

**“Garden boys and new farm boys are better paid than us.”
The case of the Zimbabwean Wesleyan Methodist
indigenous clergy and the development of
resistance to domination, 1950–1977**

*Kennedy Gondongwe*¹

School of Religion and Theology, University of KwaZulu-Natal,
Pietermaritzburg, South Africa

Abstract

The second half of the 20th century was characterised by hardship for African people. This state of affairs also pervaded the Christian churches, and in the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe some white missionaries promulgated harsh legislation to govern, among other things, stay on mission land. The stipends of the indigenous clergy were pegged at relatively low levels. While there was a vehicle scheme for the white missionaries, members of the indigenous clergy were expected to get around on foot or, where the situation was more favourable, to travel by bicycle. The indigenous clergy were made to suffer many indignities. At the heart of this practice was the white missionaries' desire to retain power. Once the Africans realised this, resistance was inevitable. The resistance came in various ways. Some engaged in open resistance while others engaged in hidden resistance. The unintended consequence of the hardship suffered by Africans was the development of a radical spirit among the indigenous clergy. This article argues that the poor working conditions of the indigenous clergy gave birth to a high level of political consciousness, which expressed itself in many forms of resistance.

Introduction

The aim of this article is to explore the working conditions of the Wesleyan Methodist indigenous clergy in Zimbabwe from 1950 to 1977. The 1950s are important in the history of Africa because it marks the beginning of organised

¹ Kennedy Gondongwe is a Doctoral student in the history of Christianity under the supervision of Philippe Denis at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. He is also a lecturer in the History of Methodism at Seth Mokotimi Methodist Seminary and a lecturer in religion at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

resistance to domination. The year 1977 was a very critical year for the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe because it was the year in which the church became autonomous. This study seeks to establish the possible connection between deprivation and the rise of the spirit of resistance in the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe. The overarching question behind this study is: What impact did the level of stipends and the working conditions of the indigenous clergy have on their political consciousness? This article will attempt to find an answer to this question.

Location of the study

This study belongs to the field of the history of Christianity in Africa in general and to the history of the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe in particular. 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 in the spreading and development of Christianity in Africa. In the Zimbabwean context, during colonialism,² Terence Ranger convincingly attempted to put the African voice into the public domain. However, his works were overshadowed by the vast amount of publications by the missionaries and colonialists. With the collapse of colonial governments in Africa, the need to rewrite the history of Christianity on the continent became apparent and many African scholars were engaged in this task. The history of the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe was initially published by missionaries. This was because the indigenes had neither the adequate education nor the resources to become involved in such a task.

Missionary history typically and glaringly downplayed the role of Africans in the spreading of the gospel. In postcolonial Zimbabwe, the history of the Methodist Church was written by a secular historian, Chengetai Zvobgo.³ In fact, there was a remarkable interest in religious history on the part of secular historians across denominations during this time. On the eve of Zimbabwe's political independence, Ngwabi Bhebhe published substantial material on the history of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Zimbabwe.⁴ After Zimbabwe's independence, Stan Mudenge published a book entitled,

² See some of Terence Ranger's works, *Peasant Consciousness and Guerrilla War in Zimbabwe*, Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1985, *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia, 1896-97. A study in African Resistance*, London: Heb, 1967. *The African Voice in Southern Rhodesia, 1898-1930*, London: Heb, 1970.

³ See Chengetai J. M. Zvobgo, *The Wesleyan Methodist Missions in Zimbabwe*, Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications, 1991.

⁴ For instance, see Ngwabi Bhebhe, *Christianity and Traditional Religion in Western Zimbabwe*, Harare: Longman, 1979.

The political history of Munhumutapa, in which the Catholic Church features prominently.⁵

From 1990, there was a wave of indigenous church historians, writing the history of Christianity in Zimbabwe. In this endeavour, Paul Gundani became the leading scholar in writing the history of the Catholic Church in Zimbabwe.⁶ In Zimbabwe, no published work on the history of the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe written by a trained religious historian is available. The current study is ground-breaking in the sense that it is the first to specifically focus on the indigenous clergy of the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe. I am, however, aware that some considerable work has been done in relation to the theme of indigenous clergy, especially in the Catholic Church in Zimbabwe. Two such works are *The Jesuit perspective on the formation of African Clergy and religious institutes in Zimbabwe 1922- 1959*⁷ and *The Diakonos Option: an investigation into the development of an Indigenous Clergy in the Catholic Archdiocese of Bulawayo*⁸ respectively by Creary Nicholas and Paul Gundani. In relation to the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe, Terence Ranger has published a book on the Samkange family,⁹ Paul Gundani¹⁰ wrote an article in a book on Canaan Banana and Ezra Chitando¹¹ wrote an article on the contribution of Canaan Banana to religious studies. Although the works have contributed to academic knowledge considerably, there remains a need for more research and publishing in the area.

The key questions in the field of study today include the following: How were indigenous people recruited and trained? How was the indigenous clergy developed? What are the methodologies to be employed in the study of the indigenous clergy? What is the historiographic perspective best suited

⁵ Stan G. Mudenge, *The Political History of the Munhumutapa c 1400-1902*, Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1988.

⁶ See for example, Paul Gundani, “Catholic Youth mobilization in Zimbabwe” in Carl Fredr Hallencreutz (ed.), *Religion and Politics in Southern Africa*, Uppsalla: Scandinavia Institute of African Studies, 1991 and Paul Henry Gundani, *Changing Patterns of Authority and Leadership: Developments in the Roman Catholic Church in Zimbabwe*, Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publication, 2001.

⁷ “The Jesuit perspective on the formation of African clergy and religious institutes in Zimbabwe 1922-1959” [www/web.ebscohost.com](http://www.web.ebscohost.com), Accessed on 7 September 2011.

⁸ 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.

⁹ Terence Ranger, *Are We Also Not Men? The Samkange Family and African Politics in Zimbabwe 1920-64*, Harare: Baobab, 1995.

¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ Ezra Chitando, “Canaan Banana and Religious Studies in Zimbabwe: A review”, in *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, June 2004 Volume xxx, No.1, p. 187-203, p187-202.

for the study of the indigenous clergy? What was the self-understanding of the indigenous clergy in relation to culture and politics? What were the working conditions of the indigenous clergy? How were the indigenous clergy promoted? Lastly, what caused the indigenous clergy to delay taking over the leadership of their churches?

This article does not claim to provide answers to the entire list of cited questions, but its role is to carry the debate forward. In the process, however, it grapples with the question of the impact on their consciousness of the indigenous clergy's poor stipends. In this sense my study is a continuation of the quest that was already undertaken by other scholars concerning the indigenous clergy. The specific contribution of this study lies in a determination to assess the connection between deprivation and resistance.

Theory undergirding the study

Peasant consciousness and Guerrilla War in Zimbabwe

In 1985, Terence Ranger published a book, *Peasant consciousness and Guerrilla War in Zimbabwe*.¹² Ranger did much of his research in the Makoni area in Eastern Zimbabwe. 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 Makoni area.¹³ In this book, Ranger argues that, in the period before 1930s, the peasants in Makoni did not offer any meaningful resistance to colonialism because the land was still available to them. It was in the 1940s, when land became scarce, that resistance amongst the peasants surfaced.¹⁴ For Ranger, protest movements started to proliferate in this period. When the guerrilla movement was born in the 1970s, it simply tapped into the consciousness of the peasantry and, with the support of the spirit mediums, the war began.¹⁵ 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 peasantisation took place painfully in the aftermath of conquest and alienation of land. It took place in defiance of the very different plans for the economics of the district, which were being adumbrated by the victorious whites.”¹⁶ 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 sub-

¹² Terence Ranger, *Peasant consciousness*, 1985.

¹³ Terence Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness*, p.5.

¹⁴ Terence Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness*, p. 8.

¹⁵ Terence Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness*, p. 8.

¹⁶ Terence Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness*, p. 28.

sistence crops.¹⁷ A railway line passing through the Makoni area was constructed to link Harare and Mutare.¹⁸

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 alienation of the great expanses of Makoni District to capitalist investment companies and to individual white farmers, designed to break up the pre-colonial political and economic system, awakened the consciousness of the African peasants.¹⁹ 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 as such.²⁰ In a nutshell, Ranger’s theory holds that peasants in Zimbabwe, particularly in the area of Chief Makoni, had their political consciousness awakened by a series of deprivations. Similarly, this article argues that the indigenous clergy’s level of political consciousness increased because of the deprivations they had suffered under the leadership of their European counterparts.

Historiographic perspective

The point of departure for this study is that the existing history of the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe is biased. It celebrates the activities of the missionaries and misrepresents the achievements of the indigenous clergy. Although it is true that some European missionaries, such as John White, were champions of social justice, the indigenous actors, who were central to the struggle for justice within and outside the church, have been ignored by history. According to missionary historiography, only missionaries had a high degree of political consciousness whereas the indigenous clergy 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 sinker.”²¹ Missionary history was bound to be propagandistic because the books concerned were often designed to boost morale and material aid.²² “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

¹⁷ Terence Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness*, p. 28.

¹⁸ Terence Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness*, p.29.

¹⁹ Terence. Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness*, p. 319.

²⁰ Terence. Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness*, p. 319.

²¹ 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.

²² Ogbu. U. Kalu, Church Presence in Africa: A Historical Analysis of the Evangelisation Process,” in Appiah-Kubi & T. Torres., (eds.), *African Theology en route*, p.14.

did not do.”²³ Van Velsen summarised the situation in one sentence: “Generals tend to attract more attention and write more about themselves than the corporals.”²⁴ Mark Shaw pointed out that Peter Falk’s *Growth of the Church in Africa* and CP Grooves’ four-volume work, *The planting of the Church in Africa*, are typical examples of missionary historiography.²⁵

The negative portrayal of indigenous clergy is not only misleading but also impoverishing. Eduardo Hoornaert argues as follows: “The principal actors of indigenisation were the ordinary people and not the missionaries on the stage.”²⁶ From this angle, however, the story has never been recorded. Several approaches have been suggested in response to the missionary historiography.

The first one involves nationalist historiography. This seeks to give new emphasis to indigenous or independent expressions of Christianity in Africa.²⁷ 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 AJ Temu’s *British Protestant Missions*.²⁸

Other 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.²⁹ Again this approach has been criticised as providing no solid ground for value judgements.³⁰ It is also propagandist as it pushes an ecumenical agenda. Shaw arguably suggested that John Baur’s *2000 Years of African Christianity* represents this approach to Christian history.³¹

Mark Shaw suggests that the history of African Christianity must be written using what he called “the Kingdom of God approach”.³² This approach does justice to missionary contributions, nationalistic responses, and ecumenical fairness.³³

²³ Ogbu Kalu, (ed.), *The History of Christianity in West Africa*, London: Longman, 1980, p.2.

²⁴ P.M. B. Mushindo, *The Life of a Zambian Evangelist, The Reminiscences of the Reverend Paul Bwembya Mushindo* (ed.), University of Lusaka: Institute for African Studies, UNZA, communication 9, 1973, p. ii.

²⁵ Mark R. Shaw, *The Kingdom of God in Africa: A Short History of African Christianity*, Michigan: Baker Books, 1996, p.13.

²⁶ 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.

²⁷ Mark R. Shaw, *The Kingdom of God in Africa, A Short History of African Christianity*, Michigan: Baker Books, 1996, p.13.

²⁸ A.J. Temu, *British Protestant Missions* London: Longman, 1972.

²⁹ Mark R. Shaw, *The Kingdom of God in Africa*, p.13.

³⁰ Mark R. Shaw, *The Kingdom of God in Africa*, p.13.

³¹ Mark R. Shaw, *The Kingdom of God in Africa*, p.15.

³² Mark R. Shaw, *The Kingdom of God in Africa*, p.15.

³³ Mark R. Shaw, *The Kingdom of God in Africa*, p.15.

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 the vista to judge this world and to renew it through a total commitment to peace, justice and freedom.³⁴ 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 very difficult to sustain in this age.

I will employ this approach while being fully aware of its limitations. The actions of the missionaries and the indigenous clergy will be evaluated against the Kingdom of God values. Kingdom of God values include justice, love, mercy and compassion. This approach helps to assess whether the stipends and working conditions of the indigenous clergy reflected the principles of justice and love. It will also explore whether the response of the indigenous clergy reflected the same principles.

The use of this approach is not a panacea to historiographic problems. In fact, it is noteworthy that in the study of religion, there is now a general appreciation of all the categories of writers, including Western writers. It is vital to acknowledge that every author is a product of his or her age and everyone will be biased. I must be quick to point out that all of 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.

Methodology

In order to adequately carry out a study of this nature, one has to make use of both archival and oral sources. Archives are good for dates and reconstruction whereas interviews put into the public domain those aspects that written records failed to capture for one reason or another. Interviews become outlets for the dominated who did not have a platform to tell their experiences.

Stipends for the indigenous Methodist clergy

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 them for Christian ministry in the Methodist Church. The letter reads as follows:

You will remember that synod asked that an appeal concerning the shortage of workers should be sent out by me. I enclose a

³⁴ Ukuchukwu Chris Manus, *Christ the African King*, Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1993, p.164.

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 the necessary qualities of soul and mind should be encouraged to respond if the call comes to them to offer for this work.³⁵

This letter prompted several responses from various church circuits. Kwenda mission pointed to a number of causes for the shortage of ministers in the Methodist Church.

Firstly, they indicated that the social standing of workers was low, determined by low pay.³⁶ Secondly, “the indigenous ministers could not support themselves and their families on the salaries given. In the early days the salaries were more than adequate but the salaries have not kept pace with the rising costs, secular work was able to give a better financial return.”³⁷ 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 [sic]”³⁸ Rev. HH Morley Wright, the superintendent of the circuit who sent these observations, commented as follows: “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.”³⁹

Wankie Circuit also responded to the chairman’s letter. They pointed to two factors that, in their view, inhibited young people from responding to God’s call. The first factor resulted from the difficult conditions under which evangelists and indigenous ministers worked and which were perceived a major discouragement.⁴⁰ The report gave examples of frequent travelling, living in a reserve and the fact that workers were moved about, often losing good crops.⁴¹ The second reason they proffered was that sometimes a man

³⁵ National Archives of Zimbabwe, Rev. Jesse Lawrence’s letter, 8 July 1954, file Ms 246.

³⁶ National Archives of Zimbabwe, Rev. H. H. Morley Wright’s letter’s to the district chairperson. 11 November 1954, file MS 246.

³⁷ National Archives of Zimbabwe, Rev Wright’s letter to the district chairperson, 11 November 1954, file Ms 246.

³⁸ National Archives of Zimbabwe, Rev Wright’s letter to the district chairperson, 11 November 1954, file Ms 246.

³⁹ National Archives of Zimbabwe, Rev. H. H Morley Wright’s letter to the district chairperson 11 November 1954, file Ms 246.

⁴⁰ National Archives of Zimbabwe, Wankie Circuit response to district chairperson’s appeal, 22 November 1954, file Ms 246.

⁴¹ National Archives of Zimbabwe, Wankie Circuit Response to the district chairperson’s appeal, 22 November 1954, file Ms 246.

felt called, but his wife refused to go with him because she felt no calling [sic].⁴²

Epworth Circuit's report suggested three reasons. They pointed at the poor accommodation for both evangelists and native ministers as one of the deterrents.⁴³ The other reason they gave was that church and school workers were not usually welcomed, respected or encouraged by the village people.⁴⁴ Lastly, they pointed out that wages were not comparing well with those paid in industry.⁴⁵

G Marsh, the quarterly meeting secretary of Epworth Circuit, made the following comments with regard to the resolutions contributed 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.⁴⁶

Plumtree Circuit offered their response on 5 February 1955. They lamented low wages, which they saw as inadequate.⁴⁷ They also suggested that young men [sic] ran away from bad and harsh treatment.⁴⁸ They further pointed out that European ministers were supplied with vehicles whereas African ministers were supplied with bicycles. Worse off were evangelists who were expected to find their own transport.⁴⁹ The report also revealed that church

⁴² National Archives of Zimbabwe, Wankie Circuit's response to the district chairperson's appeal, 22 November 1954, file Ms 246.

⁴³ National Archives of Zimbabwe, Epworth Circuit's response to the call by the district chairperson, 2 January 1955, file Ms 246.

⁴⁴ National Archives of Zimbabwe, Epworth Circuit's response to the call by the district chairperson, 2 January 1955, file Ms 246.

⁴⁵ National Archives of Zimbabwe, Epworth Circuit's response to the call by the district chairperson, 2 January 1955, file Ms 246.

⁴⁶ National Archives of Zimbabwe, Epworth Circuit's response to the call by the district chairperson, 2 January 1955, file Ms 246.

⁴⁷ National Archives of Zimbabwe, Plumtree Circuit's response to the call by the district chairperson, 5 February 1955, file Ms 246.

⁴⁸ National Archives of Zimbabwe, Plumtree Circuit's response to the call by the district chairperson, 5 February 1955, file Ms 246.

⁴⁹ National Archives of Zimbabwe, Plumtree Circuit's response to the call by the district chairperson, 5 February 1955, file Ms 246.

workers had no facility to plough in the reserve and some were being deprived of their expectations in this direction.⁵⁰

Pakame Circuit's report is dated 10 March 1955.⁵¹ They stated 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.⁵² The other problem recorded was that there was no place of retirement for the indigenous church workers.⁵³

By 1954, the Methodist Church had 15 circuits in total.⁵⁴ These circuits were vast. Out of the 15 circuits only nine responded to the chairperson's invitation. All of these cited poor remuneration and working conditions as the reason why the African ministry was not attracting young people. Based on this evidence, it is safe to conclude that the Methodist ministry was unattractive at this point in time.

Margaret James,⁵⁵ a retired white Methodist minister born in Rhodesia and whose grandfather was a Methodist missionary in Rhodesia, postulated that the system of stipends was very unfair to the African clergy.⁵⁶ She further argued as follows:

It was clear that the system of paying of stipends was unfair. All the European missionaries were supposed to be paid by the 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 Methodist Missionary Society. All the Methodist European missionaries were paid after every three months and the money was always to come in advance.⁵⁷

⁵⁰ National Archives of Zimbabwe, Plumtree Circuit's response to the call by the district chairperson, 5 February 1955, file Ms 246.

⁵¹ National Archives of Zimbabwe, Pakame Circuit's response to the call by the district chairperson, 10 March 1955, file Ms 246.

⁵² National Archives of Zimbabwe, Pakame Circuit's response to the call by the district chairperson, 10 March 1955, file Ms 246.

⁵³ National Archives of Zimbabwe, Pakame Circuit's response to the call by the district chairperson, 10 March 1955, file Ms 246.

⁵⁴ See the Methodist Connexional handbook 1954, Methodist Connexional Archives

⁵⁵ Margaret James, interview conducted by Kennedy Gondongwe on 28 April 2010, at Connexional Office, Harare, Zimbabwe. Margaret is now retired minister of the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe. She resides in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. Her knowledge of Methodist history emanates from the fact that her grandfather Frank Noble was a Methodist minister and at one time district chairperson. She inherited all her grandfather's personal archives.

⁵⁶ Margaret James, same interview.

⁵⁷ Margaret James, same interview.

The argument by James is very revealing. Firstly, the missionaries were regarded as employees of the Methodist Missionary Society, but their stipends were paid locally, with the exception of situations where the circuit or institution where the European 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 observation concerned the fact that the payment for the European missionaries was done in advance, whereas the indigenous clergy received payments in arrears.⁵⁸ James further pointed out that the white ministers born in Rhodesia who offered for the Methodist ministry had the same benefits as missionaries.⁵⁹

Beginning in September 1969, the stipends for the indigenous ministers were increased.⁶⁰ The new stipend of a minister was \$38. Rev Goodwill Gubudu who had been in the ministry for 17 years was earning \$38. By 1971, the levels of stipends were still unchanged.⁶¹ 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. These figures show that those who were employed in finance were earning a monthly figure of \$60. Those in transport and communication earned \$52 a month. Those in education got a salary of around \$49 a month and those in health \$48 a month.⁶² These figures show that the Methodist indigenous clergy were earning significantly less than people working in health education, transport and finance.

It is notable that by the 1960s teaching was the route leading to the Methodist ministry.⁶³ Therefore joining the Methodist clergy implied some kind of self-inflicted demotion. One moved downwards in terms of socio-economic mobility.

In addition, Palley argues that non-African employees were earning an average of \$3104 per annum. This translates to \$258 per month.⁶⁴ Compared to and contrasted with what Africans employed in education were getting, it means that Europeans were getting about five times more. The archives are silent about the level of stipends for European missionaries. Canaan Banana gave us a clue of how much the missionaries were earning when he wrote in

⁵⁸ Margaret James, same interview.

⁵⁹ Margaret James, same interview.

⁶⁰ See a letter by Frank Noble to the Rev. Goodwill Gubudu, 6 January 1970, Gubudu personal file, Methodist Connexional Archives

⁶¹ See the minutes of synod January 1971, Methodist Connexional Archives, S/M.

⁶² Claire Palley, “Time Scale for Majority Rule,” *African Studies Association, A Journal of opinion*, Vol 2, No 2 Summer 1972, p.2-64.

⁶³ Margaret James, same interview

⁶⁴ Claire Palley, “Time Scale for Majority rule,” *African Studies Association, A Journal of opinion*, Vol 2, No 2 Summer, 1972, p.2-64.

1976: “I was shocked when I discovered that the stipends for indigenous clergy were five times less than those of the European missionaries.”⁶⁵

According to the proposed Rhodesian settlement of 1971 “Europeans and Africans who wished to be in the voters roll could do so, only if they had been earning \$1800 per annum during the last two years prior to their claim or were the owners of immovable property valued at not less than \$3600.”⁶⁶ Alternatively, the person was supposed to be earning a salary of not less than \$1200 per annum during two years prior to the date of claim for enrolment or have ownership of immovable property of which the value was not less than \$2400. The other condition was that the person was supposed to have attained four years of secondary education.⁶⁷

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 to be voters. The indigenous clergy of the Methodist Church did not qualify for the vote by virtue of their low stipends. It is quite clear that the indigenous clergy were being underpaid.

This realisation motivated me to examine how money was used in the Methodist Church in Rhodesia. In order to do this I analysed the church’s audited accounts of 1971.

I was surprised to note that the major items on this income and expenditure account were to do with African ministers. For instance, the church had a budget for African ministers’ superannuation, native ministers’ annuitant, and funds for evangelists, African ministers’ houses and furniture, education of the children of the deceased African ministers and the provision of medical assistance to African ministers. This is indicative of a church that had the development of African ministers as its priority.

The second notable point was that the church was so much involved with investments. This characterises it as a forward looking church. It is clear from the budget that stipends for ministers were paid by circuits. It was only in special circumstances that a minister would be paid by the district. James is of the opinion that the levels of stipends for the indigenous ministers were pegged by the district.⁶⁸ In coming up with the figures for stipends, the district did not consider the cost of living as a principal factor, but they considered what circuits could afford. Many African circuits were struggling and as a result the stipends for the indigenous clergy remained perpetually low.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Methodist Connexional Archives, letter from Canaan Banana to Hughes Thomas, Secretary of Methodist Missionary Society, 13 May 1976, Canaan Banana’s personal file.

⁶⁶ Claire Palley, “Time Scale for Majority rule,” *African Studies Association, A Journal of opinion*, Vol 2, No 2 Summer, 1972, p.2-64.

⁶⁷ Claire Palley, “Time Scale for Majority rule,” *African Studies Association, A Journal of Opinion*, Vol 2, No 2 Summer, 1972, p.2-64.

⁶⁸ Margaret James, same interview.

⁶⁹ Margaret James, same interview.

It is important to point out that at the 1975 synod; the district chairperson lamented the poor finances of the church. His address reads as follows:

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 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.⁷⁰

It seems the major challenge of the church was that its circuits were not financially stable. The address by the chairperson of the district provides insight. He mentions that people were there, but they were not in a position to support the work financially. The suggestion to regroup the circuits would have been 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 come up with a way forward to improve 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.⁷¹ In fact the issue of stipends became a common subject at synods and yet very little was done to improve them.⁷²

In some cases the indigenous clergy would work for years without receiving any remuneration. A case in point is Gwai Reserve Circuit, where a native minister worked for five years without receiving any pay.⁷³ In Siabowa Circuit, Naison Makwehe worked for two years without getting adequate pay.⁷⁴ In Mount Darwin Circuit, Elliot Hungwe worked for five years without receiving any pay.⁷⁵ The cases of indigenous clergy working for years without receiving adequate pay were numerous and widespread. Other aspects of

⁷⁰ Methodist Connexional Archives, General Superintendent's review, Methodist Church Rhodesia Synod, 1975,

⁷¹ Naison Makwehe, interview conducted by Kennedy Gondongwe on 5 April 2010 at 166 Chitungwiza.

⁷² Methodist Connexional Archives, synod reports on stipends, minutes of synod 1975, 1976 and 1977. file S/M.

⁷³ See Gwaii Circuit report of 1922, synod agenda of 1922, file S/A.

⁷⁴ Naison Makwehe, same interview.

⁷⁵ Elliot Hungwe, interview conducted by Kennedy Gondongwe on the 19th April 2010 at number 5 Greenfield Road, Park Meadowlands.

the indigenous clergy’s benefits, such as transport, accommodation and so on, will require another study. It is clear that the indigenous clergy endured several deprivations and indignities regarding their working conditions. In Ranger’s theory, already discussed in this article, deprivations birthed a high level of political consciousness among peasants in Zimbabwe.⁷⁶ Additionally, if the working conditions of the indigenous clergy are assessed using the Kingdom of God paradigm, the compelling conclusion is that there was no love, fairness and justice in the church. What is important at this moment is to assess how the indigenous clergy responded to their deprivation.

Reactions of the indigenous clergy to their deprivation

The indigenous clergy reacted in a multitude of ways to their plight. Many resorted to appeals as individuals. The more radical ones responded by “stealing church money”, or what I refer to as *mutual exploitation*. Others became submissive as a strategy to access missionary resources. I am aware that this list does not exhaust all the ways in which the indigenous clergy responded. Other ways such as the managing of secret businesses and farm ownership are themes for a separate study.

Appeals by the indigenous clergy

Chrispin Mazobere, a Methodist indigenous clergy wrote a very emotional letter to the Methodist Synod of 1965. In this letter he congratulated the church for having for the first time elected an African as its district chairperson. He also castigated the practice of giving very small stipends to African ministers. The letter was written from the United States of America, where he was studying. The letter reads as follows:

Martin Luther King Junior says in his book, *Strength to love*, that in any doctrine of man we must be forever concerned about his physical and material wellbeing. 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 ...⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Terence Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness*, p.319.

⁷⁷ Letter from Chrispin Mazobere, 2 March 1965, letter addressed to the Methodist Synod of 1965, Mazobere’s personal file, Methodist Connexional Archives.

Mazobere seems to be speaking 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. This letter was written in 1965, and the 1960s marked the beginning of Martin Luther King Junior's popularity. He was eventually killed in 1968. Mazobere's views were shared by other indigenous clergy like Canaan Banana.

In 1970, Canaan Banana wrote a letter to the district chairman appealing for equality between the European missionaries and the indigenous clergy.⁷⁸ He queried why his stipend was lesser than that of the European missionary. “Is there any justification for giving the African ministers such little stipends when European missionaries are earning much more?” he enquired. To this, 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.⁷⁹

The district chairperson did not answer Banana's question. He did not provide an answer as to why European ministers were paid more than the indigenous clergy. He stated that he was also 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 Methodist Missionary Society. In this letter he was complaining about monetary issues pertaining to him and other African ministers. The letter reads as follows:

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 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 v 9)⁸⁰ (...)) 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,

⁷⁸ Letter from Canaan Banana to the district chairperson, 7 June 1970, Methodist Connexional Archives, Banana's personal file.

⁷⁹ Letter from the district chairperson to Banana, 6 July 1970, Methodist Connexional Archives, Banana's personal file.

⁸⁰ Methodist Connexional Archives, letter from Banana to Hughes Thomas Secretary of Methodist Missionary Society, 13 May 1976, Canaan Banana's personal file.

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 [sic].⁸¹

Arguably, Banana’s letter embodied the views of the majority of the indigenous clergy in the Methodist Church with regard to the issue of stipends. However, very few amongst the indigenous clergy had the courage to speak their mind about what was going on in the church.⁸² My guess is that Banana had been hardened by his prison experience, and his stay in the United States of America had widened his horizon. Banana highlighted another significant issue in the same letter as follows:

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.⁸³

Towards the end of his letter, Banana mentions that this was an appeal and he stated that he would serve the church without a stipend rather than accepting something that went against his conscience and principles.⁸⁴ This letter by Banana helps us to gain insight into the self-understanding of some of the indigenous clergy. Admittedly, Banana was an extreme case of radicalism, but his position was shared by quite a number of African ministers. His use of expressions such as *exploitation*, *conscience*, *oppressed*, *missionaries’ privileged positions*, *apartheid*, as well as *racial discrimination* exhibit a high level of political consciousness, which could have been a result of deprivations.

In 1975, Aurther Kanodereka refused to get a stipend lower than received by European missionaries. His argument was that there was no justification for him to earn less than his European counterparts.⁸⁵ The fact that Kanodereka wrote the letter in Shona was not without significance. He argued in the letter that the use of the vernacular was to prevent Europeans from reading the letter. In other words, Kanodereka was using coded

⁸¹ Methodist Connexional Archives, letter from Banana to Hughes Thomas, secretary of Methodist Missionary Society, 13 May 1976, Canaan Banana’s personal file.

⁸² Enos Chibi, interview conducted by Kennedy Gondongwe on 10 April 2010 at 22 Glamis Road, Hatfield, Harare.

⁸³ Methodist Connexional Archives, letter from Banana to Hughes Thomas secretary of Methodist Missionary Society, 13 May 1976, Canaan Banana’s personal file.

⁸⁴ Methodist Connexional Archives, letter from Banana to Hughes Thomas, secretary of Methodist Missionary Society, 13 May 1976, Canaan Banana’s personal file.

⁸⁵ See a letter from Kanodereka to the district chairperson, 4 February 1975, Methodist Connexional Archives, Kanodereka’s personal file.

language for the sake of protecting himself. In fact, the letter was not signed although it bore 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 case demonstrates the high level of political consciousness of the indigenous.

On 15 April 1971, Rusike wrote a letter to the district chairperson of Rhodesia expressing his frustration with regard to his pension funds. Rusike had retired from the Methodist ministry in 1960.⁸⁶The letter reads as follows:

I think you remember that, during the last two years, I asked you many times about the 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. A 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 an amount as that. This is lower than what ordinary workers get per week or what a new farm boy gets per month (...)⁸⁷

This section of the letter by Rusike needs to be analysed. Firstly, he accuses the district chairperson of not being an honourable person. He accuses him of buying time and not doing anything about Rusike’s situation. Secondly, he describes his retirement pension as insignificant considering his year’s earnings were lower than what an ordinary worker was getting per week. Rusike’s letter continues as follows:

I have been thinking if there is a reason for this, but I 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 as 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

⁸⁶ See his obituary from his personal file in the Methodist Connexional Archives.

⁸⁷ A letter from Matthew Rusike, 15 April 1971, Methodist Connexional Archives, Rusike’s personal file.

I began to contribute towards my 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 1956-1959 I was paying £5-0.0b to what they called the new scheme. If you look at this 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.⁸⁸

This last section of the letter by Rusike is very significant because it points to other indigenous clergy 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 without shedding light on the story. Juru tells us the sad story of Malusalila and the box of matches.

It is said that he told his family he wanted to be buried with an empty box of matches because that is all he could afford from his retirement fund.⁸⁹ He had indicated that he did not want to be buried in a coffin because he had never handled an amount of money that could buy him one. His funeral was an embarrassing moment for the church.⁹⁰

On 26 April 1971, the district chairperson responded to Rusike’s letter. He advised him that he was looking into the matter and the church was not going to let him starve.⁹¹ Rusike wrote another letter reading as follows:

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 have been giving me from 1960 on works out at 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

⁸⁸ Letter from Rusike to Ndhlela, 15 April 1971, Rusike’s personal file, Methodist Connexional Archives.

⁸⁹ Julius Juru interview conducted by Kennedy Gondongwe on 4 April 2009 at Old Highfields Methodist manse, same interview.

⁹⁰ Julius Juru, same interview..

⁹¹ Letter from Ndhela to Rusike, 26 pril 1971, Rusike’s personal file, Methodist Connexional Archives

the Methodist Church without a Minor Synod held for me and this is the way the church is saying thank Rusike (sic)...⁹²

Rusike used terms such as “garden boys”. This term was used to refer to black people who were employed to work in the garden of whites and in some cases of middle-class black people. The term was derogatory because the word “boy” refers to a young person. However, he who worked in a garden was always a “boy regardless of his age”.

Rusike’s letter helps one to appreciate and understand the kind of dilemma the indigenous clergy found themselves in. It seems that quite a number of indigenous clergy died miserably without anyone with whom to share their stories of exploitation and abuse. It seems that retirement especially was a period of increased suffering for the indigenous clergy who tried to build homes through retirement funds.

Theft or mutual exploitation? The indigenous clergy’s response to poor remuneration and oppressive working conditions

One of the duties of a Methodist minister was to provide an overview of the church’s finances. In cases where there was evidence of financial impropriety, the responsible individual would be made accountable. A case in point was that of Enoch Mapondera who was accused of financial maladministration in Nenguo Circuit in 1964. Mr Birtles was asked to audit the books and found that there were several financial irregularities. His report reads as follows:

I have just completed an audit of the Nenguo Circuit books to the time of Rev. Enoch Mapondera’s departure on 29th 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. 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 \$446, 16.10 ...⁹³

⁹² Letter from Rusike to Ndhlela, 13 May 1971, Rusike’s personal file, Methodist Connexional Archives

⁹³ A letter from the Auditor, Mr Birtles to the district chairperson, Rev Ndhlela, 17 February 1965, Methodist Connexional Archives, Mapondera’s personal file.

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 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 would be repaying 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.⁹⁴

Mapondera made use of very strong terms such as “being robbed by the church,” “treated unjustly” and “truth cannot be just suppressed”. These words reflect how he perceived the judgement. To a large extent Mapondera saw the decision of the Minor Synod as a negation of justice. As a result, the case was not closed by 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 asking for the books of accounts so that they could do their own reconciliations.⁹⁵

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.⁹⁶ Mapondera then withdrew the case. It is difficult to know whether Mapondera had stolen money from the church or not. We also face the dilemma of whether he understood this as stealing or as part of a mutually exploitative situation. Scott is of the following opinion:

⁹⁴ Letter from Mapondera to Ndhlela, 27 September 1965, Mapondera’s personal file, Methodist Connexional Archives.

⁹⁵ A letter from Danziger and Lardner-Burke Attorneys, Nortaries and Conveyancers, 11 March 1966, Methodist Connexional Archives, Mapondera’s personal file.

⁹⁶ A. M Ndhlela’s letter to Danziger and Lardner-Burke, 17 March, 1966. Methodist Connexional Archives, Mapondera’s personal file.

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, foot-dragging, secret trade and production for sale, sabotage of crops, livestock and machinery arson, flight and so on.⁹⁷

Social spaces of relative autonomy do not merely provide a neutral medium within which practical and discursive negotiations may grow. As domains of power relations in their own right, they serve to discipline as well as to formulate patterns of resistance.⁹⁸ Chances are that this was an act of reciprocity. The vocabulary of stealing may not have existed for Mapondera. As observed earlier in this chapter, exploited people employed many ways to resist. Patterson’s observations concerning the sociology of slavery can throw some valuable light on this matter. His argument is as follows:

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.⁹⁹

Stewart wrote that they were strangely addicted to theft. He added the following:

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.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance, Hidden Transcripts*, Newhaven and London: Yale University Press, 1990, p.1.

⁹⁸ James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, p.119.

⁹⁹ Orlando Patterson, *The Sociology of Slavery, An Analysis of the Origins, Development and Structure of Negro Slave Society in Jamaica*, p.222.

¹⁰⁰ 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.

Scott and Patterson’s arguments help to demonstrate that stealing was a common phenomenon amongst the dominated. The question that begs is the following: Did the church experience many cases of misappropriation of finances by the indigenous clergy? Certainly, during the period under review, some other indigenous clergy were charged for similar reasons.

From 1968 to 1977, six other African ministers had to answer charges of embezzlement of church funds. These were Michael Chidarikire, Wellington Gubudu, Stephen Manguni and Stephen Mkuruba, Jonah Patsika and J Tabaziva. All of these ministers appeared before the respective Minor Synods of the church and were found guilty. They were made to repay the church’s money at the agreed respective rates. The question is whether these indigenous ministers were dishonest or were there other factors at play? Juru commented that if one makes a close analysis, it would seem that many of the indigenous clergy accused of stealing church money were ministers who had been treated badly by the Stationing Committee. Their appointments were always in rural areas and, more often than not, their circuits were unable to adequately pay them.¹⁰¹ If Juru’s argument is valid, then the stealing of church money by the indigenous clergy was a matter of survival on the one hand and of mutual exploitation on the other. There is a need to further elaborate this concept of mutual exploitation with regard to missionaries and the indigenous clergy.

The missionary economic construct was such that resources were never equitably distributed. The indigenous clergy were working in mission centres handling a lot of funding as has been established in this study. The major income items on the 1947 and 1975 budgets were levies from African circuits. However, those funds were not evenly distributed. The indigenous clergy knew they were being exploited and perceived the usage of church funds as a form of justice. Scott looks upon this matter from a somewhat humorous angle:

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 semi-clandestine culture of the slaves encouraged and celebrated theft from the masters and morally reproved any slave who would dare

¹⁰¹ Julius Juru, same interview.

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.¹⁰²

Based on Scott’s insights, it is difficult to precisely know the reason why some of the indigenous clergy stole church money. However, the idea of mutual exploitation could have been a dominant reason. During the same period, the archives do not provide evidence of any European ministers arrayed before a Minor Synod on the accusations of financial impropriety. Possibly, such evidence did not reach the archives. The only European minister to appear before a kind of a disciplinary committee was Holman Brown.¹⁰³ He was accused of a completely different offence. He was accused in 1933 of taking liquor.¹⁰⁴ The reviewing committee found him guilty. In spite of this, he was accepted back into the ministry.

The indigenous clergy’s “play the fool strategy”

It would be an overstatement to argue that all indigenous clergy acted in the same manner in response to low wages and poor working conditions. The responses were as many and as varied as there were indigenous clergy. This study has already shown how the indigenous clergy reacted defiantly to their state as victim of oppression and discrimination. However, it is noteworthy that some of the indigenous clergy responded in a manner that was more complex to comprehend.

Juru postulates that a number of the indigenous clergy supported missionaries in return for certain favours such as speedy promotion and appointment into town circuits.¹⁰⁵ When the interviewer requested him to give examples, his response was that graves have ears.¹⁰⁶ Although there are no specific examples of indigenous clergy who were patronised by the missionaries, the fact that there is some reference to their existence provides us with the premise for the argument that the indigenous clergy responded in different ways to their unfortunate situation.

To consider the actions of those indigenous clergy who may have identified with missionaries as betrayal of the “struggle” may be to completely miss the point. Resistance takes many forms and adopts various strategies. It is possible that this group of indigenous clergy decided to “play the fool” in order to access the benefits that were available. It could be that they were

¹⁰² James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, p.188.

¹⁰³ Minutes of synod 1933, Methodist Connexional Archives, file S/M.

¹⁰⁴ Minutes of synod 1933, Methodist Connexional Archives, file S/M.

¹⁰⁵ Julius Juru, same interview.

¹⁰⁶ Julius Juru, same interview.

beating the whites at their own game. What appears to be a form of “selling out” could simply have been another form of resistance.

Conclusion

This study made use of the Kingdom of God approach to the writing of Christian history in Africa. It concludes that the indigenous clergy of the Methodist Church in Rhodesia were poorly remunerated. It is clear that there was no love and economic justice in the church during the period under review and yet justice is one of the Kingdom of God values. Salaries were less than those of African teachers and nurses and of people working in the financial sector. The salaries were pegged five times lower than those of their European counterparts. When the Rhodesian government passed legislation concerning the economic requirements one needed to fulfil in order to become a registered voter, no member of the indigenous clergy qualified because of the low salaries. Although on financial statements, some substantial resources were allocated towards the needs of African ministers, in practice this money did not reach the intended beneficiaries. Much of the money was put into investments. The deprivation that the indigenous clergy suffered produced some unintended results. As a survival strategy the clergy were compelled to engage in passive resistance presupposing passive resistance on their part. This passive resistance was caused by a high level of political consciousness that was brought about by deprivation.

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26 “Garden boys and new farm boys are better paid than us.” ...

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