CHRISTIAN WORSHIP IN THE AFRICAN CONTEXT

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Salutation

First and foremost, I would like to thank God for allowing me to be in this place. But for me to be here, it is through the invitation of this Oxford Institute leadership. For that I thank you for welcoming me to come and deliver this lecture under your leadership where I am learning a lot from observing and participating also.

In Africa, and it all started in Nigeria that for fear of missing any dignitary, they only say, "All Protocol Observed." So, here there are other dignitaries present, so allow me to say: "All Protocol Observed." I also would like to thank you all for coming to this lecture today.

Introduction

The theme I will talk about is something I am passionate about and that is in my DNA as an African and as a Christian. My presentation today is going to look at how the African culture has influenced Christian worship. I will be basing this presentation mainly on the Zimbabwe United Methodist Church (ZUMC).

In this presentation I intend to trace developments in the liturgical life of

the ZUMC since 1918.[1] 1918 was a time of significant change for the, then, Rhodesia Missionary Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in missionary, spiritual, and liturgical matters for its Black members. I contend that the ZUMC, which now has a history of over a hundred years, with a tradition peculiar to itself, will need to take its liturgical history and tradition very seriously so it can be relevant as it moves into the future. Thus, the rationale for my approach is that through tracing the history of this denomination, one finds a representation of both African and Christian traditions in the ZUMC. This, in turn, can help the church understand and prepare itself to face the present liturgical challenges in order to fulfill its mission.

Inculturation has been at play in the ways the African church started to look at many aspects of spirituality in relation to its people's day-to-day lives. Through this presentation, one will learn that African spirituality has been universally experienced at all levels of the church since 1918. However, this work also seeks to demonstrate that there is a close relationship between Zimbabwe's liberation struggle and the Zimbabwean church's struggle for ecclesiastical identity. This has led to the formation of many Independent/Indigenous churches and the making of changes within the mission (mainline) churches of which the ZUMC is a part.

The history of the mission of the ZUMC has been the subject of extensive research. However, an inadequate treatment has been given to its liturgical developments. Zimbabwean scholars such as John Kurewa and Bishop Nhiwatiwa have concentrated on evangelism, as well as other aspects of Christian missions, including preaching and the history of the expansion of American Methodism[2] in Zimbabwe.[3] Tumani Mutasa Nyajeka's work focuses on the contributions of Zimbabwean women, emphasizing, again, evangelism.

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1 1918 was the spiritual birth of the Rhodesia Missionary Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, now Zimbabwe East and West Annual Conferences of The United Methodist Church. This happened at Old Umtali Mission, now Old Mutare Mission, during a pastor/teacher revival. In-depth discussion about this revival will be done throughout the chapter.

2 We use the term "American Methodism," to distinguish this Methodism from the many Methodists on the African Continent. The names of this denomination have been changing throughout the centuries.

3 John Wesley Z. Kurewa, *Preaching & Cultural Identity: Proclaiming the Gospel in Africa* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000). See also Eben Kanukayi Nhiwatiwa, *Humble Beginnings: A Brief History of the United Methodist Church Zimbabwe Area* (Harare: Zimbabwe Annual Conference, 1997).

Gwinyai H. Muzorewa has taken up the challenge to look into the area of African theology. The areas of moral and pastoral theology are also being assessed by scholars such as Tapiwa Mucherera. Despite what these scholars reveal about the inculturation of African Christianity, liturgy in its totality remains largely untouched territory. This research is attempting to show, by going through the history of the mission of the ZUMC and using literature and interviews to illustrate, how people have been filling the gap without anyone taking note. It will also examine African religion's influence on the spirituality of the Church.

It is important to note that other scholars have also produced detailed work on the inculturation of African Christian liturgy, but they focus on other denominations. Examples include David Gitari, *Anglican Liturgical Inculturation in Africa* (1994), Peter Dom Nwachukwu, *Authentic African Christianity* (2000), and E. Elochukwu Uzukwu, *Worship as Body Language* (1997).[4] They all agree with Anscar Chupungco that liturgical *inculturation* is a process of communicating texts and rites of the liturgy through the framework of the local culture so as to assimilate the people's thoughts, language, values, rituals, symbols, and artistic patterns.[5]

Realizing that Zimbabwean religion has often fallen under heavy criticism and seems to have promised "pie in the sky" without really addressing people's problems, I find it necessary and important to try and explore the roles religion played during and after the liberation struggle. Some of the negative remarks frequently leveled against Christianity, in particular, have been a result of ignorance and lack of information about the role played by religious rituals during these periods.

Many people have not bothered to fully assess the contribution of these rituals from a positive perspective, because they have clung to the notion that religion, especially Christianity, had the blessing of the colonial government and that the traditional religion was primitive. "Formally, African religions had either been ignored or dismissed by Christian missionaries as primitive,

4 All these works focus mainly on the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches, which have been working for some time on the issue of Eucharistic inculturation; this will not be visited in this work.

5 Anscar J. Chupungco, *Liturgical Inculturation: Sacraments, Religiosity, and Catechesis* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), 30.

backward, and atavistic; they were said to be dying out."[6] About the picture painted of African religion, Laurenti Magesa put his finger on the mark when he summarized Michael C. Kirwen's book *The Missionary and the Diviner* on the questions many people have always had about African religiosity.

> What, from a Christian perspective, is the worth of the pre-Christian divine self-manifestation in Africa? Of what value are the traditional African religious signs and symbols, thought-forms and spirituality, rituals and personell vis-à-vis these realities as they are in present-day Christianity in Africa and as they are indicated in the Christian gospel? Is there any useful relationship between the God of Jesus and the God of traditional African religion?[7]

Magesa goes on to say:

> As is well known, the missionary answer Christianity gave to these questions was generally negative. By and large, missionary evangelization in Africa frowned upon any and all expressions of traditional African religiosity and spirituality. In the main it officially continues to do so. . . . There are certainly some African converts to Christianity who have been persuaded by this line of thought. . . . But these are very few. . . . The preponderance of empirical evidence shows, on the contrary, that among the people who have accepted baptism in Black Africa, the great majority have neither wanted to abandon nor succeeded in abandoning completely many aspects of their traditional religious outlook.[8]

Yes, the teachings were there, but as stated above, the majority of Africans did not give up everything. Culture is part of being human, and a person cannot shake it all off no matter how one tries. In this line of thinking, we shall see how some of the African people are trying to incorporate their traditional belief system into their Christian worship.

Let me be upfront with you and say that this presentation is ongoing research and it speaks to my passion about the richness of African spirituality

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6 Michael C. Kirwen, *The Missionary and The Diviner: Contending Theologies of Christian and African Religions* (New York: Maryknoll, 1987), xvi–xvii.

7 Laurenti Magesa, "Foreword," in Kirwen, *The Missionary and The Diviner*, vii.

8 Magesa, "Foreword," in Kirwen, *The Missionary and The Diviner*, vii.

and how it can influence and enrich African Christianity. Some of this information has been published in the *Methodist Historical Journal* and as "Ritual and Spirituality among the Shona People," a chapter in *Another World Is Possible: Spiritualities and Religions of Global Darker Peoples*.[9]

One cannot talk of worship without talking about prayer. So let us briefly look at what is meant by the word *prayer*. According to *The New Westminster Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship* there are a number of words that have been translated into English where one can use either "prayer or worship"[10] as meaning the same thing. These words are "understood as communication with God either by an individual alone or in public gathering."[11] The definition goes on to say:

> In the Judaism of NT times prayer was . . . the flow of everyday life; part and parcel of righteous living, and articulated in the round of the calendar. . . . In this sense the whole life is prayer. But time set aside for immediate attention to God has always been necessary in order to foster and sustain this Godward orientation, and its content and spirit has reflected the fact that each Christian prays "in Christ," and within the united voice of the people of God.[12]

This definition of prayer fits very well with the African spirituality where prayer is a day-to-day activity. This prayerful life has in turn influenced the African Christian worship in Zimbabwe and Africa as a whole.

But before going any further, we need to bear in mind that all people are entitled to know their history and to preserve it. Many times people are deprived of finding their identity and the meaning of their past. Africa has a rich liturgical history, some of which we would like to probe in this presentation. First, we are going to browse through the church's worship history to get to where we need to reach, that is, Christian worship in the African context. Let

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9 Beauty R. Maenzanise, "Ritual and Spirituality among the Shona People," in *Another World Is Possible: Spiritualities and Religions of Global Darker Peoples*, eds. Dwight N. Hopkins and Marjorie Lewis (London/Oakville: Equinox Publishing Ltd., 2009).

10 Paul Bradshaw, ed., *The New Westminster Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship* (Louisville and London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 380.

11 *New Westminster Dictionary*, 380.

12 *New Westminster Dictionary*, 380.

us get some brief background information in order to see where things might have gone wrong and how the situation is being corrected.

This presentation is divided into three parts: the first part will be from biblical times to early Methodism in Africa. This will be sub-divided into two parts: biblical times to the early church, then Reformation to early Methodism in Africa. Part two will focus on American Methodism in Zimbabwe. This part will be sub-divided into three parts: African and Christian rituals; bodily gestures and African Christian spirituality; then African Christian worship today. The final part will be my conclusion.

Let's remember that the aim of this presentation is to examine African Christian worship, which means that the first part will be brief because those two sections only point to where I need to go.

Biblical Times to Early Methodism in Africa

Biblical Times to the Early Church

The disciples of Jesus were asked to "Go therefore" (Matthew 28:19-20) by their Lord, who was the head of the household. Jesus was sending them into the world to preach and baptize people to become Christians. These apostles left their comfort zones where they had been preaching to Jewish families. They went into the world and cared for God's people.

In order to have an understanding of African Christian worship, we need to know what scholars such as Peter E. Fink and W. H. C. Frend say. They make clear that Africa received the gospel first from St. Mark who went to Egypt, the eunuch of Candace who went to Ethiopia[13] (Acts 8:26-40), and many more.[14] This information is not always talked about. Many people think or believe that Christian worship was first brought to Africa by Western missionaries; however, on the contrary, the worshiping life of the early church in Africa was shaped by the worship in biblical times.

Africa has given so much to the Christian world through the African Church Fathers, such as Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria; Augustine, Bishop of Hippo;

13 Candace was the Queen of the Ethiopians.

14 Peter E. Fink, "Worship in the Alexandrian Churches: Coptic and Ethiopian" in *Complete Library of Christian Worship*, ed. Robert Webber (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), 2:57. See also W. H. C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 251.

Clement of Alexandria; Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage; Origen of Alexandria; Tertullian; to mention a few. When one talks of the Church Councils, which formulated church laws; fought against Arianism, for example; offered sacramental teachings; held debates on the Trinity, Christology, episcopacy, creeds, and many other teachings; it is these Fathers in collaboration with others who paved the way for the Church and its worshiping life even today.[15] So, it is very important to remember that the early African Christian liturgical life was influenced by those who walked with Jesus and, in turn, the early African Church Fathers, who helped shape the liturgical life of the Church.

Reformation to Early Methodism in Africa

Reformers such as Martin Luther, John Calvin, Thomas Cranmer, and many others paved the way for the renewal of Christian liturgy. In this presentation, since we are looking at the Methodist family, which is a child of the Church of England, we will briefly look at Thomas Cranmer's contribution to the Reformation.

In the early part of the sixteenth century, some people throughout the Church felt that some liturgical reform was necessary. R. C. D. Jasper makes it clear that a number of liturgical reforms took place in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Church of England, where the old Latin services were translated into English, shortened, simplified, altered, and printed in one volume, the *Book of Common Prayer*. This process began with Henry VIII (1544) and ended in the reign of Charles II (1662), during which a number of English Prayer Books were produced. Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, is believed to be the architect of the *Book of Common Prayer of the Church of England*.[16]

In sifting through the debates, one would clearly see that the main issues involved the reading of the scripture, which they believed should be in vernacular during the High Mass;[17] denying the cup to laity during the administration

15 Frend elaborates the contributions of the early Church Fathers, of whom a large number were African.

16 R. C. D. Jasper, ed., *The Eucharist Today: Studies on Series 3* (London: SPCK, 1974), 8.

17 R. C. D. Jasper and G. J. Cuming, *Prayers of the Eucharist: Early and Reformed*, 3rd ed. (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1990), 226.

of Holy Communion;[18] transubstantiation; and commemoration of the Blessed Virgin.[19] Three major groups were vocal. One group was satisfied with the revisions.[20] A second group demanded a return to things as they had been during the time of Henry VIII. They wanted a return to the Latin Mass, Communion in one species, the reservation of the sacrament, and the restoration of ceremonies.[21] The third group felt that Cranmer did not go nearly far enough in removing the last traces of Catholicism by eliminating the Mass and instituting a new Communion Service.[22] The final *Book of Common Prayer* Cranmer wrote proved that he was listening to the cries of all groups, and his work was accepted by the Church of England in 1662, well after Cranmer died.[23]

James F. White tells us that because of its sound doctrine, the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer* held the Anglican Church together for a long time, with minor changes throughout the years. White sums it up saying:

> Today, the Anglican tradition of worship is usually the most readily identifiable even after nearly four and a half centuries. During that time it spanned the globe and flourished in a wide variety of cultures. That a tradition could survive so many historical vicissitudes is a sign of great inner strength. What, then, is the key to the survival of Anglican worship in such a readily identifiable form? Many would say it is the persistence in Anglican worship of the *Book of Common Prayer.* And that would be hard to deny, although with each successive revision more variants appear. The Anglican tradition, more than any other, is a

18 H. A. Wilson, ed., *The Order of Communion 1548* (London: Harrison and Sons, 1908), 24: vii. See also F. E. Brightman, *The English Rite: Being a Synopsis of the Sources and Revisions of the Book of Common Prayer: With an Introduction and an Appendix* (London: Rivingtons, 1915), 1:lxxi.

19 Edward Cardwell, ed., *The Two Books of Common Prayer, Set Forth by Authority of Parliament in The Reign of King Edward the Sixth,* 3rd ed. (Oxford: The University Press, 1852), xxxii.

20 Hastings Robinson, ed. and tr., "Letter CLXXI: Francis Dryander to Henry Bullinger: Dated at Cambridge, June 5, 1549," in *Original Letters Relative to the English Reformation, Written During the Reigns of King Henry VIII, King Edward VI, and Queen Mary: Chiefly from the Archives of Zurich* (Cambridge: University Press, 1846–1847), 1:350.

21 Francis Procter and Walter Frere, *A New History of the Book of Common Prayer: With a Rationale of Its Offices* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1941), 55–57.

22 Brightman, *The English Rite*, 1:cxlii–cxlvi.

23 "The King's Warrant for the Conference at the Savoy, Westminster, March 25, 1661," in Edward Cardwell, *A History of Conferences and Other Proceedings Connected With The Revision of The Book of Common Prayer; From the Year 1558 to the Year 1690* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1840), 300. See also Procter and Frere, *A New History*, 169–71.

> tradition of a book, a single book, the prayer book. No other liturgical tradition is so closely identified with a single document.[24]

All this background is to help us see that John Wesley received his liturgical foundation from the Church of England, which had a complex history. He came on the scene as a Church of England clergyman, who sought to bring new life to the Church through conversion and enthusiastic response to God in sacramental worship. I believe John wanted to balance the Church of England's sacramental worship, which he adored so much, with conversion and enthusiastic worship from the revival-style preaching, which was becoming prominent, and the deep spirituality that he had observed in the Moravians.

John Wesley had passion for the Church of England's *Book of Common Prayer*, which led him to edit it and send it to his followers in America. For whatever reasons, Wesleyan forms of worship did not survive in America, especially the use of written prayers. Many worshiping patterns were now being observed in the Methodist Church in America following the liturgical landscape in the country, such as revival-style worship, camp-meeting worship, and holiness worship.[25] James R. Peck elaborates the American liturgical landscape saying,

> The rambling frontier lifestyle in the West contrasted sharply with the traditional American liturgical forms as practiced in the more cosmopolitan East. The . . . traditional liturgies and the often scholarly bent of the homilies did not touch the heart of the rough and independent settlers in the West and were discarded by the revivalists as "dead orthodoxy." The revivalists believed that the Spirit brings life, full and vibrant, to touch the soul; they sought, therefore, to reach their listeners on a visceral level. Finney and his revivalist contemporaries aimed at producing "true heart-felt religion," implying that religion not felt by the heart was not true religion. The emotional emphasis inherent in revivalism, a type of vernacular romanticism, reflects this yearning for a heartfelt faith.[26]

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24 James F. White, *Protestant Worship: Traditions in Transition* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1989), 95.

25 See Robert E. Webber, ed., *The Complete Library of Christian Worship: Twenty Centuries of Christian Worship* (Nashville: Star Song Publishing Group, 1994), vol. 2. These aspects of worship are well defined in this book.

26 James R. Peck, "Protestant Worship in the Post-Reformation Era: American Revival Worship," in *Complete Library of Christian Worship,* Webber, ed., 2:88–89.

That revival spirit, with a twist of the holiness movement, later led the American Methodist Church to take the gospel back to Africa through Black emigrants. This time the Christian gospel came back to Africa coupled with Western culture.

Let us see what transpired between 1833 and 1896. In the late 1700s, Bishop Coke is said to have been thinking about starting missions in Africa. In 1795, the bishop recruited people to go and teach the native people "in domestic arts, inculcate piety by their example, and occasionally preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ." This mission was a failure and a disappointment to the bishop.[27]

Although the bishop tried a number of times to send missionaries to Africa, nothing succeeded. The early nineteenth-century upsurge of missionary spirit in many churches in North America finally galvanized the organization of mission work in Africa. Adam Hodgson commented about his meeting with Bushrod Washington, nephew of George Washington, a judge of the Supreme Court, and the first president of the African Colonization Society:

> In speaking of the African Colonization Society, of which he is the President, he remarked, that the most interesting light in which he regarded it, was as an instrument for the conversion of the Africans to Christianity, that he conceived this would ultimately be accomplished by native teachers;[28] and that the Colonization Society, by the introduction into Africa of social arrangement and religious institutions, was calculated to raise up a supply of native instructors and thus to form an important link in that chain of secondary causes which are to establish the kingdom of the Messiah in every quarter of the globe.[29]

Many agreed with this idea and believed that "Christian Negroes from North America could serve as nucleus of a civilized Christian state whose influence might ultimately permeate the entire continent."[30]

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27 Wade Crawford Barclay, *History of Methodist Missions* (New York: Board of Missions and Church Extension of the Methodist Church, 1949), 1:144.

28 We wish all missionaries had this mentality about the importance of the native African presence in Christian mission work. This would have changed the whole mission ethos.

29 Adam Hodgson, *Remarks during a Journey through North America in the years 1819, 1820 and 1820 and 1821* (New York: Samuel Whiting, 1823), 58.

30 Barclay, *History of Methodist Missions*, 1:326.

Bishop Joseph Crane Hartzell wrote how the first Methodist gathering came about:

> The first Negro colonists, a company of eighty-eight, sailed to Africa (Liberia) in 1820. While still enroute on the sea a Methodist Episcopal Church was organized. Among them were members of the Methodist Episcopal and African Methodist Episcopal Churches. To Daniel Coker, a Methodist minister among the emigrants, belongs the imperishable honor of organizing this first Methodist society of Africans whose home was to be in Africa. Under Coker's faithful supervision this society maintained an efficient organization for thirteen years.[31]

In 1832, Melville Beveridge Cox, who had very poor health, became the first foreign missionary of the MEC to go to Africa.[32] According to Hartzell, Cox was also the first missionary to go to any other foreign land.[33] On arrival in Africa in 1833, he organized the existing churches into harmony with the Methodist Discipline.[34] Wade C. Barclay says, "His [Cox's] holding aloft of the missionary standard, his utter fearlessness, his giving of himself to the last ounce of his strength, has been an inspiration to thousands who have come after him."[35] October 14, 1858, Francis Burns became the first missionary bishop and the first African to be elevated to the episcopacy in Liberia.[36] His successor, John Wright Roberts, was elected on June 20, 1866.[37] Under the leadership of Bishop Roberts, Liberia was granted full status as an Annual Conference in 1868.[38]

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31 Joseph Crane Hartzell, *The Africa Mission of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (New York: Board of Foreign Mission of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1909), 27.

32 S. Earl Taylor, *The Price of Africa* (New York, Cincinnati: the Methodist Book Concern, 1902), 165–78. This section of the book details how Cox received his call to Africa in spite of ill health. Because of his love for the work of God and his determination to accomplish his mission, although he knew his life on earth was nearing its completion, Cox wrote to one of his friends, "I am exceedingly weak. Do not, however, be anxious. I believe it is all of God. I never felt less painful anxiety about myself than now. I *think*, however, that I shall live but *I know I may die*" (173–74; italics as in original). He demonstrated the genuine care some missionaries had for Africa. He could say with the apostle Paul "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21).

33 Hartzell, *The Africa Mission*, 27.

34 Taylor, *The Price of Africa,* 179–80.

35 Barclay, *History of Methodist Missions*, 1:332.

36 Barclay, *History of Methodist Missions*, 3:880.

37 Hartzell, *The Africa Mission,* 31.

38 Barclay, *History of Methodist Missions*, 3:885.

Different kinds of church leadership came and went throughout the years across the African Continent until the arrival of Bishop Joseph Crane Hartzell in 1896.[39] The church went through good and bad times. At the General Conference of 1884, a petition from the Liberia Conference was presented, asking for a missionary bishop to reside in Africa. Little did William Taylor know that his comments at this General Conference were to lead him to be elected for that purpose. His election came as a surprise to all:

> The first ballot elected William Taylor, lay delegate from South India Conference, Bishop of Africa by an overwhelming majority. Within twenty-four hours he had been nominated, elected, and ordained a bishop in the Methodist Episcopal Church for Africa against the previously declared wisdom of that body. . . . In a whispered canvass of our delegation and those about us I found one sentiment. '*It is of God, and we must not withstand him.*'[40]

This episode at the 1884 Conference bears a resemblance to the year 1784, when John Wesley ordained his first ordinands, Thomas Vasey and Richard Whatcoat. It is recorded that after the Church of England refused to ordain clergy for the American Methodists,

> Wesley discussed the matter with numerous persons. . . . In the end, Wesley himself made the decision. Early in the morning of September 1, 1784, at a private home in Bristol, England, assisted by Thomas Cook and James Creighton, both Anglican Priests, Wesley ordained Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey as deacons. The next morning, they were ordained as elders.[41]

One hundred years later, the same manner of ordination happened with Taylor. One could argue that this was a Methodist way of responding to tough situations. Taylor was sent to Africa with two specific assignments, "the oversight of Liberia and the penetration of the continent."[42] Taylor, who had done missionary work in India and the West Coast of South America, was really mak-

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39 Barclay, *History of Methodist Missions*, 887.

40 A letter from Rev. M. D. Collins of the Des Moines Annual Conference, quoted in William Taylor, *Story of My Life* (New York: Hunt and Eaton, 1895), 692.

41 John G. McEllhenney, ed., with Frederick E. Maser, Charles Yrigoyen Jr., and Kenneth Rowe, *United Methodism in America: A Compact History* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), 41.

42 Barclay, *History of Methodist Missions*, 3:895.

ing the world his parish. While the challenge of Liberia undoubtedly appealed to Taylor, he approached the other half of his Episcopal commission, the penetration of the continent with the Christian message, with even more enthusiasm.[43]

We need to keep in mind that Liberia is the historic connecting link between the Black populations of America and Africa and that the Liberia Annual Conference binds American to African Methodism. By September 1886, the Methodist Episcopal Church had already made in-roads into Angola,[44] Congo Free State,[45] and Portuguese East Africa, now Mozambique.[46] The bishop himself did not get the chance to reach the Inhambane District, in Mozambique. Although Bishop Taylor did not visit Mozambique, his initiative for mission work in this part of the continent continued to bear fruit on its way to Zimbabwe. In 1896, the General Conference retired Bishop William Taylor as missionary bishop for Africa.[47]

Now let us see how this Methodist Church was coping with the new liturgical environment in Zimbabwe.

American Methodism in Zimbabwe

African and Christian Rituals

Joseph Crane Hartzell was elected Bishop of Africa in 1896.[48] The African Missionary Bishop's yoke had now been placed on Hartzell's shoulders. June 9, 1897, the Conference under Bishop Joseph Crane Hartzell organized the Congo Mission Conference. That same year, opportunities arose and mission work was born in Rhodesia.[49]

From this point on, we will mostly follow the mission work done in Rhodesia, since the Rhodesian mission work of the American Methodist Church was begotten with Bishop Hartzell's election. The bishop recalled:

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43 Barclay, *History of Methodist Missions*, 3:904.

44 Taylor, *The Price of Africa,* 704.

45 Taylor, *The Price of Africa,* 713.

46 Taylor, *The Price of Africa*, 921.

47 Barclay, *History of Methodist Missions*, 3:921.

48 Taylor, *The Price of Africa,* 556.

49 Hartzell, *The Africa Mission*, 37.

> A few moments after my election . . . a complete outline map of the continent had become a part of my knowledge. This outline was before my mental vision during the brief address I made to the General Conference in favor of electing a successor to Bishop Taylor, little dreaming that I would be the man selected.[50]

It was that very year (though unknown to him at that time) that the British South Africa Company (BSAC) decided to move the little four-year-old town of Umtali ten miles away to the other side of a range of mountains.[51] Bishop Hartzell made use of Cecil John Rhodes's invitation to Bulawayo, and entered Rhodesia for the first time in October 1897.[52] The next visit was his entry into the eastern side of Zimbabwe, which was done on horseback from Mozambique into Umtali.[53] It did not take him long to start the work that had brought him to Rhodesia. Shortly after the bishop's arrival, on Sunday morning, December 12, 1897, the first American Methodist worship service was held in a large office of a Dutch trading store in Umtali and had a good audience of Europeans.[54] The Church of England missionary in Umtali is said to have refused to loan his hymn books to the MEC, "but old familiar hymns were heartily sung."[55]

That this was the "fullness of time," for the entry of the MEC seems to be proved by the providence of events. When the original town of Umtali was established, the railroad had not been laid. Soon afterward, the survey showed that the railway could not be brought to the town, as it proved impracticable to carry the line over the mountains. It was then that Mr. Rhodes asked for the town to be brought to the railway. The inhabitants and property holders were

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50 *Minutes of the First Session of the East Central Africa Mission Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church* [hereafter, *Minutes*] (Printed by Gigalamugyo and two small boys, all natives of Gikuki Mission Station, 1901), vi–vii. See also Hartzell, *The Africa Mission*, 47.

51 John McKendree Springer, *The Heart of Central Africa* (Cincinnati: Jennings and Graham; New York: Eaton and Mains, 1909), 19.

52 *Minutes* (1901), vii.

53 Henry Isaac James, *Missions in Rhodesia Under the Methodist Episcopal Church: 1890–1934* (Old Umtali: Rhodesia Mission Press, 1935), 25. See also *Minutes* (1901), vii.

54 *Minutes* (1901), viii.

55 James, *Missions in Rhodesia,* 26. It is not clear why the Church of England missionary refused to loan the hymnals. Can it be that the arrival of the Methodist Episcopal Church posed a challenge for the increase of membership for the Church of England?

liberally compensated by the BSAC for their loss of property, and in 1896, the town was moved to its present site. Mr. Rhodes was asked what would be done with the old town site with its buildings and lands. His reply was, "We will turn it into a mission."[56]

When the bishop requested land for mission purposes, Sir Earl Grey, the Rhodesian administrator, replied:

> The British South Africa Company will be glad to meet your wishes in this respect, and is fortunate in being able to do so in a most satisfactory manner. . . . The British South Africa Company will reserve for six months such buildings and land as, in the opinion of the resident magistrate of Umtali, will be required, which will then be handed over to your church provided you can satisfy the Administrator of Mashonaland that you have sufficient funds to secure success.
>
> The advantages of establishing an Industrial Mission for Natives at Old Umtali, are:
>
> The site is one of the prettiest in Rhodesia and is extremely healthy.
>
> The church and buildings required for the Native Industrial Mission are already built and can be handed over to the officers of your Church at once free of charge.
>
> It is within a short distance of the kraal of Mutasa, the Paramount chief of the District.
>
> It is sufficiently close to New Umtali to enable you to be within convenient distance of the Railways and sufficiently far to secure for you the privacy which you will require.
>
> My colleagues and I view with great satisfaction your desire to establish an important center of your church in Rhodesian territory.[57]

One needs little imagination to see how fast things were unfolding for the opening of American Methodist Church missions in Rhodesia. Within ten

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56 Ernest L. Sells, "Umtali—Old and New," in *Umtali 1897–1957* (1957), 13. Bishop Hartzell's foresight about the old city was providential because the Church of England was already established in the area, Nhiwatiwa lifted up a very interesting point about the old church building at Old Umtali. He said that when the British built Old Umtali, the Anglicans were the ones who ministered to them and were the ones who built the chapel that still stands at Old Mutare. When the opportunity came for the church to acquire the land, as Rhodes had decided to move the town, it was the Methodist Episcopal Church who requested the land, and the Church of England moved to another location a few miles from Old Umtali. There is no indication as to whether they knew about the move of the town and decided not to have it. See Nhiwatiwa, *Humble Beginnings*, 12.

57 *Minutes* (1901), §§IV–V. See also James, *Mission in Rhodesia*, 28–29.

months of Bishop Hartzell's arrival in Rhodesia, the BSAC—through Captain Lewley, Earl Grey, Administrator of Rhodesia, Cecil J. Rhodes, and others—began negotiations regarding the establishment of a mission at Umtali. These negotiations resulted in the proffered concessions of land and buildings at both old and new Umtali for church and other missionary work. The bishop returned to America and arranged for financial needs, he found suitable missionaries, and the missionaries arrived and were at work all within a short period of time.

But who are these people the Bishop was passionate about? Zimbabweans!

The Place of the Church in Zimbabwe's Political Independence

The United Methodist Social Principles rightly say:

> We affirm all persons as equally valuable in the sight of God. We therefore work toward societies in which each person's value is recognized, maintained, and strengthened. We support the basic rights of all persons to equal access to housing, education, employment, medical care, legal redress for grievances, and physical protection.[58]

The Shona people of Zimbabwe have three types of religiosities. The first one is Shona indigenous religiosity. Second is the missionary religiosity experienced in "mission" or "missionary" churches. The third type of religiosity is demonstrated in the Independent churches that refused to be part of the "missionary church." These three religiosities have worked side by side during and after the political and liturgical liberation struggles in Zimbabwe and assisted in the transformation of African Christian worship throughout the years.

The legacy of the missionaries of the American Methodist Church in Zimbabwe is mixed. To assess this legacy, this section will use Robert Fulghum's definition of *rituals* to focus on rituals of the Zimbabwean churches in relation to Zimbabwe's quest for liberation. He defines *rituals* as, "those acts we do for the first time that, in fact, have been done by the human race again and again forever—and those patterns that we ourselves repeated again and again because they bring structure and meaning to our individual and collective lives."[59]

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58 The United Methodist Church, *Social Principles of The United Methodist Church, 2005–2008* (Washington, DC: General Board of Church and Society, 2005), 14.

59 Robert Fulghum, *From Beginning to End: The Rituals of Our Lives* (New York: Ivy Books, 1995), 23.

Although many churches contributed to the liberation of Zimbabwe, more emphasis will be on the contributions made by the American Methodist Church.

The British South Africa Company was established in Zimbabwe in 1890, but the American Methodist Church, unlike other denominations, did not work in Rhodesia until 1897, when Bishop Joseph Crane Hartzell arrived in the country. When Bishop Hartzell arrived, he noticed that great injustice had been done to Africans and was committed to giving them a bright future through educational facilities. In a report to people in America, Bishop Hartzell spoke of what Africa had gone through in the past, what it offered to the world, and what the world needed to do in return:

> I plead for Africa, the land of sunshine and shadow; the continent on which God put more sunlight every day than upon any other; and yet whose people for centuries and centuries had been peeled and murdered and enslaved. . . . I plead for Africa, where the early Christian church had its greatest triumphs, the land of St. Mark, of Tertullian, of Cyprian, of St. Augustine; the land whose Christian Bishops at the Council of Nice gave the early Church and the world the Apostolic Creed; the land that gave the world its lawgivers, that held the infant Christ in its bosom from his murderers, and whose son carried the cross for my fainting Savior as he went to Calvary. O, Africa, I plead for thee, for thee I live, for thee I pray, and for thee, if it be God's will, I give my life.[60]

Many missionaries came to Rhodesia during and after Bishop Hartzell's time, but not all were friendly to the native people. From the beginning of the American Methodist Church's mission work in Rhodesia in 1897, African people were being equipped in many ways. In Rhodesia, mission centers were established and vocational schools were opened. Among the schools, there was the Biblical Institute at Old Umtali, just across the road from Africa University. Africans were trained to be farmers, carpenters, and in other areas, some were also equipped to be pastor-teachers. This dual role played a great role in planting Christianity in Zimbabwe. They were pastors during the weekend and school teachers during the week. Since all training was done at Old Umtali, this place became known as the "Jerusalem" of the American Methodist Church

60 Joseph Crane Hartzell, *Four Years of Progress on Africa: Bishop Hartzell's Report to the General Conference at Los Angeles, Calif., May 12, 1904* (New York: Open Door Emergency Commission, Missionary Society, Methodist Episcopal Church, 1904), 31–32.

in Rhodesia and is still referred to as such to this day in the Zimbabwe United Methodist Church. Most of the ordained missionaries became District Superintendents, while the Africans served as pastor-teachers in the field.

Although many natives did not obtain high positions in the church in early days of mission work, the foundations of strong African Christianity were being laid through the work of Africans themselves. These foundations were laid in an unconscious manner. They were taking the African culture seriously in their worship. The missionary presence in the primary decision-making process impeded the development of top-level African church leadership in Rhodesia for a long time. The organizational pyramid created no space for intelligent Africans. In order to take advantage of the opportunities provided by mission institutions, Africans had to become baptized Christians. This meant that they had to adopt a biblical or western name. One Zimbabwean is quoted by Bishop Dodge as saying:

> Equally fantastic was the changing of names at baptism. Why should such beautiful names Chipo (**Gift**), Nyasha (**Grace**), Chuma **(Jewel**), Tendai (**Be thankful**), Kudzai (**Respect**), etc. be replaced with such names as Draper, Gift, Grace, Smart, Washington, Maxwell, etc.? While there is nothing wrong with such English names, one really finds no sufficient reason to substitute them for the meaningful African names. I find nothing unchristian in them. . . . I fear that the use of foreign names tends to alienate Christianity and thus stops it from anchoring its roots in the soil of the land. In addition, it helps to perpetuate the existing feeling of superiority on the part of one race, and inferiority on the part of the other.[61]

To the Zimbabwean, his or her African name reflects the person's life history, a reminder of his or her accomplishments or moments of sorrow or joy. To become Christian, therefore, meant to reject one's past. As it is well known in the African culture, naming means claiming something to be yours. This means to say that the renaming of African Christians meant that in reality they were being claimed by other cultures. But the missionaries believed that renaming was claiming the African for Christ. From our point of view, there is nothing Christian in most of the English names.

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61 Ralph Edward Dodge, *The Unpopular Missionary* (Westwood: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1964), 48 (bolded translations added).

Religious education was the core of educational life at the mission centers. Anyone who stayed on the mission had to conform to their lifestyle. Students who graduated from the mission schools, either as carpenters, teachers, or pastor/teachers, had been transformed into devoted Western-style Christians and upon many others to whom they were ministering.

Nevertheless, the education provided for Africans was intended to minimize the possibility that they might become a threat to the missionary position. By the late 1940s and early 1950s, the tide had changed. Some had gone to South Africa for further studies. When they returned, they were beginning to raise questions about the way African people were being treated, both in the church and in society.[62]

We need to emphasize at this point that, in all fairness, not all missionaries are guilty of the many criticisms leveled against missionaries and the church in Zimbabwe. We need to be informed here that Rhodesia received some of the best church people the Western world could offer. These men and women gave all they had to Rhodesia in terms of their time, energy, money, and indeed their lives to serve the African people. Yet on the other hand, from a Shona Zimbabwean point of view, the West also gave Rhodesia some of the worst. It is well known that Robert Moffat of the London Missionary Society assisted the settlers to get all the mineral concessions from the Shona people. This left many Shona people with a bitter taste in their mouths about Christianity. From this point on, we will look at the contribution of some of the best missionaries.

The great turning point of the American Methodist Church was its participation in the fight against colonial domination and racial segregation. In 1956, the American Methodist Church in Rhodesia welcomed Bishop Ralph Edward Dodge as its new bishop. In his first address to the pastors he said:

> I would like to visit all of you, my brothers, in your circuits and get to know the people and the church well. But I am going to be radical. I will not carry any food when I visit you. I will come and stay with you in your homes, wherever you are. I know that is the African custom and we will observe it.[63]

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62 Dodge, *The Unpopular Missionary*, 54–55.

63 Ralph E. Dodge, *The Revolutionary Bishop Who Saw God at Work in Africa: An Autobiography* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1986), 116.

Such action was a radical break from the usual pattern of the missionaries. Many missionaries had always stayed in missionary guest houses and carried their own bedding and food plus a cook. Bishop Dodge's radical ideas continued to be manifested in his sermons, teachings, conversations, and above all his actions. The old pattern of racial segregation within the church was breaking down, and it lay ahead for Bishop Dodge to break down the customs of the White settlers in the society at large.

The period from 1955 to 1958 marked the beginning of some church leaders' fearless opposition of the White racists. Bishop Dodge was among these church leaders. As a spokesperson of the American Methodist Church, he was committed to fight against racial oppression by the White minority in Southern Rhodesia. The new bishop put his finger on the crucial point about the missionary work in Africa:

> The major blind sport of the total missionary program in Africa may well be the failure of white leaders to foresee the approaching rebellion and to train nationals for administrative responsibility. Although some colonial governments have shown interest in educating the masses of Central Africa, none have set about training Africans realistically for administrative responsibility under democracy.[64]

Before Bishop Dodge, much of the missionary program's curriculum, especially the religious elements, trained Africans to be obedient to their White masters, instead of teaching African students to think independently and to develop fully as human beings. On that point Bishop Dodge quotes one high-school student as saying:

> I dare say that many missionaries I have dealt with leave not much to be desired about their earnestness in their Church work. There is an undeclared emphasis on seeking a livelihood and perpetuating their position as bosses over the Africans.[65]

No Zimbabwean who went through the time of political strife could fail to recognize Bishop Dodge's dismay: "Some missionaries refused to promote Africans, saying that if they did so, they themselves would be forced to leave

64 Dodge, *The Revolutionary Bishop*, 153.

65 Dodge, *The Unpopular Missionary*, 32.

Africa."[66] Bishop Dodge adds: "If Christianity calls for love, why is it that some of the white people don't show it in their treatment of the Africans? The answer is, 'They don't believe the gospel or they would act as Jesus did.' In Africa, as in Europe, America or the Orient, many look at the church and shout 'hypocrisy.'"[67] It is important to remember that oppression permeates not only a political system, but also involves, most importantly, a spiritual system that claims God on biblical grounds. The oppressors saw themselves as members of God's elect nation. What kind of theodicy can one propose in a system where God's omnipotence is seen in the force of governmental policy, where the state maintains law and order against the majority of the population?

Bishop Dodge came at a time when the hierarchical structure of the church was so dominated by missionaries that the chance for African advancement was apparently negligible. Bishop Dodge immediately advocated the transfer of power within the church from the White missionary community to indigenous leadership. His first action was to bring some Africans into his cabinet. With the inclusion of Africans on his cabinet and the appointment of Africans as heads of schools, Bishop Dodge broke the long-standing domination of missionaries in these most critical decision-making boards. In his capacity as the leader of American Methodism and in his determination to prepare Africans for leadership in the church and society, Bishop Dodge made it possible that by 1961, over forty Africans had left Rhodesia for colleges and universities in Great Britain and North America. One of these people was Rev. Abel Tendekayi Muzorewa, who later succeeded Bishop Dodge and became the first African bishop in the Rhodesia United Methodist Church. Muzorewa returned from studying in the United States in 1963.

Reverend Muzorewa's return home coincided with the coming to power of the Rhodesia Front Party, with Ian Smith as its leader and Prime Minister. By that time, all the nationalist leaders were put in either political exile, detention, or prison. This was the point in history when Zimbabwe nationalist politics had gone bad. There was significant fighting among the Black people themselves in 1963, because of the split between the followers of Joshua Nkomo, a Ndebele,

66 Dodge, *The Unpopular Missionary*, 32.

67 Dodge, *The Unpopular Missionary*, 55.

and those led by Rev. Ndabaningi Sithole, a Shona. It was also during this time that the churches started to assume a prophetic voice to liberate Zimbabwe.

By early 1965, most of the positions in American Methodism that had been in the hands of missionaries had passed into the control of Africans. Indeed, Bishop Dodge's vision had become a reality. He portrayed an image of a committed church leader who was trying to fight against an unjust, segregated church and society. Zimbabwean Christians, knowing they had an increasing number of missionary allies, believed that God would lead them out of oppression. Indeed, Bishop Dodge appeared on the scene at the right time and with a specific assignment from God, namely, to transfer power in the missionary-led church to the Africans.

People who were not in the midst of this struggle accused the church in Rhodesia, particularly the American Methodist Church from the time of Bishop Dodge through that of Bishop Muzorewa, of being involved in the liberation struggle of the Zimbabwean people. What these people forgot was that one cannot preach a gospel of salvation to an oppressed people. During the struggle for liberation in Zimbabwe, many churches moved away from the idea that the church should preach a civil religion, a nationalized triumphalist gospel that sought "conversion" of the "savage" before the people could taste the sweet honey of "salvation" with their masters. However, most of the missionaries coming into Zimbabwe thought of the African people as savages. Bishop Muzorewa had this to say:

> It soon became clear to me that our theology needed to be clarified and our concerns needed a broader base. I felt at ease in following in the footsteps of Bishop Ralph Dodge. He, too, had stressed that the Christian faith must be proclaimed as a total gospel for the total person. The whole gospel for the whole person I believed—and still believe—has a dynamic that will lead many to Christ as their liberator, their Savior and Lord.[68]

Many Christians were, and some are still, lacking in this kind of understanding. It needs to be known that these church leaders and many Christians in Zimbabwe fought to give "a total gospel to a total person."

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68 Abel Tendekayi Muzorewa, *Rise Up and Walk: The Autobiography of Bishop Able Tendekayi Muzorewa* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1978), 68.

Bishop Dodge, as a church leader, voiced the concerns of the African people in Rhodesia when political parties were banned and their leaders silenced in detention. He had, from time to time, preached "a total gospel for the total person." That is the gospel of political and spiritual freedom. He led the church in a denunciation of the proposed Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI).[69] He also severely criticized the government's practice of detaining people without trial. Following the publication of his book *The Unpopular Missionary,* Bishop Dodge was labeled an enemy of the status quo in racist Southern Rhodesia. This resulted in his being declared *persona non grata* by the Smith regime. On July 17, 1964, Bishop Dodge was deported, together with his colleague Rev. Robert Hughes.[70] His deportation stunned the nation, especially the oppressed majority, the African people. This was a great loss, not only to the American Methodist Church, but to all Africans in Rhodesia. His deportation brought with it public demonstrations by American Methodist Church members, and other denominations joined the demonstration. Fifty-eight Salisbury clergy of different denominations carried the protest to Mr. Ian Smith's office.[71] In their letter to Mr. Smith, the Salisbury clergy made it clear that the act of deporting Bishop Dodge and Rev. Hughes "would create a wide gulf between the government and world Christian opinion."[72] Their words fell on deaf ears, but the demonstration initiated many church leaders into a new ritual of political involvement. Bishop Dodge was given only two weeks to say good-bye to his conference. Those two weeks were enough for him to empower and encourage the church to continue the fight for justice, peace, and freedom.

As a truly God-led church leader, Bishop Dodge had accelerated native educational, medical, and church leadership, and had campaigned vigorously against the oppressive rules of the Smith regime. Although he was deported, he had stimulated hundreds of Zimbabwean church people to take up the

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69 George Klein, "Rhodesia and the World's Conscience," in *The Christian Century* 83, no. 5 (February 2, 1966), 158.

70 "Bishop Dodge Expelled by Southern Rhodesia," editorial in *The Christian Century* 82, no. 32 (August 5, 1964), 981.

71 Klein, "Rhodesia and the World's Conscience," 158.

72 "Bishop Dodge Expelled by Southern Rhodesia," 981.

torch in the quest for independence. Seeds of revolution had been sown in the minds of many clergy in the American Methodist Church. One does not have to wonder why many of the American Methodist pastors participated in politics.

Bishop Dodge, as a church leader, proved that it is possible to suffer with the oppressed and walk with them in their struggle for liberation. Through his guidance, the American Methodist Church had become committed to the struggle of Black people who were oppressed on their own land. It was now clear in the minds of many that the church needed to assume a prophetic voice and to speak with one voice on behalf of the oppressed masses of Zimbabwe. Through Bishop Dodge's leadership, the American Methodist Church assumed the status of the church of the people. Many clergy joined Bishop Dodge in leading their societies in the battle to recover their own identity and the struggle to be human again before the eyes of White people living on their land.

We need to know that he was not the only church leader who stood up to the Smith regime; there were many. Another influential missionary church leader was Bishop Donald Lamont of the Roman Catholic Church in Umtali. In 1964, when Ian Smith issued the UDI, Bishop Lamont was one of those from the Salisbury Council of Churches who stated that the African people did not recognize the Smith regime as a legal authority in Rhodesia. Bishop Lamont was also deported, but his care for the people led the Catholic Church up to today to be a prophetic voice in the country.

With the deportation of Bishop Dodge, the American Methodist Church was left in limbo. People were like sheep without a shepherd. For four years, Bishop Dodge continued as their bishop in exile. Episcopal elections for the new bishop for Rhodesia were in 1968. That was the same year the denomination changed its name from the Methodist Church to The United Methodist Church (UMC).

In Rhodesia, the questions on people's minds seemed to be, "Who will take over the office of bishop in this church?" or "Whoever will be elected, will the person take the same political stand Bishop Dodge took?" This is the kind of atmosphere that prevailed in the church as it looked forward to a new bishop and a new era in the history of the church and country. This is the kind of atmosphere that witnessed the inauguration of Bishop Abel Tendekayi Muzorewa as the first African bishop in Rhodesia.

Bishop Muzorewa recounts Bishop Dodge's five principles of leadership that were given in the charge to him during his consecration service as the Rhodesia Resident Bishop:

> First, maintain your personal integrity; honesty in dealing with other people, honesty in dealing with yourself, honesty in dealing with the Father. . . . Second, maintain your concern for people; do not forget those of different classes, those who walk far from where you normally walk. Don't forget the despised. . . . Third, maintain an open mind; learn as well as speak; admit your mistakes. . . . Fourth, maintain vision and foresight; he who would lead people must be ahead of them; he must look into the future. You must begin now to build the foundation in Africa upon which our Church of the year 2000 can stand. . . . Finally, maintain contact with the true vine; your ministry will fail if you are out of harmony with God's plan and purpose for you and for His Church; keep sensitive, deeply sensitive to the whisper of God's voice. As God has spoken through the prophets in past generations, so prophets must continue to speak to His people today. Listen to the Holy Spirit, and as you listen you will be taught, and as you are taught you will go forth in faith to help to establish God's Church—a new Church in a new Africa and a new world.[73]

This powerful commission became a motto in Bishop Muzorewa's term as bishop of The UMC in Zimbabwe till his death in 2010. One thing was clear in Bishop Muzorewa's mind as he assumed his position of church leadership: people needed "a total gospel." To love as God loved meant to be in total service to the total person, spiritually and socially.

As far as Bishop Muzorewa was concerned, participation in politics was not only a secular activity but also part of Christian ritual and duty. With this kind of thought, he felt comfortable following in the steps of Bishop Dodge. All this meant that the American Methodist Church now known as The UMC was once more going to pursue the issue of reclaiming the identity of the African people in Rhodesia.

With Bishop Muzorewa choosing to follow in the footsteps of his predecessor, Bishop Dodge, there was no going back regarding the church's involvement in the liberation struggle. The stage was set. People had to be liberated

73 "Bishop Dodge Expelled by Southern Rhodesia," 66.

from the feeling that it was right to suffer here on earth because Christians can look forward to a better life in heaven.[74] After his election as bishop of the Rhodesia Annual Conference of The UMC, Bishop Muzorewa's actual immersion into the political arena as a church leader began in 1969. He joined hands with the Catholic and Protestant church leaders to reject the new constitutional proposals of the Smith regime.[75] The new proposals were earmarked to cater to White people. On June 5, the bishops sent a joint letter for publication entitled, "BISHOPS SLAM PROPOSALS: Church warns: This will breed hatred."[76] This was only the beginning of the involvement of Bishop Muzorewa in the quest for liberation in Zimbabwe.

One needs to keep in mind that there were many clergy who helped raise the consciousness of Africans in Rhodesia about their rights to freedom as human beings. Among them were persons like Rev. Canaan Banana (British Methodist), Rev. Paul Burrough (Anglican), and Rev. Christopher Chikasha (African Reformed), to mention a few. They represent a whole group of church leaders who spoke out boldly against the Smith regime. The involvement of these people of God gave encouragement to the struggling, oppressed, underprivileged people of Zimbabwe. The church was seen as an organization that addressed the real problems of the people. Members of the clergy were in the forefront denouncing the evil system of racial discrimination and the oppressive laws of the Smith regime.

Following the victory of the Smith regime in the constitutional referendum, the government sought to pass a Land Tenure Act, which was to bring about land apartheid in Rhodesia. In January 1970, the UMC Rhodesia Annual Conference declared that:

> We . . . view with great alarm the passing through Parliament of the Land Tenure Act. The Philosophy behind this Act and the possible grave results issuing from the enforcement of it, will, in our opinion, not avoid racial friction but on the contrary will seriously intensify it. . . . The Church is one. We cannot tolerate any division into African and

74 Muzorewa, *Rise Up and Walk*, 55–56.

75 Muzorewa, *Rise Up and Walk*, 76.

76 Muzorewa, *Rise Up and Walk*, 77.

> European congregations. . . . We stand for equal rights for all racial, cultural, and religious groups.[77]

The declaration was sent to the Rhodesia Christian Council when it met for its annual meeting in Umtali in March of that year. The Christian Council then proposed civil disobedience as the appropriate Christian response to this racist matter. Bishop Muzorewa was chosen as one of the church representatives to lodge a strong protest to Ian Smith and they had their first confrontation on June 4, 1970, in Mr. Smith's office.[78]

The Act being proposed included regulations that would restrict the church in a number of ways. Father Randolph of the Roman Catholic Church explained to the bishops and leaders of different denominations the restrictions which would be imposed on the church:

> The church is no longer at liberty to move freely among people of all races to carry out her mission. People of different races may no longer freely associate for the worship of God in churches outside their own prescribed racial areas. The church has no longer the right to admit to her schools whomsoever she wills. The church is forbidden to admit to her own hospitals people of a race different from that of the prescribed area. The church can no longer—without a permit from a Minister of State—admit ministers and other church workers of different races to live in the same communities. The church can no longer use freely its own land or property.[79]

After hearing what the Land Tenure Act was all about during their Annual Conference at Old Umtali, the UM leaders endorsed the ecumenical statement concerning the Act, stating that "it cannot be reconciled with the Christian faith."[80] It was during this conference that Bishop Muzorewa realized even his presence at Old Umtali could be prohibited because it was in the White people's area. As an African, he would be required to have a

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77 Muzorewa, *Rise Up and Walk*, 79–80.

78 Muzorewa, *Rise Up and Walk*, 80. Rev. Andrew Ndhela and Rev. Christopher Chikasha, together with Bishop Muzorewa, were the three Blacks in a delegation of seven church leaders who represented the voice of the church at their first confrontation with Ian Smith.

79 Muzorewa, *Rise Up and Walk*, 81–82.

80 Muzorewa, *Rise Up and Walk*, 82.

permit to enter that zone. Later that day he gave a statement on his plan of action:

> Let it go on record that I will fight as a Christian and by Christian methods of non-violence. But I will sit in the same chair as I have been sitting in the chair before . . . and I will not move from it. I will not move from it! They will have to carry me away instead.[81]

In the true image of a church leader committed to liberating his race, Bishop Muzorewa was not going to give in, and there was no room to retreat. He felt that the church and the Zimbabwean people were comrades in arms. The bishop's effectiveness in consciousness-raising of the people resulted in his being banned from any of the rural areas where the majority of the African population lived. The bishop was not intimidated by this act and declared that he would "rather obey God than man."[82]

What the Smith regime was not aware of was that they had ignited a spark of fire from The UMC members. The very day the bishop was banned from going to the rural areas, about three hundred women, on their way from a revival meeting, demonstrated in the city of Umtali wearing their church uniforms and holding placards. Bishop Muzorewa recalled the incidents which followed the women's demonstration:

> The following Saturday, Salisbury shoppers, politicians and police were startled to find persons at every major intersection of the downtown area who were protesting against my banning. Without any notice they had descended on Salisbury by night so as to be in their places by 6 a.m. There were women in the sky-blue dress, with red sleeves and belt and white turban—the uniform of United Methodist Women. Men wore the blue sashes across their chests which were the insignia of "Fishermen" (*Vabvuwi*), a churchmen's organization. Missionaries from America and Sweden demonstrated side by side with their African colleagues.[83]

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81 Muzorewa, *Rise Up and Walk*, 82.

82 Muzorewa, *Rise Up and Walk*, 85.

83 Muzorewa, *Rise Up and Walk*, 85.

It was reported that two grandmothers stood outside Ian Smith's office holding a placard saying "Woe to Christian Oppressors!"[84] This shows that every generation was affected and people were ready to fight for their rights. These demonstrations helped the African people in Zimbabwe see the bigger picture of how strong the oppression had grown in their country.

It is important to bear in mind that by this time all the political leaders in Rhodesia were in detention. The situation now demanded a neutral political leader to command a unity movement to fight the Smith regime and its oppressive doctrines. Bishop Muzorewa's lack of any previous experience in nationalist politics in Rhodesia was, therefore, a major factor in his selection as the African National Council (ANC)'s leader.[85]

Bishop Muzorewa was assured that both Rev. Ndabaningi Sithole (ZANU, UCC) and Mr. Joshua Nkomo (ZAPU) would support this new party. The second hesitation Bishop Muzorewa had was the fear of how his church members were going to react if he not only worked together with other church leaders but was a political party leader as well. For three weeks he prayed and conferred with his church leadership, and they gave him their word of approval and support. He finally accepted the position, and the party chose Rev. Canaan Banana as his vice-chairman.[86] All this came as a result of the Rhodesian and British need to impose the Pearce Commission Proposal as an acceptable means of independence.[87] The Zimbabwean people also needed a leader to restore international confidence that the people of Zimbabwe were ready for African majority rule. They needed someone who could inform outsiders that the proposals for a settlement were a clever way to legitimize and

84 Muzorewa, *Rise Up and Walk*, 86.

85 I was fortunate to have an opportunity to talk to a top ZANU PF, former Governor for Manicaland, Comrade Chigudu, who was the one sent with the letter to Bishop Muzorewa. His statement is profound to see that Bishop Muzorewa struggled with the request. It was one thing to denounce injustice but to now lead the people in a political arena was something else and rather very difficult, to say the least.

86 Muzorewa, *Rise Up and Walk*, 94–95.

87 Muzorewa, *Rise Up and Walk*, 97. This was a settlement these governments had proposed that stated: "In the period before and during the test of accountability normal political activities will be permitted to the satisfaction of the Commission, provided they are conducted in a peaceful and democratic manner." This was a way of attempting to control what the Africans could and could not do politically.

empower white minority rule. The bishop, in his initial stages as the leader of the ANC, was able to persuade people to oppose the Pearce Commission Proposals as an acceptable means of independence with a resounding *Kwete,* "NO."[88]

On behalf of the ANC, Bishop Muzorewa visited the United Kingdom at London's Trafalgar Center, where he presented the Zimbabwean issue. His final stop was to talk to the Security Council at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, where he told them that

> The African National Council is a spontaneous grass-roots reaction . . . not a political party. It represents the overwhelming number of persons in Rhodesia who have rejected the Proposals as being unacceptable to them. . . . The Proposals, contrary to some arguments, do not de-colonize Rhodesia, rather, they re-colonize the country and to ensure the success of this dangerous and dishonorable venture the British Government seems prepared to subsidize it. . . . Our rejection of these proposals is therefore unanimous.[89]

All this fell on deaf ears, but we thank God that Bishop Muzorewa did not give up his quest for liberating his country. These activities could have cost Bishop Muzorewa his life, and yet he was determined to preach the "total gospel for the total person" in the quest for freedom. He believed that there was no peace without freedom and vice versa.

Through the leadership of Bishop Muzorewa, a devoted and God-fearing church and political leader, the Zimbabwean people won their country back in 1979, and he became the country's first Black Prime Minister. The Zimbabwean general elections were held in 1980, and the political leadership went to Mr. Robert Gabriel Mugabe as Prime Minister. The Rev. Canaan Banana became the first African President of Zimbabwe. As we can see, both the first Prime Minister and the first President of Zimbabwe were ordained clergy from the Methodist family. This shows how religious leaders played an important role in Zimbabwe's quest for liberation.

88 Muzorewa, *Rise Up and Walk*, 95.

89 Muzorewa, *Rise Up and Walk*, 111–12.

African and Christian Ritual During and After Independence

Throughout the struggle for independence, the Zimbabwean people did not leave behind their spirituality. Answering the question of how the traditional rituals played a part in the quest for Zimbabwean independence, one of the Zimbabwe war veterans, Mr. P., said, "To begin with, the rituals were a unifying force." He pointed out that the contribution of the *masvikiro* (mediums) made their relationship with the communities comfortable. He informed the author that there were a number of rituals which were imposed on them.[90] David Lan also echoed this statement saying:

> It was only within the freedom fighter's army that the belief in the participation of the ancestors was elaborated into a system of ritual practices believed to place the combatants under their protection. While on active service within the borders of Zimbabwe, the freedom fighters were not allowed to kill animals in the forest, they were not allowed to have sexual intercourse, and they were not allowed to eat certain foods. These rituals prohibitions were imposed on them by the *masvikiro* of different areas they passed through. It was believed that by observing them the freedom fighters could protect themselves from the danger of war and increase their chances of victory.[91]

The rituals used during the quest for independence were not invented by the freedom fighter or by the *masvikiro*, but were part of a wider pattern of beliefs and rituals that existed for a lifetime of the Shona people. All people were of worth and believed in the vital importance of God's role in the struggle.

This brings us to the question of healing, after independence. Now that colonial powers had been defeated and political independence achieved, there was yet another war to be fought. There were many issues which needed to be dealt with concerning the total health of the ex-combatants and their kindred and those civilians who helped them throughout the war and their kindred. It is well known in Zimbabwe that there are many people who did not

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90 Mr. P., whose real name we cannot reveal in respect of his request for confidentiality, is the ex-combatant interviewed by the author on February 6, 1998, at the United Nations Headquarters, New York.

91 David Lan, *Guns and Rain: Guerrillas and Spirit Mediums in Zimbabwe* (Markley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985), xvii.

deserve to die, who were purposely or mistakenly killed by freedom fighters, their male or female helpers, the Rhodesian soldiers, or some other groups, in the name of war.

In the Shona tradition, because of the strong belief in the power of the spirits, the innocent blood that was shed during the war was, and still is, believed to be coming to fight back. As spirits, they fight with more power than they had while still living. This kind of spirit is called *ngozi* (aggrieved or revengeful spirit). These spirits are what many people have been afraid of since after the liberation struggle, and people try to act fast. It was a major psychological illness, especially for those who know that they have shed innocent blood. Although some bodies are never recovered, their families have had ways of calling their spirits back home by conducting rituals. The Shona people soon after the war knew that this situation was a reality. They sought religious rituals for cleansing. Both Christian and traditional believers sought their religious leaders.

As mentioned before, the life of the Shona people is communal. This connection was echoed by Richard Katz when he wrote about the Kalahari Kung saying,

> Healing is more than curing, more than the application of medicine. Healing seeks to establish health and growth on physical, psychological, social, and spiritual levels; it involves work on the individual, the group and surrounding environment and cosmos. . . [I]ts vital life of the spirit and strong community, are expressed in and supported by the healing tradition.[92]

As a result of fear of endangering their families and communities, soon after independence was achieved, those who participated in the war and their kin were in constant fear that the spirits of those innocently killed could come and possess their perpetrators without their knowledge until their families were affected by illness or deaths. Thus, they sought family healing. It is the Shona people's lives being intertwined with their religion which gave and still gives families the power to seek their traditional or Christian help. Those who felt

92 Richard Katz, *Boiling Energy: Community Healing Among the Kalahari Kung* (Cambridge, London: Harvard University Press, 1982), 34.

that they could not deal with these spirits in the cultural aspect found themselves going to churches for Christian ritual of healing.

Like traditional rituals, Christian rituals played a big role after the liberation struggle and influenced the transformation of people's religious beliefs. John S. Pobee and Gabriel Ositelu tell us that:

> We are surrounded by hosts of spiritual beings—some good, some bad—which are considered able to influence the course of human lives. For that reason calamities are attributed to personal forces of evil. In such a setting it is an important role of religion to help free humanity from the tyranny of those forces of evil. It is useless to debate the reality of such spirit beings. . . . [W]hatever the philosophical issue at stake, the thinking of traditional Africa appears to be not dissimilar to what we read in the New Testament: that 'our struggle is not against enemies of flesh and blood, but against the rules, against authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places' (Eph. 6:12). In this sense, AICs[93] reminds us of a part of the apostolic tradition which the historic churches have tended to explain away.[94]

Although no written material was found on which Christian rituals were sought soon after independence in Zimbabwe, we are going to attempt to give you what is known based on the Shona tradition, Zimbabwe Christianity, and personal experiences as a Zimbabwean clergyperson.

In the Shona tradition, exorcism is carried out in a number of ways such as approaching a traditional diviner. As for Christians, they go to church priest, pastors, or prophets, depending on the type of church, mainline or African Initiated Churches or Pentecostal.

In Zimbabwe, nearly every church was, and still is, concerned with healing. Post-war rituals in Zimbabwean churches had to deal with spiritual more than physical healing. Talking about his experience of dealing with the total healing of people from spiritual and physical illnesses, Rev. Kingston Kahlari, a United Methodist pastor, says:

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93 AIC, in this context, stands for African Initiated Christianity.

94 John S. Pobee and Gabriel Ositelu, *African Initiatives of Christianity: The Growth, Gifts and Diversities of Indigenous African Churches: A Challenge to the Ecumenical Movement* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1998), 29.

> The healing of the people is happening more today. I am busy with healing prayers. Even yesterday, I had a woman who came from very far away; at Murambinda who came to be healed. During the healing process of some people, they will be troubled by demons which will be causing them to be sick. So we exorcize them and their sickness will be gone.[95]

We need to note that some missionaries had led many Zimbabweans to believe that there was nothing good in their culture. Many people believed what they were told, but when problems come, and they cannot explain the reasons why they are happening, some continue to be Christians by day and traditionalists by night. Because of fear of being labeled "heathens" within their Christian traditions, some families who were faced with spiritual warfare coming into their families or were anticipating it because of what they knew their family members had done during the war chose not to consult traditional healers so that they could remain members of their respective denominations. Instead, they went mainly to the African Initiated Churches for help, which was a better alternative.

Holy Spirit possession, discernment of the spirits, and exorcism drew and still draw a lot of people to these indigenous churches. The prophets/prophetesses can tell people where the problem is coming from, what kind of spirit is troubling them, and finally how they can pray those spirits away. The most important aspect of Christianity for the Zimbabwean church is the experience of deliverance through a restored relationship with God in Jesus Christ.

These are some of the reasons why some of the victims of the spiritual world after the Zimbabwean liberation struggle had to seek help from churches and traditional healers alike. These religious rituals brought the Zimbabwean people closer to God, which also led to church growth. These rituals did not end after war but still happen because of the day-to-day spiritual challenges people have.

We shall see in the last section of this presentation how the church today is responding to the spirituality needs of the African people.

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95 Rev. Kingston Kahlari, interview by author, tape recording, October 16, 2001. All interviewees have given their permission for their words to be utilized in this chapter.

Bodily Gestures and African Denominational and Personal Spirituality

Early African Christians in Zimbabwe proved to be more open to the gospel than the missionaries expected. What we need to bear in mind is that African spirituality is deeper than what meets the eye. The culture itself has a strong foundation in the belief system of the spiritual world and has the means of understanding and dealing with this realm as we just saw. During the early days of missionary work in Zimbabwe, God was pouring out the Holy Spirit on native work in unusual ways.

At the 1910 Annual Conference, William C. Terril and Herbert N. Howard, reporting on the state of the church in Rhodesia, offered five points on what they observed the church doing and what they hoped for in the future. Their fourth point strongly advocated the spiritual empowerment of the church. It reads:

> There is another thing that we must desire for the church in Africa, which is larger in import than any of the above. We want a strong influx of the Spirit. We want a spiritual revival among all of our people, and especially at our central school. At the latter place the whole atmosphere ought to be intensely spiritual. Here the boys ought to feel God near them at all time. We know from the increase reported this year that the Spirit has been at work in the kraals and at Old Umtali we had a most blessed time during the Passover Week. All of our boys at the end of the meetings gave themselves to the work of God; that is potentially, for they took the stand that if they felt that God wanted them for his work in Africa they would not rebel. In this matter is the hope, and the only hope, of effective work in Africa, wherefore we ought to give the more diligence to seeking the presence and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.[96]

More and more signs were seen that Africans were taking responsibility for the work of God. Terril and Howard believed that in order for the church to move forward and do even more, the Holy Spirit must become manifest. We read in Acts 8 about the baptism by water of the Samaritans, but they also

96 *Minutes of the East Central Africa Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (Inhambane: Pilgrim Press, November 1910), 70. Apparently, the term "Passover Week" was used to describe a distinct period of spiritual revival.

needed the second baptism, the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The Africans were baptized by water and were doing God's work in the field but still needed the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This seems to have been the prayer of the missionaries for this young church.

At the 1913 Annual Conference, three years following Terril and Howard's expressed desire for a Spirit-filled church, Bishop Hartzell reported on the work of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe). He explained what happened at the Assembly Days held at Old Umtali on October 28th and 29th that year. At this particular time, the Assembly Days had been attended by one thousand natives together with the missionaries. Hartzell said:

> The sermons and addresses by missionaries and natives were of high order, while singing led by the Missionaries and over fifty teachers and evangelists, must have been heard to be appreciated. As I was describing the return of the prodigal son, the native leaders and people started a movement forward and fell on their faces around me. In a moment, the great audience was prostrated on the grassy ground. There was no noise except one universal sob, indicating profound spiritual emotion. A most impressive season of prayer followed, the results of which only the Holy Spirit Himself can estimate.[97]

This even led the Bishop to reconnect this event with what he did and felt in 1899.

> To me, that scene and manifestation of the spiritual power was an assurance of answer to prayer. Overlooking Old Umtali Mission Park is a mountain fifteen hundred feet higher than the plains where that audience lay prostrate in prayer to God. In 1899, after the papers for the land had been signed and words of cheer had come from the home church, I climbed to the top of that mountain and alone kneeled before my Lord and poured out my soul in a prayer of thanksgiving and praise, and then my faith climbed a new spiritual empire in Africa for American Methodism. That prostrate audience, only three were Christians when my prayer was offered on the mountain-top, and besides, there was over two thousand of our membership in Rhodesia not present.[98]

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97 *Official Journal: Minutes of the East Central Africa Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (Umtali: The Mission Press, 1913), 7.

98 *Official Journal: Minutes* (1913), 7–8.

The bishop's remarks show that prayers were being answered, the work in Rhodesia was progressing, and the native people were answering God's call. I liked the phrase the bishop used here, "my faith climbed a new spiritual empire in Africa." This shows that when prayer is said earnestly, one moves to a higher level of spirituality. Prayer positively impacted the mission of the Church. As Bishop Hartzell reports, in 1899 there were only three African Christians in the MEC, and by 1913 the number had grown to more than three thousand.[99]

Through the years, the Methodist Episcopal Church in Rhodesia experienced more and more work of the Holy Spirit. Spiritual roots were growing deeper. The Church was seriously praying for the spiritual empowerment in order for them to accomplish their mission of evangelizing the African societies. But I strongly believe there was disconnect between the missionaries and the natives who became Christians. We shall see this disconnect later.

Sometimes in Christian life, circumstances push you until you hit rock bottom before you get to the next spiritual height. You look around yourself and everything seems to be falling apart. Remember Jesus' disciples in John 21? Life was now uncertain for them after the death of Jesus. Even with the resurrection they had witnessed, they were not quite sure of what to do next in that crisis moment. The best way was to go back to familiar territory—fishing. Similarly it happened to the church in Rhodesia.

John R. Gates's report to the 1917 Annual Conference gave details of the situation starting in 1916. In the history of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Rhodesia, this was a very difficult time for the Church. They did not have enough money, which meant that they had to cut down the number of staff. In an Annual Conference, where they needed thirty-one missionaries and sixty-two pastor-teachers in order for the church to do ministry effectively, there were only thirty-one missionaries and a few African helpers available to go out and do work. There was also almost nothing to support the pastor-teachers.[100] The

99 *Official Journal: Minutes* (1913), 7–8.

100 *Minutes of the 2nd and 3rd Sessions of the Rhodesia Mission Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (Inhambane: Mission Press, 1917), 19. What is very interesting here is that the pastor-teachers were the ones on the ground with the people, but support for them was almost dry.

worship community now had the superiors and the inferior co-workers. Rev. George A. Roberts in his book *Let Me Tell You a Story* wrote:

> At that time expenses were increasing more than the mission income. Although, as a mission, we were paying out all the money we could get, the pastor-teachers began wanting higher wages. I think that every one of the pastor-teachers had announced his intension to leave and go where he could get bigger money. They had families and needed more money for the education of their children.[101]

Putting myself in the shoes of these pastor-teachers, I do not think I would have acted differently, especially given the fact that missionaries were being paid and the Africans had to sacrifice the welfare of their families by becoming volunteers. We need to bear in mind that the closure of forty out-station schools (schools and parishes other than Mission Centers where the missionaries were) meant regression on the part of the mission of the church. People were still young in their Christian faith, and the shepherds were not going to be there to nurture them. It was believed that something needed to be done in order for the work not to perish. A time of worship together was needed.

There are a number of theories regarding how a worshiping time together was needed, according to John W. Z. Kurewa,[102] Eben K. Nhiwatiwa,[103] and George Arthur Roberts.[104] They hoped that these Africans could rethink the mission of the church in the world.[105] To be the revival's guest preacher, they agreed to call Rev. James Hatch from Rusitu Mission, "who was a strong evangelist and could handle the native language perfectly."[106]

What is agreed upon in both oral and written materials is that it all started with someone from the American Board at Rusitu. The Holy Spirit was touching

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101 George Arthur Roberts, *Let Me Tell You a Story* (Bulawayo: The Rhodesia Christian Press, [n.d.]), 44.

102 John Wesley Z. Kurewa, *The Church in Mission: A Short History of The United Methodist Church in Zimbabwe, 1897–1997* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), 67.

103 Kurewa, *The Church in Mission*, 67. See also Nhiwatiwa, *Humble Beginnings*, 76.

104 Roberts, *Let Me Tell You a Story*, 44.

105 What needs to be said here is that missionaries had been convinced by the conversion of the pastor-teachers, so they wanted to use worship to manipulate them to be volunteers, while the missionaries themselves were being paid for their services.

106 Roberts, *Let Me Tell You a Story*, 77; see also Kurewa, *The Church in Mission*, 67.

people wherever the preachers from Rusitu went. In 1916–1918 the spirituality of the Zimbabwean church was shaken by the circumstances surrounding them. There was a spiritual drought. Today, when one talks about the power of prayer in the Zimbabwe United Methodist Church, people will rush to talk not about what the Bible says, but about the 1918 revival. People believe that the strength of the spirituality of African Christians started to go deeper in 1918, which is known as the Pentecost of the American Methodist Church in Zimbabwe.

The financial situation had not changed but it shows that something important for the Church happened at this revival, which left people with different ways of looking at its results. Missionaries Herbert N. Howard, J. G. Paisley, and Eddy H. Greeley had this to say about the 1918 revival:

> Last June there came upon our native teachers a baptism—a Pentecost. We were not impressed with the gymnastics that some went through, but a large number of our men became flaming fires with a heavy burden for their people rolled upon them. They received such a baptism as Paul, who said, "Woe is me, if I preach not the Gospel." This Spirit followed them to their out-stations. . . . Lives were cleaned up. It was a marvelous and blessed experience. The emotional side of life is indeed the great dynamic and does erupt some out of deep pits and turn them right about and sets them on new paths. But the emotions were never made to become dominant over the intellect. We do not want to lose any part of the blessing by dissipating its power into sentimentalism. Nor do we want anyone to get the idea that he is not saved if he takes the work of grace quietly.[107]

What these missionaries did not know was that in African culture, the whole worship experience is embodied with bodily gestures. The gestures were what missionaries called "gymnastics." E. Elochukwu Uzukwu elaborates the importance of body language to an African in this way:

> Contrary to the Greco-Roman and Western Christian practice, Africans do not experience the body as a prison for the soul, an indicator of "fallen-ness," and consequently, an instrument of sin. The African experience of body and gestures displays humans in the universe

107 *Official Journal: Minutes of the East Central Africa Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (Umtali: The Mission Press, 1919), 37.

> grasped as a totality. The body is the center of the total manifestation of person in gestures. In gestures (verbal and nonverbal) the self reveals itself, from head to toe, as one complex reality—visible and yet invisible; corporal-incorporeal; part of, but also the center of a complex universe in interaction. The rhythm of interaction in this universe is discovered, re-created, and expressed bodily by humans.[108]

This realization about the importance of bodily gestures evolved bit by bit in the Methodist Episcopal Church in Rhodesia, but it was looked at as evil during the period in question.

The question now is: What really happened at this revival? It seems that these missionaries had mixed feelings. For years the church had been praying for the coming of the Holy Spirit as we heard. Now that the Spirit had come, they were not satisfied because the natives were not behaving in the way they had taught them. But we all know that when the Holy Spirit comes, no one is in charge but God. The African culture was changing but not in the direction the missionaries had wanted.

Our immediate reaction to the missionaries' attitude toward the bodily gestures, as shown by the pastor-teachers, is summed up by Uzukwu when he says:

> The divergent attitudes toward the body as experienced in the African and Western traditions may expose the possible misunderstandings and conflicts in the cross-cultural contacts between the two traditions (formal and informal acculturation). . . . Gestures are symbolic codes. . . . The ritual action as a presentation of the community before God and the spirits goes back to the ethnic group for its meaning—like all gestures. Insofar as ritual gestures involve body movement, they are particular; they thus display a particular ethnic pattern of interaction within the universe… bodily motions are variably interpreted from one culture to another. It is thus clear that we may live in the same universe but may not express its impact on us in the same way. Even at the deepest level of experience of the mystery that life is to all of us (religion), the ritual expression of this mystery (whether verbal or nonverbal) remains particular.[109]

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108 E. Elochukwu Uzukwu, *Worship as Body Language: Introduction to Christian Worship: An African Orientation* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1997), 10.

109 Uzukwu, *Worship as Body Language*, 14–15.

He further notes:

> Because worship is concerned with body motions or gestures, African Christians see worship as a channel to display their deep experience of the mystery revealed in the Christian story. And since African sociocultural groups have successfully integrated body and spirit into interactional gestures, a healthy expression of the incarnate human in African Christian liturgy should constitute the intent of the inculturation of worship in African communities. Here inculturation is understood as the expression by African Christians of the mutual impact of the gospel and culture in their respective sociocultural area.[110]

These statements show us that these missionaries did not consider the fact that people of every culture need to express themselves in their own way in response to what God has done and is saying to them. In other words, Uzukwu is reminding us that there is no one way of displaying our response to God's grace. Jesus' life and teachings are understood through the individual's culture. Reporting on what he observed, Roberts wrote:

> After two weeks of meeting with only slight enthusiasm on the part of the pastor-teachers, I remember sitting in front looking in their faces and wondering what was going on in their minds. Suddenly a young pastor-teacher, Samuel Chieza, jumped up at the back of the church, ran quickly to the altar, knelt down and began praying. In a few minutes almost all the teachers were at the altar. Then there was a long period of praying, singing and testimonies. This continued for almost three days, then groups of them began going to the top of the mountain preaching to each other; then they started going preaching to anyone who would listen in the mines or farms or in the streets of Umtali.[111]

Interestingly, the Africans are the ones responding to this power of the Holy Spirit, while missionaries are watching. I guess things were not going as planned or expected. A new African Christian culture was being formed in their midst.

We need to know that besides the missionary eye witnesses, there is also information from the Africans themselves who experienced this spiritual

110 Uzukwu, *Worship as Body Language*, 15.

111 Roberts, *Let Me Tell You a Story*, 44.

renewal. Rev. Josiah Chimbadzwa was one of the pastor-teachers present at the revival. His version of the revival and its aftermath was that in March 1918, people were gathered at Old Umtali for a revival meeting. Reverend Gates had invited Rev. Hatch of Rusitu Mission to be the guest preacher. For two weeks, every day they would meet and Rev. Hatch would speak to the congregation on passages in the Bible about the Holy Spirit. It came to pass, on the tenth day, that people were in the Chapel of the Biblical Institute praying, Rev. Hatch asked them to pray silently in their hearts. As they were on their knees praying, the Holy Spirit came down upon them. The whole room became filled by a bright light that they had never seen before. Every one of them spontaneously said, "Amen-Amen, Alleluia-alleluia." Zachariah Mukombiwa walked on top of people, saying "Alleluia-Amen" in a tune that they had never heard before. (He was speaking in tongues.) Many people were convinced that the Holy Spirit had come down upon them as it had come upon the Apostles in the Upper Room. No sooner did they come out of the church than they found themselves in twos and going to pray in different places in the nearby mountain. Josiah Chimbadzwa and his friend Samuel Chieza went to a place in Chiremba Mountain to pray. When they came back, Josiah could not even eat, for the Holy Spirit had filled his heart.

The spiritual drought had been quenched and pastor-teachers had a new sense of mission. Their level of spirituality had gone to a higher level through prayer. The Acts Pentecost was relived in an African context. After the meeting at Old Mutare ended, people went out to spread the Word of God. All the pastor-teachers did their best to spread the Good News.[112]

A more profound result of the revival was the healing of Nhenhu, a daughter of Chieftess Muredzwa. With the famine breakout in 1916, all pastor-teachers had been asked to leave their work places and go to Old Umtali Mission, since there was no money to pay them. Reports say that other people from nearby communities had also moved to Old Umtali, probably in order for them to get food. A young girl by the name of Nhenhu Muredzwa was also at Old Umtali Mission at this time. After the revival Nhenhu also went away as these

112 Ernest L. Sells Collection held at the United Methodist Archives, Drew University, Madison, New Jersey (call nos. 1539-4-3 to 1541-5-3), hereafter referred to as "Sells files"; "The 1918 Revival by Josiah Chimbadzwa" (call no. 1541-5-1).

pastor-teachers were dispersing to their respective places after the revival. She had been in school all this time. When she reached home, she never returned to school because she had become lame. She was only six years of age.

Peter Mufunde, Gezana Sadomba, David Mandisodza, and John Cheke went out preaching in villages. When Nhenhu heard that there were pastor-teachers traveling around villages preaching the Word of God, she was very eager to just see them so that she could tell them her troubles. Muredzwa, her mother, is said to have spent twenty goats, five cows, and many hens in trying to find a cure for her daughter. Although she had lost so much, there was one more way for the mother to try, and that was to pray for Nhenhu.

The next day the pastors asked people to gather at the church. By faith, Nhenhu was brought to church before the congregation. There was a rope hanging down from the roof in Nhenhu's house. It had been put there by her mother to help her on standing up. The rope was brought to the church for prayer. Nhenhu was raised and was asked to take hold of the rope as it hung from the rafters of the church. The rope swayed here and there as though she were on a swing. She said she could feel somebody pressing her legs and stretching them but no one touched her feet. People were praying. When Nhenhu got down, she felt as if her knees and legs stretched. She had been healed. No sooner did Muredzwa see her daughter standing on her feet, because of joy mixed with fear, she began to run away, but she was stopped by a great light that flooded the church. She had never seen this light before in her life. The pastor-teachers had prayed for Nhenhu, and she had been healed. Their prayers had been answered. She travelled from village to village alone, showing people how she had been healed. She was given a great gift through the African pastor-teachers.[113]

This story is told in many ways, but all the versions come to the conclusion that Africans were given the gifts of the Holy Spirit from the 1918 Old Umtali revival. That power positively helped change the African culture. I strongly believe that this was also the time that Africans came to realize they could be both African and Christian at the same time, even though it was not welcomed

113 Sells files, "Dorcas Muredzwa"; Kurewa, *The Church in Mission*, 68–69; Nhiwatiwa, *Humble Beginnings*, 80–81.

by some missionaries. This was the beginning of Africans reclaiming their identity and deeper spirituality.

Now, to move to the church's liturgical life today, we know that in Africa, we are blessed that our culture informs us that there is a spiritual world. This was not taught to us by missionaries. We understand spirituality more than most of our Western counterparts. Now the question is, as Christians, what are we doing with that knowledge? In each country on this continent, people have gone through wars or unsettlement, innocent blood has been shed, rituals were done for the spirits of the dead to fight back. What is the church doing to deliver the victims, especially the girl child? Not spirits from the wars only, but different kinds of alien spirits. To try and answer this question, let us now look at what the African church is doing today to respond to the spiritual needs of the people.

African Christian Worship Today

John Wesley said:

> This religion we long to see established in the world, a religion of love, and joy, and peace, having its seat in the inmost, but ever showing itself by its fruits, continually springing forth, not only in all innocence, (for love worketh no ill to his neighbour,) but likewise in every kind of beneficence, spreading virtue and happiness all around it.[114]

Jesus' disciples, as they joined his ministry through his calling, observed Jesus as a prayerful person that even illness or spiritual worlds could not withstand. Jesus was healing the physical (the centurion's servant, Luke 7:1-10), and he was also healing the spiritual part of his listeners by forgiving them (e.g., a woman, who was known in the whole city as the bad one, washed Jesus' feet with her tears, then anointed them with oil, Luke 7:36-50). Evil spirits left the bodies of the living (e.g., a demonic Gerasene was exorcised and sent back to his community to testify about Jesus, Luke 8:26-39). These examples in the Gospel of Luke, and many more throughout the Bible, demonstrate that Jesus lived by example, so that these newly called messengers of the good news

114 John Wesley, *An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*, in *Works* [ed. Jackson] *of John Wesley,* ed. Thomas Jackson (New York: J. Emory and B. Waugh, 1831), 5:5.

could learn about the power of prayer in transforming peoples and cultural perceptions about other people.

African spirituality is embedded in Zimbabwe United Methodist worship. We believe that the spirituality of each individual can enrich the worship experience of any congregation. Each person's "Christian" spirituality has been informed by both cultural and denominational experiences; although, it is often taken for granted that all came only from a Christian influence. Many African Christians, especially elderly people, do not want to associate their Christian spirituality with their African heritage, because they were taught by missionaries that "everything African is evil." E. Milingo tells us that:

> In the field of liturgy, we have been surprised that those who have specialized in African liturgical adaptations are the Westerners. They have come to teach Africans accepted gestures, movements and drums. What they approve, we Africans must approve. What they do not like, we must give up. They have gone so far as to incite the Africans themselves to condemn their own traditional values supposed to be included in the liturgy. The principle to guide them is that there is nothing pure and sacred in all that is African, they pose before us as the sacred and pure, having the spirit of discernment for genuine African values worthy to be included in the liturgy. Our Africanness is with us and in us. We have been fed on it and so brought up in it. They tell me that I do not have any discipline since I do not send away from the church all the ladies with crying babies during my sermon. . . . As we come together to pray I am told, "Will you teach them to sing quietly? Singing is also prayer, why do they have to shout? Moreover they are singing at every moment which is left free. They should learn to have some silent moments." . . . [O]ur traditions have to be reshaped to suit the Western mind before they can be accepted as worth preserving. They advise me that it is my duty to co-operate with them to educate my fellow Africans. They accept the fact that I am an African, but they value me much more as the instrument to bring a change to African attitudes and culture according to their wishes.[115]

In order to demystify those beliefs Gabriel M. Setiloane asserts that:

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115 E. Milingo, *The World in Between: Christian Healing and the Struggle for Spiritual Survival* (Gweru, Zimbabwe: Mambo Press, 1985), 73–74. See also G. C. Oosthuizen, "The Task of African Traditional Religion in the Church's Dilemma in South Africa," in *African Spirituality: Forms, Meanings, and Expressions*, ed. Jacob K. Olupona (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2000), 279–80.

> I have always believed that we Black who study the mysteries of African religious activity and life have a duty to bring to the attention of our White western fellow scholars that there is much more to this than can be assessed adequately by western scholarship.[116]

Here I agree with Setiloane that it is the responsibility of Black scholars to bring to the attention of our fellow Western scholars the deep spirituality of our people. But in this work, we would go even further, saying that it is not for Western fellow scholars only, but also for the church in Africa. There is an even deeper level of spirituality and mysticism within the members of different churches that has not yet been tapped, which could enhance the worship life of the church even more than it is doing today. There is need to continue unveiling that mystery in order for the African people to realize that everything in their culture is not bad, but has helped to enhance their Christian spirituality in one way or another.

The challenge facing the Zimbabwean society today is a new form of spiritual warfare attacking the girl child. The issue of spiritual husbands has the church and society battling with more questions than answers.

There is a religion called Satanism, which has been in the Zimbabwe papers and news. It is said that it started in the Tongogara Refugee Camps in Manicaland, where we have refugees from Congo and Rwanda. Two refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo have been deported. Initiation into that group demands that one has to shed blood. They lure young men with money or other luxury items. They definitely give them what they promise, but that person has to shed blood in their families. They also spiritually take women as their spiritual wives. Mainly girl children are affected the most.

During our revivals or prayer meetings, their demon can speak through that child. As UMs we have always made it a point that during these prayer times, especially at revivals, we have space set aside as prayer rooms furnished with prayer warriors and counselors. Available are people who are gifted with the spirit of discernment—this will help separate psychological and spiritual cases.

I will not dwell on this, but this is a new war; and the Government and

116 Gabriel M. Setiloane, "Snippets Out of Research Experience," in *Afro-Christian Religion at the Grassroots in Southern Africa*, eds. G. C. Oosthuizen and Irving Hexham (Lewiston/Queenston/Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1991), 5.

Church are aware of it. As UMs we are fighting this spiritual warfare in our schools and churches.

Conclusion

This study has sought to examine the changes that have been taking place in the worship life of the Zimbabwe United Methodist Church. Three questions have been posed in this study in order to assess the progress and also hear what people on the ground hope for the future.

How has the political liberation struggle influenced liturgical inculturation? An analysis of the part played by religious rituals within Zimbabwe's quest for liberation reveals that one crucial element is that of commitment. Religious rituals have been important throughout the political, physical, psychological, emotional, and spiritual struggles of the people of Zimbabwe. Religion brought total healing to the total person and still continues to strengthen people through the service of respect for human dignity.

As a result of the contribution of religious rituals to the quest for Zimbabwe's independence, religion, especially Christianity, was able to reach the inner selves of people at the grass-roots level; people whose lives had never been actually touched in spite of the long history of Christianity in Zimbabwe. Up to now, Christianity still appeals to the Shona people, because the church was there with them throughout their struggles to meet various needs.

Through their healing services, religious groups have given the Zimbabwean people new beliefs that God was there in their midst as they struggled. Instead of promising people "pie in the sky," religion has really tried to descend to the lowest level of humanity to assist them where they were in order to uplift them. Religion in Zimbabwe, through its rituals, suffers with the people. The religious leaders assume a prophetic function and address the imbalances of society, both political and spiritual.

The readings from some missionary documents, together with historical materials written from the Western point of view, show that very little is mentioned about how change took place in the worshiping life of the ZUMC as a result of political influence. If this change was mentioned at all, it was generally in a negative light. But considering the information gathered in this document, we can see that the political liberation struggle has influenced the liturgical inculturation in a concealed, if not mysterious manner.

As we have seen from the beginning of this study, Africans had their own religion, African religion, before the coming of settlers and missionaries to Zimbabwe. African people's lives were always surrounded by rituals that helped them live in harmony with one another. The coming of settlers and missionaries disturbed that religious and social ecology. Africans were now expected to understand, practice, and express their Christian experiences by imitating Europeans. When Africans did not imitate the European type of Christianity, the perception was that there was something wrong with African Christian spirituality. For Africans, for whom both religion and society are always inseparable, this created a conflict. Missionary Christianity did not reconcile the African world with the African religious experience. This was clearly demonstrated in the 1918 revival experience and can be found in the many experiences heard through people's voices. People refused to be restrained whenever they felt led by the Holy Spirit to talk to their God.

Ernest L. Sells stressed, "We must not think that everyone who hears the Gospel is immediately changed into a Christian of Western culture and civilization. We would not want it so if it could be true. Christ deals with the Black man in Black man's ways."[117] Here we assume that Sells was observing the struggles between the missionaries who wanted Africans to imitate them and the Africans who were claiming their identity and wanted to be given freedom to worship God within their cultural setting. In this study we have realized that the patterns of Christianizing Africans by missionaries led to the formation of African Independent/Indigenous churches and changes within the mainline denominations due to political reasons within church and society.

If Zimbabwean history is to be correct, we would like to emphasize strongly the need to recognize the contributions of religion to the political liberation struggle. As we have seen, religious rituals helped people in many ways with regard to community structure, religious concepts, and respect of self. Religious leaders and rituals made it clear to the Shona people that to be Black does not mean one is a second-class person in the world; but that we are all created equal in the image of *Musikavanhu* (Creator).

117 Ernest L. Sells, *On Trek with Christ in Southern Rhodesia* (Umtali: Rhodesia Mission Press, 1936), 21.

Therefore, amidst all the changes, Zimbabwean history cannot divorce itself from the political and liturgical freedom given to its people. It started with Bishop Dodge, who saw the need to respect people's culture and encouraged the Africans to fight for their political and liturgical freedom. The empowering of clergy also meant change within the worship patterns. Bishop Muzorewa believed in the "total gospel for the total person," meaning every person needed to have freedom politically and also in the ways they worshiped.

In order for us to have an idea of the changes that have taken place in the worship life of the ZUMC, we sought the voices of the people who have lived through those times of change. Through their voices, we demonstrated that all along there was an interaction between missionary and African consciousness. Both missionary and African perspectives were important in this research in order for us to see the struggles both parties witnessed for or against change in ZUMC worship. We have argued that these changes were the result of the work of African people themselves. They used their own culture as foundation.

Par Hassing reported at the 1944 Annual Conference about the ongoing work in the Mutasa-Makoni District:

> During this Conference year my work among the African population has shown me power of the Gospel of Christ. My six brethren in the ministry have been travelling and working faithfully among the people. The more I work with them, the greater becomes my respect for them. . . . The message of Jesus Christ shows his power wherever it is spoken in the Holy Spirit, and where man does not interfere with it. Things that are strange to our western trained eyes are surely happening in many of our meetings. But very many strange things indeed were happening in the early Church as it is pictured in our New Testament. It always follows when the Gospel enters a new culture and environment. It is true that this growing African Church needs teaching and help, but I believe it must be sympathetic guidance rather than strong control.[118]

This indicates that some missionaries were beginning to have an understanding of the cultural importance of the growth of African Christian spirituality. Worship patterns would never be the same in every culture.

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118 *Official Journal* (1944), 28.

Change has been occurring since missionary times, but in some areas it was, and still is, difficult for some people. In trying to keep up with the changes and help the church move with the times, there are many concerns about the suppression of spiritual gifts people have as United Methodists. These gifts are openly celebrated in Independent/Indigenous and Pentecostal churches. There are two major opinions in the ZUMC that will continue to be heard through the interviewees' voices. There are those who say that United Methodist worship needs to follow traditional Methodist ways, meaning what was taught by missionaries. Others say that these spiritual gifts are biblical; therefore, they are not particular to certain denominations but are for all Christians. This difference of opinion is not determined by age or class. What is interesting is that in many congregations, one would find both groups operating and sometimes even a third opinion emerges, which expresses a middle path. These differences of opinion have become one of the contributing factors in the growth of small group meetings where people of same spirituality get together and worship without limitations.

In the following paragraphs we shall try to answer the remaining two questions about the struggles concerning change in worship patterns and incorporation of traditional aspects of worship. These struggles will continue to be found in the voices of the people who share their hopes and dreams for continued liturgical inculturation in the life of the church in Zimbabwe.

1. How have the worship patterns changed since missionary times?

Responses from some of my interviewees will give us some light as to the hope for the vibrant worship services in the future.[119]

Enoch Mutsago

> What I would like to lift up is that people need to hear more preaching. After preaching to them, educate them. After giving them education, there should be time to make that education practical and not theory only; to really get into the issues through education. If we talk about repentance, you need to go in the midst of people. If it's seeking those who are lost, go to where the people are. Let us not only wait for people to come. We need to remember that some people

119 All interviewees quoted here have given their permission for their words to be used.

come to church because they like the playing of the *hosho* (rattle) or the singing we do. But if we want to have a deep worshiping life which touches the hearts of people, let's go to where the people are and preach. Then educate them.

Let me lift up the thought that, yes, time is moving and years are going by, but if we could get in the spirit of taking seriously Sunday, the day of the Lord, so that we can take more time learning about worship. After the worship service, I would like for us to spend the rest of the day devoted to worship. After the Sunday worship service, then around one, two or three we go to home revivals[120] where those who feel free could go and spend more time worshiping and finish that day in prayer. Let most of the time on Sunday be left as time of worship. Yes, you can go to football games, but come back to worship time.

Betty Satumba

I would like to see us continue enriching our worshiping life, enriching it through Bible studies. You know, when a person is not well grounded in scripture, they can preach, but the message is very weak because they do not have it all. They do not have the details. In order for people to know why they worship, they need to know the Word first and foremost in order to have an understanding of what God is saying to them. They need to know the texts.

When a person just wants to worship, worship without studying the scriptures, you will be someone without spiritual depth. I hope that the Sunday schools we are having which are very helpful, I hope they will do even more. We used to be forced to go to Sunday school and people would go here and there. But now I see that the lessons are appealing. People are coming even earlier to the lessons. I see that people are interested in studying the Bible. I hope that our denomination will increase Bible study times.

Kumbirai Answer Madenyika

The issue is complex, but within a few years I would like to, since I am focusing on youth, I would like to see us being taught Methodism in depth. Many times people are coming into the Methodist Church without knowing what Methodism is, to the point that sometimes they will start saying that they do not like the way the Methodist

120 These home revivals are becoming more and more prevalent in local churches. They are promoting the spirituality of many people in the ZUMC.

Church worships. But that is the formal way they do their worship which made them be called Methodist. As a leader, you need to know what is required in the Methodist Church so that you can share with the youth that is what is required of you, because young people are the church of tomorrow which needs to know.

Yemurai Unity Masukume

My advice is that I hope we do not try to control the Holy Spirit. There is an understanding that people say, "We are old enough and are the ones who know the church better." I wish that kind of attitude would end. We have some people who are receiving Jesus while they are still young. They are being used by God a lot. Sometimes they backslide because adults will always be saying to us, "You children that is not our Methodist tradition." If we can stop that suppression and give each person the chance to share their gifts, I strongly believe that God communicates with everybody. And yes, *Mwari* needs things done in order. But if people get to the point of saying, "We have been in church for long and what you are doing is no more Methodism," sometimes these young people are doing things which are biblical. So, sometimes we get confused and no more know what this means, especially with the gifts of the Spirit. I believe that the Spirit does not choose that I would like to give this gift to this denomination. If we say God gives the gifts of the Spirit to all denominations, to all people who are *Musikavanhu's* (Creator's) children, especially the gift of speaking in tongues, I believe we have some people who have those gifts. Let us not suppress those gifts if they are there. Let them be celebrated so that they can enhance our worshiping life as believers.

2. How is the ZUMC incorporating African traditional practices into their worship?

Eben Kanukayi Nhiwatiwa

It's true that the issue of incorporating some of our cultural practices into the worshiping life of the church has been worked on and it's enriching us. When we look at music, *ngoma* playing was not allowed. *Hosho* playing was not allowed. All those are now a part of our worshiping life. When I look at today, there are things which are not going on well in this area of incorporating our culture into the worshiping life of the church because there are still arguments. Let me tell you that there was a time when it was brought up in the church ideas about the Lord's Supper so that we could use *sadza* which we are used to. People refused saying we cannot do that because it will be too much

of a big change. Some said, "If Jesus was in Africa and eat this *sadza*, He would have used it." The answer was, "No, it is not the same."

I am giving this as an example and there is still a chance to do it. I remember one time when we were teaching about tithing when one woman said, "Tithing is like a mother's cow. In our culture you cannot play around with that cow when it's given to her."[121] I liked that way of thinking and I said, "Here is this woman who is bringing the language which can interpret better than we can do that tithing is like a mother's cow." A person who knows our culture knows how important that is. She was trying to explain that tithing is very important. We still have a chance of bringing more to the worshiping life of the church if we teach people. In our talking to people, we need to use words which are acceptable and can be able to communicate well with people at whichever level they are. Words which will say to people, "Worship goes from here to there."

Sanda Sanganza

In worship, I hope we will take time to look into the reason why our foreparents used to ask for things and God provided. Also we need to look into how this God through *midzimu* whom our foreparents worshiped,[122] how is that spirituality related to Christian spirituality? What is Christian spirituality? I am not saying let's worship *midzimu.* I am saying that we need to have a deeper understanding of what they meant and compare that with what we do today to see if there is a relationship. Do people understand that we are worshiping the same God? What has happened is that people tend to say Christianity

121 When *lobola* is being paid during a daughter's marriage, most of the items are given to the father. Usually the girl's father receives money, a head of cattle, and clothes. A few things are given to the mother, including clothes and a cow. The mother does whatever she wants with the cow, and no one can touch it unless directed by her. If she dies before she sells or kills it, it has to be given to her paternal family. No one in her husband's family has the right to it, even her own children, unless she had said so. If anyone dares to take it from her family, her spirit will come and fight the family until it's paid back. Out of that cow, she can have a herd of cattle, and she does whatever she wants with them. Every Zimbabwean, traditionalist or Christian, knows very well that it's a must that you have to give a cow and not the cow's money equivalent. They want *mombe inotsika* (a live cow). It is better to pay the cow first before anything else so, if for some reason the mother dies before the prospective son-in-law finishes the rest of the lobola, he will not have to deal with her angry spirit and have to perform special traditional rituals. If it so happens that the cow dies while in her husband's family, it has to be replaced soon. Whether you are a Christian or traditionalist, the cow is a must. Some of the items for the father can be negotiated, but nothing on the mother's list can be changed. The mother's list is short but more ritualistic than the father's.

122 Here it needs to be clarified that the Zimbabwean forefathers/mothers did not worship *midzimu* but they worshiped *Mwari* through *midzimu*.

> is better, but Jesus said, "I have come to fulfill the Law of Moses." If we get to understand this foundation and cherish it, then come to Christianity as people with their foundation that we were not worshiping idols but God. The same God is the one we are worshiping today, is the understanding which came with Jesus Christ. I think if we can manage to do that we would end up growing faster than we are doing today as a church.

In order for the ZUMC to continue having a healthy worshiping life, it needs to work with people of all ages and different levels of spirituality with respect to African culture. The ZUMC is still doing very well in terms of evangelism, and the church continues to grow. But listening to the people while interacting with them during my research, and listening to the voices of the interviewees pose a number of questions. One of the questions people are asking now is, "For how long will the church continue to grow?" To strengthen the spirituality of the people there is a cry for a stronger emphasis on Christian education that will include Methodist studies.

Although a setup or forum is available for teaching using class meetings, sections, and Sunday schools, the problem is the lack of resources and sometimes a lack of interest. Then the other question is: Why is the church not taking bold measures in addressing these issues? The church needs to take aggressive measures as did Bishop Ralph Edward Dodge. He equipped Africans by sending some people to school specifically to train and go back to lead. The ZUMC needs to send people to train in specific areas in demand today. Africa University and United Theological College need to have practical courses on liturgy and Christian education, and not theory only, in order to ground the worship life of the church. While in parishes, pastors need to have interest in Christian education, in order to equip and lead their congregations in studying and grounding their faith in liturgy. Without the pastor's interest (since pastors have too much power over church matters), such programs can be overshadowed by the pastor's other priorities. The confusion we witnessed in the voices of the people shows that not enough people are taking time to study and teach one another that the African people have the right to worship their God in ways they feel comfortable. People need to learn to accept spiritual gifts, which are given by God and not by a denomination.

As we look into the future of The United Methodist Church in Zimbabwe,

together with the interviewees, we say that there is a need for more educational programs on liturgy. Worship can be celebrated in many ways, yes, but if there is not time for study and commitment to leadership, then sooner or later people will move on to churches where they can be fed both spiritually and intellectually. This is a great challenge for the Zimbabwe United Methodist Church.