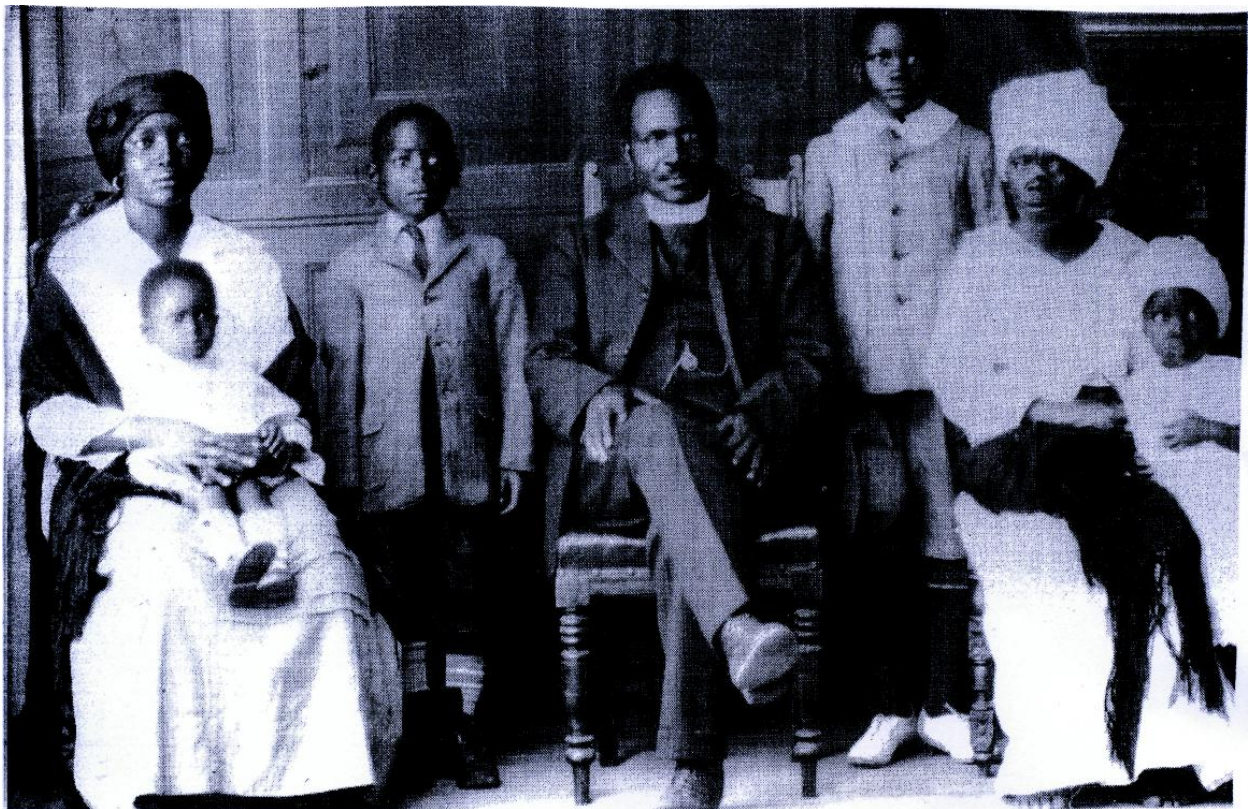
Wesley Theological  
Seminary Washington, D.

## **Appendix 6**

**Thompson Samkange sits in the centre with his children Ernest, Stanlake, Grace, his mother far left. Little girl is Norah**

**Source: Samkange private archives**

**The picture was taken in Bulawayo in 1929.**



## **Appendix 7**



**Matthew Zvimba: A precursor to militant resistant to political domination**

**Source: Picture stored in his personal file**

**Methodist Connexional Archives**

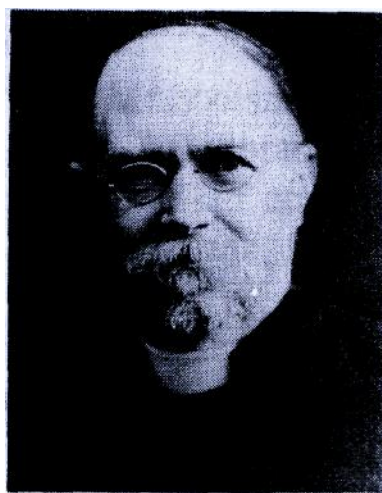


## Appendix 8

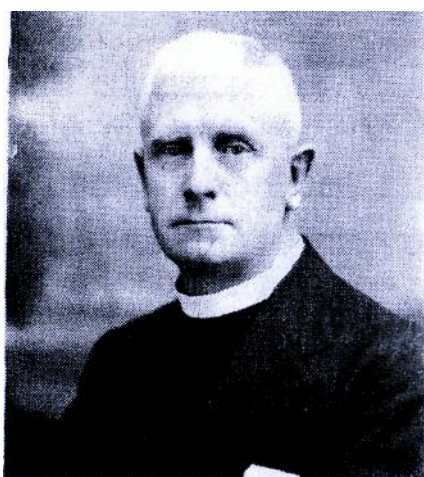
### District Chairmen and lecturers UTC



Owen Watkins  
1891-1902



John White  
1903-1927



Frank Noble  
1928-1938



Herbert Carter  
1939-1953



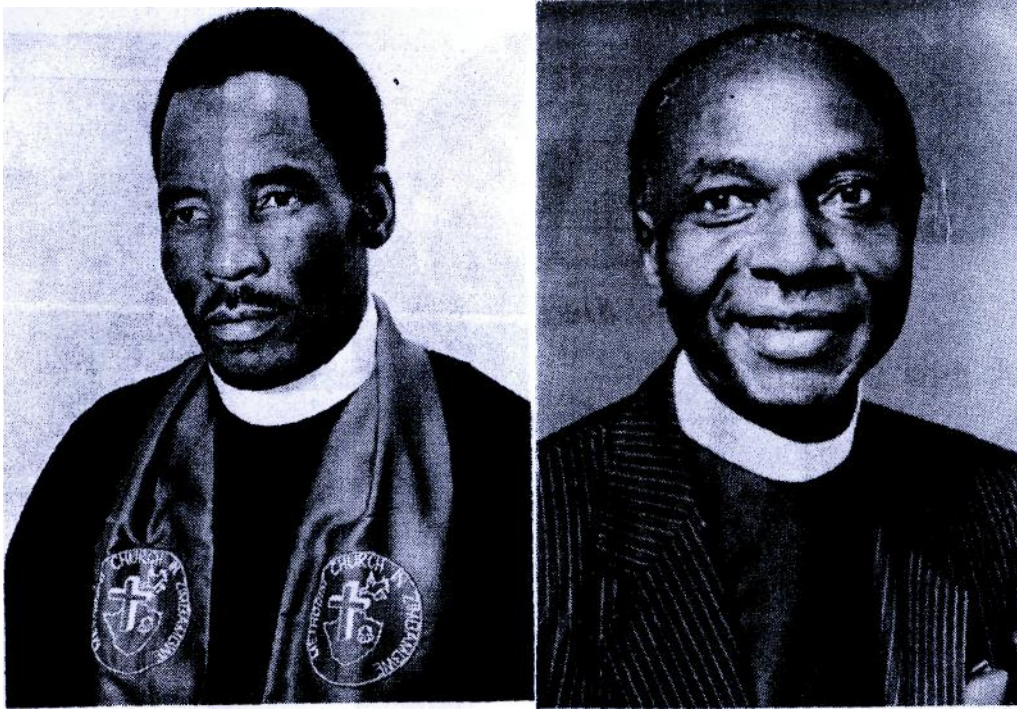
Andrew Ndhlela

1965-1977



Caspen Makuzwa

Prominent indigenous minister



**Farai Chirisa (left) and Dr Chrispin Mazobere- lecturers at UTC.**