

Obvious Vengeyi

ALUTA CONTINUA BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS FOR LIBERATION

Interpreting biblical texts on slavery for liberation
of Zimbabwean underclasses



There is neither Jew nor
Greek, there is neither slave
nor free, there is neither male
nor female; for you are all one
in Christ Jesus



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Aluta Continua

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ABBREVIATIONS/ACRONYMS

AA	American Anthropologist
AbhBAW	<i>Abhandlungen der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften philosophisch-historische Klasse</i>
AFM	Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe
AJSLL	American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures
AOS	American Oriental Series
AnBib	<i>Alalecta Biblica</i>
ANE	Ancient Near East
AThANT	<i>Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments</i>
BA	Biblical Archaeologist
BASOR	Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research
BAWPHKA	<i>Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften philosophisch-historische Klasse Abhandlungen</i>
BBB	<i>Bonner Biblische Beiträge</i>
BBVO	<i>Berliner Beiträge zum Vorderen Orient</i>
BETL	<i>Bibliotheca Ephemerium Theologicarum Lovaniensum</i>
BFT	Bayreuther Forum Transit
BI	Biblical Interpretation
BiAS	Bible in Africa Studies
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BKAT	<i>Biblischer Kommentar: Altes Testament</i>
BSACO	British South Africa Company
BT	The Bible Translator
BTAVO;RB	<i>Beihefte zum Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients; Reihe B</i>
BZAW	<i>Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
CahRB	<i>Cahiers de la Revue Biblique</i>
CBQ	Catholic Biblical Quarterly
DHSAT	<i>Die Heilige Schrift des Alten Testaments</i>
EDICESA	Ecumenical Documentation and Information Centre of Eastern and Southern Africa

ESAP	Economic Structural Adjustment Programmes
EvQ	Evangelical Quarterly
FA	Foreign Affairs
FOG	Family of God Church
FRLANT	<i>Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments</i>
HR	History of Religions
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
HUCA	Hebrew Union College Annual
HWS	History Workshop Series
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IDWN	International Domestic Workers Network
IEJ	Israel Exploration Journal
Int	Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology
JAH	Journal of African History
JAOS	Journal of American Oriental Studies
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JBT	Journal of Black Theology
JSONT	Journal for the Study of the New Testament
JSONTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplements Series
JSOT	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplements Series
JSAS	Journal of Southern African Studies
JNES	Journal of Near Eastern Studies
JWH	Journal of World History
JQR	Jewish Quarterly Review
JRA	Journal of Religion in Africa
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
NCBC	New Century Bible Commentary
NES	Near Eastern Studies
OTL	Old Testament Literature
PS	Political Studies
RH	Rhodesian History

SAH	Studies in African History
SJLA	Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity
SSN	<i>Studia Semitica Neerlandica</i>
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SWBAS	Social World of Biblical Antiquity Series
TD	Theology Digest
TESG	<i>Tijdschrift voor economische en sociale geografie</i>
TGI	<i>Theologie und Glaube</i>
TOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries
TrinJ	Trinity Journal
TynBul	Tyndale Bulletin
UF	<i>Ugarit-Forschungen</i>
VT	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
WIEGO	Women in Informal Employment: Globalising and Organising
ZANU-PF	Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front
ZAOGA FIF	Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa Forward in Faith
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZCTU	Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions
ZDAWU	Zimbabwe Domestic and Allied Workers Union
ZDPV	<i>Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina Vereins</i>
ZDWT	Zimbabwe Domestic Workers Trust
ZFU	Zimbabwe Farmers Union
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

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PREFACE

The exploitation of the underclasses on the basis of race, class or gender and resistance thereof has been one consistent occurrence in every culture and society. In this book, the author argues that the household being the foundational institution in every society is both the 'manufacturing industry' of racial, class and gender ideologies as well as the battleground of this struggle that pervades the whole society at large. Racial, class and gender struggles characterising domestic service/household industry in Zimbabwe, between employers, on one hand, and domestic maids and 'garden boys' on the other, are therefore a small window through which we can observe the broader picture of what is and has been going on within and beyond the Zimbabwean borders. While this study generally is an analysis of the matrix of this struggle between the dominant class and the underclasses in Zimbabwe, it is particularly a protest against the exploitation of the weak (on racial, class or gender wise), whose collective ordeal is represented by the experiences of domestic workers. Thus, this book deliberately takes sides with the weak by enlisting the Bible as a weapon of the struggle for their liberation. The author specifically appeals to the liberation motif behind slavery texts in the Bible.

The premise for this undertaking is informed by the fact that in both the biblical world (ancient Israel and Roman-Palestine) and the Zimbabwean context, religion has been central in this struggle. Religion has been appealed to in order to sustain the exploitation of the underclasses as well as to confront exploitation, bringing about revolutionary change to the status quo. In that regard, this study is anchored upon the perspective that comparatively, the treatment and the overall political, religious and socio-economic situation of domestic workers in Zimbabwe as currently experienced is synonymous to that of slaves during the biblical era. As such, valuable lessons can be drawn from these biblical texts to confront similar or recurrent situations of exploitation. In other words, the study argues that from a historical-cultural-material methodological perspective, the struggle that the Zimbabwean poor; peasants and domestic workers especially are engaged in is comparable to the one that

ancient Near Eastern, Israelite and Roman-Palestinian underclasses (and slaves) encountered.

Since religion was a vital weapon of the struggle; readily accessible and appealed to by both the oppressor class, slave masters and the oppressed masses including slaves and a crucial resource that continues to be deployed in the Zimbabwean society in the same manner, its role in the society cannot be underestimated. As such, it is this dual and ambiguous role of religion that is scrutinised in this study, paying particular attention to models of appropriating Christianity especially biblical interpretation to advance the liberation agenda of the poor and domestic workers in particular. In other words, the book contends that Christianity through biblical interpretation that begins with the experience of the oppressed, such as domestic workers and basing on its numerical advantage of adherents has the potential to contribute to social transformation in Zimbabwe. Religious and political gurus such as Exodus-Levites, prophet Amos, Jesus, Paul, Mbuya Nehanda, and all the comrades of the First, Second and Third Chimurenga who have used religion (and some the Bible) as a 'Weapon of Mass Liberation' in the struggle for the attainment of full humanity and egalitarian existence, provide the example and motivation for such an endeavour, hence the title: "Aluta Continua Biblical Hermeneutics for Liberation".

CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Overview of the Study

Broadly, 'Aluta Continua (The Struggle Continues) Biblical Hermeneutics for Liberation' is an attempt to appropriate the Bible from a historical-cultural-material perspective in the struggle against exploitation of the majority by the few in Zimbabwe. Utilising the relationship between masters and domestic workers as a microcosm of the macrocosm, the study argues that the struggle between the majority poor against the minority elite is not over yet; it has continued almost unperurbed by political independence in 1980. The choice of the experiences of domestic workers as a case study and a hermeneutical starting point in appropriating the Bible in this struggle is not a random undertaking; their struggle is microscopic of a nationwide struggle. Their struggle is indeed a reflection of the long road Zimbabwe is yet to travel in fixing racial, class and gender equality issues. Engaging the Bible as a weapon on the side of the weak, domestic workers is one attempt at trying to ease the tension in the country between races, classes and genders.

The argument is, while religion, Christianity and the Bible in particular have been used by the few as Weapons of Mass Destruction/Exploitation, something regrettably a reality even today, it is not too late to turn these into Weapons of Mass Liberation. This can only happen when the Bible is read from the experiences of the majority poor. That process snatches the Bible from the hands of the elite and it gives it to the oppressed majority to grasp it firmly as a weapon against any form of exploitation. Zimbabwean history confirms that traditional religions, Christianity and the Bible could be very important tools for the oppressed in societal reorganisation and transformation. It is from this premise that the study argues that the manumission laws (Exo 21:2-6, 20-21, 26-27; Deut 15:12-18; Lev 25:39-55), Jesus' mission statement in Luke 4:18 and Paul's theological position regarding slavery (Gal 3:28; 1 Cor 7:20-24 and Phil), provide not only hope but also important models of liberation for like-situated peoples throughout the world, such as domestic workers of Zimbabwe. These texts also connect the struggle of the underclasses (especially domestic workers) in Zimbabwe to a long tradition of struggle

between the underclasses and the elite oppressors (slaves and masters) in the biblical times.

Contrary to the fundamentalist reading of the Bible which views the manumission laws as God-given decrees, through Moses during the Exodus from Egypt, I argue that these laws evidence in every respect a sedentary context; most likely eighth century BCE Israel in which they were a response to an ongoing struggle between the classes, races and genders and sought in a way to take sides with the oppressed masses and slaves. The same struggle confronted the context of Jesus (Luke 4:18) and that of Paul (Gal 3:28; 1 Cor 7: 20-24 and Phil). Since the selected biblical passages on slavery were liberating in their contexts, their motif of liberation is still relevant to Zimbabwe in addressing the exploitation of domestic workers. Thus, from ancient Israel, to Roman-Palestine, right down to our age, “Aluta Continua!”=the struggle continues!

Setting the Agenda: The Problem

While the focus of the study is the apparent problem of exploitation of domestic workers in Zimbabwe, which exploitation I take as synonymous to slavery, the study argues that domestic work in itself is not the problem but a reflection and product of historical problems that beg for urgent attention in the broader Zimbabwean society. This section seeks to respond to the following questions: What is the state of domestic work in Zimbabwe? What factors contributed to this state of affairs? How can this be corrected? What role can the Bible or biblical scholars/interpreters play in this situation? Responses to all these questions, in a way contribute to the justification of the study.

The State of Domestic Work in Zimbabwe

Domestic service as an institution is symptomatic of everything that is wrong in Zimbabwe. It is a microcosm of the historical macro political, socio-economic and cultural struggles that the entire country has experienced so far. In it, issues such as historical racial domination, class and gender inequalities linger noticeably. Since its inception, as one of the vital sections of the economy during colonial times, domestic service has been exclusively a profession for the dominated individuals; racial, class and gender wise. As a matter of fact, owing to colonial advantages, whites in Zimbabwe, even the uneducated and unemployed cannot do

without black domestic workers. It is now 33 years after the end of colonisation; yet not even one white person has been employed by a black person or by fellow whites in domestic service. Thus, until today, domestic workers are without exception, all blacks and of very poor backgrounds; peasant men who have no other chance of better job opportunities in a shrinking job market and divorced or widowed women, children from miserably poor peasant families, desperate orphans and school-leavers whose only hope to guarantee the next meal is to seek employment as domestic workers.¹ Trekking the struggle of domestic workers is in other words tracking the black struggle for equality and humanhood.

With the economic woes that gripped Zimbabwe from 2000 to 2009, black women and men degree-certificate holders have even found themselves employed as domestic workers in low, medium and high density households. Apart from long working hours and a paltry salary, domestic workers are subjected to dehumanising treatment; physical abuse such as being whipped, raped, pinched; psychological abuse such as being shouted at, scolded; made to engage in culturally repulsive responsibilities such as forcing men to hand wash undergarments of both male and female employers, cooking and taking care of children. In most cases domestic workers are denied freedom either to visit or to meet with outsiders or to be visited either by relatives or friends. In many cases, domestic workers are served poor quality food or leftovers. Some are even denied choice of religious tradition or political party. Thus, this racial, class and gender character and nature of exploitation in domestic service is a fundamental problem that begs for urgent solution.

The Contrast between Pervasive Christianity and Abundant Poverty

Although Christianity is growing by leaps and bounds, with new forms of Christianity such as African Initiated Churches and Pentecostal movements sprouting every day, poverty is on the historic rise and exploitation of the poor seems to be the norm rather than an exception. Lovemore Togarasei, in 2006 succinctly captured this contradiction when

¹ Cf. John Pape, 'Still serving Tea: Domestic Workers in Zimbabwe 1980-90'. *JSAS* 19, No. 3 (1993), pp. 387-404; Constance Tobaiwa, 'Domestic Workers: A Harare Case Study of Pay and Conditions of Service.' M.S.W. Thesis, University of Zimbabwe, 1989.

he wrote: 'if the number of Christians and the seriousness with which the people pursue religion was put in monetary value, Zimbabwe would not be experiencing the current problems it is facing'.² Surely, in a society such as Zimbabwe where more than 80% of the population claim to be Christians³ and where the Bible is read almost daily by all and sundry; politicians, economists, farmers and even miners, at various platforms and in any situation and subject of human concern, one wonders how exploitation of such magnitude as that of domestic workers described above is possible; in a nation where almost everyone is 'Christian'. With these staggering statistics, it would appear that it is Christians who abuse fellow Christians, domestic workers. And this constitutes a problem. Given this contradiction, can we not suggest that Christianity is fully involved in underdevelopment, impoverishment and exploitation of the weak?

History of Christianity in Africa shows that it has always been at the service of the elite. For instance, the Bible has been interpreted by colonial missionaries to advance the cause of the dominant groups, making Christianity a powerful ideological tool in organising and pacifying the masses to serve the dominant political and socio-economic interests of the white ruling class. In fact, colonisations were orchestrated with full participation of Christian missionaries who were convinced as their colonial kith and kin that it was permitted by God to do so. Colonisers together with missionaries understood themselves as carrying the promise given to Abraham by God (Gen 12:1ff). As John Goldingay rightly observes, 'it is this self-understanding that undergirded European emigration to America and British policies in Southern Africa'. European and British peoples therefore put themselves in the shoes of Abraham or Moses, consequently putting Native Americans and African peoples, in the position of Canaanites, and could be treated accordingly. On the other hand, Americans saw themselves as Israelites running away from Egyptian Pharaoh-Britain.⁴ This history makes the Bible and Christianity

² Lovemore Togarasei, 'One Bible many Christianities: revisiting Christian typologies in Zimbabwe today', *Zambezi* Vol. 32 (2) 2006, pp. 1-18.

³ International Religious Freedom Report (2008), USA, Department of State, Under Secretary for Democracy and Global Affairs, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor.

⁴ Cf. John Goldingay, 'Introduction to Genesis and Exodus' in Goldingay (ed., et al), *Genesis and Exodus: With Introduction by John Goldingay*. England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001, pp. 30-31.

fundamental problems in our society that need to be dealt with, especially that they still influence every aspect of human life in Zimbabwe; be it private or public.

The Historical Ambiguity of Christianity and the Bible

Associating any religion, especially Christianity and the Bible only with oppression and exploitation of the masses is one truth; but not all truth. The other truth is that from ancient societies to modern ones, religions, Christianity and biblical interpretation have shared trenches with those fighting for liberation from a 'religiously' or 'biblically inspired' exploitation. History shows that the oppressed of the world, especially in Latin America and Africa, after reading the Bible have also understood themselves as Israelites against Pharaoh; America and Britain. The struggle for liberation against colonial exploitation in Zimbabwe, for instance was understood as an 'Exodus from Egypt to Canaan, the promised land of milk and honey'. Rather than interpreting the Bible from the perspective of the colonialists, the masses learnt to read the Bible from their cultural, racial, and socio-economic standpoint of exploitation. The Bible is therefore a weapon of liberation in as much as it is a weapon of oppression. This ambiguity makes the Bible a problem. And the same is true with Christianity or any other religion for that matter.

The 'Absence' or 'Silence' of Biblical Exegetes of Liberation in Zimbabwe

Despite Zimbabwe's unrivalled history of struggle for liberation in Africa, in which struggle the Bible played a very significant part, currently there are very few if any biblical scholars and theologians committed to liberation hermeneutics. Since the death of Rev Canaan Sodindo Banana⁵ in 2003 and the 'silence' of Rev Dr Sebastian Bakare;⁶ two tower-

⁵ Cf. Canaan Sodindo Banana, *The Gospel According to the Ghetto*. Gweru: Mambo Press, 1990; Banana, speaking to Heads of Denominations: ZPS 153, 3 March 1981, in R. H. Randolph, *Dawn in Zimbabwe: The Catholic Church in the New Order: A Report on the activities of the Catholic Church in Zimbabwe for the five years 1977-1981*. Gweru: Mambo Press, 1985, p.76; Banana, *Come and Share: An Introduction to Christian Theology*. Gweru: Mambo Press, 1991; Banana, *Politics of Repression and Resistance: Face to Face with combat theology*. Gweru: Mambo Press, 1996.

ing liberation biblical hermeneuticians whose commitment to the struggle for social justice is beyond doubt, there is a yawning gap in Zimbabwe for biblical exegetes of liberation. These theologians laid the blame where it rightly belongs; they challenged the government, black elites and whites alike through biblical interpretation. They advocated for land redistribution and economic democracy rather than having Zimbabweans continue as slaves even after political independence. Their biblical exegeses were rooted in the history and culture of the struggle of the oppressed black people, especially the peasants. They raised pertinent issues about race, class and gender inequalities. This study is an attempt not only to connect biblical exegesis to contemporary struggles but also to revive this firmly established tradition of struggle through the appropriation of religion and biblical interpretation.

The absence or silence of biblical exegetes committed to the liberation of the poor is attributed to several reasons. Of these, political and economic ones are the most dominant, whereby church leaders are rewarded handsomely by some political parties and their allies who control the economy to keep quiet and not to stand with the weak.⁷ However, another problem that is rarely acknowledged relates to the incapacity of the Zimbabwean Churches and biblical exegetes to transcend political and socio-economically inspired colonial missionary teachings and biased presuppositions about the Bible. It is believed that the Bible is the word of God and that God of the Biblical text is always 'God of the oppressed'.⁸ As in the colonial era, there is no attempt at exposing the nature of oppression. This presupposition is awash in Evangelical circles and their Pentecostal counterparts, who view the Bible as, authored by

⁶ Cf. Sebastian Bakare, *My right to land in the Bible and in Zimbabwe: A theology of land for Zimbabwe*. Harare: World Council of Churches, 1993; Bakare, 'African Perspective on the Jubilee celebration', World Council of Churches. *Ecumenical Review* 49 No. 4 (1997), pp. 470-475. Bakare is silent now about the issues he previously was known for. My assumption is that he has changed his ideological position.

⁷ Cf. Obvious Vengeyi, 'The Bible in the Service of Pan-Africanism: The Case of Dr. Tafataona Mahoso's Pan-African Biblical Exegesis', Massiva R. Gunda and Joachim Kügler, (eds.), *The Bible and Politics in Africa*. Bamberg: University of Bamberg Press, 2012, pp.81-114. (p.89).

⁸ Cf. Pastoral Letter by the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference on the Current Crisis of Our Country, 'God Hears the Cry of the Oppressed'. Thursday, 5 April 2007; Cf. Nyasha Madzokere, *The Divine Preferential Option for the oppressed: The liberation topos behind Exodus*. VDM Verlag, Dr. Müller, 2010.

God through men who were filled with the Holy Spirit; hence the Bible is a timeless, ahistorical, ideology free book, with ready-made answers to all the questions one can ask, now and in the future.⁹ On the basis of this belief, Pentecostal Christians have even gone to the extent of using the copies of the Bible during exorcism, healing, deliverances and indeed as fetish.¹⁰

Because of this presupposition, while the Bible is summoned every day, it is reduced to addressing nonexistent spiritual or demonic oppression as the cause of poverty and not the real and pertinent political and socio-economic ones. This position divorces the Bible from the real political and socio-economic struggles not only of the society in which it was produced, but of contemporary societies as well. This incapacity of the Church and biblical exegetes to transcend preset parameters has contributed to their silence in the face of exploitation. In some cases, this inability has made the Church and biblical exegetes to stand on the side of the oppressors. This, for me, is a problem as I believe that the Church and biblical exegetes of liberation must of necessity take sides with the oppressed.

The Ideological Premise of the Church and Biblical Exegesis

Related to the above, another problem why it is impossible to come up with biblical hermeneutics of liberation among Zimbabwean Churches and academics is that the Church and biblical exegesis are premised on the ideology of the elite. This is partly because of the colonial history of biblical interpretation in Africa. Colonial missionaries taught that the Bible was the word of God whose claims could not be questioned. And this is also part of a long tradition in Church. According to Itumeleng Mosala, throughout history of biblical interpretation, the notion that the whole Bible is the word of God is an ideological manoeuvre by the elite. In this endeavour, ruling class interests evident in the Bible are con-

⁹ Cf. Masiwa Ragies Gunda, *The Bible and Homosexuality in Zimbabwe: A Socio-historical analysis of the political, cultural and Christian arguments in the homosexual public debate with special reference to the use of the Bible*. BiAS 3. Bamberg: University of Bamberg Press, 2010, pp. 21-22.

¹⁰ Cf. Vengeyi, 'Gona and The Bible among Indigenous Pentecostal Churches of Zimbabwe: A Comparative Approach', in Masiwa Ragies Gunda, (ed.), *From Text to Practice: The Role of the Bible in Daily Living of African People Today*. BiAS 4. Bamberg: University of Bamberg Press, 2011, pp. 95-129.

verted into a faith that transcends social, political, racial, sexual, and economic divisions. In this way, the Bible becomes an ahistorical, interclassist document, something that it is not.¹¹ The existence of this notion in many churches is not by accident. Historically speaking, as Sergio Rostagno argues,

the church has always been a church of the bourgeoisie, even when it claimed to transcend class barriers or laboured under the illusion that it pervaded all classes in the same way. Indeed it has been a truly bourgeois ideology....The church has been the church of the class which has identified itself with the history of the West, in which Christianity may have been considered to have been a major force.¹²

Because the Church is historically for the dominant class, its hermeneutical standpoint favours the elite against the poor. Missionary churches came to represent colonial interests in Africa such that their indifference to the struggle of the oppressed colonised blacks is not unpredictable. Instead of shifting the hermeneutical platform at independence to ground biblical exegesis in the language, culture, worldview and in the history of the struggle of the oppressed black people, the reality on the ground is that academics and churches especially Pentecostal movements have become replica of missionary churches. Although they draw members from the poor and middle class blacks, their hermeneutical presuppositions, language, culture and worldview are for the elite. This is what has contributed to the absence of Christian scholars of liberation that read and interpret the Bible from the experience of the weak and oppressed.

I agree with Mosala that a theology that has the capacity to liberate the oppressed black people (such as domestic workers), needs to rediscover the black working-class and poor peasant culture in order to find for itself a materialist-hermeneutical starting point. The particularity of the black struggle in its different forms and faces must provide the epistemological lens with which the Bible can be read. Only this position seems to represent a theoretical break with dominant biblical hermeneutics; anything else is a tinkering with what in fact must be destroyed.¹³

¹¹ Cf. Itumeleng J. Mosala, *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology in South Africa*. Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989, p. 26.

¹² Sergio Rostagno, 'The Bible: Is an Interclass Reading Legitimate?' in Norman K. Gottwald (ed.), *The Bible and Liberation*. New York: Orbis Press, 1983, pp. 61-73 (62).

¹³ Mosala, *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology*, p. 26.

In a context such as the one described above, the task of biblical exegetes is to make sure they engage their societies. They should avoid parroting colonial and oppressive methods of reading and interpreting the Bible. It is the duty of the biblical scholar to inform the society about the need for a paradigm shift in the interpretation of the Bible. This paradigm shift means reading and interpreting the Bible from the experiences of the weak and oppressed readers.

Justification of the Study

While the problems outlined above constitute enough justification for the study, three questions that have been posed to me consistently require a response. And this response, in a way provides justification for this study. First, of all categories of people, why focus on domestic workers? Second, why compare domestic workers of Zimbabwe to ancient Israelite and Roman-Palestinian slaves? And finally, what is the role of the Bible (a very ancient book) in this modern labour issue? I will begin by addressing the issue relating to the choice of domestic workers among other groups of labourers, followed by the comparison between Zimbabwean domestic work and slavery. The involvement of the Bible in this social transformation programme has been addressed above. I will here give brief notes.

Timeliness and Importance of the Study

The study is timely in that the debates on human and workers rights are taking centre stage world over and of late the exploitation of domestic workers that previously was considered trivial has received recognition at the highest international level. After 60 years of serious lobbying, in June 2011 the International Labour Organization (ILO) adopted a global convention setting forth the fundamental rights of domestic workers, and the obligation of governments worldwide to protect them. According to the International Domestic Workers Network,

In June 2011, the *ILO Convention on Decent Work for Domestic Workers* (ILO Convention) was adopted by a wide margin at the 100th International Labour Conference in Geneva, opening it up to *ratification* by states. At the same time, linked directly to that process and led by the International Catholic Centre of Geneva, a group of Catholic-inspired NGOs and part-

ners convened in anticipation of the advocacy necessary to encourage states to ratify the Convention.¹⁴

The constituent elements of the lobbyists interestingly include church-related organisations. It seems there is a realisation that there is need for not only a multisectoral but also a cross-disciplinary approach to social transformation or conflict resolution. And the church has been identified as a very influential force that can help in labour-related issues. It is from this background that this study is justified as it seeks to challenge the church and scholars of the Bible in Zimbabwe to consider relocating their biblical hermeneutics to the experience and struggle of the otherwise forgotten lot, domestic workers included. Despite it being a public secret that domestic workers are one sub-category of people who are exploited on racial, class and gender grounds, their circumstances have skipped the interest of Zimbabwean scholars. This is why apart from a few available scholarly works, of which some of them consider the subject of domestic workers in passing,¹⁵ this study relies on newspaper articles, interviews and knowledge gathered over the past fifteen years from observing and being informed by relatives and friends engaged in domestic work.

Be that as it may, none of the scholars and writers above considered the important role of religion, the Church and biblical interpretation as viable options for advocating for justice and social transformation. In short, none of the works is theological. Seeking to further social transformation particularly at a level that has been neglected by many academics justifies the worthiness of the research. This is especially impor-

¹⁴ Cf. International Domestic Workers Network (IDWN) conference on, 'Strengthening the Capacity of and Social Protection of Domestic Workers' Geneva Switzerland, 3-4 June, 2011; see also, Women in Informal Employment: Globalising and Organising (WIEGO) report on 'Decent work for Domestic Workers' International Labour Conference. June 2009.

¹⁵ Cf. Duncan G. Clarke, *Domestic workers in Rhodesia: the economics of masters and servants*. Rhodesia: Mambo Press, 1974; A. K. H. Weinrich, *Mucheke: Race, Status and Politics in a Rhodesian Community*. United Kingdom: Unesco, 1976; Tobaiwa, 'Domestic Workers: A Harare Case Study of Pay and Conditions of Service'; Pape, 'Black and White: The 'Perils of Sex' in Colonial Zimbabwe'. *JSAS* 16. No.4, (1990), p. 699-720; Pape, 'Still serving Tea: Domestic Workers in Zimbabwe 1980-90'. *JSAS* 19, No. 3, (1993), pp. 387-404; McCulloch, Jock. *Black Peril, White Virtue: Sexual crime in Southern Rhodesia, 1902-1935*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2000; M.F.C. Bourdillon, *Child Domestic Workers in Zimbabwe*. Harare: Weaver Press, 2006.

tant in Zimbabwe where history and political ideology together with the prevalence of Christianities and biblical interpretations are not commensurate with daily practice. Considering the statistics of people claiming to be Christians hence beholden to the Bible, attempting social transformation through biblical interpretation is justifiable. On that basis I believe the Bible (and religion) can be invoked in Zimbabwe on issues that relate to labour relationships in which domestic work falls.

Comparison of Zimbabwe's Domestic Workers with Ancient Slaves

It is also important to justify the premise of comparison between ancient Israelite and Roman-Palestinian slavery and domestic work in Zimbabwe. In other words, the premise of comparison justifies engagement of the Bible (slavery texts) in the struggle for liberation of domestic workers of Zimbabwe. First and foremost, it must be understood that from before the emergency of Israel in the ancient Near East, slavery was already in place as a political and socio-economic phenomenon. Thus, the assumption is; during the Israelite monarchy, down to the Roman-Palestinian times of the New Testament and even to the modern era, slavery has exhibited consistent characteristics some of which are comparable to present day phenomenon of domestic work in Zimbabwe. Be that as it may, there are broadly two approaches that scholars usually adopt in defining and demarcating slavery from other related phenomena. One approach is legally oriented while another is a sociologically oriented distinction. This study adopts the later particularly Orlando Patterson's comparative historical and cultural sociological approach¹⁶ which after adjustments fits the Zimbabwean context of domestic service. Hence, I appeal to it here to dismantle the legally oriented approach to slavery, as a way of clearing ground for its appropriation.

¹⁶ Cf. Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social death: A Comparative Study*. USA: Harvard University Press 1982; Patterson, 'Paul, Slavery and Freedom: Personal and Socio-Historical Reflections', in David Jobling et al (eds.), *Slavery in Texts and Interpretation*. SBL. Semeia 83/84, 1998, pp. 263-279.

Legally Oriented Understanding of Slavery

I have been asked several times why I compare domestic workers of Zimbabwe with ancient Israelite and Roman-Palestinian slaves when domestic workers are legally not called slaves. The background to this question is that generally people and many scholars alike are familiar with the legally oriented approach to slavery. J.K. Ingram, for example argues that, 'the essential character of slavery may be regarded as lying in the fact that the master was owner of the person of the slave.'¹⁷ Similarly, and perhaps the most cited definition is that given by the League of Nations committee on slavery which says: 'the status or condition of a person over whom any or all the powers attaching to the right of ownership are exercised.'¹⁸ Emphasis here is on the legal right of ownership of an individual by another just as property. This led J. L. Watson to claim that 'the property aspect of slavery must be accepted as primary—this is what distinguishes slavery from all other forms of dependence and involuntary labour'.¹⁹

Based upon this legally oriented understanding, domestic workers of Zimbabwe who are not legally owned as property cannot be considered as slaves. However, it should be pointed out that this understanding of slavery is weak in that law codes at best provide only inexact knowledge about social practice hence can build a highly misleading model of any phenomenon, slavery included. In fact, theory and practice have always been difficult to match. What the law prescribes may not reflect the situation on the ground. It is possible that legally one is considered free when in practice such an individual is not free at all. Thus, the legally oriented definition/distinction fails to specify distinct categories of persons, because many who are clearly not slaves such as spouses, children, or professional athletes can also be objects of a property relation. Any person, beggar or king, can be the object of a property relation, yet they are not called slaves. What should be considered are power relations and not legal phrases such as ownership.

¹⁷ J.K. Ingram, *History of Slavery and Serfdom*. London: Black, 1895, p. 265.

¹⁸ Report to the League of Nations Advisory Committee of Experts on Slavery, Geneva, April 5, 1938, Vol. 6, p.16.

¹⁹ J. L. Watson, 'Slavery as an Institution, Open and Closed Systems,' in James L. Watson (ed.), *Asian and African Systems of Slavery*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980, p.809.

In the same vein some legally oriented definitions understand a slave as someone without a legal personality whereas spouse, children, athletes, among others although they may be objects of a property relation have 'legal personalities'. According to Orlando Patterson, while this is quite attractive, the problem is that the idea of the slave as someone without a legal personality is too theoretical hence has quite limited applicability in legal practice. As a matter of historical and legal fact, there is no society, ancient or modern, that did not recognise the slave as a person in law. There is abundant proof to this. In all societies there are laws that provided penalties for offending slaves. That means, in all societies, the slave is held legally and morally responsible.²⁰ Manumission laws in Exo 21:2-6, Deut 15:12-18, Lev 25:39-54, for example, do not only make it clear that masters had certain powers over their slaves restricted but also presuppose that in the ancient Near East and in Israel and even in Roman-Palestine, slaves were legally held accountable for their crimes. Slaves were also legally permitted to visit the law courts for arbitration between them and masters.

Another legally and property oriented understanding of slavery that needs to be challenged as we begin is one held by some Marxists that argue that slavery is distinctive in that slaves are the only group of persons who constitute disposable capital. From this view, slaves are the only group of persons in whom capital is invested and who can be 'bought and sold on the market'. The first weakness of this definition as Patterson argues is that when any firm, ancient or modern, invests funds in the training of person whose skilled labour it later hopes to exploit for profit, it is doing nothing other than investing capital in persons.²¹ Yet, such people are not called slaves. Or shall we call all employees thus trained, slaves?

The second weakness is the claim that only slaves can be 'bought and sold'. While it is true that slaves were bought and sold from as early as the origin of the institution of slavery, it fails to realise that in the vast majority of pre-modern slave holding societies there was usually a prohibition on the sale of all slaves beyond the second generation. In fact, the house-born slave was usually considered so intimate and close member of the household that masters would rather go into debt or

²⁰ Cf. Patterson, *Slavery and Social death*, p. 22.

²¹ Cf. Patterson, *Slavery and Social death*, p. 23.

pawn one of their free dependents than sell that slave. Also, there are many societies such as China where the free people would be sold and bought, yet they were not called slaves. The practice of *roora* all over Africa and other parts of the world is another instance where bride-price is essentially part of all marital transactions almost suggesting especially to outsiders the buying and selling of a woman. According to Patterson,

both African men and women regard the exchange of brides as sale-in addition, of course, to recognising its other, equally social and emotional functions. The women, in particular, make it clear that they take pride in the amount of goods or money paid for them and in no way feel that they have been demeaned by the fact that they were sold. The only source of humiliation would be the eventuality that a very low bride-price had been paid for them. But these women would be horrified to hear that their sale was slavery. They don't consider it slavery at all.²²

Therefore the involvement of monetary transactions should not be the sole criterion to determine slave status. Further, according to Patterson, quite frequently we hear these days of professional athletes, particularly football stars who are put up for auction and sold to the highest bidder, yet we do not regard such people as slaves. In fact, the footballer would be as amazed and distressed as an African bride to learn that his sale implied anything slave-like about him.²³ In order to imply the difference between a footballer and a slave, those pushing for a legally oriented definition of slavery commonly suggest that what is purchased in the case of slave transaction is the 'raw body' of the slave, where as in the case of athletes, employees, and African wives is not their bodies but only their services are purchased or hired. This distinction for Patterson makes no sense in physical or economic terms because when one buys or hires a person's labour, by implication one purchases the person's body for the negotiated period, since there is no such thing as disembodied service.²⁴

Another common error that scholars who advance legally oriented perspectives of slavery have always committed is the assumption that all non-slave persons have a choice in the sale and withdrawal of their services, where as slaves do not. On that basis it can be taken as absurd to

²² Patterson, *Slavery and Social death*, p. 23.

²³ Cf. Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, p. 24.

²⁴ Cf. Patterson, *Slavery and Social death*, p. 24.

compare domestic workers of Zimbabwe to slaves of ancient Israel and Roman-Palestine, which are subjects of Exo 21:2-6; Deut 15:12-18; Lev 25:39-55, Luke 4:18 and Gal 3:28. However, it must be noted that while this understanding might usefully distinguish slaves from most wage earners, it fails to make a separation between slaves and other forms of bonded labourers such as serfs, indentured servants, peons, and debt bondsmen who had no say in the purchase and sale of their labour.²⁵ The legally oriented understanding of slavery therefore leaves a lot to be desired. The situation can only be rescued by the sociologically oriented definition of slavery.

Sociologically Oriented Understanding of Slavery

Because of these weaknesses associated with the property relation and legally oriented definition or distinction of slavery, the sociological approach was advanced. There is now a realisation that slavery is less a static institution of property law and more a dynamic process that involves socio-economic classes. It is a process of total domination, an almost absolute kind of mastery that denies the 'slave' access to autonomous relations outside the master's sphere of influence. This reduces a 'slave', although he may be a native, to an alienated outsider, socially 'dead' to the free population. In this case therefore slavery may be defined as a situation of social death rather than on any other legal basis. And Albert Harrill argues that three necessary forces depicting social death must be present and combined in a permanent way, before a phenomenon of domination is called slavery. First, there must be a social force, which is direct and insidious violence. Second, there must be a psychological force which involves nameless and alienating social death. Third, slavery involves a cultural force evident in general dishonour. An example of this dishonour is the common address of male slaves of any age as 'boy' and even slave women as 'girl'. In effect that is denigrating them as infantile adults.²⁶

It is this sociologically oriented understanding of slavery that guides this study. Patterson's views are particularly very important in shaping the comparison of slaves of ancient Israel and Roman-Palestine and domes-

²⁵ Cf. Patterson, *Slavery and Social death*, p. 25.

²⁶ Cf. J. Albert Harrill, 'Paul and slavery', in J. Paul Sampley (ed.), *Paul in the Greco-Roman World: A Handbook*. USA: Trinity Press International, 2003, pp. 575-607.

tic workers of Zimbabwe as the three forces alluded to can be easily traced in both the Biblical and the Zimbabwean contexts. According to Patterson,

Slavery is one of the extreme forms of the relation of domination, approaching the limits of total power from the viewpoint of the master, and of total powerlessness from the viewpoint of the slave. Yet it differs from other forms of extreme domination in very special ways. If we are to understand how slavery is distinct, we must first clarify the concept of power. The power relation has three facets; the first one involves the use of violence in the control of one person by another. The second is psychological facet of influence, the capacity to persuade another person to change the way he perceives his interest and his circumstances. And third is the cultural facet of authority, 'the means of transforming force into right, and obedience into duty'.²⁷

First, insidious violence against slaves in Israel was the norm rather than an exception (Exo 21:20-21, 26-27). Prov 29:19 is even clearer as it says: 'A slave will not be instructed by words *alone*; for though he understands, there will be no response'. In Zimbabwe, although the law during the colonial era allowed whipping of juveniles, in practice even the family men and women who worked as domestic servants could be whipped. To date the practice is still common in Zimbabwe.

Second, while there is no biblical text reflecting the namelessness of slaves, it is known that in slave societies, 'so completely undivided were slaves and their labour that in wills slaves could be identified by their jobs without their names'.²⁸ In Zimbabwe, during the colonial era, domestic servants were called by their job description such as 'Garden boy' or 'House girl' irrespective of age. Many had their names completely disregarded as employers preferred 'Kaffir', 'Negro', 'Baboon', names of their cattle, cats, dogs or such demeaning names as 'Idiot', 'Fool', or even 'Anus'.²⁹ As dishonoured and totally dominated people, in response to their masters, domestic servants were supposed to say, 'Madam' or 'Baas' or 'Master' regardless of age.³⁰ It could be a son or daughter of the

²⁷ Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, pp. 1-2.

²⁸ Sandra R. Joshel, *Work, Identity, and Legal Status at Rome: A Study of the Occupational Inscriptions*. Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992, pp. 49-50.

²⁹ Cf. Juliet Rusere, interview in Marlborough, Harare, 27 March 2011.

³⁰ Cf. Austin, Reginald. *Racism and Apartheid in Southern Africa: Rhodesia*. Paris: Unesco Press, 1975, p. 64.

white employer, still was addressed as Madam or Baas. And some of these names and addresses have continued to date in both white and black elite households.

However, common designations of domestic workers in black households are names expressing 'kinship' such as *Mukoma* (brother), *Sissy* (sister), *Sekuru* (uncle), *Muzukuru* (sister's son or daughter) and not with their names. And the employers are called *Mai* (mother), *Baba* (father), *Sekuru*, although they may be younger than the domestic worker. While this does not seem out of place in Zimbabwean culture, the reality is that this practice alienates the domestic worker from not only him/herself or from family but also from the rest of the society, since the designations indicate the status of a domestic worker as an outsider. In fact, this is a tactic of exploitation that has been adopted in slave societies since time immemorial. As Patterson observes,

there is a practice of incorporating the slave as a fictive kinsman of his master in kin-based societies, and even in many more complex pre-modern systems. On the surface the relationship appears to be a straight forward adoption. All over the world we find the master being addressed as 'father' and the slave as 'son' or 'daughter,' and in matrilineal societies we find the term for the social father being used (that is, the term for 'mother's brother', while slaves are referred to by the master as 'sister's son'). This fictive kin relationship extends to other members of the master's family....It would be a great mistake, however, to confuse these fictive kin ties with the claims and obligations of real kinship or with those involving genuine adoption. Some anthropologists are rather careless about making this distinction. Relations, we are told, are always warm and intimate; it is difficult to detect any difference between the 'adopted' slave and other young members of the family. No wonder some interpreters have concluded that slavery does not exist in these traditional societies, or that the traditional patterns of servitude are best called something else.³¹

Patterson's ground breaking theory has not only shed new light thereby stretching the boundaries for understanding both ancient and modern slavery but has in fact inspired many other sociologists and scholars dealing with slavery in the biblical world.³² Scholars now insist that slav-

³¹ Patterson, *Slavery and Social death*, p. 62.

³² Cf. Catherine Hezser, *Jewish Slavery in Antiquity*. Oxford: University Press, 2005, p. 27; Claude Meillassoux, *The Anthropology of Slavery: The Womb of Iron and Gold*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991; Harrill, 'Paul and slavery', pp.575-607, (p. 576); Cf. Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament: Literary, Social and Moral Dimensions*. Minnea-

ery as a sociological phenomenon is better understood in the light of its (political and) socio-economic context, for legal definitions alone are inadequate as well as meaningless.³³ From such a premise comparing domestic work to slavery is justifiable. It is impossible to analyse and understand individual aspects of society without placing them within the total framework of that society. As I. J. Gelb argues, such legal terms as 'unfree' or 'slave', are meaningless by themselves; they only can become meaningful when contrasted with other terms involved in social stratification, such as 'semi-free' and 'free'.³⁴ Also, a sociological exegesis of manumission laws in Exo 21:2-6, Deut 15:12-18, Lev 25:39-55, shows that these laws do not grapple with the issue of legality of slavery but by the exploitative socio-economic environment. The solutions proposed in the manumission laws to the problems faced by slaves are not a reminder on legality, rather the arguments are built upon a common history; political and religious history of both the masters and the slaves as the basis upon which to advocate for better treatment and liberation of slaves.

Although slaves were fellow Israelites, their state of landlessness rendered them generally powerless in terms of their relation to their masters. It was because of their state of exploitation and powerlessness that these manumission laws have a motif of liberation thus taking sides with the slaves but not on the basis of any legal platform. Also, Jesus' proclamation of liberty to the slaves in Luke 4:18 is influenced by the liberation spirit behind these manumission laws and the oppressive socio-economic Roman colonial context of his hearers which is strikingly comparable to the social setting of the manumission laws. Paul's views on the same subject (Gal 3:28; 1 Cor 7: 20-24 and Phil) are not informed by the legal standing of slaves but purely by the socio-economic and religious dimension of his community.³⁵ Legally the institution of slav-

polis: Fortress Press, 2006; Cf. Harrill, *The Manumission of Slaves in Early Christianity*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998.

³³ Cf. Victor H. Matthews, 'The Anthropology of Slavery in the Covenant Code' in Bernard M. Levinson (ed), *Theory and Method in Biblical and Cuneiform Law: Revision, Interpolation and Development*. Sheffield: JSOTSup 181, 1994, pp. 119-135;

³⁴ Cf. I. J. Gelb, 'Approaches to the Study of Ancient Society', *JAOS* 87 (1967), pp. 1-8 (4).

³⁵ Cf. Cf. Richard A. Horsley, 'The Slave Systems of Classical Antiquity and their Reluctant Recognition by Modern Scholars', in David Jobling, et al (eds.), *Slavery in Texts and Interpretation*. SBL. Semeia 83/84, (1998), pp. 19-66, (33), observes that Roman slavery as

ery was firmly established and binding that there was no need to deal with issues of legality but instead he appealed to individual conscience of the believers. It is upon these points of seeming similarity that we do not only find justification to engage the Bible in the struggle for better treatment of domestic workers but equally justified to compare the relationship between slaves and masters to that of domestic workers and employers of Zimbabwe.

As in the case of master and slave in ancient Israel and Roman-Palestine, down to the modern era, the relationship between Zimbabwean employers and their domestic servants from the colonial era to date is one of total domination and almost total powerlessness on the part of the domestic workers. In other words, the institution of domestic service in Zimbabwe is similar to slavery like its eighteenth and nineteenth century European predecessor which Erving Goffman classified under, 'total institutions'³⁶ while Lewis Coser describing the same (domestic service in eighteenth century Europe) opted for 'greedy institution'³⁷ as every part of life of the domestic worker is controlled and organised by the master/employer and that the institution greedily demands all of the workers energy and time such that other areas of his/her personality suffer. A majority of domestic workers in Zimbabwe are not allowed choice of political party and choice of religious tradition; either to visit or to be visited by their relatives, friends and even to chat with neighbours or outsiders; to watch Television or even to listen to the radio.³⁸

This relationship is quite reminiscent of the colonial era. There is hardly a change in some instances. Thus, the relationship is typical of that of masters and slaves from ancient societies to the modern world. Domestic workers of Zimbabwe are therefore slaves as was the rest of the black population during the colonial era. Nadine Gordimer makes a convincing argument by linking slavery of the new world to colonisation. According to her bold assertion, 'slavery was not abolished, it evolved into

was ancient Israelite one was intrinsically related to economic exploitation of the peasants by the elite who acquired plots of the poor, sometimes by purchase with persuasion, sometimes with force-joining one farm to the other.

³⁶ Cf. Erving Goffman, *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates*. England: Penguin Books, 1971, pp. 11-17.

³⁷ Cf. Lewis A. Coser, *Greedy Institutions: Patterns of Undivided Commitment*. New York: The Free Press, 1974, p. 6.

³⁸ Cf. Bourdillon, *Child Domestic Workers in Zimbabwe*, p. 56.

colonisation'.³⁹ In the same manner, colonisation never actually ended, it just evolved into such concept as globalisation and others. It is therefore possible to compare and even depict domestic service in Zimbabwe as slavery or colonisation, for the essence is the same. And from Patterson's comparative historical and cultural sociological perspective, 'slavery and its aftermath, colonial society; freedom; (and) Christianity were intimately and necessarily related both historically and conceptually'.⁴⁰ From this perspective, both the comparison of domestic service to slavery from the colonial era to date and the appeal to religion; Christianity and Biblical interpretation in seeking liberation are justified.

Methodology

Historical-Cultural-Materialist Methodology

This study is anchored upon the historical-cultural-materialist methodology of reading the Bible, particularly its paradigm of struggle. The method utilises the Marxist tools of sociological analysis to read and interpret biblical texts, particularly on the class struggles and the role of religion in social organisation. Thus, the methodology is sometimes referred to as social scientific approach, sociological or materialist exegeses of the Bible. The methodology builds upon the revolutionary insights of the historical-critical methods about the production of the Bible. The historical critical methods, contrary to the then prevalent fundamentalist perceptions in Church and society in general demonstrated beyond any doubt that the Bible cannot be conceived of as a divine production, authored by God himself through inspiration but that it had come into being as other pieces of literature available. Historical critical methods revealed that the Bible was made up of a multiplicity of sources, forms and often contradictory traditions that apart from revealing a long history over which they were produced, preserved and edited, reflect also the different societies from which these sources, forms and traditions were produced.

Until mid 20th century A.D. which saw the rise of the historical-materialist methodology of reading the Bible, historical critical method

³⁹ Nadine Gordimer, 'New Introduction', in Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*. London: Earthscan Publications Ltd, 2003, pp. 27-44, (27).

⁴⁰ Patterson, 'Paul, Slavery and Freedom', p. 266.

ruled the day. Unlike historical critical methodology, sociological exegesis attributed the existence of contradictory and conflicting traditions in the Bible to socio-economic and political class interests/struggles, even within the same society, in which the production of the biblical texts took place. With this new development, the Bible is metaphorically looked at as a parliament where different and often conflicting socio-economic, political, cultural and religious interests, views and opinions are expressed and debated.⁴¹ The readers of the Bible today have the luxury to pay more attention to other texts in the Bible than others depending on their (readers) context. History has shown that readers respect and value those texts which they interpret as representing their cultural, religious, socio-economic and political interests. It is this realisation that has led to the proliferation of biblical exegeses that appropriate the Bible in the class, culture and gender struggles of their particular contexts: Liberation Theology of Latin America, Black Theology, African Theology, Asian Theology and Feminist Theology⁴² among others that appeal to the Bible to protest against oppression.

Assumptions of the Method

The method assumes that the historical, cultural and material existential situations of the people affect in every way how they read, interpret and understand particular texts of the Bible or any other literature for that matter. While the forms of the historical materialist methods vary in that there are important historical, cultural, racial and gender variations in the way the historical-materialist method is appropriated,⁴³ particularly important in this study is the 'class, cultural, racial and gender struggles as part of the material relationships that the historical-materialist method undertakes to analyse'.⁴⁴ Thus, for this method, the reader's history, culture, class, gender and race are important hermeneutical tools to unpack the meaning of particular texts of the Bible since the Bible is the product of a similar context. The implication of such a position is that the meaning of the texts of the Bible is not the same from

⁴¹ Cf. Joachim Kügler, *Hände Weg!? Warum man die Bibel nicht lesen sollte und warum doch*. Würzburg: Echter, 2008, pp. 15-26, (18).

⁴² Cf. Mosala, *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology*, p. 3.

⁴³ Cf. Michael Clevenot, *Materialist Approaches to the Bible*. New York: Orbis Books, 1985.

⁴⁴ Mosala, *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology*, p. 6.

one individual to another and from one context to another; it is conditioned by the nature of the struggles of the society in which the reader is situated.

Situating the Bible in the life struggles of the society of the reader is not at all out of place. The historical-materialist method presupposes that behind both the Bible and our context are communities engaged in struggles and networks of relationships that must be brought to the fore before engaging any biblical text. These struggles could be gender, socio-economic or political.⁴⁵ Only such an exposure of the underlying struggle in relationships can throw light on the problems of which the biblical texts are intended to be a solution. It is only after such an undertaking to expose these historical struggles that a theology of liberation dealing with a specific group of people become the kind of critical discourse that is capable of contributing meaningfully to the liberation struggle of such a selected group. The category of struggle provides the lens for reading the text in a liberating fashion as well as the codes for unlocking the possibilities and limitations of the biblical texts. This assumption allows us to engage Exo 21:2-6, Deut 15:12-18, Lev 25:39-54, Luke 4:18 and Gal 3:28 in our context of struggle between the exploited domestic workers and their employers, since these texts are responding to a similar struggle between the peasant class and the elite classes. And the struggle between these classes is represented by the struggle between the slaves and masters.

From this standpoint, I agree with Mosala that to engage biblical texts (such as Exo 21:2-6, Deut 15:12-18, Lev 25:39-54, Luke 4:18 and Gal 3:28) in the light of the black (domestic workers) struggle for liberation may be to take sides in and to connect with kindred struggles that were being waged in very ancient communities. Doing this may be one way of taking sides in and connecting with contemporary struggles. For this reason, it is liberating to recognize that since the Bible is like a parliament (as I have indicated above), not every biblical text is on the side of the poor, nor is every God of every biblical text on the side of the poor, nor is it desirable that this should be so.⁴⁶ The Bible as a witness to the struggle in the society in which it was produced contains both voices; that of the oppressors and that of the oppressed.

⁴⁵ Mosala, *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology*, pp. 4-6.

⁴⁶ Mosala, *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology*, p. 8.

Methodological Parameters for Engaging the Bible in Contemporary Struggles

While I have already justified the use of the Bible, (an ancient book, written in a different geographical context), in trying to address modern struggles, it is important here to be more specific about how this should be undertaken. The historical roots of the method presuppose that it does not tolerate 'an anything goes' kind of biblical interpretation in the contemporary struggles. It does not tolerate an approach whereby the Bible is deprived of its historical social context. However, the search for biblical hermeneutical weapons of struggle must not begin and end with the historical context of the biblical text. The process must take into consideration, or rather proceed to a critical interrogation of the history, culture, and ideologies of the readers/appropriators of the biblical texts. This allows the scholar to identify areas of commonality or differences with the historical context of the biblical texts so identified for the purpose of crafting hermeneutics of liberation. Consequently, biblical hermeneutics dedicated to liberation of a selected group of people, using the same tool of struggle as was used to interrogate the readers' history, culture, and ideology, must of necessity go further to address the question of the material conditions that constitute the sites of the struggle that produced the biblical texts. This is so important because, even the material conditions that produced the culture, history and ideologies of the readers of the Bible need to be seen as sites of struggle. Operating with the hypothesis that the Bible is the product and the record of historical, cultural, gender, racial, and social-class struggles, the exegete is then allowed to interrogate the material and ideological conditions that produced the texts.⁴⁷

Norman K. Gottwald, one of the most celebrated Old Testament scholars and a staunch advocate for the appropriation of the historical cultural-material methodology's paradigm of struggle in analysing biblical texts, which he convincingly deploys when analysing the origins of early Israel, the development of the monarchy in Israel, and the aftermaths, set the necessary parameters for appropriating the Bible in today's struggles, thus,

⁴⁷ Cf. Mosala, *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology*, p. 9.

there is but one way in which those ancient religious symbols can be employed today in anything like their full range and power, and that is in a situation of social struggle where people are attempting a breakthrough toward a freer and fuller life based on equality and communal self-possession. Even then it is risky business to 'summon up' powerful symbolism out of a distant past unless the symbol users are very self-conscious of their choices and applications, and fully aware of how their social struggle is both like and unlike the social struggle of the architects of the symbols.⁴⁸From an historical cultural-material and social-evolutionary perspective, if we are to continue to derive symbolic resources from the biblical traditions, our way of relating to early Israel-as to all previous complexes will have to be scientifically informed. A social understanding of early Yahwism might encourage us to see what form of oppression are inhibiting and frustrating the full development of human life today, what has to be done to change those conditions in specific terms, and what praxis and ideology are needed if we are to develop in the needed direction.⁴⁹

As will be evident, most of Gottwald's views are highly placed in this study. For, it is upon these foundational insights that this study has chosen biblical texts whose material conditions and subject of discussion are strikingly similar to the situation of Zimbabwe. In other words, the study is an adoption and application of Gottwald's hypothesis particularly the paradigm of struggle between dominant and dominated socio-economic and political classes on the Zimbabwean scene using the racial, class and gender struggles between the (dominant) employers and the (dominated) domestic servants as the lenses through which we can observe the larger picture of the struggle in the society.

Given not only geographical separation but huge time-span that separates Zimbabwe from the texts of the Bible, it should be admitted that Exo 21:2-6, Deut 15:12-18, Lev 25:39-54, will not make a lot of sense as liberating texts when read only from the context of the reader especially now in the 21st century A.D. But when the texts are situated in the broader ancient Near Eastern context first, and their eighth century context, one finds that there are areas of continuity with the exploitation of the poor that is still going on in different parts of the world. In their context, these texts suggest a struggle between the rich and the poor;

⁴⁸ N. K. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh: A Sociology of the Religion of Liberated Israel 1250-1050 B.C.E.* New York: Orbis Books, 1979, p. 701.

⁴⁹ Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh*, p. 705.

peasants and the ruling elite who exploitatively amassed and monopolised control of the means of production, the land, such that the only available option was for the peasants to be enslaved after losing the land.⁵⁰ The same situation is underlying slavery in the Roman-Palestinian environment, the context of Jesus and Paul.

The context of Luke 4:18; 1 Cor 7:20-24, Phil and Gal 3:28 clearly suggest that they come out of the socio-historical situations in which there was a struggle between those who exacted tribute, through control of a state machinery as well as through control of latifundia (large estates) acquired by the dispossession of the poor, and those who tilled their own land but were reduced to bare subsistence by heavy taxes and rents, as well as dispossessed employed labourers, slaves, the unemployed, petty criminals, bandits, and other lumpen-proletariat, quite typical of the ancient Near Eastern and eighth century contexts. This is strikingly similar to the struggle that produced domestic workers in Zimbabwe. It was in this context that Jesus announced the 'good news' of liberation to slaves among others. Both the content and the pattern of this proclamation (Luke 4:18-19) are rooted in the Jubilee and Sabbatical-year traditions of Hebrew Scriptures (Exo 21:2-6; 23:10-11; Deut 15:1-18). In these traditions, liberty is presented in economic, social, and political terms: freedom for slaves, release for captive people, cancellation of debts, redistribution of land and care for the poor among others;⁵¹ the very practical steps that Zimbabwe needs to adopt so as to solve the exploitation of domestic workers.

Merits of the Method

The concept of struggle as a tool of hermeneutical appropriation of texts of the Bible avoids the escapist option of textual selectivity. This escapist attitude finds expression in a one of the most common tendencies among readers of the Bible; the tendency of simply rejecting as irrelevant those parts of the text that seem unsupportive of one's cause and accepting as the 'Word of God' those parts that appear supportive (of one's cause). The notion of struggle in biblical hermeneutics allows the

⁵⁰ Gregory C. Chirichigno, *Debt-Slavery in Israel and the Ancient Near East*. JSOT Supplement Series 141. Sheffield Academic Press, 1993, pp. 54, 142.

⁵¹ Cf. Sharon H. Ringe, *Jesus, Liberation, and the Biblical Jubilee: Images for ethics and Christology*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985, p. xiv.

reader to appropriate any biblical text, even that which stands against his cause. Such texts reveal the other voice on the other side of the struggle. And this helps to identify the nature of and take sides in the struggles that are signified by the text. This is true whether or not the victorious forces in the struggles of the biblical texts are antithetical to one's concerns and aspirations.⁵² As a matter of fact, in most societies, as it was in the biblical world, it is rare that the righteous, the weak are victorious. They lack the technology, legal instruments and ideological tools to wage a successful struggle against the oppressors. Nevertheless, the narrative of their failure or defeat is a pointer to their struggle between the classes. The Bible is therefore a site of struggle, and witness to the ongoing struggle such that,

what one can do is take sides in a struggle that is not confirmed by the whole of the Bible, or even of the Gospels, but is rather encoded in the text as a struggle representing different positions and groups in the society behind the text. That provokes different appropriations of those texts, depending on one's class, gender, culture, race, or ideological position and attitude.⁵³

Point of Departure

Throughout history, religion has always been a tool of both exploitation and liberation. It offers an integral ideology to organise the masses either for economic and political advantage of the elite few or for a revolution against the status quo. It is therefore not by coincidence that every mode of economic production is usually accompanied with or is preceded by a supporting religious ideology, for without this religious ideology such a mode of production will be doomed.

This study demonstrates the validity of this assertion through an analysis of the deployment of religion to sustain political and socio-economic interests by both the dominant class and the dominated classes in ancient Israel, Roman-Palestine, and Zimbabwe from the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial era. However, unlike Marx, whose disdain for religion is evident in his famous statement: 'religion is the opium of the oppressed peoples', I take religion as both part of the problem and part of the solution to the problem of exploitation. While the elite appropriate

⁵² Cf. Mosala, *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology*, p. 11.

⁵³ Mosala, *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology*, p. 27.

religion to oppress the masses, the masses must appropriate religion to liberate themselves. What I am advocating for is 'turning Weapons of Mass Oppression into Weapons of Mass Liberation'. My position is informed by the history of ancient Israel, Roman-Palestine and the Zimbabwean history. Yahwism was deployed by the elite to oppress the majority. But the oppressed majority turned Yahwism against the oppressors, the elite of the Canaanite city-states. The same happened in eighth century BCE Israel. The rich deployed Yahwism in the exploitation of poor Israelites. Yet, the poor organised and also appropriated the ideology of Yahwism to free themselves (Exo 21:2-6; Deut 15:12-18, Lev 25:39-55). The message of prophet Amos among other prophets bears evidence to this.

In colonial Roman-Palestine, eighth century BCE Israelite scenarios replayed themselves. The elite used religion, Yahwism to exploit the majority poor. But as the ministries of Jesus (Luke 4:18) and Paul (Gal 3:28) reveal, religion was again appealed to in order to mobilise the exploited majority against their adversaries. It is exactly like a context of armed conflict. One camp brandishes arms to oppress while another hold the same to defend and liberate themselves. This is what happened in colonial Zimbabwe. From the onset of colonialism, the Bible, Christianity and guns were brought to serve and protect colonial masters and not the colonised. But in no time the same instruments of oppression were turned by the colonised into instruments of their liberation. The same process is possible today. *Aluta Continua!*

CHAPTER TWO

DEBT-SLAVERY IN THE A.N.E. AND IN ISRAEL

Introduction

This chapter constitutes the necessary background for understanding the manumission laws of the Old Testament (Exo 21:2-6; Deut 15:12-18 and Lev 25:39-55). The chapter is in three chronologically related parts. The first part lays the context for appreciating debt-slavery in the ancient Near Eastern particularly the exploitative economic system since the transition from tribal arrangement to city-states formation in Mesopotamia. It thus shows the struggle between the tribal, peasant class and the new urban/feudalist class. The second part traces the formation of Israel in the ancient Near East through a peasant-slave revolution, struggle for liberation against socio-economic exploitation of Canaanite-city states. The third part, argues that contrary to its painful history of struggle however, it took a very short time after Israel was established for the ruling elite to continue with the exploitative socio-economic policies and even propagate more punitive measures targeted at the underclasses. I argue that Israel's peasant-slave revolution could not last long because it was hijacked and sabotaged by the former elite, beneficiaries of the old system who 'converted' to early Israel only to protect their economic interests. This state of affairs resulted in the proliferation of debt-slavery in Israel as it had always been. Although some religious officials ignored the plight of the underclasses or even justified the state of affairs, some ignited the spirit of protest against the exploitation of the underclasses by the elite few and called for liberation. It is this protest that informs the liberation motif behind debt-slavery/manumission laws in the Pentateuch, (Exo 21:2-6; Deut 15:12-18 and Lev 25:39-55), a subject of discussion in the next chapter.

Types and Causes of slavery in the A.N.E

There were two types of slaves in the ancient Near East: temporary slaves and permanent slaves,¹ of which the Bible testifies the existence of both types in Israel. In this study however, I am interested with temporary slavery, a phenomenon comparable to domestic labour in Zimbabwe, beginning with socio-economic factors leading to domestic labour to their treatment once in the institution, since the colonial era. Classified under temporary slavery in the ancient Near East were debt-slaves since they had the possibility to retain a right to redemption. Permanent slaves were foreign prisoners of war who were turned into chattel-slaves and these had no individual right to redemption,² except after ransom was paid by one's tribe or state.³ The problem with this rigid classification, as I have argued in the general introduction above is not only that it is legalistic but it is also an abstract characterisation not rooted enough in the day to day operations of the institution of slavery.

At a sociological level, it is possible for debt-slaves to be permanent slaves while chattel slaves become temporary. It is upon this realisation that this theoretical difference has been dismissed as meaningless since it is independent from the overall socio-economic structure of the ancient Near East, which structure gave rise to and nurtured the institution of slavery.⁴ Fundamental questions are: in the light of the economic system of the ancient Near East was it possible to find individuals who were totally 'free'; what constituted the 'freedom' of such individuals? To respond to these fundamental questions and to properly understand debt-slavery in Israel, we need to first of all understand the chief causes of this type of slavery in the ancient Near East.

¹ Cf. Matthews, 'The Anthropology of Slavery in the Covenant Code', p.121; Dexter E. Callender, Jr. 'Servants of God(s) and Servants of Kings in Israel and the Ancient Near East', in David Jobling, et al (eds.), *Slavery in Text and Interpretation*. SBL. Semeia 83/84, 1998, pp. 67-82.

² Cf. R. Thurnwald, 'Sklave', in M. Ebert (ed.), *Reallexikon der Vorgeschichte*, XII, Berlin: 1928, pp. 210-12; B. J. Siegel, 'Some Methodological Considerations for a Comparative Study of Slavery', *AA* 49, 1976, pp. 388-89; Cf. Chirichigno, *Debt-Slavery in Israel and the Ancient Near East*. p. 30.

³ Cf. Matthews, 'The Anthropology of Slavery', p. 122.

⁴ Cf. Gelb, 'Approaches to the Study of Ancient Society', *JAOS* 87, (1967), pp. 1-8 (4).

In the ancient Near East, it has been observed that debt-slavery was intrinsically related to land alienation, which was mainly caused by varying degrees of insolvency. In that way, we should devote some time to analysing the social and economic structures under which insolvency that led to land alienation developed and increased to such an extent that one would either be forced to sell his children or surrender himself/herself into slavery.⁵ Scholars are unanimously agreed that the study of the ancient Near Eastern life using the methods of cultural anthropologists and ethnographers is essential if we are to understand properly the history of Israel with its various institutions.⁶ Israel as a small state within the rest of the ancient Near East certainly was influenced to a greater extent by developments in the bigger and more established states. We thus need to invest some time in discussing the Mesopotamian city-state environment as the necessary background for understanding the rise of debt-slavery in general and in Israel in particular.

The Formation of City-States in the A.N.E

Urbanism in lowland Mesopotamia developed in the fifth-third millennium BCE. Beginning with the formation of temple-towns in the lowlands (ca 5300-2900 BCE), it culminated in the formation of city-states of Sumer which developed in the river valleys and main water canals of Middle and Northern Mesopotamia in the third millennium BCE (ca 2700 BCE).⁷ During the second half of the third millennium the city-states of Agade (i.e. the Akkadian empire: ca. 2340-2200 BCE) and Ur (i.e. the Ur III dynasty: ca. 2111-2003 BCE) contributed significant cultural and political achievements.⁸ The social organisation of most of the tribal and non-urban populations that lived within the Mesopotamian and other ancient Near Eastern city-states was based on the concept of real or fictitious kinship, which anthropologists usually call lineage systems.

⁵ Cf. G. A. Herion, 'The Impact of Modern and Social Science Assumptions on the Reconstruction of Israelite History', *JSOT* 34, (1986), pp. 3-33; J. W. Rogerson, *Anthropology and the Old Testament*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978, pp. 17-18; F.S. Frick, *The Formation of the State in Ancient Israel*. SWBAS 4. Sheffield: Almond Press, 1985, pp. 17-25; Cf. Chirichigno, *Debt-Slavery in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, p. 31.

⁶ Cf. Chirichigno, *Debt-Slavery in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, p. 31.

⁷ Cf. C.L. Redman, *The Rise of Civilisation: From Early Framers to Urban Society in the Ancient Near East*. San Francisco: W.H Freeman, 1978, p. 221.

⁸ Cf. Redman, *The Rise of Civilisation*, pp. 214-309.

There are generally three stages of kinship; nuclear family, clan and tribe. In the pre-state societies, or communal mode of production, each tribe was responsible for the protection of the social and territorial rights of its local inhabitants. Issues pertaining to justice and all other administration duties were left to the care of elders of the tribe and all free man.⁹ It was them who settled matters between neighbours and between families.

Although with the development of state societies, the tribal government lost much of its political influence, the tribal representatives nonetheless continued to operate as local administrators during most periods,¹⁰ that is, even after the establishment of centralised government of the city-states. However, while city-and national states, that were composed of the state (temple and palace households) and private sectors, held many political and security advantages over the previous arrangement, one of the negative results of the process of centralisation that took place among city-and national states was an increase in social stratification, characterised by an increase in debt-slavery and alienation of land among free citizens.¹¹ This was unprecedented and a cause for concern, particularly for the poor, whose welfare had been catered for by the tribesmen.

Before the rise of city-states, economic structures created by the elders of the tribes/society would not allow an unjustifiably huge gap between the haves and the have-nots. There were always checks and balances. In fact, it was the responsibility of the elders to make sure no one member of the society prospered at the back of blatant exploitation especially dispossessing vulnerable members of the society of their inheritance, the land, their sole means of production. The land as a communal commodity could not be privately owned and speculatively acquired. Land was inherited from the family, from one generation to another. But with the introduction of the central government, this traditional conception of land was just ignored or negated. The state sector acquired and maintained large land holdings which were previously 'owned' and managed

⁹ Cf. Chirichigno, *Debt-Slavery in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, p. 32.

¹⁰ Cf. M. Stol, *Studies in Old Babylonian History*. Leiden: Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten Noordeindsplein, 1976, pp. 73-93.

¹¹ Cf. Chirichigno, *Debt-Slavery in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, p. 34.

by the tribes.¹² This scenario implies that the state dispossessed people from their only valuable asset and source of livelihood. Unlike under the tribes, the main economic activities of the state sector included cereal agriculture, date palm cultivation, animal husbandry and other assorted and complex 'industries', which goods were then manufactured and distributed or exported by merchants who worked for the temple and palace.¹³

As it turned out, this new economic system was not crafted to serve the majority but only a handful, the elite, the ruling class and merchants. Naturally, the economic system was inimical to the majority of the people for it brought unprecedented suffering among the peasants especially as it reduced many of them to slaves of the state and of the temple. In other words, this new economic system could only thrive with exploitation. Thus, the beneficiaries of the system had to make sure there was always excess labour hence they crafted several ways of manufacturing poverty such as uprooting peasants from their lands so as to enslave them. In the end, the development of central government, and the introduction of the new economic system was never an advantage for the majority of the populace but a big set back to their advancement. It increased social stratification in Mesopotamia, to an extent that the gap between the rich and the poor became almost unbridgable.

Social Stratification in Mesopotamia

Since the establishment of the city-states, there was a high degree of social stratification in the Mesopotamian society based mainly on access to the means of production. Three social classes can be distinguished: free citizens, semi-free and unfree chattel-slaves. Free citizens were very few and comprised; priests, nobility, officials, merchants and the kinship families who owned land or some other means of production. The 'semi free citizens' category includes all those citizens who worked for the

¹² Cf. I.M. Diakonoff, 'Socio-Economic Classes in Babylonia and the Babylonian Concept of Social Stratification', *AbhBAW* 75, 1972, pp. 44-45; Diakonoff, 'The Rise of the Despotical State in Ancient Mesopotamia', in I. M. Diakonoff (ed.), *Ancient Mesopotamia Socio-Economic History: A Collection of Studies by Soviet Scholars*. USSR Academy of Sciences Institute of the Peoples of Asia. Moscow: 'Nauka', 1969, pp. 179-84; Diakonoff, 'Slaves, Helots and Serfs in Early Antiquity', in J. Harmatta and G. Komoróczy (eds.), *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft in alten Vorderasien*. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1976, pp. 47-50.

¹³ Cf. Chirichigno, *Debt-Slavery in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, p. 36.

state, that is those employed in the temple and palace households but who did not own the means of production. While their socio-economic position was not always admirable, they were better off than those individuals in the third social strata; unfree chattel slaves. As a matter of fact, individuals who comprised the second socio-economic strata in Mesopotamia could own slaves suggesting that either, they were not really poor or that the uprooted poor were so many that even those who had very little economic means could afford to own some as slaves. The third category includes the foreign captives, who were utilised in the state households,¹⁴ and chattel-slaves- either those who were bought in foreign and domestic markets or who were born in the house of their master-who were used mostly by the free citizens in their households.¹⁵

Since access to the means of production or the loss of it was the main criterion to acquire status, the above three-tier socio-economic structure therefore is inadequate to distinguish people in Mesopotamia and the rest of the ancient Near East, since free citizens could easily become semi-free if they lost their means of production (their land). And if they lost their jobs in the semi-free category, they could easily become slaves. In other words, only a tiny minority were free and subjected the rest of the majority populace to slavery and other forms of economic dependence. There was therefore great mobility between the three classes to the extent that Gelb's observation that in real economic sense we could talk of only two classes of people in the ancient Near East holds water. He argues:

'In the economic sense, we may very well distinguish not three but two classes, the master class and the rest of the population. The latter would include all dependent labour, composed not only serfs (semi-free) and slaves (chattel-slaves), but also of the so-called free peasantry (citizens) and craftsmen, who, while theoretically free and independent, sooner or later

¹⁴ Cf. Gelb, 'Definition and Discussion of Slavery and Serfdom', *UF* 11, (1980), pp. 283-97, (293-94).

¹⁵ Cf. I. Mendelsohn, *Slavery in the Ancient Near East: A Comparative Study of Slavery in Babylonia, Assyria, Syria, and Palestine from the Middle of the Third Millennium to the End of the First Millennium*. USA: Greenwood Press Publishers, 1978, pp. 3-4; G. R. Driver and C.J. Miles, *Babylonian Laws. 1. Legal Commentary. 11. Transliterated Text, Translation, Philological Notes, Glossary*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956, pp. 221-22; Gelb, 'Definition and Discussion of Slavery', pp. 294-95; Cf. Chirichigno, *Debt-Slavery in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, p. 49.

became dependent on the large landowners for water, draught animals, ploughs, seed grain, and other means of production'.¹⁶

Debt-slavery in the A.N.E

It was a common scenario for those peasants who would have lost their land to become dependent on land owners and merchants for their survival. Since subsistence farming was the main preoccupation of the small land owners, they were most likely to become insolvent, owing to the precarious nature of farming and especially due to the unpredictability of the farming seasons. Unlike the previous tribal arrangement where one's tribe could economically cushion its member who may have fallen on bad times, in the city-state set-up, once a small land owner was insolvent, there were very limited options. More often than not, these farmers were forced to sell or surrender dependents into debt-slavery. And when their circumstances did not improve, if for instance, there was a pestilence or recurrent and persistent droughts, such that they could not redeem their members of the family in debt-slavery, they would eventually be forced to sell their land (their only means of production), themselves and their families.

Free citizens who depended on the ruling elite for resources and loans could also become 'indentured servants' whose overall circumstances were not very different from debt-slaves. For example, large landowners often secured labour through the use of the loan contracts, which required a pledge of the debtor to work on the creditor's land to pay off the debt. In many cases, these pledges served from several years to a lifetime.¹⁷ Thus, temporary slavery could become permanent.

¹⁶ Cf. Gelb, 'From Freedom to Slavery', in D. O. Edzard (ed.), *Gesellschaftsklassen in Alten Zweistromland und den angrenzenden Gebeiten-XVIII: Rencontre assyriologique internationale, Munich, 29. Juni bis 3 Juli 1970*. BAWPHKA 75. Munich: Verlag der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1972, pp. 81-92; J. Renger 'Flucht als soziales Problem in der altbabylonischen Gesellschaft', in D. O. Edzard (ed.), *Gesellschaftsklassen in Alten Zweistromland*, 1972, pp. 167-182; G. Giordadze, 'Die Begriffe, freie' und 'unfreie' bei den Hethitern', in J. Harmatta and G. Komoróczy (eds.), *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft in alten Vorderasien*. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1976, pp. 299-308, who notes the mobility between free and semi/unfree classes among the Hittites; Cf. Chirichigno, *Debt-Slavery in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, p. 50.

¹⁷ Cf. Chirichigno, *Debt-Slavery in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, p.51.

High interest rates on Loans

The few elites, owners of the means of production would do everything possible for the situation to remain in their favour hence the poor who would have sold themselves into slavery remained there forever. In other words, the relationship that the large landowners and merchants had with the rest of the free and semi-free population by and large was one of extreme exploitation.¹⁸ The main problem was high interest rates charged and the precarious climatic conditions that continued to threaten small-scale farmers. Once, one found himself and family either in 'indentured servitude' or debt-slavery, it was almost impossible to regain freedom. This is why, according to Isaac Mendelsohn, although slaves were recruited from various indigenous and foreign sources, the basic supply source for the ever-mounting number of slaves in the Ancient Near East was the native debtor; for insolvency inevitably led to the debtor's enslavement.¹⁹

In a society where small-scale farming, house industry, and internal trade were the chief occupations of the population, credit facilities were of paramount importance for the survival of the small to medium enterprises of the common people. In economic sense, the farmer, the craftsman, and the merchant needed credit, for their economic activities. This credit was supplied through loans in the form of silver or goods by the temples, priests, landlords, and capitalists-the elite class. On average, the rate of interest charged in Ancient Babylonia was 20-25 percent on silver and 33 and one-third (1/3) percent on grain.²⁰ Although, the Hammurabi Code maintained this rate and threatened those who charged a higher interest with forfeiture of the loan, practice is always different from the prescriptions of the law. Chances are very high that several greedy creditors charged more than the legally prescribed rate especially in times of great and serious economic stress.

The loan documents of the Hammurabi period do not state whether the interest rate was reckoned on a monthly or yearly basis. However, judging from the documents of the Third Dynasty of Ur of the Neo-Babylonian and the Assyrian periods, in which interest was charged monthly,

¹⁸ Cf. Diakonoff, 'Socio-Economic Classes in Babylonia', p. 47-48; Diakonoff, 'Slaves, Helots and Serfs', pp. 52-68.

¹⁹ Cf. Mendelsohn, *Slavery in the Ancient Near East*, p. 23.

²⁰ Cf. Mendelsohn, *Slavery in the Ancient Near East*, p. 23.

we may assume that either this was the case also in the Hammurabi period or that the interest covered the period from spring to harvest time where it remained unchanged (at 20-25 per cent and 33 and 1/3 per cent on grain). But there are other frightening ancient Near Eastern interest rates that reflect a terribly greedy tendency at exploiting the borrowers. In late Assyrian period, the usurer had a free hand in determining the rate of interest he wished the borrower to pay. As such, interests on money varied from 20 per cent to as high as 80 percent per annum. There were also some loans in Babylonia and Assyria on which interest was charged only after the date of maturity. In that case, the interest was enormous. In Ancient Babylonia 100 percent was charged. In neo-Babylonian times we find 40 per cent and also 100 per cent. In Assyria it reached 100 per cent and even to unimaginable interest of 141 percent at times. In Nuzi, the average interest rate seems to have been 50 per cent 'till after harvest',²¹ and there are chances that it increased to enormous levels when one failed to pay in time. While it is not known if Israelite creditors charged such exorbitant interests, given the overwhelming evidence from the rest of the ancient Near East, 'Israel' of the city-state era could not have been spared from this rampant exploitative practice. This background is very informative and offers fertile ground for understanding peasant rebellions in the ancient Near East especially peasant-slave revolts that led to the emergence of Israel, around 1250 BCE. In spite of that, the situation repeated itself also during monarchic Israel from 1000 BCE where the Israelite elite few corruptly controlled the means of production, the land, setting the stage for successive sustained struggles between the classes.

Habiru/Peasant Reaction to Exploitation of the City-States

From the ongoing discussion on the manipulation of the peasants and other underclasses by the rich and centralised government, it would appear as if these groups were pliable that they could not organise resistance strategies. On the contrary, peasants engaged in several and relentless revolts against the exploitative city-states. Most of them withdrew but not always physically from the city-states and from the society to become rebels resisting authority of the rulers. The behaviour of the groups variously known in the ancient Near East as the Habiru, Abiru,

²¹ Cf. Mendelsohn, *Slavery in the Ancient Near East*, p. 25.

Apiru, or Apitu shed light on the resistance strategies of the peasants. It is the same process through which Israel emerged as a rebellious movement against the socio-economic set up of the Canaanite city-state establishment. It is important therefore to highlight some general characteristic features of the Habiru groups as background to understanding the history of the emergence of Israel.

Although the debate is still raging over the true identity of the Habiru and their connection to Hebrews and Israelites, scholars have at least established that common to all people designated as Habiru in the ancient Near East is the fact that they were 'uprooted' from their original political and social framework and forced to adapt to a new environment, for a while, but would soon come back to reintegrate into their original social, economic and political environment. The Habiru menace was not confined to one locality; it was a common scenario in the rest of the ancient Near East, as a reaction to various factors, chief among them being economic exploitation of the city-states; debt, heavy taxes, wars, disasters, famine and prolonged military service among others.²² The different traits and social behaviour of the Habiru in each area of Western Asia are the result of the adaptation to new circumstances. Conditions in the host environment therefore determined the overall behaviour of the Habiru tribes.

These 'tribes', it should be understood were not real but were based upon fictive kinship and the tribal framework therefore was basically territorial in nature and included inhabitants of small towns and villages as well as nomads. All these variegated peoples formed a tribe although they had no blood relations.²³ Contrary to previously thought about the Habiru as exclusively nomadic in nature, it is now conclusive that most of the people designated as the 'Habiru' insofar as their background can be ascertained, actually came from the sedentary population and not from among the nomads. The Habiru originated from the two major sectors of the ancient Near East: the urban and the tribal hence were an

²² Cf. M. B. Rowton, 'Dimorphic Structure and the Problem of the 'Apiru-ibrim''. *JNES* 35, (1976), pp.13-20 (p.14); Cf. Nadav Naaman, *Canaan in the Second Millennium B. C. E. Collected Essays, Vol. 2*. Indiana: Winona Lake, 2005, p. 253.

²³ Cf. G. E. Mendenhall, 'The Hebrew Conquest of Palestine'. *BA* 25 (1962), pp. 69-71; Mendenhall, *The Tenth Generation: The Origins of the Biblical Tradition*. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1973, pp. 174-178; Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh*, 1979, pp. 294-298, (especially p.470).

intermediate social element between these two groups, justifying them being called the 'dimorphic' structure.²⁴

It was common in the ancient Near East that such individuals who were uprooted by the various factors I have mentioned above, sometimes moved from their homeland to neighbouring countries and served either in the public or in private sector for subsistence or wages until such a time when conditions improved back in the homeland. Some would migrate in search of pastures for their animals. Usually, however they did not migrate individually, but they formed a band (a group). These bands of immigrants were independent bodies and were restricted in number and unified often by a single prominent leader. Apart from the ring leader, so to speak, there was no other hierarchy or institutional organisation required for this tiny social structure and it is for this reason that none of the institutions that typify either clan or tribe ever appeared in connection to the Habiru. For sustenance, the Habiru bands often engaged in predatory raids.²⁵ That is why M. B. Rowton argues that normally, 'in tribal society, the most predatory elements were usually the small and poor tribes or tribal splinter groups. These lacked enough strength to assert their claim on pasture and as a result would turn to brigandage'.²⁶

Sedentary individuals with political ambitions would in some cases appeal to the Habiru brigands (those living in the peripheries of their societies) whom they would recruit as mercenaries. On some occasions they served in the armies of established kingdoms and this route normally opened the way for re-integration of the Habiru into sedentary society and may have been a stepping-stone to a military career for a leader of a band.²⁷ Due to a number of technicalities, the social status, 'Habiru'-the 'uprooted migrants' did not last very long. The stability of

²⁴ Cf. Rowton, 'Dimorphic Structure and the Problem of the 'Apiru-ibrim''; Cf. Naaman, *Canaan in the Second Millennium*, p. 254; Cf. J. Bottero, 'Les Habiru les nomads et les sédentaires', in Castillo, J.S. (ed.), *Nomads and Sedentary Peoples*. Mexico City, 1981: pp. 89-107, (pp. 96-97).

²⁵ Cf. Naaman, *Canaan in the Second Millennium*, p. 254; Cf. Bottero, 'Habiru', in G. Ebeling and M. Meissner (eds.), *Reallexikon der Assyriologie*, IV. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1972, pp. 14-27, (26); Cf. Bottero, 'Les Habiru', p. 94.

²⁶ Cf. Rowton, 'Dimorphic Structure and Parasocial Element', *JNES* 36 (1977), pp. 181-197, (193).

²⁷ Cf. Rowton, 'Dimorphic Structure and Parasocial Element', p. 193.

the organisation of these bands depended mainly on the personality of their leader and cohesion of their members.²⁸ Usually, the Habiru group disintegrated as soon as their members married, had children, and when for instance, their number expanded to a degree that necessitated support from a larger political group. Therefore the groups appear to have re-integrated themselves either into tribal society or (through military service) into urban society; they may have even formed the nucleus of an entirely new tribe.²⁹ It is equally well attested that individual refugees would get re-integrated into the society through their service in ancient Near Eastern kingdoms.

From the foregoing discussion, each society therefore had its own 'Habiru people' so to speak. In general the phenomenon of the Habiru can be described as a circular process, one in which people were uprooted from society in which they were born, lived for a while as foreigners in another country, and then were absorbed into their new environment.³⁰ And this new environment due to socio-economic processes and other factors produces its own Habiru, the 'uprooted migrants' who leave for another country where the same process happens. The process is cyclical in nature. Such a process is assumed to be the route through which 'Israelite tribes' settled in Canaan. Contrary to the assumption that Israelites were foreign to Canaan, who came through a conquest or peaceful infiltration from Egypt, it is now almost clear that they were part of the Canaanite populations, some of whom became Habiru, who wandered and later rejoined the other tribes in a peasant rebellion.

The Emergence of Israel in Canaan

There are basically three models postulated by scholars as well as hinted by the biblical narrative as possible ways through which Israel emerged and/or settled in Canaan. However the models still will break into finer and minor ones.³¹ Although my interest is to discuss in detail, the peas-

²⁸ C. Bottero, 'Les Habiru', pp. 93-106,

²⁹ Cf. Naaman, *Canaan in the Second Millennium*, p. 255; Cf. Rowton, 'Dimorphic Structure and Parasocial Element', p. 194.

³⁰ Cf. Naaman, *Canaan in the Second Millennium*, p. 255.

³¹ For more details on the three theories, see for example, W.H. Stiebing, *Out of the Desert? Archaeology and the Exodus/Conquest Narratives*. Buffalo, NY: Prometheus, 1989; J.J. Bimson, 'The Origins of Israel in Canaan: An Examination of Recent Theories', *The-*

ant revolt model as articulated by Gottwald, which model I strongly suspect does not only provide us with the most likely scenario through which Israel came onto the scene but also resonates with the methodology guiding this research and the history of Zimbabwe, from the pre-colonial, colonial and to the post colonial era, as background, I will discuss briefly the other two models proposed, namely, the Conquest model and the Infiltration model of settlement. These models agree in principle that Israelites were foreigners, who invaded Canaan from outside.

The Conquest Model of Israelite Settlement

The Conquest Model is based upon the Exodus story through Joshua 1-12 especially which presents a united front of twelve tribes of Israel who first under Moses and later under Joshua, fleeing from Egyptian slavery orchestrated a swift and bloody invasion into Canaan accompanied by miracles. According to the narrative, the conquest was led by Yahweh himself, who had promised to give them (Israelites, through Abraham) the land of Canaan (Gen 12:1). In other words, the theory leans closely to the biblical account of events. It interprets archaeological evidence in ways that support the authenticity of the stories in the Bible. The archaeological school, known in some circles as the Baltimore school comprising American archaeologists, W.F. Albright, G.E. Wright, and J. Bright, is famous for suggesting that the archaeological evidence is testimony to at least the reliability of the biblical account of the conquest of the Israelites led by Joshua. Thus, for them, the Iron Age settlers were new nomadic immigrants who entered Canaan in around 1200 BCE, through a conquest. The premise of the argument was the resemblance between the names Habiru and Hebrew, the proximity of their location (as they had been a menace to Egyptian rule) as well as the close chronological relationship between the Amarna Habiru and the Israelites which brought about the immediate equation of the two groups.³² The main

melios 15, (1989), pp. 4-15; Bimson, 'Merenptah's Israel and Recent Theories of Israelite Origins', *JSTOT* 49, (1991), pp. 3-29.

³² Cf. W.F. Albright, 'Archaeology and the Date of the Hebrew Conquest of Palestine', *BASOR* 58, (1935), pp. 10-18; Albright, 'The Israelite Conquest of Palestine in Light of Archaeology', *BASOR* 74, (1939), pp. 11-23; G.E. Wright, *Biblical Archaeology*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 2nd edn, 1962; J. Bright, *A History of Israel*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 3rd edn, 1981; Bright, *Early Israel in Recent History Writing: A Study in Method*. London: SCM Press, 1956.

problem with this theory is; the conquest model as illustrated in the book of Joshua can no longer be sustained, not only because the cities mentioned as being destroyed by Joshua in 1200 BCE such as Jericho (Joshua 6) were already destroyed by this time,³³ but also because the majority of the conquest stories in the Book of Joshua (and of the Exodus) are devoid of historical reality.³⁴

The Infiltration Model of Israelite Settlement

While still subscribing to the overall assumption that Israel entered Canaan from outside, there have been scholars who after observing the disparity between the Joshua account of settlement and that presented in the book of Judges (chapter 1-3 especially) where the cities claimed to have been taken by Joshua are still to be taken after Joshua, thought that the Judges account was more of a possibility than the account of Joshua. The newcomers, according to this theory are thought to have been nomadic pastoralists; hence the hypothesis has loosely been called the infiltration model of settlement. According to the proponents of this theory, especially form critics such as A. Alt and his disciples; Martin Noth and others, the account of Judges 1 and a situation depicted elsewhere in Joshua (chapter 13) shows a gradual infiltration or portrays a picture of a people who had long contact with the Canaanites before they settled in the highlands. Therefore, the new comers did not come in as is suggested by the conquest tradition where they swiftly wrought destruction and vanquishing the previous inhabitants, but gradually and peacefully settled by both signing agreements with the inhabitants of the area and initially targeting unpopulated areas for their settlement. According to these form critics, violence to the magnitude portrayed by Joshua is very unlikely under such circumstances. The only violence encountered probably was later after settlement when there was need to increase land.³⁵

³³ Chirichigno, *Debt-Slavery in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, p.105.

³⁴ Naaman, *Canaan in the Second Millennium*, p.347; Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology's New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origins of Its Sacred Texts*. London: Free Press, 2002, pp. 72-96.

³⁵ Cf. A. Alt, 'Erwägungen über die Landnahme der Israeliten in Palästina', in *Kleine Schriften zur Geschichte des Volkes Israel*, 1, Munich: Beck, 1959, pp. 126-175; Alt, 'The Settlement of Israel in Palestine' in *Essays on Old Testament History and Religion*. Oxford: Oxford

Disciples of this school of thought, although now aware of the academic advances disconfirming the theory especially the claim that Israel was an outsider to Canaan still try to validate the model by harmonising the disparity by suggesting that archaeological evidence seems to confirm the possibility of the new comers (may be Israelites) to Canaan had long time contact before their final settlement. V. Fritz, for example, in 1981, suggested that there was ‘a symbiosis’ of the original inhabitants-Canaanites and the nomadic newcomers-(the Israelites).³⁶ However, J. A. Callaway although he believes that the Israelites were newcomers, that is foreigners to Canaan, he had already suggested that the newcomers were not nomads as commonly suggested but were farmers and herders, who brought with them their sedentary life style into Canaan.³⁷ That is, these new comers have been settled and engaged in agriculture when they left for Canaan. While Callaway believes that the Israelites were foreigners who came (may be as a single unified group) to Canaan, other scholars argue that the notion that Israelites were foreigners in Canaan is misplaced. I. Finkelstein, for instance, suggests that the Iron Age settlers were mainly Canaanite nomads/pastoralists who were once part of the sedentarised populations of the surrounding city-states. These sedentary Canaanites dropped out of the city-states during the Late Bronze Age (1550-1200 BCE), during which several cities were destroyed, and became nomads/pastoralists, but then re-sedentarised during the early Iron Age when they settled in the highlands.³⁸ His theory has attracted

University Press, 1966, pp. 133-69; Martin Noth, *The History of Israel*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1960.

³⁶ V. Fritz, ‘The Israelite ‘Conquest’ in the Light of Recent Excavations at Khirbet el-Meshash’, *BASOR* 241 (1981), pp. 61-73; Fritz, ‘Conquest or Settlement? The Early Iron Age in Palestine’, *BA* 50 (1987), pp. 84-100.

³⁷ J. A. Callaway, ‘Excavating Ai (et-Tell): 1964-1972’ *BA* 39 (1976), pp. 18-30; Callaway, ‘Respondents: Session II: Archaeology, History, and Bible. The Israelite Settlement in Canaan: A Case Study’, in J. Amitai (ed.), *Biblical Archaeology Today: Proceedings of the International Conference on Biblical Archaeology, Jerusalem, April 1984*. Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1985, pp. 72-77.

³⁸ Cf. I. Finkelstein, ‘Respondents: Session 11: Archaeology, History and Bible: The Israelite Settlement in Canaan: A Case Study’, in J. Amitai (ed.), *Biblical Archaeology Today: Proceedings of the International Congress on Biblical Archaeology, Jerusalem, April 1984*. Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1985, pp. 80-83; Finkelstein, *The Archaeology of the Israelite Settlement*. Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1988. Finkelstein and Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology’s New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origins of Its Sacred Texts*. London: Free Press, 2002.

following from many other scholars.³⁹ And it relates well with the *modus operandi* of the Habiru.

The Peasant Revolt Model of Israelite Settlement

The third theory is called the 'Revolt Model' and is closely related to the Habiru hypothesis. It is a significant departure from the above two as it postulates continuity in material culture between the people that constituted early Israel and the allegedly former inhabitants of Canaanite city-states, the Canaanites. G.E Mendenhall is accredited as the brains behind this ground breaking hypothesis.⁴⁰ His argument is that the so-called conquest was not solely a job of the outsiders as described in the Exodus and Joshua narratives, but rather was largely organised and executed by the indigenous masses of Canaan who rose against a ruling aristocracy composed basically of foreign military conquerors who had recently invaded the land. These foreigners include the Hittites, Hivvites, Girgashites, Perizzites, and Jebusites. According to Mendenhall, this peasant revolution was cyclical in nature, taking place every tenth generation or after 250 to 300 years. This is the reason he titled his book *The Tenth Generation*.⁴¹ In other words, the settlement of Israel was not through an invasion by nomads or some other groups of people from somewhere. It was a 'peasant revolt' anchored upon a cultural and ideological revolution.

Mendenhall, does not however completely dismiss the Exodus story. But unlike the two theories above, he maintains that only very few Israelite people came from outside of Canaan. In a way, both these Israelites and Canaanite groups had a common enemy; the Canaanite city-states. This, is the logic behind the theory being coined, 'the revolt/rebellion model' as it assumes that there was a revolt from within the Canaanite city states to establish early Israel. For Mendenhall, the glue to the solidarity between the Hebrews (those few Israelites who came from Egypt) and

³⁹ Cf. G. W. Ahlström, 'Giloh: A Judahite or Canaanite Settlement', *IEJ* 34 (1984), pp. 170-172; Ahlström, *Who were the Israelites?*, pp. 11-24; R. B. Coote and K. W. Whitelam, *The Emergence of Early Israel*, pp. 125-26; see also, Chirichigno, *Debt-Slavery in Israel and the Ancient Near East*. pp.105-6.

⁴⁰ Cf. Mendenhall, 'The Hebrew Conquest of Palestine'. *BA* 25 (1962) pp. 71-84; Mendenhall, 'The Hebrew Conquest of Palestine', in D.N. Freedman, and F- Campbell, Jr (eds.), *Biblical Archaeology Reader*, 111. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970, pp. 100-120.

⁴¹ Cf. Mendenhall, *The Tenth Generation*, p. 225.

the other 'stateless' or uprooted social units that withdrew from or rebelled against the Canaanite-city states was achieved through a common adherence to the Yahwistic religion which was inherently anti-Canaanite in nature.⁴² As noted above, archaeology has even confirmed that Iron Age settlers were a mixture of both new nomadic immigrants and indigenous Canaanite peasant groups (the Hebrews or the Apiru) who were once part of the sedentarised populations of the surrounding city-states.⁴³

Mendenhall's hypothesis has attracted many disciples. Gottwald is among the first 'followers'. His contribution to the theory has so far made his name firmly rooted in scholarship. It is important to note however that the hypothesis ignited a stormy debate characterised by rebuttal and counter-rebuttal between not only on one hand, Mendenhall and Gottwald versus their critics, but also between their critics on the other.⁴⁴ Be that as it may, the criticisms have failed to dismantle the influence of the hypothesis especially as reformulated and elaborated by Gottwald in his response to critics and in his *The Tribes of Yahweh*.⁴⁵ Contrary to the advocates of nomadic origins of Israel, Gottwald asserts that that Israel has nomadic origins should be rejected completely for it is baseless. For him, proto-Israelites practiced pastoral nomadism otherwise known as transhumance nomadism-seasonal movements of farmers in search of pastures for their herd usually without family. It was a subsidiary offshoot of the agricultural village.⁴⁶

⁴² Cf. Mendenhall, *The Tenth Generation*, pp. 24-26; Mendenhall, 'Ancient Israel's Hyphenated History', in D.N. Freedman, and D.F. Graf, (eds.), *Palestine in Transition: The Emergence of Ancient Israel*. SWBAS 2. Sheffield: Almond Press, 1983, pp. 91-102, (92).

⁴³ Cf. Chirichigno, *Debt-Slavery in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, p.106.

⁴⁴ Cf. Weippert, M. *Die Landnahme der israelitischen Stämme in der neueren wissenschaftlichen Diskussion*. Göttingen. 1967; Alan J Hauser, 'Israel's Conquest of Palestine: a Peasants' Rebellion?' *JSOT* 3 (1978), pp. 2-19; Thomas L. Thompson, *The Settlement of Palestine in the Bronze*. BTAVO; RB. Wiesbaden, 1978; Thompson, 'Historical Notes on "Israel's Conquest of Palestine: a Peasants' Rebellion?"' *JSOT* 3 (1978), pp. 20-27; Hauser's Response to Thompson, *JSOT* 3 (1978), pp.35-36; Hauser, 'The Revolutionary Origins of Israel: A Response to Gottwald (*JSOT* 1978), pp. 37-52)', *JSOT* 3 (1978), pp. 46-49.

⁴⁵ Cf. Gottwald, 'The Hypothesis of the Revolutionary Origins of Ancient Israel: A Response to Hauser and Thompson', *JSOT* 3 (1978), pp. 37-52; Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh*.

⁴⁶ Cf. Gottwald, 'Were the Early Israelites Pastoral Nomads?' in J. Jackson and M. Kessler (eds.), *Rhetorical Criticism: Essays in Honor of James Muilenburg*. Pittsburgh: Pickwick, 1974, pp. 223-255.

Unlike Mendenhall, Gottwald also, stressed the political rather than the ideological nature of the 'revolt'. The ideology of Yahwism only served to push forward the political and socio-economic revolution. For him, the peasant revolt culminated in the process known as 'retribalisation' or return to traditional egalitarian tribal social system, known as Communitarian Mode of Production, a socio-economic and political system that stands against the Canaanite Tributary Mode of Production system of governance that was responsible for creating socio-economic strata we have talked about.⁴⁷ Gottwald's hypothesis is therefore also based upon the assumption that Israelites were indigenous to Canaan. Early Israel, thus came into being through the Apiru and peasant cooperation in revolt or struggle against feudalist Canaanite city-states.

The basis of the assumption is that prior to the introduction of feudalist socio-economic and political system, the Canaanites were egalitarian and the tribes were the highest authorities responsible for the administration of the economic, social and political affairs of the community. With the introduction of the city-state system, the Egyptian imperial powers imposed tribute on the Canaanite city-state vassals. The Canaanite vassals would in turn collect the tribute from the people: the Tributary Mode of Production. This chain of authority, with its interlocking system of grants and services, depressed a considerable part of the populace into serfdom and pushed technically 'free' elements of the populace into powerlessness. And this was a source of great discomfort among the tribes. The disgruntled elements of the society undertook to revolting, particularly the Apiru, whose role is ambiguous, in that they could be recruited by some city-states or factions within to fight⁴⁸ as mercenaries although they were revolting against city-state system.

⁴⁷ Cf. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh*, pp. 323-27, especially, p. 325; Gottwald, 'Were the Early Israelites Pastoral Nomads?', pp. 251-255; Gottwald, 'Domain Assumptions and Societal Models in the Study of Premonarchic Israel', *VTSup Edinburgh Congress Volume*, (1975), pp. 89-100, (93-94); Gottwald, "Early Israel and 'The Asiatic Mode of Production' in Canaan," *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers*. Montana: Scholars Press, 1976, pp. 145-154; Gottwald, 'Social Class as an Analytic and Hermeneutical Category in Biblical Studies', *JBL* 112 (1993), pp. 3-22, (7).

⁴⁸ Cf. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh*, pp. 394-397.

Apiru/Habiru Contribution to the Peasant Revolution

According to Gottwald, although the ordinary people of Canaan including the Apiru felt the increasingly steady convergence of consciousness on the desirability and possibility of weakening the Egyptian imperial grip, they however do not show a corresponding convergence of consciousness on the desirability and possibility of reorganising their socio-economic and political existence on non feudal lines, so as to replace the status-quo. The resistance during the rest of the Amarna era, from about 2000 to 1200 BCE, did not reach the point of common intention toward overthrowing the socio-economic and political set-up of the city-states. They were in real terms isolated hence orchestrated uncoordinated resistance tactics to the prevailing scenario. Also, from the numerous texts available, the most distinguishing generic trait of the Apiru turns out to be socio-political rather than ethnic or economic, although there are economic features that follow systematically from the dominant socio-political factors. The term Apiru then had several connotations ranging from, robber, fugitive, refugee, rebels, who prey upon and threaten the dominant order, since they were specialised in guerrilla-like tactics. In simple, the term was pejorative, implying one or an outlaw group perceived as threatening a person or the existing socio-political order.⁴⁹ Thus, Apiru cannot be classified as a homogeneous ethnic group in one location. They were scattered all over the ancient Near East.

With the waning Egyptian imperial hold on Canaanite city-states around 1310 B.C, the Apiru groups were afforded an opportunity to organise a revolution to unshackle the rest of the population from the exploitative city-state socio-economic system. While there is no concrete evidence suggesting the Apiru-peasant cooperation, Gottwald thinks that we may not be totally wrong to conjecture about the possibility of these Apiru bands providing nuclei for an anti-feudal social order in those regions of Palestine where Egyptian and city-state power had receded in the post-Amarna era. The Bible seems to confirm this assumption. The composition of the group that followed David (1 Sam 22:1) and other rebel leaders show how easy it was to gather discontented people in Canaan,⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Cf. Gottwald, 'Were the Early Israelites Pastoral Nomads?', pp. 247-250; Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh*, pp. 398-406.

⁵⁰ Cf. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh*, p. 407.

thereby suggesting the possibility of Habiru/Apiru-peasant collaboration, in the struggle against Canaanite city-state exploitation.

It is easy to explain the relationship between the Apiru groups and the peasant populations of Canaan when we understand the manner in which the peasants responded to demands by the city-states. Contrary to the previously held idea of complete withdrawal from the society of all the oppressed groups, according to Gottwald, to escape taxation in kind and curve, peasants would rebel; remaining in place if possible, thus just dodging the system and fleeing if necessary. To make up for the loss of human and natural resources, the city-states would have to increase the burden they placed upon those who remained under their control or those caught-up. On the other hand, this in turn would increase the flow of fugitives, joining the rebels in the inaccessible places. An enlarged flow of newcomers to the existing Apiru bands would swell to a point where the assimilation of newcomers was no longer possible. New outlaw communities would begin to form, composed of nuclei of refugees from the same city or village. Organisationally, these new groups would be relying on their own resourcefulness. However, Apiru groups of longer standing provided them with counsel and adaptive models of social, military and economic organisation.⁵¹

It must be emphasised that by this time, all these Apiru/Habiru groups were united in their anti-feudalism stance but were not well organised with a clear agenda on how to decisively deal with feudalism. Only with early Israel did the diffuse anti-feudal sentiment of Canaan become a highly charged cultural, socio-economic, and military-political revolution. That is, according to Gottwald, egalitarian social revolutionary consciousness as distinct from ruling-class appropriation of aspects of egalitarian sentiment first received full literate expression in the whole ancient Near East with early Israel. That in itself is of great significance, as the underclasses of Canaan who joined in early Israel decided that writing was too valuable a tool to be left to the ruling class. Without any further elaboration, Gottwald suggests that they seized upon the alphabetic script as a simple instrument of expression that could serve an egalitarian community instead of aiding ruling elite to control and ma-

⁵¹ Cf. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh*, p. 407; Gottwald, 'The Hypothesis of the Revolutionary Origins of Ancient Israel: A Response to Hauser and Thompson', p. 46.

nipulate the populace.⁵² This may be the origin of protest prophetic voices against exploitation that find expression in some sections of the Bible. These voices include, the manumission laws.

The Aim of the Habiru-Peasant Revolt

The main aim of the Habiru-peasant revolt can only be gotten from understanding their socio-economic and political status. Regarding the socio-economic class of the 'founders' of Israel, it is more probable that they were a loose assemblage of people, holding in common only the fact that they were lower classes oppressed by the Egyptian crown. These were only gradually welded together in the cult of Yahweh in the desert on the way to Canaan.⁵³ Such an interpretation is hinted at by comments in the Exodus traditions that 'a mixed multitude also went up with them' (Exod. 12:38) when Israel set out from Raamses to Succoth, and that 'the riffraff that was among them' (Num 11:4) agitated against Moses because of the lack of food.

While the traditions try to distinguish between the main body of Israelites-the Habiru and the mixed followers, it is clear that these were one group composed of unrelated people. The attempt to separate them is an editorial one, in order to fit the perspective of the rulers later. What concretises our assumption is that despite the attempt by historians to suppress the diversity these solid allusions to heterogeneity survived as authentic memories of the conglomerate origins of those who banded together in flight from Egypt. It is clear that they did not flee as a pre-existent community but as those whose intolerable conditions of oppression drove them in the direction of a community yet-to-be.⁵⁴ It is these narratives that tell us that the revolution was carried out by the common people and the few leaders, whose common experience of oppression (and nothing else) influenced their thinking. As such, the aim of such people would naturally be to seek an alternative socio-economic and political system from the previous oppressive system. Hence, it was

⁵² Cf. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh*, p. 409.

⁵³ Cf. Gottwald, 'Were the Early Israelites Pastoral Nomads?', p.252; Gottwald, 'Domain Assumptions and Societal Models', pp. 93-94; Cf. Mendenhall, 'The Hebrew Conquest of Palestine', p. 74; Mendenhall, *The Tenth Generation*, pp. 23-25.

⁵⁴ Cf. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh*, pp. 455-56; Hauser, 'Israel's Conquest of Palestine', p.5.

upon their arrival in Canaan that by their appeal to Yahweh as a liberator god, they managed to ignite the fires of the Apiru-peasant revolution against oppression. This oppression was similar to the one they had escaped from in Egypt.

From this characterisation of the struggle in Canaan, the social reality is that the basic division, tension and the crucial conflict of interests in the ancient Near Eastern society during Israel's appearance was between the city and the countryside. The 'city' and the 'countryside' are characterised as antithetical.⁵⁵ Whereas the city stood for oppression and exploitation, the countryside stood for salvation and liberation. While the city represented hierarchy, the countryside represented the desirable situation of egalitarianism. Also, the city for them represented injustice, but the countryside represented fairness. In short, whereas the city represented all that was evil and everything that needed to be demolished, the countryside stood for all the values that needed to be emulated and resorted to as the only viable system of life. This is the basis for the peasant agitation for the return to the traditional set-up of tribalisation, where the socio-economic and political spheres are administered by the tribes. This is precisely the reason why early Israel began to actively appropriate religion, Yahwism as an instrument to achieve this goal.

Role of Yahwism in the Habiru-Peasant Revolt

Clear consciousness resulting in concerted efforts towards fundamentally altering the socio-economic and political system of the Canaanite city-states is noticeable from 1350-1250 or 1225 BC. And these efforts are intimately related to the rise and contribution of Yahwism towards the agenda of radical and revolutionary changes in all spheres. From this era, early Israel began to champion fundamental changes. It challenged Egyptian imperialism; it rejected Philistine threats and radically confronted Canaanite city-state feudalism. The organisers of the revolution linked up the majority of the exploited peoples across the boundaries of the old city-state divisions into one broad movement agitating for revolutionary change. This led Gottwald to argue that, from now on we begin to observe, precisely the kind of embracing unitary culture, a common cult and religion of Yahwism, and social order in early Israel that was

⁵⁵ Cf. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh*, p. 461

lacking as a bond or framework for Apiru, peasants, and pastoral nomads a century or more earlier.⁵⁶

The role of Yahwism in galvanising the diverse and variegated oppressed classes and in the process of reorganisation and transformation of the whole socio-economic and political structure should not to be underestimated. It was the responsibility of Yahwist functionaries to provide the ideological and intellectual impetus to challenge the state of affairs as well as pointing the peasants to the intentions and goals of the revolution. In other words, Yahwism became the rallying point of most of the oppressed peasants and all the other vulnerable groups, including the Apiru. With this background, it is not far from truth to regard the religious cult and ideology of Yahwism as potent organisational and symbolic forces in establishing and reinforcing the social, economic, political and military arrangements normative for the new community. Equally, the Levitical priesthood, the founders of Yahwism, can be designated as the intellectual and organisational cadre of leadership which cuts across and penetrates the several autonomous social segments, binding them together for actions based on common sentiment.⁵⁷ Their common enemy as I have alluded to above, was the exploitative feudalism of the Canaanite city-states.

From the way early Israel was constituted, it is apparent that it was totally against feudalism. The society which it established radically transformed the status-quo. The new society extended its 'outlaw' system (as observed by the city-state rulers) over an entire region and an entire oppressed people, so that 'outlawry' became 'inlawry' as the basis of a new social order characterised by egalitarianism. The early Israelite society made it of particular importance to reintroduce tribalisation that the city-state system had summarily rejected as primitive. Therefore, Israel became an entirely counter-society; religiously, socially, economically, politically and militarily autonomous.⁵⁸

This is what Zimbabwe has failed to do at independence in 1980, which ushered in the liberation movements into power. Contrary to the war-

⁵⁶ Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh*, pp. 489-90.

⁵⁷ Cf. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh*, p. 490; Gottwald, 'The Hypothesis of the Revolutionary Origins of Ancient Israel: A Response to Hauser and Thompson', see, pp. 43-46.

⁵⁸ Cf. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh*, p. 490; Gottwald, 'The Hypothesis of the Revolutionary Origins of Ancient Israel: A Response to Hauser and Thompson', p.46.

time promises, the language, the religion and the culture that led the struggle were never given prominence in the new Zimbabwe; the political and socio-economic worldview of the underclasses was not prioritised; the racist system of housing was never disturbed. This is generally the situation across Africa. Today, colonial languages are not only the official languages of the people of Africa, they are also the *lingua franca*. In Africa, we have today, African scholars, historians, journalists, religious leaders and the like who are proud to be identified as “Francophone” or “Anglophone”. It is not an overstatement to argue that most of the people in Africa are proud to be identified with their colonial masters than they are to be associated with their heroes of the liberation. Everything that is associated with the colonial era is regarded as modern and civilised while everything associated with independence is characterised as primitive.

Be that as it may, so far, it is clear that the majority that made up early Israel were not foreign at all, but disgruntled indigenous Canaanite groups. Although it is not clearly attested or hinted in the ancient Israelite history, it appears, some of the Apiru, but certainly not all of the descendants of the Palestinian Amarna era Apiru entered into early Israel. And at the same time, it must be categorically stated that some, but surely not all of early Israel was composed of former Apiru. Important to take note of is that upon settlement, the later full formation of early Israel was an enlarged version of essentially the same process of eclectic social composition, this time in reaction to Canaanite feudalism and the remnants of Egyptian imperialism in Canaan. According to Gottwald, the rise of early Israel could be understood as a greatly expanded version of the Apiru movement. Thus, we can understand Israel as a continuity in which not merely a few people but the entire populace has become Apiru.⁵⁹

The Origins of Yahweh, the God of the Oppressed

One of the most vexing questions regards the origin of Yahwism in the history of early Israel. When was Yahweh the god of Israel? Was Yahweh always the god of Israel? If so, why did the biblical authors choose to prioritise the name of another god, El to derive the name of the nation whose patron was Yahweh? According to Gottwald, given the over-

⁵⁹ Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh*, p. 491.

whelming importance of Yahweh as the proper name of Israel's god, one would have expected the authors of the biblical accounts of Israel to prioritise the divine name Yahweh and integrated it probably in the short form 'Yah', to have it in the people's name, so that we have for instance, 'Israyah'.⁶⁰ On the contrary, it is the common generic divine name, 'El' that takes prominence hence we have *Israel*. How did this come into being? What could be the explanation for this anomaly?

One of the plausible explanations proffered is at least to seek to identify proto-Israel origins of the name Yahweh. From this perspective, Israel must have been a pre-Yahwistic entity which was larger than any one of the tribes that eventually entered Yahwistic Israel. This is a viable possibility given that there is not even the slightest hint in biblical tradition that Israel was ever the name of a single tribal entity. According to Gottwald, it is therefore a reasonable conjecture that the separate Apiru bands, grown more numerous and powerful in the highlands and contributing to the breaking away peasant settlements from the city-states, made efforts at joining together in an 'El'-worshipping association (probably near Shechem). The deity of this proto Israelite association was apparently *El Elohe Israel*, e.i., 'El the God of Israel' (Gen 33:20). Later (with the coming of the Levites with the Egyptian team of Israelites) after the proper name Yahweh became the primary designation for deity in Israel, 'Yahweh' replaced 'El' in the formulary 'Yahweh/El, the God of Israel', (Exo 5:1; 32:27; Josh 8:30; 9:18-19; 24:1, 23; Judg 5:3,5).⁶¹

For early Israel, the deity El was already associated with Canaanite underclasses who had earlier employed it. In a way, Israel adopted it instead of Yahweh because it was the single comprehensive term available with adequate historical associations to communicate the intent of Yahwistic Israel to be an egalitarian social order. It is assumed that such a union, probably falling within the period 1325-1250 B.C., expressed the growing consciousness of the antifeudal movement as a powerful social movement in its own right, able to cooperate in the search for new forms of liberated social organisation and a cult appropriate to such aims.⁶² This basic strategy was well executed by the oppressed masses of Ca-

⁶⁰ Cf. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh*, p. 494.

⁶¹ Cf. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh*, p. 494; Gottwald, 'The Hypothesis of the Revolutionary Origins of Ancient Israel: A Response to Hauser and Thompson', see, p.45.

⁶² Cf. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh*, p. 495.

naanite city-states such that important lessons are gotten for the analysis of the present contemporary struggles, which are similar to the ones the masses of Canaan were exposed to.

In Canaan, it was important that the peasants and all the several segmented social units embraced a common religious identity through a cult of the deity El, for the sole reason that the fighting forces to be effective agents of change in their quest for creating an egalitarian society had to have a common historical narrative, that means blending their various histories together into one running narrative claiming common ancestry and one common ideological foundation. Although, allegiance to the common cult probably allowed simultaneously for collateral cults connected with groups, natural and social functions, and places of the sort reflected in the patriarchal accounts, the devotion to El was sufficiently strong that the new deity of Israel, Yahweh retained El(ohim) as an alternate name. Therefore, while, the several cooperating social units retained their distinctive names, they were broadly unified under one name, Israel.⁶³

Yahweh's Gender and Engagement in Gender Struggles of Early Israel

In order to engage Yahweh in the liberation struggles of the oppressed across the globe, which in most societies women constitute the majority, liberation theologians are manifesting a great interest at establishing Yahweh's gender. This is especially important to establish in our study considering that the majority of domestic workers in Zimbabwe are women. Be that as it may, archaeology has been of great help in shedding light on the gender of Yahweh. It has revealed that while Yahweh is almost always depicted as male, iconography found at excavated sites in Israel do not have any evidence of a male deity. On the contrary, there is a high occurrence of goddesses iconography in the form of crude statuettes and amulets apparently worn by women, as if to suggest that the deity was feminine. And this has been interpreted by feminist scholars, contrary to generally held views of the 'maleness' of Yahweh as concrete evidence of the femininity of Yahweh.

⁶³ Cf. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh*, p. 495.

However, we must be warned against such hast conclusions. For, while this sort of popular magic was probably discouraged by official Yahwism, it was perhaps never viewed as a serious infringement of the iconic prohibition since there was no danger of confusing a goddess with Israel's deity, Yahweh who is normally conceived in male imagery. For instance, the pronoun references to Yahweh and the verbs of which Yahweh is subject are masculine throughout the traditions. Moreover, the dominant metaphors and similes for deity are male societal roles.⁶⁴

But this alone does not necessarily constitute sufficient grounds to confirm that Yahweh was indeed male. Yahweh was largely not conceived of in terms of human biological gender dimensions. Gottwald is right to argue that,

(when) Israel reflected on the gender of the deity it was not in sexual-biological categories but rather in terms of the indivisibility and completeness of the deity. Yahweh has no consort and does not sire Israelite 'sons' and 'daughters' but creates a people by adoption. If we try to state the indivisibility and completeness of Israel's deity in sexual terms, we might more nearly describe Yahweh as hermaphrodite than as either male or female.⁶⁵

In other words, the reality is that although Yahweh was addressed in male gender vocabulary, Yahweh was genderless and this was purposefully to make sure Yahweh fights for all the oppressed; either on socio-economic class or gender lines. Nevertheless, Yahweh's asexuality was apparently not invoked to challenge or to shatter male dominance in the Israelite society as a whole, in the same way that class dominance was challenged and shattered by Yahweh's liberating action. On the other hand, the overthrow of class domination in early Israel had the indirect effect of improving the status of women relative to their status in Canaanite city-state society, but there was obviously no frontal assault in Israel on several forms of feminine subordination.⁶⁶ This is a very important point to consider in this study, for a similar scenario developed in Zimbabwe at independence. Of course, the overthrow of white domination brought about several measures to emancipate African women, but the measures did not go far enough to restore the dignity they en-

⁶⁴ Cf. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh*, p. 684.

⁶⁵ Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh*, p. 685.

⁶⁶ Cf. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh*, p. 685.

joyed in the pre-colonial times. In other words, independence did not completely eradicate female subordination to men. This is cause for the struggle to continue until victory is achieved.

Major Highlights of the Peasant Revolt Model

So far, the logical conclusions from the long and winding discussion on the emergence of Israel could be summed up as: First, whatever their actual numbers, the Exodus proto-Israelites, who had broken away from the grip of the Egyptian empire and survived a trek through the desert, became a powerful catalyst in energizing and guiding the broad coalition of the underclass Canaanites. The Exodus-Levitical infusion of energy and leadership emboldened the coalition of the underclasses to overcome the defeat it seems to have suffered somewhat earlier.⁶⁷

Second, the Exodus-Levites introduced the cult of Yahweh to the oppressed masses of Canaanite early Israel, not strictly as a substitute for El, but as a deity who could absorb valued El attributes and functions as aspects of his own comprehensive adequacy for meeting coalition needs, particularly for symbolising, defining, and defending the locus of sovereignty within a diffuse egalitarian community. The coalition of the underclasses obviously needed a god who identifies with their socio-economic and political history that is one who is not subjected to the whims of the socially, economically and politically powerful. Although El had started as a pro-poor and underclasses, with time he was hijacked by the powerful members of the society to legitimise their power. And one struggle that the underclasses engaged in is their resistance against depicting god as male who takes sides with the oppressive system. Anything that revolutionarily challenged and advocated for overturning the status quo was bound to be welcome. As Gottwald argues,

the impetus for Canaanite underclasses to turn to a totally, or largely, strange deity was apparently the result of factors both negative and positive. Negatively, there was disappointment and frustration with El as a deity for validating an antifeudal social order, inasmuch as El had come to be so largely appropriated as the high father god of the very feudal city-states that Israel was challenging head-on. Positively, there was the overwhelming, demonstrated, military and cultic-ideological appeal of the Levites in convincing the coalition that Yahweh, who had defeated Egypt on its home

⁶⁷ Cf. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh*, p. 496.

ground, could defend an enlarged anti-imperial and antifeudal order in Canaan.⁶⁸

Third, regarding the connection between early Israel and Apiru/Habiru groups, it could be claimed with certainty that in sum Israel was both continuous with the earlier Apiru and at the same time discontinuous. Continuous in the sense that Canaanite highland Apiru probably formed the greater part of Elohistic Israel which in turn entered Yahwistic Israel, contributing wealth of experience in social struggle against the city-states of Canaan.⁶⁹

Fourth, contrary to the Conquest and infiltration models of settlement whereby all the Canaanites are depicted as enemies of Israel, according to the Peasant Revolt Model, the enemies of Israel were particular persons in various socio-economic and political groupings who either profited from the hierarchic system as rulers or those who collaborated with the hierarchy such as agents of the system at various levels and in various sectors of its operation. Therefore, when Israelite narratives refer to 'Canaan/Canaanite(s)' to designate those enemies, it was not inclusive of the generality of the population of Canaan but it referred to precise socio-economic and political groupings and functionaries within the hierarchic system. The individuals include, Canaanite kings, armies, merchants, landowners and overseers, city-state officials and Canaanite gods and cults and their priestly functionaries. Thus, from this perspective, 'Canaanite(s) as an epithet for Israel's enemy was not a term for an entire region and an entire population, nor was it a term for a particular ethnic group distinguishable from an Israelite ethnic group, nor was it a term for a body of language speakers distinguishable from the language speakers of Israel,⁷⁰ as is particularly suggested in the Bible.

Fifth, in light of the above discussion, it should be understood that exodus from Egypt to Israel was largely figurative and not actually describing a wholly historical episode as is suggested in the Bible. Reference to 'deliverance from Egypt' typified all sorts of 'escapes' from Canaanite, Egyptian, Philistine and Transjordanian political-military domination. Consequently, 'conquest of the Land,' under the rubric of united Israel directed by Joshua, typified the way in which the strivings for auto-

⁶⁸ Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh*, p. 496.

⁶⁹ Cf. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh*, p. 497.

⁷⁰ Cf. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh*, p. 586.

mous socio-economic existence among several converging proto-Israelite social sectors were realised by their unification as segments in an inter-tribal social system.⁷¹ Thus, pre-monarchic Israel had actually managed to retribalised and practiced egalitarianism.

Be that as it may, the contention that early Israel returned to 'retribalisation', which system brought back traditional 'egalitarianism' as forcefully advocated by especially Gottwald is disputed not only by Mendenhall, the proponent of the revolt model, but also by a whole lot of other scholars.⁷² For them, Israel is believed to have engineered significant radical changes to the existing structures, but did not really return to the tribalisation of the pre-city-states arrangement. That there was a time when Israel did not have hierarchical socio-economic structures is disputed.

Retribalised Pre-Monarchic Israel

Despite doubts regarding whether Israel managed to really retribalise in the fashion in which Gottwald argues, it is almost unanimous and conclusive that the pre-monarchic and early monarchic Israel social organisation, like that in Mesopotamia and elsewhere in the ancient Near East, was based on the kinship or lineage system.⁷³ Comparatively, it seems every society passed through this stage of social development as African societies also have been organised along the same system,⁷⁴ before the establishment of the state. As in the pre-feudalist era, the lineage system or tribal system was both an economic and political organisation.⁷⁵ Thus, during the Pre-monarchic period, Israelite tribes, like their ancient Near

⁷¹ Cf. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh*, p. 698.

⁷² Cf. Mendenhall, 'Ancient Israel's Hyphenated History', pp. 91-102; Cf. also, M. L. Chaney, 'Ancient Palestinian Peasant Movements and the Formation of Premonarchic Israel', in D. N. Freedman, and D.F. Graf, (eds.), *Palestine in Transition: The Emergence of Ancient Israel*. SWBAS 2. Sheffield: Almond Press, 1983, pp. 39-90; Chaney, 'Systemic Study of the Israelite Monarchy', *Semeia* 37, 1986, pp. 53-76; R. Boling, *The Early Biblical Community in Transjordan*. SWBAS 6. Sheffield: Almond Press, 1988, who have provided valuable insights which have proven to be necessary refinements to the 'revolt model'.

⁷³ Cf. Gottwald, 'Domain Assumptions and Societal Models', pp. 93-99.

⁷⁴ Cf. A. Malamat, 'Tribal Societies: Biblical Genealogies and African Lineage Systems', *Archives europeenes de sociologie* 14, (1973), pp. 126-36.

⁷⁵ F. I. Andersen, 'Israelite Kinship Terminology and Social Structure', *BT* 20 (1969), pp. 29-39; C. H. J. de Geus, *The Tribes of Israel: An Investigation into Some of the Presuppositions of Martin Noth's Amphictyony Hypothesis*. SSN 18. Assen, 1976; Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh*. pp. 293-337.

Eastern counterparts, were responsible for the protection of the social and territorial rights of the local inhabitants. Contrary to the city-state arrangement, after retribalisation in Israel, the societies were run by a council of elders who would sit to deliberate on nearly every issue of concern to the wellbeing of the tribe. For instance, it is suggested that the Sumerian assembly of free adults is similar to the Israelite 'assembly' or 'council' of elders which were collective bodies of self-government in pre-monarchic Israel, responsible for administration of the society (Exod. 12:3, 21; Num. 8:7; 14:1-4; 31:26, 28, 43; Josh. 22:13).⁷⁶

According to Gottwald, although some values of the retribalisation and egalitarian programme remained intact, the whole retribalisation agenda was short lived due to several factors, among them, the attitude of the 'converts' to early Israel. These converts are the previous beneficiaries of the city-state system.⁷⁷ As it turned out, their 'conversion' was not genuine, it was tactical. It was meant to protect their class interests in the face of inevitable defeat. Once inside, their mentality corrupted the early Israelite elite class. Their influence is most noticeable in the advent of the monarchy that concentrated all power in the hands of the elite few who as previously, began to manipulate religion, Yahwism for their benefit rather than for the benefit of the masses.

The Rise of Monarchic Israel: 'A return to Egypt'

There is almost consensus among scholars that Israel developed into a national state from around 1000 BCE with the reign of David, whose military actions repelled the threat of the imperial Philistines in the highlands.⁷⁸ Most of these scholars submit that during the days of Saul one cannot talk of Israelite kingship. In fact, for many, Saul was in all

⁷⁶ Cf. Malamat, 'Kingship and Council in Israel and Sumer: A Parallel', *JNES* 22 (1963), pp. 247-51; Milgrom, 'The Priestly Terminology and the Political and Social Structure of Pre-Monarchic Israel', *JQR* 69 (1983), pp. 65-81; Jacob Milgrom, *Studies in Cultic Theology and Terminology*. SJLA 36. Leiden: Brill, 1983, pp. 1,2, 11-17.

⁷⁷ Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh*, p. 698.

⁷⁸ Cf. F. S. Frick, *The Formation of the State of Ancient Israel*. SWBAS 4. Sheffield: Almond Press, 1985, pp. 51-97; C. Hauer, 'From Alt to Anthropology: The Rise of the Israelite State', *JSOT* 36, (1986), pp. 3-15; J.W. Rogerson, 'Was Early Israel a Segmentary Society?' *JSOT* 36 (1986), pp. 17-26; J. Flanagan, 'Chiefs in Israel', *JSOT* 20 (1981), pp. 47-73; Gottwald, 'The Hypothesis of the Revolutionary Origins of Ancient Israel: A Response to Hauser and Thompson', p. 46.

respects not actually a king, but rather a chief or just a leader of the intertribal army. Thus, scholars suggest that Israel went through an intermediate stage of development; from 'chiefdom' under the leadership of Saul and David before it became a national state in the latter part of the reign of David.⁷⁹ From this perspective, it should be stressed that scholars believe that the Israelites had never dreamt of themselves having a monarch had it not been political threat posed by the Philistines (1 Sam 8: 5) in the 11th century. From the time of the peasant revolt, the Israelites considered themselves unique in that they were led by Yahweh. This background is the reason why the monarchy was such a detestable institution as captured in the traditions of Israel, the fable of Jotham, for example (Judges 9:8-15). However there are some suggestions to the effect that the formation of the national state of Israel was not only influenced by Philistine threat. Even without the Philistine threat early Israel was going to become a nation state in response to environmental and socio-economic factors.⁸⁰ In other words, environmental and socio-economic factors forced Israel to develop into a nation state. Be that as it may, the formation of State for the underclasses was synonymous to 'a return to Egypt', for it brought with it enormous religious, cultural, political and socio-economic burdens and tensions.

Negative Effects of the Monarchy to Yahwism

While the establishment of the monarchy was a welcome political development as it improved the security of the lives of the people, it had an equal share of its problems. It created a dilemma in the tribal society. There was for the common man double allegiance. Politically, as well as socially and culturally, there was tension between various key institutions of Israel. For instance, while the 'popular' secular assemblies, as well as related sacral institutions, continued to exert political and constitutional pressure upon the king' (cf. 1 Sam 8:1-22; 10:25; 1 Kings 12:1-15;

⁷⁹ Cf. Bright, *A History of Israel*, p. 185; Soggin, *A History of Israel*, p. 49; Gottwald, 'Domain Assumptions and Societal Models', p. 95.

⁸⁰ Cf. Finkelstein, 'The Emergence of the Monarchy in Israel: Environmental and Socio-Economic Aspects', *JSOT* 44 (1989), pp. 43-74; Callender, Jr. 'Servants of God(s) and Servants of Kings', pp. 75-77; Chirichigno, *Debt-Slavery in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, p. 109; Frick, *The Formation of the State of Ancient Israel*, pp. 51-97; C. Hauer, 'From Alt to Anthropology: The Rise of the Israelite State', *JSOT* 36, (1986), pp. 3-15; Coote and Whitelam, *The Emergence of Early Israel*, pp. 164-6.

2 Kings 23:1-3), in their quest to protect the tribal and egalitarian structure that defined Israel as unique from the rest of the societies around them, kingship on the contrary wanted to speedily become like other nations, a phenomenon widely interpreted as 'a return to Egypt' (1 Sam 8:11-17).⁸¹

Religiously, the establishment of the monarchy negatively affected Yahwism. Instead of preserving their integrity as representatives of the common people, we begin to witness the unprecedented phenomenon in Israel whereby some priests and prophets of Yahweh began to serve the interests of the monarch, as was the practice in the surrounding nations. In fact, some of the prophets and priests became almost permanent members of the court and chances are high that they were basically paid royal officials.⁸² Gad was so close to David that he is described as David's personal seer (1 Chr. 21:9), while prophet Nathan is believed to have been David's own son (1 Chr. 3:5).⁸³ Although it is difficult to confirm or deny the sonship of prophet Nathan to David, his crafting of the unprecedented Royal Davidic Theology/Ideology that contrary to the traditional practice of tribal rotation of leadership confined Israelite kingship to the house of David (2 Sam 7:1-12) points to him as an insider or a close associate of the house of David. Equally, his involvement in the unceremonious palace coup, in which Solomon and his mother Bathsheba snatched the throne from Adonijah, the rightful heir to David's throne (1 Kgs 1),⁸⁴ shows us that prophets could easily be corrupted to serve the interests of the elite, wrong doers.

In other words, the role of prophet Nathan in the palace coup speaks volumes about the possibility of manipulation of the majority of the

⁸¹ Cf. Chirichigno, *Debt-Slavery in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, p.111; Cf. N.E. Andreasen, 'The Role of the Queen Mother in Israelite Society', *CBQ* 45 (1983), pp. 179-194; Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh*, p. 143; H. Tadmor, 'The People' and the Kingship in Ancient Israel: The Role of the Political Institutions in the Biblical Period', *JWH* 11 (1968), pp. 46-68; S. Talmon, 'Kingship and the Ideology of the State', in *King, Cult and Calendar in Ancient Israel: Collected Studies*. Jerusalem: Magnes, 1986, pp. 21-25.

⁸² Cf. J.R. Coggins, *Introducing the Old Testament*. London: Oxford University Press, 1990, p. 69.

⁸³ Cf. M. Black and H.H. Rowley (eds.), *Peake's Commentary on the Bible*. New York: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1962, p. 141.

⁸⁴ Cf. Keith Bodner, 'Nathan: Prophet, Politician and Novelist?', *JSOT* 95 (2001), pp. 43-54; John. Van Setters, *In Search of History: Historiography in the Ancient World and the Origins of Biblical History*. London: Yale University Press, 1983, p. 288.

court prophets to sing the song of the powerful. According to J. R. Coggins prophets who operate from the court circles, are sociologically speaking labelled 'central prophets'. These could be regarded as prop; individuals who support and legitimate the norms and values of the society and expressing that support in terms of divine approval for the actions of the community and their leaders rather than critiquing them. But a critique of the society especially of the leadership can be well executed by the 'peripheral prophets', those who are independent in that they operate from outside the structures of power.⁸⁵ Characteristically, prophets in the court spoke what the king wanted to hear, while those outside, spoke against the kings. And this division among religious leaders; priests and prophets continued to define Israel's religious landscape for the rest of her history and in some cases resulted in nasty confrontations and clashes: Elijah against the 450 prophets of Jezebel, king Ahab's wife, (1 kgs 18:20ff); prophet Micaiah against prophet Zedekiah and his group of 400 prophets, (1 kgs 22:1ff) and the infamous priest Amaziah against prophet Amos, (Amos 7:10-14).

The Monarchy as Replica of Egyptian Slavery

Socio-economically, rather than easing the suffering of the poor and peasants, the monarchy especially during the later part of the time of David and that of Solomon, proved to be a curse and not a blessing. The Israelite society had closely resembled the Mesopotamian and Canaanite city-states.⁸⁶ In short, Israel had successfully 'returned to Egypt', something that the society had all along impressed upon the leaders to avoid (Deut 17:14-20). For, 'with the introduction of social classes at the emergence of the monarchy, Israel entered into the very Tributary Mode of Production it had struggled free from at its inception and had resisted for decades'.⁸⁷ The gains of the Exodus from the clutches of the Canaan-

⁸⁵ Cf. Coggins, *Introducing the Old Testament*, p. 72.

⁸⁶ Cf. Chirichigno, *Debt-Slavery in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, p. 113; Cf. Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions*. London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1961; Hauer, 'From Alt to Anthropology', p. 6; Hauer, 'The Economics of National Security in Solomonic Israel', *JSOT* 18, (1980), pp. 63-73; Hauer, 'David and the Levites', *JSOT* 23 (1982), pp. 33-54.

⁸⁷ Cf. Gottwald, 'Social Class as an Analytic and Hermeneutical Category in Biblical Studies', pp. 7-8; Gottwald, 'A Hypothesis about Social Class in Monarchic Israel in the Light of

ite city-states were in no time eroded and never fully realised. Almost the same social structures that characterised the Canaanite city-states were beginning to be realised and the gap between the haves and have-nots widening as each day passed.

With the rise of the monarchy, therefore, it is argued that there was a 'resurgence' of socio-economic stratification in Israel. However, there are scholars who think that while the rigid social structures developed with centralisation of government at the beginning of the monarchy, during the pre-monarchic era, there is some evidence of a socio-economically structured society. This suggestion usually is meant to imply that pre-monarchic Israel was not retribalised into an egalitarian society as Gottwald claims. R. B. Coote and K. W. Whitelam, for example, are of the opinion that social stratification was most likely already an ongoing process due to economic diversification, a process that allowed some to take advantage of their relative position to trade routes.⁸⁸ The clearest example of a socio-economic stratified community at Tel Masos supports a ranked society during the pre-monarchic Israel.⁸⁹ From this standpoint, it is possible that the developing rich landowners, who likely held some authoritative position in their communities, retained and improved their economic position during the Monarchic period. However, as I have noted earlier, during the early monarchic period there was an active suppression of social stratification by both the secular and sacral league authorities, who continued to exert pressure on the king throughout the period.⁹⁰ In that way, socio-economic strata were more influenced by nature and environment rather than skewed economic policies; a scenario well attested during the monarchy.

Contemporary Studies of Social Class and Social Stratification' in Gottwald, (ed.), *The Hebrew Bible in its Social World and in Ours*. Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1993, pp. 139-64.

⁸⁸ Cf. R. B. Coote and K. W. Whitelam, *The Emergence of Early Israel in Historical Perspective*. SWBAS, 5; Sheffield: Almond Press, 1987, pp. 154-159.

⁸⁹ Cf. Frick, *The Formation of the State of Ancient Israel*, pp. 159-169.

⁹⁰ Cf. B. Halpern, *The Constitution of the Monarchy in Israel*. HSM 25. Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981, pp. 246-49; Coote and Whitelam, *The Emergence of Early Israel*, pp. 154-159; Cf. Chirichigno, *Debt-Slavery in Israel and the Ancient Near East*. p.139.

Burdens of Forced Labour and Taxes

It is well known that both David and Solomon acquired land and other properties. What is not clearly attested is what kind of labour was used to maintain these various Crown properties. Scholars suggest four possible sources of labour; conscripts/slaves, tenants who rent royal land, semi-free citizens; and clients who are given royal land in exchange for service. Some if not all of these measures strained the populace to the limits and increased poverty among the majority. J. Dearman suggests that agricultural workers who worked the palace properties were conscripted Israelite labour, as is mentioned in 1 Sam 8:12, where Samuel tells the people that the future king will appoint people to plough and reap his harvest, and make war materials such as weapons and equipment for his chariots.⁹¹ Also, according to 1 Kgs 5:13-15 narrative, Solomon conscripted 30,000 Israelites to work in the Lebanon in order to help with the building of the Temple of Jerusalem.⁹² These Israelite conscripts were taken away from their farms and their families one month in every three to hew cedars in Lebanon,⁹³ and this had adverse effects on the family agricultural economic productivity. The conscripted family men would not get time to work on their fields which exposed the families to starvation and eventual self-sale into debt-slavery.

Further problems of the monarchy particularly to the peasants regarded the issue of taxation. It became clear with the establishment of an unfriendly and almost impoverishing taxation regime that the monarchy was running into collision course with the people. This justifies W.H. Heaton's argument that 'even those Israelites who were not sufficiently politically minded so as to resent the growth of a highly centralised form of government soon began to resent the development when they found that they had to help pay for it'.⁹⁴ The monarchy became so expensive to the underclasses that they began to question its validity. In order to un-

⁹¹ Cf. J. A. Dearman, *Property Rights in the Eighth-Century Prophets: The Conflict and its Background*. SBLDS 106. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988.

⁹² Cf. Soggin, *A History of Israel*, p. 84; Bright, *A History of Israel*, p. 230; S. Herrmann, *A History of Israel in Old Testament Times*. London: SCM Press, (rev and enlarged edn.), 1981, p. 190; M. Noth, *Könige 1. Teilband*, BKAT, 9.1. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1968, pp. 92, 216-18.

⁹³ W. H. Heaton, *Everyday Life in the Old Testament Times*. London: B. T. Batsford Ltd, 1956, p. 165; Callender, Jr. 'Servants of God(s) and Servants of Kings', pp. 75-77.

⁹⁴ Heaton, *Everyday Life in the Old Testament Times*, p. 165.

derstand the disgruntlement among the ordinary people especially northerners, one needs to situate the taxes in context. For the purposes of taxation, Solomon divided the country into twelve administrative districts. In each district, he placed a Higher Civil Servant, whose duty was to supply the court with provisions for one month per year. Two of the Higher Civil Servants were Solomon's sons-in-law and were from Jerusalem and not local men.⁹⁵ Thus, nepotism also glaringly came into being with the rise of the monarchy.

In order to appreciate the resentment of the people against the monarchy we need to understand what it demanded on the peasants in all districts, who even under normal circumstances were struggling to make ends meet. According to 1 Kgs 4:22-23, the *daily* needs of the court included: thirty measures of fine flour, and sixty measures of meal; ten fat oxen, and twenty oxen out of the pastures, and an hundred sheep and goats. If these figures are to be trusted, each administrative district had to supply an annual average of roughly 5,000 bushels of flour, 10,000 bushels of meal, 900 oxen and 3,000 sheep. Since the population of a district has been estimated at less than 100,000 persons, it is not surprising that the burden of taxation led to the rebellion which followed Solomon's death (1 Kgs.12).⁹⁶ Israel of the monarchic era had in all respects become similar to other nations, contrary to the previous claims that they had been separated apart by Yahweh. Instead of amending their ways, Israelite kings continued on a downward path over the successive years of the Davidic dynasty.

There is debate however, regarding whether Solomon divided only the North into twelve districts or also in the South. The problem is complicated by 1 Kgs 4:7-19 that talks only about the division of 'Israel' into twelve districts without specifying if by 'Israel', the author also includes Judah. Hence some scholars suggest that only the north was subjected to tax and the corvée.⁹⁷ From that perspective, the secession of Israel, that is, the Northern kingdom from Judah at the death of Solomon is seen as a reaction to corvée that Rehoboam intended to keep and which was restricted to the North while the South was exempted (1 Kgs 12).⁹⁸ How-

⁹⁵ Cf. Heaton, *Everyday Life in the Old Testament Times*, p. 166.

⁹⁶ Cf. Heaton, *Everyday Life in the Old Testament Times*, p. 166.

⁹⁷ Cf. Soggin, *A History of Israel*, pp. 82-83; Herrmann, *A History of Israel in Old Testament Times*, pp. 177-78.

⁹⁸ Cf. Chirichigno, *Debt-Slavery in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, p.116.

ever, others believe that Solomon's corvée was collected from both the South and the North,⁹⁹ in that way 'Israel' in 1 kgs.4:7-19 relates also to Judah. The bottom line is: the tax regime was punitive for both ordinary Northerners and Southerners and a source of resentment against the monarchy.

The system of taxation did not die with the death of Solomon. It was a necessary strategy for the survival of the palace however burdensome it was for the ordinary citizen. Thus, Solomon's division of the country for taxation lasted as long as the monarchy existed. At least, there is direct evidence from the time of Amos, from the Samaritan Ostraca of an organised system of taxation in the Northern Kingdom. These small fragments of broken pottery, found in one of the storehouses of Jeroboam II's palace at Samaria, had evidently been used as a receipt for oil and wine.¹⁰⁰ There is also archaeological evidence from the Southern Kingdom which probably shows a similar system of taxation in operation during the two centuries before the Exile. The archaeological finds consist of a collection of 550 handles from storage jars, found at more than fourteen sites in Judah, bearing stamp impressions. Scholars have however found the interpretation of this material difficult, but there is weighty support for the view that the stamped jars were used for collecting taxes paid to the king in kind principally wine and oil.¹⁰¹ This evidence suggests that the burden of the poor never was lessened, but maybe even increased.

From the days of Solomon and his son Rehoboam, there are suggestions that the economic position of the poor deteriorated greatly as they lost their means of production, the land, to the marauding greedy rich few. It is likely that the rich landowning elite, many of whom were probably connected with the palace, were able to improve their economic position through the acquisition of property that was lost on account of debt.¹⁰² And the exploitation of the underclasses spilled into later periods, even among the Northerners who had shortly rebelled (922 BCE) against the house of David on account of the burdens of forced labour and heavy taxation (1 kgs 12). During the Omride Dynasty, for example, there was

⁹⁹ Cf. M. Noth, *Könige 1*, pp. 216-18.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Heaton, *Everyday Life in the Old Testament Times*, p. 166.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Heaton, *Everyday Life in the Old Testament Times*, p. 167.

¹⁰² Cf. Chirichigno, *Debt-Slavery in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, p.121.

marked increase in the oppression of the free citizens, which evidence has usually been used to understand the whole monarchic era. This implies that the monarchy was the problem, for it could not survive without an economic system that exploits the underclasses.

Insatiable Greedy Among the Ruling Elite

The reign of Omri (876-869BCE) and that of his successor Ahab, his son (869-850 BCE) in Israel and the reign of Jehoshaphat (873-849 BCE) in Judah saw massive accumulation of wealth in both kingdoms. This was largely because the two sister states were able to secure important trade routes which resulted in economic prosperity.¹⁰³ This period of prosperity is highlighted by an extensive building programme in Israel and significant legal reforms in Judah that replaced customary law with royal appointed judges (2 Chron. 19:4-11; Exo 18:13-27; Deut 1:9-17). While this could be seen as a positive development, the negative side of it is that these judges in no time began to protect the interests of the ruling elite and the rich and not of the poor. Thus, the position of the small free citizen landowners deteriorated in the face of creditors (2 kings 4:1), and a drought that occurred in Ahab's reign probably forced many small landowners to lose their land (cf. 1 kgs 17),¹⁰⁴ something that could have been avoided had the society remained organised on kinship bases, as it was during the pre-monarchic era.

Also, the Omride building programme became another burden for the people as it required the citizens to serve in corvées, almost as they were required under the Davidic house. Even after Omri, the extensive military campaign of Ahab put extreme economic pressure on the citizens of Israel who had to pay for the adventures, in terms of human and financial resources. The economic pressure forced poor families to lose their land either selling it to the rich or having it attached on account of debt, accumulated in order to finance the wars. In the end, this scenario tended to favour the position of the ruling elite and a few rich landown-

¹⁰³ Cf. M. Elat, 'The Monarchy and the Development of Trade in Ancient Israel', in E. Lipinski, (ed.), *State and Temple Economy in the Ancient Near East*. 1, 11. *Proceedings of the International Conference Organised by the Katholieke Inversiteit Leuven from the 10th to the 14th of April 1978*. OLA 5. Leuven: Dept. Orientalistiek, 1979, pp. 527-46 (pp. 542-43).

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Bright, *A History of Israel*, pp. 224-45.

ers.¹⁰⁵ The ruling elite and the rich increased their wealth and extended farms through the manipulation of both the underclasses to sell their lands and the judiciary especially which had to authorise the appropriations.

One example that is often cited to illustrate the injustice of these times is the appropriation of Naboth's vineyard by Ahab (1 Kings 21:1-20). Ahab offered to buy Naboth's vineyard or exchange it for a better one, but Naboth refused, stating that, 'the Lord forbid me that I should give you the inheritance of my fathers' (vs.3).¹⁰⁶ But Ahab intent on taking Naboth's field frames Naboth for false witness and has him executed. It is clear that Naboth's refusal was based upon the tribal philosophy of land holding that regarded the land as inalienable in Israel on the basis that Yahweh was the prime and ultimate owner of all land. The philosophy placed honour on each family or tribe for clinging to and defending the inheritance of their fathers, the land (Num. 36:7-9) under any circumstances, since they were only custodians of the land (Lev 25:23; Mic.2:2b).¹⁰⁷ This attitude toward land is quite common in many ancient and modern societies. The land as an inheritance from the fathers is sacred.

In Africa, Zimbabwe in particular, until today, the land is as it was considered in ancient Israel, an inheritance from the fathers/ancestors and the divine Supreme Being, especially among the rural folk. It is thus a religious entity, an economic enterprise and a political and social status marker. Losing father's land is a disgrace to both the living and the dead. Gaining control of it and dying in defence of the land is a symbol of honour to the living and the departed. Be that as it may, the story of Naboth's vineyard evidences the fact that the rich and ruling elite had developed a very different culture from the rest of the poor peasants. For the ruling elite, it seems the commercial value of land was more impor-

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Chirichigno, *Debt-Slavery in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, p. 123.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Chirichigno, *Debt-Slavery in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, p. 124.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Alexander Rofé, 'The Vineyard of Naboth: the Origin and Message of the Story', *VT* 38, (1988), pp. 89-104, (90); Alt, 'Der Anteil des Königtums an der sozialen Entwicklung in den Reichen Israel und Juda', in *Kleine Schriften zur Geschichte des Volkes Israel*, 11. Munich: Beck, 1959, pp. 348-72 (pp. 349-65); G. Von Rad, 'The Promised Land and Yahweh's land in the Hexateuch', in *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966, pp. 79-93; Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 1. New York: Harper & Row, 1965, pp. 296-305.

tant than its religious value, its sacrality as an inheritance from forefathers. And such a culture gripped the whole class of the elite particularly during the eighth century. It is clear that the rich cared less about morality, values or even business ethics but profit from selling anything including the sacred; land and humanity.

Unequal Access to the Land

Resultant from the above described economic exploitation of the underclasses orchestrated by the ruling elite, is a situation whereby we have the elite not only accumulating vast tracks of land from dispossessing fellow countrymen, the poor peasants who would have failed to settle loans, but also enslaving the owners of the land. This has been called *rentenkapitalismus* (rent capitalism), and it was solely responsible for much of the latifundia that existed within many city-and national states in the ancient Near East, well before Israel was established.¹⁰⁸ Rent capitalism is an economic system by which large landowners, who were often local officials or merchants, could procure income and land from free citizens through the monopolization of resources. It is also called the mercantile system/capitalism. Over and above this method, in many agrarian societies the king, who had domain over the land, gave land grants to officials who controlled the income (*prebend*) generated from these lands (*prebendal system*). Officials could also be granted patrimonial domain over lands controlled by the king. Both of these types of domains were maintained by peasants whose land would have been acquired by the king.¹⁰⁹ Thus, the peasants, already squeezed on their traditional patrimonial domain lands witnessed the introduction of a new system of land ownership (prebendal) which not only resulted in the commercialisation of their ancestral lands but also saw them being violently dispossessed of the same lands the ancestors had bequeathed to

¹⁰⁸ Cf. H. Bobek, 'Zum Konzept des Rentenkapitalismus', *TESG* 65 (1974), pp. 73-77; Bobek, 'Rentenkapitalismus und Entwicklung im Iran', in G. Schweizer (ed.), *Interdisziplinäre Iran-Forschung*. Wiesbaden, 1979, pp. 113-124; Cf. Chirichigno, *Debt-Slavery in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, p. 50.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. E.R. Wolf, *Peasants*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1966, pp. 55-56; R. B. Coote, *Amos Among the Prophets: Composition and Theology*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981, pp. 26-32; and also, B. Lang, 'Social Organisation of Peasant Poverty in Biblical Israel', *JSTOT* 24, (1982), pp. 47-63 (48-51), who cites Bobek; Cf. Chirichigno, *Debt-Slavery in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, p. 50.

them. In reality, monarchic Israel had successfully 'returned' its underclasses to Egypt.

Because of this exploitative economic structure, masses of people remained without access to the means of production, the land. These were turned into slaves of the few whose conscience never troubled them to see fellow countrymen become so desperate as to sell their children, themselves into slavery. The rich never lost sleep after snatching from their fellow men their only means of survival and possession, land, as a result of their greedy economic policies designed precisely to breed poverty and destitution. G. E. Lenski observed that the ruling elite of the agrarian monarchies of the ancient Near East, who comprised no more than two per cent of the population, mostly controlled up to half or more of goods and services.¹¹⁰ This is what Israel had become, a situation that exposes the underclasses to any kind of exploitation. Typically, this situation reduced the rest of the population to either debt-slaves or indentured servants.

Despicable Exploitation in the Eighth Century BCE

Politically and economically, the two states of Judah and Israel experienced a boom during the eighth century. For example, the borders of Judah and Israel, during the reigns of Jehoash and Jeroboam II of Israel (802-786 and 786-746 BCE respectively, and Amaziah and Uzziah of Judah (800-783 and 783-742 BCE respectively, were extended to the limits attained under David and Solomon.¹¹¹ Owing to political stability, peace and re-opening of valuable trade routes, there was unprecedented economic prosperity in the two sister states. While this was supposed to be good news which brings about celebration, for the ordinary citizens there was nothing to celebrate. The much-hyped prosperity was confined to the top echelons of the society and did not trickle down to the masses. Side by side with extreme wealth, extreme poverty was growing.¹¹² While the elite enjoyed a luxurious life to the extent of owning winter and

¹¹⁰ Cf. G. E. Lenski, *Power and Privilege: A Theory of Social Stratification*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966, pp. 189-296.

¹¹¹ Cf. P. J. King, 'The Eighth, The Greatest of the Centuries?', *JBL* 108 (1989), pp. 3-15, who did an extensive study of the social, economic and historical survey of this period.

¹¹² Leon J. Wood, *The Prophets of Israel*. Michigan: Baker Book House, 1979, p. 277.

summer houses,¹¹³ the poor families squeezed themselves in one room together with their belongings, visitors and their animals at night and during bad weather.¹¹⁴ In short, there was an increase in social stratification something that the tribal leaders interpreted as an unprecedented negative development in the society,¹¹⁵ and contrary to the aspirations of the common people.

In tandem with increased stratification was not only the alienation of land but also a rise in debt-slavery (cf. 2 Kgs 4:1-7; Neh 5:1-13; Isaiah 5:8; Jer 34:8-16; Mic 2:1-2; Amos 8:5).¹¹⁶ Matthew Coomber's in-depth study shows that protests from prophets such as Amos, Isaiah, Micah and Hosea make it particularly clear that during this period the small farmers of Israel and Judah were particularly vulnerable to the wealthy private and state sector landowners who made them debt-slaves and confiscated their land (cf. Amos 2:6-8; 5:8-12; Hos 4:2; 5:10; 12:7-8; Isa. 5:8-10 and Mic. 2:1-2).¹¹⁷ Therefore, it is suggested that Amos 2:8b and 5:11a refer to debts and rent taken from tenants who resided on the officials' prebendal domain.¹¹⁸

¹¹³ Cf. Shalom M. Paul, 'Amos III 15: Winter and Summer Mansions', *VT* 28, 3 (1978), pp. 358-360.

¹¹⁴ Cf. Heaton, *Everyday life in Old Testament Times*, p.71.

¹¹⁵ Cf. E. Neufeld, 'The Emergence of a Royal-Urban Society in Ancient Israel', *HUCA* 31, (1960), pp. 31-53, (pp. 41-53).

¹¹⁶ Cf. Dearman, *Property Rights in the Eighth-Century Prophets*; R.H. Lowery, *The Reforming Kings: Cult and Society in First Temple Judah*. JSOTSup 120. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991, pp. 54-61.

¹¹⁷ Cf. M.J.M. Coomber, 'Caught in the Crossfire?: Economic Injustice and Prophetic Motivation in Eighth-Century Judah' *BI* 19 (2011) pp. 396-432; Coomber, *Re-Reading the Prophets Through Corporate Globalization: A Cultural-Evolutionary Approach to Economic Injustice in the Hebrew Bible*. Biblical Intersections 4. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2010; Coomber, 'Prophets to Profits: Ancient Judah and Corporate Globalization', in Coomber, (ed.), *Bible and Justice: Ancient Texts, Modern Challenges*. BibleWorld. London: Equinox Press, 2011, pp. 212-237; See also, Mosala, *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology*, pp.101-53 and Gottwald, 'Social Class and Ideology in Isaiah 40-55: Egletonian Reading', in David Jobling and Tina Pippin, (eds.), *Ideological Criticism of Biblical Texts*. SBL. Atlanta GA: Scholars Press, 1992, pp. 43-57.

¹¹⁸ Cf. Chirichigno, *Debt-Slavery in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, p.125; Cf. B. Lang, 'The Social Organisation of Peasant Poverty in Biblical Israel', *JSOT* 24, (1982), pp. 47-63 (especially pp. 50-59); J. Mays, *Amos*, OTL. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969; H.W. Wolff, *Amos and Joel*, Hermeneia: Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977; p.230; Coote, *Amos Among the Prophets*, pp. 31-32; However, Dearman, *Property Rights in the Eighth-Century Prophets*. pp. 28-31 dismisses any reference to a prebendal arrangement, but rather he

During this period, the elite in the two states of Israel and Judah moved toward the mass accumulation of land by dispossessing the poor peasants on condition of debt, hence, the formation of latifundia or plantations allowed the rich to market more valuable crops, such as wine and olive oil, rather than the less valuable crops and herds which were vital to the existence of Israelite agricultural households.¹¹⁹ For Gottwald, they continued with what had begun during the reign of Solomon, when valuable crops were already in demand at the palace or for export (cf. Prov. 22:7).¹²⁰ While excessive taxation from the time of Solomon and the consecutive eras is one of the possible causes for debt-slavery and the alienation of land, it is also most likely that the control of (other) resources and lending by the ruling elite, which included both state officials and private landowners caused many small farmers to sell their dependents and themselves into debt-slavery, and eventually to sell their land.¹²¹ For the poor, Israel, during the eighth century had completely negated the covenant hence had become Egypt, the house of slavery.

Eighth century monarchic Israel as we have hinted above represents a perfect example of an advanced agrarian society, whereby the individual's socio-economic status was derived from the amount of land one owned. From the sayings of the prophets one could easily detect that there was an economic problem emanating from the ownership of land, the benefits and the rights that went with it in the society. Land was being accumulated in estates and used as a basis for status and to generate surplus wealth. Those who lost their land were deprived of status, material support, divine possession and inheritance.¹²² As a result of the distribution of the economy, the society saw the emergence of two dis-

suggests that in Amos 2:8, we are dealing with some form of tax; Cf. Chirichigno, *Debt-Slavery in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, p.126.

¹¹⁹ Cf. Chirichigno, *Debt-Slavery in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, p. 126; Chaney. M. 'Systematic Study of the Israelite Monarchy', *Semeia* 37, 1986, pp. 53-75; Chaney, 'Bitter Bounty: The Dynamics of Political Economy Critiqued by the Eighth-Century Prophets', in N. K. Gottwald and R.A. Horsley (eds.), *The Bible and Liberation: Political and Social Hermeneutics*. Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1993.

¹²⁰ Gottwald, 'The Participation of Free Agrarians in the Introduction of Monarchy to Ancient Israel: An Application of H.A Landsberger's Framework for the Analysis of Peasant Movements', *Semeia* 37 (1986), pp. 77-106, (pp. 85-86).

¹²¹ Cf. Chirichigno, *Debt-Slavery in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, p. 127.

¹²² J. L. Mays, 'Justice: Perspectives from the Prophetic Tradition', in David L. Petersen (ed.), *Prophecy in Israel*. London: SPCK, 1987, pp. 144-158, (148).

tinct social classes; the poor who were getting poorer each day and the rich amassing wealth daily. The socio-economic stratification of Israel, led Gottwald (and his disciples) to coin it the 'Asiatic mode of production', whereby classes are differently related to the means of production. There are those who control the means of production and those that do not.¹²³

As Lenski indicated above, in an 'agrarian society' (of which Israel was), the governing class receives the surplus of production, usually amounting to not less than half of the total national income although this group never represents more than two percent of the population.¹²⁴ This produces the most desirable scenario of exploitation as one of the most important characteristic features of an advanced agrarian society is the extreme social cleavage between its two main classes; the ruling elite and peasantry. The peasants are a necessity to the profit and wellbeing of the rich. For, it is them who provide the much desired agricultural labour force at less or no cost. According to Coote, in many agrarian societies, a situation applicable to eighth century in Israel, the rich,

comprising from 1 to 3 percent of the population, typically own 50 to 70 percent or more of the land. On the basis of these disproportionate land holdings, they control by far the greater amount of power and wealth in the society, and from their positions of power exercise domain over the peasantry. Although they own most of the land, the majority of them live in cities, especially the capital. Many poor dwell in the city and some of the elite in rural towns, but because of their power and privilege the elite seldom come into meaningful social contact with the peasantry. They take virtually no role at all in the work on the land.¹²⁵

True to this observation, during the course of the eighth century in Israel, the state (upper class) was the primary and perhaps even the exclusive expropriator of the subject classes. Even money-lending could be seen as reliant on wealth derived from taxes or crown lands, and it could

¹²³ Cf. Gottwald, "Early Israel and 'The Asiatic Mode of Production' in Canaan", pp. 145-154; Gottwald, 'Social Class as an Analytic and Hermeneutical Category in Biblical Studies', pp. 3-22; Gottwald, 'A Hypothesis about Social Class in Monarchic Israel in the Light of Contemporary Studies of Social Class and Social Stratification', pp. 139-64.

¹²⁴ Lenski, *Power and Privilege*, p. 228-29; Cf. Walter J. Houston, *Contending for Justice: Ideologies and Theologies of Social Justice in the Old Testament*. London: T & T Clarke, 2006, p. 34.

¹²⁵ Coote, *Amos among the Prophets*, p. 25.

even have been a state-administered activity 'assigned to persons benefiting from the public treasury'.¹²⁶ With the passage of time, it seems, the upper class developed a sub-category which became almost the middle class consisting of merchants or middlemen; professionals (civil servants¹²⁷) and semi-professionals. Properly speaking they were agents of the government hence were also the target of eighth-century prophets' indictments especially Amos (Amos 3:9, 12; 4: 1; 6:1). Most of them were not only the apparatus of government; they also constituted the elite as they took a corrupt rake-off from the tax.¹²⁸ This class of individuals was both oppressors and the means by which the poor were crushed.

It seems logical that it was during this eighth century period that biblical laws that prohibit exacting interest were formulated by the tribal religious leaders of Israel (Exodus 22:25; Deut 23:19-20) as a desperate bid to protect the poor from these marauding government creditors. However, there is no possibility for us to conclusively claim that these laws were followed. Law and practice have always been difficult to match. Also, given the greedy that had engulfed the rich, it is likely that these provisions were ignored by many of the money-lenders during the eighth century BCE and later.¹²⁹ It was to these people that Amos pronounced judgment of God, as he did in other instances to the 'strong, the well-to-do, the well housed and well-fed, the authorities, the holders of power and privilege, in short, the ruling elite of Israel's agrarian society'.¹³⁰ Thus, Amos 8:4-6 most probably describe how merchant speculators sold wheat at high prices to the poor by using short measures and false scales (cf. Prov 11:26). Such speculation and dishonesty lead to the sale of the poor as debt-slaves (cf. Amos 2.6-8).¹³¹

¹²⁶ Gottwald, 'A Hypothesis about Social Class in Monarchic Israel in the Light of Contemporary Studies of Social Class and Social Stratification', pp. 139-64.

¹²⁷ Heaton, *Everyday Life in Old Testament Times*, p.174.

¹²⁸ Dearman, *Property Rights in the Eighth-Century Prophets*, p.133-34; Cf. Heaton, *Everyday Life in Old Testament Times*, p.174, says, 'the small army of civil servants distributed throughout the length and breadth of the land on the king's business helped point the way to what, had the words been coined, would have been called Prosperity and Progress'.

¹²⁹ Cf. Chirichigno, *Debt-Slavery in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, p. 140.

¹³⁰ Coote, *Amos Among the Prophets*, p.16.

¹³¹ L. Epsztein, *Social Justice in the Ancient Near East and the People of the Bible*. London: SCM Press, 1986, p. 96; Coote, *Amos Among the Prophets*, pp. 93-94; Lang, 'Peasant Poverty in Biblical Israel', pp. 58-59.

Because of their privileged position on the basis of controlling the means of production, the ruling elite possess a body of cultural information so different from that of the peasantry that the gap between the two classes (if they are of the same race and culture) produces two distinct subcultures within the same society. Members of the elite subculture have been known to fail to recognize the peasant or urban poor as fellow human beings.¹³² The peasants are normally accused of being lazy, thieves, unintelligent and all the negative characterizations. In some contexts, the poor are condemned for being unholy and sinful owing to their miserable circumstances. It is for that reason that the elite do not mix with the poor. A similar theology that condemned the poor, the oppressed and exploited while glorifying rich oppressors existed in Israel, during the eighth century BCE.

Elite Theology of Legitimation of Ill-Gotten Wealth

In the light of the socio-economic imbalances that existed glaringly in Israel, some religious personalities possibly, beneficiaries of the status quo, decided to legitimize the imbalances by coining a theology, an official ideology. The theology regarded the minority; rich, the ruling elite as the blessed ones of Yahweh while the majority poor were condemned as unholy and cursed by Yahweh. As it was believed that the blessing of Yahweh bestowed on the righteous consists of material prosperity, according to this theology, poverty therefore was a sign of being cursed while riches were signs of blessings from Yahweh. In other words, being poor was synonymous to being a sinner and being rich was equal to being righteous! Yahweh was considered as a God who rewards accordingly. One's religiosity and faithfulness determined one's socio-economic position, so they believed. Therefore, that very few people were rich while the rest were poor was easy to explain. The explanation was: since very few people are righteous, very few people are rich; since very many are unrighteous, many people are poor!

Such a theology sought not only to disarm the poor but by failure to challenge the ruling elite it actually helped to exonerate the rich of their guilty. The logical conclusion of the demand of the theology is for the poor to devote to prayer and fasting rather than seeking to take matters into their own hands with the help of Yahweh and fight their oppressors.

¹³² Cf. Coote, *Amos among the Prophets*, p. 25.

That is why the theology, led the rich to anxiously wait for the Day of the Lord when Israel, the rich rulers would be exalted above all other nations (5:18-20). The language of the passage clearly acknowledges that certain factions (the rich especially) of the society looked forward to the Day of the Lord hence Amos' dramatic reversal of the expectation should have shocked them.¹³³ They had come to believe their lie that God was on their side. According to Coote,

It therefore seems sensible to the elite to regard themselves as the righteous. Their wealth proves it! They take for granted that the poor's poverty reflects some lack of righteousness. This is to define one's status in God's sight exclusively in terms of the present, which the prophetic perspective contradicts. Since justice is hard to achieve, doubtless the paucity of the elite confirms their sense of righteousness. Righteousness is for the few, they believe. From the stance of power, self-deception is hard to correct.¹³⁴

Contrary to the pre-monarchic tribal setting, with this theological propaganda, Yahweh had become associated with the rulers and not with the common people, the poor peasants. This serves to confirm that from the beginning of the monarchy, Yahweh was slowly but surely being hijacked by the rich ruling class. Rather than being a religious ideology seized with liberation of the underclasses from oppressors, Yahwism had been turned into an ideology of oppression by giving legitimation to ill-gotten wealth. In the end, not only was the wealth and land snatched away from the poor, but also their god, their comrade in arms, Yahweh. By trying to explain and justify the disparity between the poor and the rich in terms of religiosity, the priests and religious functionaries of Israel became part and parcel of the oppressive syndicate in Israel. But prophet Amos (among a few), unlike the priests and other religious functionaries took sides with the oppressed and not with the rich.

Counter Status-Quo Theology: Amos' Theology

Instead of swimming along with the currency, the prevalent theology, Amos observed that land, economic and property ownership disparities were the factors that caused poverty and not spirituality of the individuals. The economic system was very much skewed against the poor. Amos

¹³³ Cf. Max E. Polley, *Amos and the Davidic Empire: A Socio-Historical Approach*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1989, p. 166.

¹³⁴ Coote, *Amos among the Prophets*, p. 25.

therefore takes up the cause of the dispossessed, the excluded, the poor, to demand justice. He itemised the crimes that the rich had committed against their fellow men: selling the poor for trivial debts (2:6; 8:6), excessive fines (2:8), falsifying weights and measures (8:5), dishonest trade practices (8:6), corrupting the legal system (2:7; 5:10, 12)¹³⁵ among others. These factors, for Amos, were behind the wealth among a small class and poverty among the majority, not religiosity. In effect the indictments pointed at the rich as the sinners while defending the poor as the righteous. Prophet Amos' message is thus very revolutionary, an aspect that is missing in Zimbabwe, especially among biblical intellectuals and church leaders. Men and women of God neither can make a distinction between oppression and liberation nor diagnose the root causes of the stinking poverty in the Zimbabwean society. They are usually on the side of oppressors.

In Amos' eyes, the court in the gates was the most crucial institution in Israel's life. There the weak and poor should have their defender and find their rights. Contrary to his expectation, the judicial process had been corrupted by the powerful and rich, and was used as instrument of oppression (5:12; 2:6-7). Courts had become weapons in the hands of the elite few to oppress the majority. They had become almost markets to enslave the needy and wring the last bit of land and produce from the poor.¹³⁶ The wealth that Amos denounces was specifically the result of this oppression of the poor and corruption of the courts (3:10; 5:11), for estates had grown by dispossessing the peasants.¹³⁷ The death sentence passed on the society by Amos was therefore not without basis (5:1-3). Institutions created for the whole society especially for the poor no longer served the poor. Instead, they were manipulated by the rich. This is evident with the courts of law and the cult. Cultic figures, as I have pointed above were made to sing for their supper by the oppressors as they coined a theology to justify ill-gotten wealth.

The cultic priests especially, took it upon themselves to defend the oppressors, the ruling elite and jealously devoted to protecting the official theology, making sure that they would not tolerate any contrary ideology

¹³⁵ Cf. J. Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy in Israel: From the Settlement in the Land to the Hellenistic Period*. Great Britain: SPCK, 1984, p. 95; Cf. Coote, *Amos among the Prophets*, pp. 25-32.

¹³⁶ Cf. Polley, *Amos and the Davidic Empire*, p. 135.

¹³⁷ Mays, *Amos: A Commentary*, p. 11.

that could upset the ruling elite. It was their responsibility to be angry and fight for the rich. The exploitation of the poor by the rich did not trouble their conscience as long as they were well looked after by the rich. It took extraordinary religious figures such as prophet Amos to challenge the system and share the trenches with the poor in their struggle against the rich. The clash of the two contending classes climaxed with the clash between prophet Amos and priest Amaziah (Amos 7:10-14). The clash is between the rich and the poor; the elite and the peasants; the oppressed and the oppressors. It is obvious from the conversation between the two that Amaziah was no doubt angry at Amos especially that he spoke against everything he (Amaziah) stood for; the kingdom and the religious institution that was the foundation of the state. Amaziah took Amos for a trouble maker, and conspirator against the state for challenging the oppressors. This obviously was propaganda by the rich to protect their privileged interests. Although we do not know how the people took Amos after being labelled conspirator, we however observe that men of the people due to smear propaganda of the elite class can be turned 'enemies' of the same people they fight for. And this is sadly the reality in Zimbabwe.¹³⁸ One fighting to abolish the oppression of the majority by the few is labelled an enemy of the majority, but one conspiring to maintain oppression of the majority is turned into a darling of the oppressed.

Despite prophetic protests against exploitation of the poor, it seems the elite groups in both the kingdoms of Israel and Judah were so corrupt that they did not know how to live fairly. Even after the fall of Samaria/Israel, the northern kingdom in 722-721 BCE, when the kingdom of Judah, under the reign of Ahaz (735-715 BCE) became a vassal state of the Assyrian empire,¹³⁹ the rich continued to exploit and enslave the peasants on account of debt. As Isaiah and Micah observed, large landowners often made debt-slavery out of the poor farmers and dispossessed them of their land, much as they did in Israel (Isa. 3:13-15; 5:8;

¹³⁸ Cf. Vengeyi, "Kunonga versus Bakare: Zimbabwe's own version of 'prophet Amos versus priest Amaziah' of Israel (Amos 7:10-14)". *BOLESWA Journal of Theology, Religion and Philosophy*, Vol 3 No.3 (2012), pp. 15-41.

¹³⁹ Cf. Bright, *A History of Israel*, pp. 276-78; H. W. F. Saggs, *The Might That Was Assyria*. Great Civilisations Series; London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1984, pp. 91-92.

Mic. 2:1-9).¹⁴⁰ The trend of oppressing the poor continued even after Hezekiah (715-687/686 BCE) and Josiah (640-609 BCE) instituted important reforms in the cult and society of Judah. Although these reforms certainly improved the position of the Israelite citizens it is clear that in subsequent periods they would again be victims of the wealthy private and state landowners.¹⁴¹ In all the known historical periods of monarchic Israel and Judah the poor have never fared well. The elite resisted at all cost to let go their wealth they had corruptly acquired. At the end of the day, we have in one society, the very rich and the very poor classes. Monarchic Israel had thus become no different from the rest of the ancient Near Eastern states. Instead of upholding justice by defending the righteous, the exploited poor against the unrighteous rich oppressors as per their mandate (Psalm 72:1-14), the kings of Israel did not only take sides with the oppressors, but they also equally participated in the exploitation and enslavement of the weak.

Conclusion

This chapter has observed that ancient Near Eastern societies began as egalitarian, with the tribe as the highest religious, social, economic and political unit. The introduction of city-state systems, controlled by imperial Egypt brought unprecedented exploitation of the majority peasants who on account of debt were enslaved. Since then, the struggle was between the old tribal system and the new system; that is between the ruling elite and the underclasses. Early Israel emerged from an underclass-peasant revolution anchored on the ideology of Yahweh, the warrior god of the oppressed, who was introduced to the masses by the Apiru and a few leaders that came from Egypt where they had been subjected to slavery. The goal of the revolution was to eradicate the exploitative Canaanite city-state system and revert to the pre-city-state egalitarian system. However, the reintroduced egalitarianism and retribalisation programmes were short-lived owing to a number of internal and external problems. As it turned to be, the introduction of the monarchy in Israel represented a counter revolution move. Rather than advancing the cause of the underclasses it continued with the same old exploitative

¹⁴⁰ Cf. Coomber, 'Caught in the Crossfire', pp. 396-432; Coomber, *Re-Reading the Prophets Through Corporate Globalization*; Coomber, 'Prophets to Profits', pp. 212-237.

¹⁴¹ Cf. Chirichigno, *Debt-Slavery in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, p.129.

Canaanite city-state policies resulting in general disdain for the monarchy. Thus, the struggle for the underclasses continued.

For all the days of Israel's monarchy, the exploited underclasses were crushed and enslaved. And once enslaved their circumstances worsened each and every day. Their hope for freedom from exploitation by the ruling elite continued to be cast into the distant future. Exacerbating the situation was the conduct of the religious leaders. Instead of being champions of the oppressed (as had been the case with the Exodus-Levites at the inauguration of Israel) by standing and fighting alongside the exploited against their adversaries, the ruling elite, some priests and prophets wined and dined with the same people they should be fighting. The good news however is that some few religious leaders throughout the history of Israel continued the struggle against exploitation, following the established tradition of the Exodus-Levites, the Apiru and the peasants. It is from these that we get valuable insights and inspiration as we engage similar exploitation.

CHAPTER THREE

THE LIBERATION MOTIF IN SLAVERY/MANUMISSION LAWS

Introduction

This chapter is devoted to analysing and interpreting slavery texts/manumission laws in the Old Testament, (Exo 21:6-12; Deut 15:12-18 and Lev 25:39-55) in the light of the context of the struggle described in the previous chapter between the ruling elite class and the underclasses. Interpreted in this broader ancient Near Eastern setting and the exploitation of the underclasses in Israel during the monarchy particularly in the eighth century B.C.E onwards, the struggle between masters and slaves as reflected in these laws is a miniature of the broader struggle between the ruling elite and the generality of the peasants. The constant reminder that Israelite masters have been underclasses, slaves, 'in Egypt' is critical in understanding the liberation motif of these manumission laws. Unlike in the official theology, they portray Yahweh as a god of the Exodus, one who participates in the struggles of the underclasses to bring about revolutionary change. Thus, they sought to reintroduce a poor-friendly warrior god, Yahweh whose interest is egalitarianism, the same concept that had been successively rebuffed by the ruling elite. The chapter therefore begins with a discussion on the relationship between the terms Habiru, Hebrews and Israelites. This is premised on the fact that the phrase עֶבֶד עִבְרִי 'Hebrew slave/servant' that features prominently in the manumission laws (Exo 21:2; Deut 15:12) has been variously interpreted. While some scholars take the phrase עֶבֶד עִבְרִי as an indication that the manumission laws are dealing with foreign slaves (the ancient Near Eastern Habiru) in the service of Israelites, others associate עֶבֶד עִבְרִי with Israelites of low socio-economic status, the 'Hebrews'. The manumission laws are therefore dealing with liberation of Israelite debt-slaves, direct products of successive exploitative socio-economic environment. It is this later position that guides this study.

The Relationship of עֶבֶד עֲבָדִי with Habiru, Hebrews and Israelites

I have implied in the previous chapter without much elaboration that early Israel emerged from the struggles of the peasants and groups of people variously called; Apiru, Abiru, Habiru, or Aritu against the oppression of the Canaanite city-states. We have also realised that other factors but especially the introduction of the monarchy smuggled back the Canaanite city-state scenarios in the Israelite society, resulting in the prevalence of debt-slavery. Thus, the people whose collective memory is rooted in exploitation and slavery 'in Egypt' created their own slaves, by enslaving their own! It is this sad reality that has been subject of debate for many years now that we are also interested in here with reference to the manumission laws. The study of manumission laws itself has been not only influenced but also triggered by the Habiru/Hebrew and Israelite debate. Exodus 21:2-6 especially and Deut 15:12-18 became the centre of the debate.

For many years, scholarship had been unconcerned with the study of slavery laws or manumission laws of the Old Testament. It was only toward the second half of the 20th century after the discovery of the references to the Habiru in the Amarna Letters and other extant documents that interest in these laws was generated.¹ Since then, theories began to be put forward trying to solve the puzzle: which group of people was referred to in Exo 21 and Deut 15? Is there any connection between the Habiru and the Hebrews? Some quickly concluded that the Habiru are identical with the biblical עֲבָדִים (Hebrews) who are mentioned in both of the manumission laws in Exo 21:2-6 and Deut 15:12-18, and elsewhere in the Old Testament. But the other question was: if the Habiru are identical with the Hebrews, what is the connection between Habiru/Hebrews and Israelites? While others presumptuously associated the Habiru/Hebrews with the Israelites, most scholars were cautiously avoiding equating the two. The other most difficult part was also to establish whether Israel had slaves from among themselves or not. Other scholars had and still have difficulties accepting that Israelites, 'the chosen people' exploited each other let alone selling and buying

¹ Cf. Chirichigno, *Debt-Slavery in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, p. 17; Cf. Mendenhall, 'The Hebrew Conquest of Palestine', pp. 71-84; Mendenhall, *The Tenth Generation*, Chapters 1, 5, 7, 8.

each other as slaves. As such, there emerged basically two camps of scholars; one suggesting that the manumission laws related to foreign slaves while another regards them as targeted at Israelite slaves. Given the background in the previous chapter and as I have alluded to in the introduction, this later position is what we adopt.

Be that as it may, in the first school of thought, we have J. Lewy for example, who could be the first scholar to extensively devote energy towards discussing the biblical manumission laws in Exo 21:2-6 and Deut. 15:12-18 in the light of the ancient Near Eastern Nuzi Habiru contracts. He concluded that these laws concerned the manumission of foreign slaves (Habiru),² and by no means refer to Israelite slaves. For him, the Habiru were not Israelites. It was his conviction that Israel could not hold slaves from among themselves. For a moment this position was well received and commanded a lot of respect. Notwithstanding some conservative Christian fundamentalist scholars who still uphold this position, however, the tables were soon to be turned. After a few years, scholars began to discredit the hypothesis of Lewy and offered contrary conclusions. It was generally observed that Israel had slaves from among themselves. Scholars, such as, A. Alt, for example, suggested that the biblical manumission laws in Exo 21:2-6 and Deut 15:12-18 referred to Israelites who belonged to a lower social class in Israel. However, Alt noted that the use of the term עֶבְרִי (Hebrew) in these laws tells us little about anyone's nationality or legal status.³

Although this position leaves some important details unclear especially the nationality of the slave, its association of slavery with the lower class Israelite citizens is a welcome development in the scholarship of manumission laws. This is important because it situates these texts in the context of exploitation of the weak by the rich, scenarios that were rampant as we have observed in the previous chapter. Hence, today, many scholars in varying degrees follow Alt's line of argument that these manumission laws referred to a lower social class of Israelites. M. Weip-

² J. Lewy, 'Habiru and Hebrews', *HUCA* 14 (1939), pp. 587-623; Lewy, 'A New Parallel between Habiru and Hebrews', *HUCA* 15 (1940), pp. 47-58; Lewy, 'Origin and Significance of the Biblical Term 'Hebrew'', *HUCA* 28 (1957), pp. 2-13.

³ Cf. A. Alt, 'The Origin of Israelite Law', in *Essays on Old Testament History and Religion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966, pp. 93-96; Alt, *Kleine Schriften zur Geschichte des Volkes Israel*, 1. Munich: Beck, 1959, pp. 278-332; Cf. Chirichigno, *Debt-Slavery in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, p. 18.

pert, for example suggested that the phrase עֶבֶד עִבְרִי (Hebrew slave) was an Israelite of the Habiru-type, and that in Deut 15:12-18 the phrase אֶתִּידּוֹ הָעִבְרִי אוֹ הָעִבְרָיָה⁴ -your brother 'a Hebrew man or woman,' clearly refers to Israelites.⁴ It is from this position that the manumission laws pertained to Israelites of lower socioeconomic status, that some scholars have gone further to link these Hebrew slaves with the uprooted Israelites; the ones that had been deprived of the means of production which resulted in them being enslaved. C. J. H. Wright specifically suggested that the manumission laws in Exo 21:2-6 and Deut 15:12-18 refer to a class of the *landless* Israelites.⁵ This position allows us to link the manumission laws of Exo 21 and Deut 15 with the manumission laws in Leviticus 25:39-54. Although Lev 25:39-54 does not use the designation עֶבֶד it nevertheless talks about the people who became slaves because they had lost their land.

Scholars have generally adopted this position as binding. S. A. Kaufman, for example, agrees with the suggestion that the biblical manumission laws refer to a class of landless Israelites, who were enslaved by their fellow rich Israelites, on account of debt.⁶ I. Cardellini's comprehensive comparative study of slavery in the ancient Near East and Israel also dismissed the suggestions by the first school of thought as lacking substance. He concluded that the Israelite manumission laws were not at all similar to Nuzi service contracts or any other ancient Near Eastern laws for that matter. Like Alt, Cardellini argues that the expression עֶבֶד עִבְרִי refers to a lower social class of Israelites, those who were exploited by the rich and by implication the Hebrew slaves were in essence the Habiru of

⁴ Cf. M. Weippert, *The Settlement of the Israelite Tribes in Palestine: a critical survey of recent scholarly debate*. London: SCM Press, 1971, pp. 85-87; S. M. Paul, *Studies in the Book of the Covenant in the Light of Cuneiform and Biblical Law*. VTSup 18. Leiden: Brill, 1970, pp. 45-52.

⁵ C. J. H. Wright, 'What Happened Every Seven Years in Israel? Old Testament Sabbatical Institutions for Land, and Debts and Slaves, Part 1', *EvQ* 56 (1984), pp.193-201; H. L. Ellison, 'The Hebrew Slave: A Study in Early Israelite Society', *EvQ* 45 (1955), pp. 30-35.

⁶ Cf. S. A. Kaufman, 'A Reconstruction of the Social Welfare Systems of Ancient Israel', in W. B. Barrick and J. R. Spencer (eds.), *In the Shelter of Elyon: Essays on Ancient Palestinian Life and Literature in Honor of G.W. Ahlström*. JSOTSup 31. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984, pp.-277-86.

the Israelite society.⁷ Thus, for him the term ‘Hebrew’ is a lower socio-economic status designation not an ethnic designation. On the contrary, I. Reisener believes that the term עִבְרִי is indeed an ethnic designation that has an entirely different origin from the term Habiru.⁸ But this does not imply that the terms were unrelated. Scholars now believe that contrary to the initially held position which interpreted Habiru/Apiru/Apitu etc as a corruption of the term Hebrew which was then automatically concluded that the Amarna letters referred to Israelites, the term Hebrew has a socio-literary connection to Habiru.

A majority of scholars are now agreeing that while the two terms are related, the main obstacle to equating the two terms, Habiru-Hebrew is their difference in usage. The name ‘Hebrew’ served as an ethnicon for the Israelites in particular historical and social situations. But the appellation, Habiru on the other hand, was never used as an ethnic designation. In fact, the absence of a gentilic ending is one of its most remarkable features and distinguishes it from all ethnic names.⁹ Thus, M. Greenberg’s assertion in his discussion of the Habiru-Hebrew problem that ‘no scriptural passage gives explicit ground for extending the scope of הָעִבְרִיִּים beyond Israelites’,¹⁰ holds water. From this perspective, Hebrews are poor Israelites according to the Old Testament testimony. According to Nadav Naaman, indeed one is justified in discussing the Habiru-Hebrew equation in the context of the history of Israel. By accepting the identity of the two names, (Habiru and Hebrew) one would necessarily have to assume that the term Habiru was transformed from a social appellation into an ethnic term (Hebrews).¹¹ The question that needs to be asked is how and for what reasons did this shift occur in Israelite tradition?

⁷ Cf. I. Cardellini, *Die biblischen ‘Skaven’-Gesetze im lichte des keilschriftlichen Skaven rechts: Ein Beitrag zur Tradition, Überlieferung und Redaction der alttestamentlichen Rechtstexte.* BBB 55. Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1981, pp. 337-44.

⁸ Cf. I. Riesener, ‘Der Stamm עִבְרִי im Alten Testament: Eine Wortuntersuchung unter Berücksichtigung neuerer sprachwissenschaftlicher Methoden’, *BZAW* 149. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1979, pp. 115-135.

⁹ Cf. Weippert, *The Settlement of the Israelite Tribes in Palestine*, pp. 74-82.

¹⁰ M. Greenberg, *The Hab/piru*. AOS 39. New Haven, 1955, p. 198.

¹¹ Naaman, *Canaan in the Second Millennium*, p. 261.

The Use of the term הֵעֲבָרִים ‘The Hebrews’ in Israelite Literature

There are basically two senses in which the name Hebrew is used by the biblical authors. First, the name הֵעֲבָרִים occurs in the Bible mainly in the description of two historical periods: the sojourn of the Israelites in Egypt and Philistine-Israelite relations. In this regard, the name Hebrew is used many times by foreigners, as derogatory, for example, by the Egyptians (Gen 39:14, 17; 41:12; Exo 1:16; 2:6) and Philistines (1 Sam 4:6, 9; 13:3, 19; 14:11; 29:3) and also by the narrator with reference to Israelites in the context of Egyptians vis-à-vis Israelites (Gen 40:15; Exo 1:19; 2:7; 3:18; 5:3; 7:16; 9:1, 13; 10:3). In this sense, the term Hebrews refers mainly to Israelites in the pre-monarchical period and is used to distinguish them from other ethnic groups. It usually appears in unfavourable contexts, thus, lacking the honour generally associated with the term ‘Israelite’.¹²

A few examples to justify the claims above would suffice at this moment. The term Hebrew was used by the authors of the history of Israel as a designation for the Israelites migrating to or already in a foreign country. For example, Joseph, who was brought by force from Canaan to Egypt, is called a ‘Hebrew’ (Gen 39:14) and ‘a young Hebrew’ (Gen 41:12). When the ‘Israelites’ were in Egypt, they were frequently designated as ‘Hebrews’ (Exo 23:9) and never as Israelites. The prophet Jonah is another clear example in which the authors show this bias. When leaving his homeland and fleeing to a foreign country, Jonah calls himself ‘a Hebrew’ and not an Israelite (Jon 1:9). Also, Abraham may have been called ‘the Hebrew’ (Gen 14:13), because he was commanded by the Lord: ‘Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you’ (Gen 12:1). The Genesis 14:13 passage may, however, reflect the later post-biblical ethnic usage of the term, meaning simply ‘Israelite’.¹³ What is clear however is that the term ‘Hebrew’ is not ordinarily used for every Israelite except for only those Israelites who were in certain circumstances, which circumstances qualified them to be called Hebrews.

¹² Cf. Naaman, *Canaan in the Second Millennium*, p. 261.

¹³ Cf. Weippert, *The Settlement of the Israelite Tribes in Palestine*, pp. 93-101; Cf. Naaman, *Canaan in the Second Millennium*, p. 270.

The designation הֵעֲבָרִים 'Hebrews' appears seven times in 1 Samuel (1 Sam 4:6, 9; 13:3, (7), 19; 14:11; 29:3). However scholars usually leave 13:7 out because it is badly corrupted that its true meaning is difficult if not impossible to come up with. It is almost unanimously agreed that 1 Sam 14:21-22 is key to the proper understanding of the meaning of the designation; Hebrew.¹⁴ The passage relates to the joining of two different groups to the side of the victor in the Battle of Michmash: the Hebrews who served in the Philistine camp and the Israelites who hid themselves in Mount Ephraim (1 Sam 13:6). The narrator consciously and deliberately made a distinction between the two groups. Israelites who worked with the Philistines were called Hebrews, while those Israelites who hid themselves are called Israelites. In the other six references, the name הֵעֲבָרִים is used by the Philistines (1 Sam 4:6, 9; 13:3,19; 14:11; 29:3). One may assume that by using this name the narrator intentionally emphasised the Philistines' scorn of the uprooted elements who were in their service as mercenaries and who were apparently considered an inferior group. This makes a lot of sense, considering that in five out of the six references given above, the degrading appellation is directed by the Philistines towards the Israelites, their rivals.¹⁵ The Hebrews are therefore Israelites who are either in mercenary activities or in some other unfavourable circumstances. Both circumstances are characteristic of Habiru life. In fact, all the uprooted Israelites were called Hebrews. And the Biblical narrative presents to us with a lot of them; Israelites who led a life identical to that of the Habiru.

Thus this requires some special discussion on the activities of the uprooted Israelite individuals and bands during the pre-monarchical and the early monarchical periods. Scholars have since established that the bands of Jephthah (Judg.11) and David were socially identical with the Habiru-bands of the second millennium. The appellation 'Hebrews' is applied once to David and his band, who were scornfully defined as such by the Philistine lords (1 Sam 29:3). In fact, the best description of bands within the entire literature of the ancient Near East appears in the biblical stories of Jephthah, David and Dan.¹⁶ Their stories portray the

¹⁴ Cf. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh*, pp. 422-423.

¹⁵ Cf. Naaman, *Canaan in the Second Millennium*, p. 262.

¹⁶ Cf. Naaman, *Canaan in the Second Millennium*, pp. 262-264; Cf. G. Buccellatti, 'La 'carriera' di David a quella di idrimi, re di Alalac', *Bibbia e Oriente* 4. 1962, pp. 95-99; B. Ma-

Habiru background: the flight from one's home country, the emergence of the bands, raiding as their methods of survival, and mercenary involvement as the manner in which they were re-integrated into the Israelite society.

According to 1 Sam 22:1-2 narrative, 'David escaped to the cave of Adullam; and when his brothers and 'all' his father's house heard it; they went down there to him. And everyone who was in distress, and everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was discontented, gathered to him; and he became captain over them. And there were with him about four hundred men'. Nabal, David's enemy, who refused to give supplies to David and group, scornfully calls them slaves 'who are breaking away from their masters' and men 'who come from I do not know where' (1 Sam 25:10-11). This description was however not without basis. By his authority and personal influence, David was able to attract not only his relatives, but also elements of a lower social status, men who had complaints against the incumbent regime as well as others seeking a new fortune. David thus, became the leader of a powerful and well organised military force. The band also included a priest (Abiathar, 1 Sam 22:20-23) and a prophet (Gad, 1 Sam 22:5).¹⁷ And later, as we have observed in the previous chapter, these religious men became beacons of David's rise and stay in power.

The migrating Danites are presented as a brigade of 600 armed men (Judg 18:11, 16,17) almost exactly as the bands of David (1 Sam 23:13; 27:2; 30:9) and Rezon (1 kgs 11:24). The moods of the Danites is characterised by the term מְרִי נָפֶשׁ 'angry fellows' (Judg 18:25), the same expression is used to describe the moods of the men who attached themselves to David (1 Sam 22:2). On their way northward, the Danites, took both the cult objects and the priest of Micah's temple by force and threatened to kill him if he tried to stop them. Finally, they made a surprise attack on the peaceful city of Laish, annihilated its population, and eventually settled there (1 Sam 27:8-11).¹⁸ This presentation is an almost accurate literary reflection of the way of life the bands of the pre-monarchical and early monarchical periods conducted.

zar, 'The Military Elite of King David'. *VT* 13 (1963), pp. 310-320, (310-312); Mendenhall, *The Tenth Generation*, pp. 133, 135-136.

¹⁷ Cf. Naaman, *Canaan in the Second Millennium*, p. 263.

¹⁸ Cf. Naaman, *Canaan in the Second Millennium*, p. 264.

From these examples cited, it is clear that there is a relationship between the Habiru and the Hebrews. However the relationship is not ethnic but the *modus operandi*. The authors of the biblical account seem to have deliberately and carefully used the term Hebrew to refer to those Israelites in unfavourable positions, especially those running away from a sedentary Israelite community due to many reasons, not excluding debt. Thus, scholars have suggested that in the history of Israel, the term Hebrew underwent some development; from ethnic connotation to the sphere of literature where it connotes those people living outside of the sedentary social structures, those without land, the only means of production. Therefore, with their status as uprooted people living on the margins of the society, the bands described in the books of Judges and Samuel are identical to the Habiru of the ancient Near Eastern texts. The main difference that must be borne in mind is that the term ‘Habiru’, is an appellation that has exclusively social connotations, whereas the term **הַעֲבָרִים** has both social and ethnic connotations. And the term is used as a gentilic only for the socio-economic underclass Israelites. The main question, we are going to address now is, ‘how, then, did the social appellation Habiru become a ‘social ethnonym’, in the biblical tradition, and why was it applied in these stories to the Israelites?’¹⁹

As was made clear above, the ‘Hebrews’ originated from among the Israelite tribal society just as all other Habiru-people originated from the neighbouring Western Asiatic societies of the second millennium BCE. Moreover, in certain historical moments, such as the struggles with the Ammonites or the Philistines; groups of ‘Hebrews’ cooperated with their compatriots and were subsequently re-integrated into the Israelite society. Thus there was a kind of ethnic connection between the Israelites and the Hebrews in the sense that the latter were part of Israelite tribal society both at the beginning and the end of their history. It is no wonder the social appellation acquired an ethnic meaning and that the refugees of Israelite origin were called ‘Hebrews’. According to Naaman, taking into account this specific usage for the term ‘Hebrew’ the author of the stories of 1 Samuel used a subtle literary device. In description of the Philistine scorn for the Israelite uprisings, the Philistines mockingly call their enemies ‘Hebrew’ the term for the marginal groups who had come to their aid and, thus, we begin to see the beginning of the literary

¹⁹ Cf. Naaman, *Canaan in the Second Millennium*, p. 269.

process that would culminate with a considerable difference in meaning between the terms 'Habiru' and 'Hebrew'.²⁰

However, the biblical narrator of the stories is quite aware of the difference between the two designations 'Israelite' and 'Hebrew'. It is only the Philistines who would use this degrading name to denigrate their rivals, the Israelites. Nowhere does the narrator use the term 'Hebrews' as a gentilic for all the Israelite tribes. The scribes of the Amarna letters used the appellation Habiru in a similar way—as both a derogatory term indicating scorn and as a label for all real or ostensible rebels against the Egyptian and their allies among the city-state rulers of Canaan.²¹ Therefore, the Hebrews as was the Habiru were the poor uprooted sections of the society. In other words, uprooted Israelites who were in foreign lands and Israelites in slavery within their land were designated as Hebrews.

'Hebrew Slaves' as the Habiru of the Israelite Society

The other common usage of the term 'Hebrew' in the historiography of Israel is as a designation for Israelites in a position of slavery in their own land. From the above discussion we are safe to conclude that the phrase עֶבֶד עֵבֶרִי in biblical law, designates Israelites who were enslaved (Exo 21:2; Deut 15:12; Jer 34:9,14) by fellow Israelites,²² not foreigners (Habiru) in the service of Israelites. They are seen in the same sense as the proto-Israelites, the Habiru in the stories of the book of Exodus who were enslaved and exploited by the Egyptians for hard labour. From the few examples, we have given above, it seems clear that the biblical references to the 'Hebrews' reflect some traits borrowed from the image of the second millennium Habiru. This suggests that authors of the biblical texts (Exo 21:2; Deut 15:12; Jer 34:9,14) in which the term 'Hebrew' is used were conscious of the situation of the Habiru and used their images to designate the Israelite slaves.

²⁰ Cf. Naaman, *Canaan in the Second Millennium*, p. 269.

²¹ Cf. Weippert, *The Settlement of the Israelite Tribes in Palestine*, pp. 87-88; Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh*, pp. 421-422.

²² Cf. Naaman, *Canaan in the Second Millennium*, p. 270; A. Phillips, *Ancient Israel's Criminal Law: A New Approach to the Decalogue*. Oxford, 1970, pp. 73-4; Phillips, 'The Laws of Slavery: Exodus 21:2-11' *JOT*, 30 (1984), pp. 51-66, (57).

However, one must not forget to acknowledge the difference in the use of the two terms and the changes that the appellation 'Habiru' underwent in the tradition of the Old Testament. The distinct biblical term 'Hebrew slave' (Exo 21:2; Deut 15:12; Jer 34:9,14) may well illustrate this transformation. Studies of the Nuzi service contracts and Hebrew slave laws reveal some common traits about the Habiru and the Hebrew slave. Scholars are convinced that comparatively, while the Habiru were due to their status as migrants, foreigners entering Nuzi from neighbouring countries, the 'Hebrew slave' on the other hand, was designated as such because of his social status as an Israelite who was enslaved within his own society.²³ In fact, it is a characteristic feature of slavery that a slave must be a foreigner, an outsider. If one is a native, one becomes a foreigner by falling through the socio-economic net into poverty. Such an individual who thus falls out was considered a foreigner, a socially dead person. It is important at this point to make a short detour, to discuss the relationship between slavery and social death, so as to show that 'Hebrew slaves' were in essence the Habiru of the Israelite society.

'Hebrew Slaves' as Socially Dead Israelites

Extensive comparative historical and cultural sociological studies of slavery from the antiquity to the modern era have revealed that one enduring and defining characteristic feature of slavery is social death or civil death. Social or civil death has two modes of representation: intrusive and extrusive. In the intrusive mode, a slave is a foreigner and usually a prisoner of war, therefore is depicted as an enemy. Thus, slavery was a salvific option for individuals who were supposed to die in the hands of their captors, but spared. Since being captured in battle situations usually meant the captured individuals would be killed, in their community of origin, such individuals were considered dead. On the other hand, in the new community, the society of their captors, they were not related to anyone, hence were 'socially dead'. From this perspective, Patterson observes that a slave was not only symbolic of a defeated enemy, but also

²³ Cf. Weippert, *The Settlement of the Israelite Tribes in Palestine*, pp. 85-87; Rowton, 'Dimorphic Structure and the Problem of the 'Apiru-'ibrîm', p. 19; N. P. Lemche, 'The 'Hebrew Slave'. Comments on the Slave Law Ex. XXI 2-11'. *VT* 25 (1975), pp. 129-144.

reflected the power of the local gods, and the superior honour of the enslaving community.²⁴

In their new status as slaves, the defeated enemies had to be desocialised, de-sexualised, depersonalised, deracialised and decivilised. In fact, they had to be assigned new identity so as to be 'integrated' in the host community. Slaves were therefore given for example; new names, new 'parents', new 'kinsmen', 'new gender roles and new race'. Literally, everything had to change upon integration into the host society.²⁵ As socially dead people, slaves were like newly born babies who have no past but the future, which again they did not control. Slaves lived at the whims and mercy of their masters. Like animals they lived on the fringes of the cosmos, without the capacity to make history; that is to determine their own lives. Catherine Hezser, concurs with this observation when she noted that,

irrespective of the slave's local or foreign origin, his or her state was characterised by what is called total alienation. The first step toward this alienation was the captured or sold person's desocialisation. He was taken away from and/or no longer considered part of the social group from which he originated. All ancestral and kinship ties were severed, whereas new ties could not be established. Whether he was introduced into a new culture and society or remained within his land of origin, the slave was seen as an alien by the insiders who were linked by kinship or social ties. Removed from his own milieu he had lost his ethnic, national, and religious heritage and was socially dead.²⁶

The idea of social death is so central and important in defining slavery that the Roman law regarded the slave as 'one who recognised no father

²⁴ Cf. Patterson, *Slavery and Social death*, p. 39.

²⁵ Cf. Hezser, *Jewish Slavery in Antiquity*, p. 27; Meillassoux, *The Anthropology of Slavery*, pp. 100-127; In Roman society, Moses Finley, *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology*. London, 1980, p. 75, has pointed out that 'the slave was always a deracinated outsider-an outsider first in the sense that he originated from outside the society into which he was introduced as a slave, second in the sense that he was denied the most elementary social bonds, kinship; Cf. Joshel, *Work, Identity, and Legal Status at Rome*, p. 36, observes that in contrast to names of free Roman citizens, 'the slave's name was a badge of kinlessness and non-membership in any legitimate social order'.

²⁶ Cf. Hezser, *Jewish Slavery in Antiquity*, p. 10; Cf. Hezser, 'The Social Status of Slaves in the Talmud Yerushalaim and in Greco-Roman Society', in Peter Schäfer (ed.), *The Talmud Yerushalaim and Graeco-Roman Culture*. Vol. 3, Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism 93, Tübingen 2002, p. 108; Cf. Meillassoux, *The Anthropology of Slavery*, p. 106.

or fatherland'. This concept is implied in some of the Old Testament manumission laws. According to Patterson, Hebrew slavery in law and practice, in both ancient and medieval times was highly intrusive. But he does not dismiss domestic slavery, for he argues that even fellow Jews (Israelites) could be enslaved in the Biblical times, but the slave was considered as the quintessential enemy within.²⁷ The notion that slaves were to be exclusively of foreign origin in Israel as expressed in Leviticus 25:44 should be interpreted as a later development which again was not always reflective of reality on the ground. As a matter of fact, like the rest of the ancient Near East, Israelites enslaved their own men and women as debt-slaves as implied in the manumission laws (Exo 21:2-6, 20-21, 26-27; Deut 15:12-18; Lev 25:39-55).

Therefore, in sharp contrast to the intrusive conception of social death was the extrusive representation of slavery. This was the most common in Israel. In this case, the dominant image of the slave was that of an insider who had fallen; one who ceased to belong and had been expelled from normal participation in the community because of a failure to meet certain minimal legal and socio-economic norms of behaviour. That is, while the destitute committed no overt crime, their failure to survive on their own was taken as a sign of innate incompetence and a divine disfavour.²⁸ In Israel, this was particularly true given the prevalence of the official theology predicated on the equation of blessings/material riches and curses/poverty as rewards for either righteousness or sinfulness respectively.

It is from this perspective that we can understand the meaning of 'Hebrew slave' in the manumission laws in Exo 21, Deut 15 and other places in the Old Testament as concerning the poor members of the Israelite society. By virtue of them losing land, their source of identity and livelihood, the destitute became foreigners, outsiders, 'enemies', and Habiru, so to speak in their own society of origin. Their condition meant that they were socially dead. According to Patterson therefore,

we may summarise the two modes of representing social death....by saying that in the intrusive mode the slave was conceived of as someone who did not belong because he was an outsider, while in the extrusive mode the slave became an outsider because he did not (or no longer) belonged. In

²⁷ Cf. Patterson, *Slavery and Social death*, p. 40.

²⁸ Cf. Patterson, *Slavery and Social death*, p. 41.

the intrusive the slave was an external exile, an intruder; in the extrusive he was an internal exile, one who had been deprived of all claims of community. The one fell because he was an enemy, the other became an enemy because he had fallen.²⁹

From this standpoint, we can observe that while Habiru represented an outsider, Hebrew slave represented an insider who has become an outsider because he has fallen. The comparison clearly illustrates the development of the term 'Hebrew' within the biblical tradition and the increasing difference that developed in the use of the terms 'Habiru' and 'Hebrew'.³⁰ Be that as it may, there is almost consensus among scholars that the term 'Hebrew' was not widespread in common usage. From the analysis above, one is left with the conviction that it was confined to individuals not to a nation or a whole ethnic group and more importantly the term was confined only to literary usage and not colloquially. Therefore, the application of the term 'Hebrews' to large groups of Israelites was probably confined exclusively to the literary sphere; possibly influenced by the stories in the books of Samuel. The 'literalisation' of the term 'Hebrew' in the tradition of the Old Testament further affected the late development of the name in the post-Old Testament period. As is well known, the designation 'Hebrew' appears in non-canonical Jewish literature: Josephus, Philo, and the New Testament, where it becomes a synonym of the ethnonym 'Israelite'.³¹

The use of this term 'Hebrew' in these late periods depends entirely on the terminology of the Old Testament, reflecting the influence of biblical literary traditions on authors who could not have been aware of the complicated background and changes that occurred in the use of the term. Also, it is possible that the term could have been used indiscriminately referring to all Israelites after the destruction of the First Temple which forced a number of them into exile.³² It is from this complicated background that we take 'Hebrew slave' in manumission laws (Exo 21:2-6, 20-21, 26-27; Deut 15:12-18; Lev 25:39-55) as denoting an Israelite who

²⁹ Patterson, *Slavery and Social death*, p. 44.

³⁰ Cf. Naaman, *Canaan in the Second Millennium*, p. 271.

³¹ Cf. H. Parzen, 'The Problem of the 'ibrîm' (Hebrews) in the Bible'. *AJSLL* 49 (1932-33) pp. 254-261 (especially pp. 255-258); Lewy, 'Origin and Signification of the Biblical Term 'Hebrew'', (p.1); M. P. Gray, 'The Habiru-Hebrew Problem in the Light of the Source Material Available at Present', *HUCA* 29 (1958), pp. 188-193.

³² Cf. Naaman, *Canaan in the Second Millennium*, p. 271.

fell into slavery after losing land, something that was very common in Israel, as we have pointed out already.

Israelite Manumission Laws

Before I focus on selected individual sets of laws concerning manumission of slaves in the Pentateuch, I briefly highlight here the various texts that generally deal with or have an implication on the subject of slavery as the broader context for understanding individual laws. The treatment of slaves in the Pentateuch is discussed in many different legal stipulations which can be categorized according to the following topics: Manumission of male slaves (Exo 21:2-6; Lev 25:39-42,47-55); Marriage and Manumission of female slaves (Exo 21:7-11; Deut 21:10-14); Sex outside marriage (Lev 19:20-22); Coveting (Exo 20:17; Deut 5:21); Assault (Exo 21:20-21,26-27,32); Sabbath (Exo 20:10; Deut 5:14); Sabbatical Year, Lev 25:6; Offerings (Deut 12:12, 18); Feats (Deut 16:11-14); Miscellaneous (Lev 25:44-45, (on permanent slavery); Runaway slaves (Deut 23:15-16).

While all various laws undoubtedly show an unparalleled special concern for the wellbeing of a slave, there is nevertheless some confusion as to whom these laws apply, since the term עֶבֶד (slave) (as I have discussed above), and similar terms are employed in most of these slave laws of the Old Testament. That is, do these slave laws apply exclusively to foreign chattel-slaves, or to Israelite debt-slaves, or to both types of slaves? The cases in which it is difficult to determine whether it is chattel-and/or debt-slaves referred to are found in the laws concerning assault in the Covenant Code (i.e., Exo 21:20-21, 26-27, 28-32). On the other hand, the interpretation of the debt-slave laws in Exo 21:2-6, 7-11 has by and large been influenced by the interpretation of these controversial slave laws in Exo 21:20-21, 26-27.³³ As I have noted, to some scholars, it is not possible that these laws could be talking about the Israelites enslaving fellow Israelites; thus these laws are talking about foreign slaves in Israelite homes. However, it is clear as I am going to demonstrate (and as I have argued above) that these laws dealt with slavery as it was practiced by Israelites against fellow country men and women, whom they had set up to fall into slavery.

³³ Cf. Chirichigno, *Debt-Slavery in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, pp.146-7.

Exo 21:20-21; 26-27: Context for Interpretation of Manumission Laws

Since the interpretation of debt-slavery laws (Exo 21:2-6,7-11; Deut 15:12-18; Lev 25:39-55) which are the subject matter of our discussion here has by and large been influenced by the interpretation of the slave laws in Exo 21:20-21, 26-27, it is important that we begin by an extensive discussion on these verses. Unlocking the context and meaning of these verses allows us to understand all the other texts of concern to this study.

- 20 When a man strikes his slave, male or female, with a rod and the slave dies under his hand, he shall be punished.
21 But if the slave survives a day or two, he is not to be punished; for the slave is his money.

וְכִי־יִכֶּה אִישׁ אֶת־עַבְדּוֹ אוֹ אֶת־אִמָּתוֹ בַּשֶּׁבֶט וּמַת תַּחַת יָדוֹ נָקַם יִנָּקֶם:
אֶדְ אִם־יֹוֹם אוֹ יוֹמִים יַעֲמֹד לֹא יִקָּם כִּי כֶסֶף הוּא:

- 26 When a man strikes the eye of his slave, male or female, and destroys it, he shall let the slave go free for the eye's sake.
27 If he knocks out the tooth of his slave, male or female, he shall let the slave go free for the tooth's sake

וְכִי־יִכֶּה אִישׁ אֶת־עֵיַן עַבְדּוֹ אוֹ־אֶת־עֵיַן אִמָּתוֹ וְשִׁחַתָּהּ לַחֲפָשִׁי יִשְׁלַחְנוּ:
תַּחַת עֵינָו:
וְאִם־שֵׁן עַבְדּוֹ אוֹ־שֵׁן אִמָּתוֹ יִפִּיל לַחֲפָשִׁי יִשְׁלַחְנוּ תַּחַת שֵׁנוֹ:

This case deals with a master who strikes his slave with a rod or a wooden object (Num 35:18), which was usually understood to be the normal method used for the punishment of slaves (and also children) (Prov 10:13; 13:24).³⁴ Appalling as it may sound, we have to understand the provisions of this law in context of slavery in general. Throughout

³⁴ Cf. S. R. Driver, *The Book of Exodus: With Introduction and Notes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911, p. 218; Paul, *Studies in the Book of the Covenant*, p.69; Cf. Chirichigno, *Debt-Slavery in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, p.178-82.

history, as I have argued above, one of the facets through which social death manifests in the institution of slavery is animalisation of the person, the slave. Slaves were seen as similar to animals in three regards. First, they had to work like animals for their owners and were not paid for it. And like animals, the sick and old slaves were considered a burden to be discarded rather than supported and maintained. Second, slaves' bodies could not be protected against physical abuse and sexual exploitation, since they had no control over their bodies. Third, slaves were sold like animals.³⁵ It is these aspects of animalisation of the slave that gave his masters total control over him.

Although some passages in the Old Testament confine the harsh exploitative treatment to foreign slaves only (Lev 25:46), in the previous chapter we have realised that Israelites bought slaves from within their communities. And it was normal for such slaves to be treated as chattel-slaves, as animals. Some patriarchal stories indicate that slaves have been counted alongside animals. For instance, we are told that in Egypt Abraham 'acquired sheep, oxen, asses, male and female slaves, she-asses, and camels' (Gen 12:16). Jacob is also described as sending a message to Esau telling him that he had 'acquired cattle, asses, sheep, and male and female slaves' (Gen 32:5). Again like animals, Isaac's slaves are subjected to hard physical labour such as digging wells (Gen 26:19). It seems hard, manual labour was always inseparable from slavery since the ancient times. During the first two centuries A.D, Roman writers on slavery addressed work as an essential element in the slave's existence, such that in wills slaves could be identified by their jobs without their names. As such, various writers have regarded a slave as an 'instrumentum vocale' (the tool that is able to speak).³⁶ And as they laboured, physical punishment was the order of the day. As elsewhere in the ancient Near East, in the Israelite society, the physical punishment of slaves was taken as normal: 'A slave cannot be disciplined by words. Though he may comprehend, he does not respond' (Prov 29:19).

It is probably this violence against slaves that was so common that the master's abuse of his power had to be curtailed (Exo 21:20-1). Because of the brutality of slave masters insinuated in the text which in fact seems to be condoned by the law, some scholars have interpreted Exo 21:20-12;

³⁵ Cf. Hezser, *Jewish Slavery in Antiquity*, p. 57.

³⁶ Cf. Joshel, *Work, Identity, and Legal Status at Rome*, pp. 49-50.

26-27 as pertaining exclusively to chattel-slaves, foreigners. However, it seems quite clear that Exo 21:20-21, 26-27 refer to debt-slaves, except for Exodus 21:32 which clearly refers to chattel-slaves, which Cardellini calls (*echte-Sklaven*)-real or actual slaves.³⁷ And as is implied by the laws, apart from being treated like children, corporal punishment of slaves was a constant feature. This does not only relate to foreign chattel-slaves but applied to debt-slaves also. Thus, Cardellini is justified to interpret these laws as based upon the older Cuneiform tradition that initially referred to chattel-slaves but have been reworked by the biblical authors in order to make them applicable to Hebrew debt-slaves. But for him, there still remains in the received text a visible link between the older legal material, which shares similarities with some ancient Near Eastern legal stipulations and the new reworking.³⁸

Arguing from this perspective, Cardellini therefore advances three main lines of opinion to support the idea that these laws refer exclusively to Hebrew debt-slaves. First, he argues that, the reworked biblical laws were unique in that they afforded rights to slaves by legally curtailing the authority of the master, a situation not present in the Cuneiform tradition. In Israel, as explicit in Exo 21:20-21, 26-27, it is the owner who is guilty of maltreating slaves, while in the Cuneiform laws the only laws that deal with the mistreatment of slaves concerned cases where a slave was assaulted by someone other than the owner (cf. Code/Law of Hammurabi 199, 201, 213, 219). The owner had total and full control over the slave that he could even kill the slave without consequences. But such was not the case in Israel. According to Cardellini, the Israelite motivation clause in v.21 shows great improvement from the Cuneiform laws in that it establishes a legal distinction between intentional and unintentional homicide, something that would never have been considered in the case of a chattel-slave in the Cuneiform tradition.³⁹

In the same vein, according to H.W. Wolff, the master's inability to treat his slave in a humane fashion evident in the beating until the slave loses

³⁷ Cf. Cardellini, *Die biblischen 'Sklaven'-Gesetze*, pp. 265-68, 343-47; B. S. Jackson, 'Biblical Laws of Slavery: a Comparative Approach', in L-Archer (ed.), *Slavery and Other forms of Unfree Labour*. HWS; London: Routledge, 1988, pp. 86-101; R. Westbrook, *Studies in Biblical and Cuneiform Law*. CahRB, 26; Paris: Gabalda, 1988, pp. 89-101; Cf. Chirichigno, *Debt-Slavery in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, p.178.

³⁸ Cf. Cardellini, *Die biblischen 'Sklaven'-Gesetze*, pp. 343-47.

³⁹ Cf. Cardellini, *Die biblischen 'Sklaven'-Gesetze*, pp.265-266.

an eye or tooth may also have been a motivating factor in the Israelite community for this regulation requiring that the slave be set free (Exo 21:20-21, 26-27). Wolff believes that here the Book of the Covenant goes significantly further in the slave's favour than the Code of Hammurabi, paragraph 199: which states that: 'If he has destroyed the eye of a seigner's slave or broken the bone of a seigner's slave, he shall pay one-half his value'. But in Israel, the master's right of ownership finds its limit when his slave endures serious physical injury.⁴⁰ From this line of argument, the reworked Israelite slave laws evidence a conscious departure from the older tradition of the ancient Near East. We can thus safely assume that Israelite laws were revolutionary and were concerned with liberating the slave from the grip of the master. However, for a people who purport to have been delivered by Yahweh from slavery, the changes did not go far enough. More could have been done to eradicate slavery.

Second, Cardellini observes the similar use of vocabulary between the other manumission laws of Hebrew debt-slaves and the law in Exo 21:26-27. The basic argument is that Exo 21:2b,26b,27b; Deut 15:12b and Jer 34:9,10,11,14,16 have a similar vocabulary and syntactical structure. On that basis, the formular *הִפַּשְׁתָּ שְׂלָחָה* (you shall let go) which is found in all the above texts, refers specifically to the manumission of Hebrew debt-slaves⁴¹ and not to the permanent slaves-chattel slaves. Third, the biblical law in Exo 21:20-21 is based upon the legal tradition present in Cuneiform laws which sanctioned the death penalty when a distraint (free man) was killed in the house of a creditor.⁴² Because of its reference to the distraint who is a free man, the law can only be referring to an Israelite slave, for chattel slaves were not free men. That Exo 21:20-21, 26-27 refer to Hebrew debt-slaves is further attested by the use of the same terminology in the debt-slave law in Exo 21:2-6. For Cardellini, if the contexts were indeed different, logically different terminologies could have been used in the other slave laws in the Covenant Code. For

⁴⁰ Cf. W.H. Wolff, 'Master and Slaves: On Overcoming Class-Struggle in the Old Testament', *Interpretation* 27, 1973, p. 267.

⁴¹ Cf. Cardellini, *Die biblischen 'Sklaven'-Gesetze*, pp. 265-266; Jackson, 'Biblical Laws of Slavery: a Comparative Approach', p. 96; Cf. Chirichigno, *Debt-Slavery in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, pp.177-80; Mark Leuchter, 'The Manumission Laws in Leviticus and Deuteronomy: The Jeremiah Connection', *JBL* 127 No. 4 (2008), pp. 635-653.

⁴² Cf. Cardellini, *Die biblischen 'Sklaven'-Gesetze*, pp. 265-266. For criticism of Cardellini, see Chirichigno, *Debt-Slavery in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, p.178-82.

instance, in Exo 21:2, we find the expression עֶבֶד עִבְרִי (Hebrew slave) the same phrase used in other manumission laws, which clearly limits the application of this law to Hebrews-Israelites in slavery as I have demonstrated above.

The fact that slave laws in Exod. 21:2-11 are structurally parallel to the introduction of the Decalogue, in which the release of Israel from Egypt occupies a special place (Exo 20:2; 19:1,4; 23:9,15) is another piece of evidence not only showing that these laws pertained to Israelite slaves⁴³ - the Hebrews, but that the laws also carry a liberation motif. This becomes more compelling an argument, especially considering that the verb יָצָא is used in Exo 21:2b to refer to the release of debt-slaves: 'but on the seventh he shall go out (יָצָא) as a free man'. The same verb is used again in Exo 20:2 אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִיךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מִבֵּית עֶבְדִּים: 'I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the house of slavery',⁴⁴ with the same connotation of God's action in releasing the Israelites from servitude.

This release of Israel from Egypt also plays an important role in the manumission laws of Deut 15:12-18 and Lev 25:39-54, in which specific references to this release are found. The release from Egypt is the basis upon which release of debt-slaves should be done. Thus, scholars observe that while the Holiness Code concludes with laws of release, the Covenant Code opens with the law of release.⁴⁵ Reference to the 'Exodus' and release from captivity and Sabbath therefore cannot apply to the foreign slaves at all. The reference clearly points to the Israelites whose collective memory identifies their founding in the wilderness. Therefore 'release' relates to poor Israelites who had fallen into slavery, hence Hebrews. There were very few options for such individuals whose eco-

⁴³ Cf. U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus*. Jerusalem: Magnes, 1976, p. 266; Cf. Paul, *Studies in the Book of the Covenant*, pp. 106-107; Susanne Talabardon, 'Das Sklavenrecht in der Hebräischen Bibel und seine Interpretation bis zum Hochmittelalter', in Joachim Kügler, et al, (eds.), *Bibel Und Praxis: Beiträge des Internationalen Bibel-Symposiums 2009 in Bamberg*. Bayreuther Forum Transit 11, pp. 189-221.

⁴⁴ Cf. W.H. Gispen, *Exodus*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982, pp. 1-2, 206.

⁴⁵ Cf. M. Weinfeld, 'Justice and Righteousness in Ancient Israel Against the Background of 'Social Reforms' in the Ancient Near East', in H. J. Nissen and J. Renger (eds.), *Mesopotamien und seine Nachbarn: Politische und Kulturelle Wechselbeziehungen im Alten Vorderasien vom 4. bis 1. Jahrtausend v Chr. Teil 1 & 2*. BVO 1. Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1982, pp. 491-519 (510); Cf. Chirichigno, *Debt-Slavery in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, p. 217.

conomic circumstances had deteriorated to render the family destitute. Initially to avoid slavery, a desperate father could for instance, sell his daughter into slavery, in the double capacity of slave and concubine. But eventually circumstances of debt would force such whole families to fall into slavery by selling off their land. It is these Israelites, Hebrews whose predicament is captured in Exo 21:7-11.

Context and Interpretation of Exo 21:7-11

7 When a man sells his daughter as a slave, she shall not go out as the male slaves do.

וְכִי־יִמְכַר אִישׁ אֶת־בִּתּוֹ לְאִמָּה לֹא תֵצֵא כְצֵאת הָעֶבְדִּים:

8 If she does not please her master, who has designated her for himself, then he shall let her be redeemed; he shall have no right to sell her to a foreign people, since he has dealt faithlessly with her.

אִם־רָעָה בְעֵינָי אֲדֹנָיָהּ אֲשֶׁר־לָא (לוֹ) יַעֲדָהּ וְהִפְדָּהּ לְעַם נָכְרִי לֹא־יִמְשַׁל לְמַכְרָהּ בְּבַגְדוֹ־בָּהּ:

9 If he designates her for his son, he shall deal with her as with a daughter.

וְאִם־לְבָנוּ יַעֲדָנָהּ כְּמִשְׁפֵּט הַבָּנוֹת יַעֲשֶׂה־לָּהּ:

10 If he takes another wife to himself, he shall not diminish her food, her clothing, or her marital rights.

אִם־אֶחָרָת יִקַּח־לָּהּ שְׂאֵרָה כְּסוּתָהּ וְעִנְתָּהּ לֹא יִגְרַע:

11 And if he do not these three unto her, then shall she go out free without money.

וְאִם־שְׁלֹשׁ־אֵלֶּה לֹא יַעֲשֶׂה לָּהּ וַיֵּצֵאָהּ חֲנָם אִין כְּסָף:

There are generally two competing scholarly positions regarding the interpretation and context of Exo 21:7-11. One position is that here we are dealing with the general sale of children into slavery, something that was very common in ancient Near East when the family was economically depressed. But the second position interprets Exo 21:7-11 as dealing with the selling of a daughter for sexual purposes by the master. While the first position cannot be totally dismissed, the second position seems to hold water. Gregory Chirichigno has observed that that Exo 21:7-11 deals with a particular type of marriage contract, as opposed to a more

general sale for household or non-sexual labour, is demonstrated by the existence of extant Nuzi contracts entitled in English, 'Tablet of daughtership and daughter-in-lawship'.⁴⁶ In the ancient Near East, these contracts allowed a man who adopted a slave girl to marry her himself or give her in marriage to one of his sons or male slaves, or to another man outside the purchaser's household. In this context, the slave girl also could be inherited. In Israel, on the contrary, certain rights not found in the Nuzi contracts are bestowed on the slave girl. In Exo 21:7-11, for instance, it is clear that the slave girl is no longer considered a type of property that can be passed from one husband to the next as was common and legally allowed in the ancient Near East; she is considered a free maiden or daughter if she was designated for the purchaser's son (verse, 9).⁴⁷ The biblical injunction is therefore quite liberating and progressive compared to the others. It safeguarded the slave girl against abuse by male members of the host family.

Be that as it may, it is difficult to know if the society complied with such regulations or not. In their state of powerlessness, is it not possible that some masters and their male relatives ended up sexually abusing such slave girls or treating them as inheritance as they were treated in the rest of the ancient Near East? Given that the ancient Israelite society, especially the eighth century Israel, had become so corrupt and morally bankrupt as we have seen in the previous chapter, can we not assume that sexual abuse of slave girls was a common scenario? It is with these questions that we try to find clues from Amos 2: 7 that could afford us a small window to assume the prevalence of sexual abuse of such slave girls in the households of their masters, against the law. It is my assumption that Amos 2:7 helps us understand the context of Exo 21:7-11. When discovered that there was rampant sexual exploitation of slave girls in eighth century Israel, such information becomes very crucial not only in dating Exo 21:7-11 and all the manumission laws but also for comparison with Zimbabwean domestic workers who although the law

⁴⁶ Cf. Chirichigno, *Debt-Slavery in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, p. 246.

⁴⁷ Cf. Mendelsohn, 'The Conditional Sale into Slavery of Free-Born Daughters in Nuzi and the Law of Exodus 21:7-11', *JAOS* 55, (1935), pp. 190-95; Mendelsohn, 'Slavery in the Ancient Near East', *BA*, 9, (1946), pp. 74-88; Paul, *Book of the Covenant*, pp. 52-61; Cf. Reisener, *Der Stamm עַבְדֵי*, pp. 123, 129); T. L. Thompson, *Historicity of the Patriarchal Narratives: The Quest for the Historical Abraham*. BZAW 133. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1974, pp. 230-31.

prohibited such sexual unions, they have been exposed to sexual abuse by their master class in a similar way since the colonial era, owing to their powerlessness.

Understanding Exo 21:7-11 in the Light of Amos 2:7

Amos 2:7 has been interpreted in various ways. While, some scholars see it as an indictment against cultic prostitution,⁴⁸ some suggest that it is a rebuke against incest. Yet some understand Amos as reacting against sexual abuse of slave girls. At the centre of the controversy is the phrase; **וְאִישׁ וְאָבִיו יֵלְכוּ אֶל־הַנְּעָרָה** 'Father and son go (enter) into the same girl'. Part of the problem for lack of unanimity among scholars is the multiplicity of possible meanings of the words and phrases used in the passage. For those arguing for a cultic prostitution context, Amos 2:7 is read together with verse 8, thus: **אֲצֵל כָּל־מִזְבֵּחַ וַיִּין עֲנוּשִׁים יִשְׁחֹו בֵּית אֱלֹהֵיהֶם: וְאִישׁ וְאָבִיו יֵלְכוּ אֶל־הַנְּעָרָה וְעַל־בְּגָדֵיהֶם חִבְּלִים יִשּׂוּ** 'a man (father) and his son enter (go) into the same girl' and they 'lay themselves down beside every altar in garments taken in pledge'. From this perspective, Amos 2:7, 8 are interpreted in the light of Amos 6:4-7 which is claimed to be alluding to fertility cult rituals or 'cult festive meal' enjoyed among the wealthy class.⁴⁹ Such a festival is attested in the Ugarit texts, and is understood as 'a social and religious institution in which included families, owned property, houses for meetings and vineyards for wine supply, as associated with specific deities, and met periodically, perhaps monthly, to

⁴⁸ Cf. A. Weiser, *Die Prophetie des Amos*. BZAW 53. Giessen: Töpelmann, 1929, p. 141; G. Pfeiffer, 'Denkformenanalyse als exegetische Methode, erläutert an Amos 1, 2-2,16,' ZAW 88 (1976) pp. 56-71. (p. 67); Francis I Andersen and David Noel Freedman, *Amos: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. London: Doubleday, 1989, pp. 318-321, concluded that: 'when we look at the crimes charged against the nations, only the last two, Judah and Israel, are accused of specifically religious offenses, which amount to rejecting the covenant and not giving Yahweh due worship and service...in Israel's case more detail is given, and the charges cover a spectrum of unacceptable practices; but the critical element seems to be the worship of other gods, or the corruption of the worship of Yahweh'.

⁴⁹ Richard M. Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh: Sexuality in the Old Testament*. Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007, p. 109.

celebrate for several days at a stretch with food and drink and sometimes, if not regularly, with sacral sexual orgies'.⁵⁰

Building upon, this perspective, some have insinuated incest since the festival was organised by rich families. Thus *וְאִישׁ וְאָבִיו* (a man and his son) is interpreted as reference to real biological relations. However, it is very doubtful that Amos was dealing with incest here. If it was incest that was meant, it would have been easy (for Amos or the redactor) to say that 'a man had intercourse with his father's wife (cf. Lev 20:11) or with father's concubine'.⁵¹

A common approach therefore is that *וְאִישׁ וְאָבִיו* is not meant to be literal. The phrase just connotes the prevalence of the practice of 'a man and his son going into the same maid'. Hence for those scholars in support of cultic prostitution, the phrase indicates the spread of sacred prostitution among old and young; in other words, among all members of the society and not the sharing of the sin in the nuclear family. That is, *וְאִישׁ* (a man) is used in this case in the distributive sense, whereby it means 'each' and not just two men, but everybody is doing it and have been doing it for generations. Cultic prostitution has been further implied by the fact that Amos 2:7 uses the verb *הִלַּךְ* which literally is 'walk' to the *same* girl, therefore suggesting a religious pilgrimage to a shrine.⁵² This position is also based upon the assumption that there was rampant sacred prostitution in the Semitic regions, in which 'Israel shared a lot of cultural elements'.⁵³

However, it seems very unlikely that Amos was addressing cultic prostitution here, let alone incest.⁵⁴ While the theory could be quite compelling, it does not situate Amos 2:7 in both the immediate and overall

⁵⁰ Marvin H. Pope, 'A Divine Banquet at Ugarit', in James M. Efrid (ed.) *The Use of the Old Testament in the New and Other Essays: Studies in Honour of William Franklin Stinespring*. Durham, N. C.: Duke University Press, 1972, p. 193.

⁵¹ Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, p. 318.

⁵² Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, p. 318.

⁵³ Alberto Soggin, *The Prophet Amos: A Translation and Commentary*. London: SCM Press, 1987, p. 48; Bernard Thorogood, *A Guide to Amos*. London: SPCK: 1995, p. 23; Richard S. Cripps, (ed.), *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Amos*. London: SPCK, 1929, p. 142; Charles M Laymon, (ed.), *The Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary on the Bible*. London: Abingdon Press, p. 468; D. Guthrie, et al, (eds.), *New Bible Commentary*. England: InterVarsity Press, 1988.

⁵⁴ Cf. Paul M. Shalom, *Amos: A Commentary on the Book of Amos*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991, pp. 82-83.

context of Amos. Notwithstanding that Amos could have addressed religious matters, overall he is a prophet dealing with issues of social justice; the exploitation of the poor by the rich who claim to be religious by frequenting religious shrines and by paying tithes and freewill offerings (Amos 4:4-5). Thus, Amos 2:7 should be connected to verse 6, where oppression or exploitation of the poor looms large, which is the thrust of his message. According to Amos 2.6, Israel, the ruling elite is mainly guilty of ‘selling the righteous for silver and the need for a pair of sandals’ עַל־מִכְרָם בַּכֶּסֶף צְדִיק וְאַבְיוֹן בְּעִבּוֹר נַעֲלָיִם.

This approach is plausible given that Amos 2:7 does not begin a new oracle; it simply expands the indictment and further delineates (after the past crimes listed in the former verse) the ongoing offenses for which Israel is guilty. Unlike those oracles of the foreign nations (which enumerate only past transgressions) the accusations against Israel, are in the present and reflect the social situation current at the time of the prophet himself.⁵⁵ Hence, Gottwald observes that:

if we pay heed to the crushing of the poor as the central sin Amos condemns and to the way he pictures divine activity through rhetorical questions and figures of speech from natural and social world of rural Palestine, we can make an informed estimate of what weighed most in his thinking. He knew at firsthand about the murderous oppression of the poor; not only did he detest that oppression, but he knew that it was diametrically opposed to Yahweh’s wishes.⁵⁶

It is in this eighth century context of Amos where the poor were crushed and oppressed by the rich that Exodus 21 is situated. Hence, chances are high that Amos 2:7 is addressing sexual exploitation of the slave girls, the ones that are the subject matter in Exo 21:7-11 and Lev 12:17.⁵⁷ This interpretation makes sense considering the prevalence of debt-slavery in which the debtors who were legally free citizens had no choice but to serve as slaves in households,⁵⁸ as implied in Amos 2:6. While there are

⁵⁵ Shalom, *Amos: A Commentary on the Book of Amos*, 79.

⁵⁶ Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible: A Socio-Literary Introduction*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985, p. 357.

⁵⁷ L. Markert, *Struktur und Bezeichnung des Scheltwortes: Eine gattungskritische Studie anhand des Amosbuches*. BZAW 140. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1977.

⁵⁸ Walter A. Elwell, (ed.), *The Marshall Pickering Commentary on the NIV*. Britain: Baker Book House Company, 1991, p. 632.

still some scholars who argue against this theory,⁵⁹ it should be noted that the objections do not hold water. A closer look at other biblical texts from the same era with Amos 2:7 and Exo 21:7-11, may as well show evidence of the prevalence of sexual abuse of slave girls by their masters. The story in Genesis 16: 1-6, which features Abram, Sarah and Hagar as key players, gives some clues about the powerlessness of the slave girls to deny sexual advances by their masters. Although the very details of what really transpired are difficult to come by, the story tells us that Abram was told by Sarah to sleep with Hagar their slave girl, to bear children on her behalf. We are not told if Hagar was employed in a double capacity of slave and wife or not. We are also not told about the reaction of Hagar to Abram's proposal or that of Sarah. But it seems clear that she had no power to deny whatever Abram and Sarah had agreed about her. While it was a common practice in the ancient Near East that when a legitimate wife failed to bear children a surrogate mother would be used for that purpose,⁶⁰ the text does not tell us if a hired hand/maidservant could be used for that purpose or not.

This story therefore could be showing evidence of the general sexual abuse of the slave girls in Israel as in the rest of the ancient Near East. But given that ancient Israel was a slave holding society as others, we could use evidence from elsewhere to conjecture the prevalence of sexual exploitation of slave girls as implied in Exo 21:7-11, Amos 2:7 and Gen 16:1-6. According to D. Brendan Nagle and Stanley M. Burstein, the 'Greek society of the 4th century BCE offered few legal measures to protect the slaves against their masters,...corporal punishment and free sexual access to their slaves were both permitted to masters....(in fact), freedom of sexual access by masters to their slaves is one of the basic characteristics of all slave systems'.⁶¹ Further, Martin Dale observes that

⁵⁹ Cf. Shalom, *Amos: A Commentary on the Book of Amos*, says that Amos 2:7 therefore deals with the general abuse of the lowly people, especially of female sex, however not a slave young woman, but just a 'young woman' who belongs to the same category as that of the others previously mentioned-just one more member of the defenceless and exploited beings in the northern Israel.

⁶⁰ Cf. Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh*, p. 455; Jennifer Glancy, 'The Mistress-Slave Dialect: Paradoxes of Three LXX Narratives' *JSOT* 21 (1996), pp. 71-87, (86).

⁶¹ D. Brendan Nagle and Stanley M. Burstein, *The Ancient World: Readings in Social and Cultural History*. Fourth Edition. New Jersey: Pearson Education, 2010. pp. 86, 91; Finley, *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology*, p. 93; Glancy, 'The Mistress-Slave Dialect', p. 80.

Jewish people were not an exception. Throughout history, 'Jewishness itself had little if any relevance for the structures of slavery among Jews... Slavery among Jews of the Greco-Roman period did not differ from the slave structures of those people among whom Jews were living'.⁶²

In the same vein, sociologists have observed that the exploitation of slaves even sexually was a result of depersonalisation, which leads to desexualisation. According to Claude Meillassoux, it is almost a universal norm that 'in any social system, to be a man or a woman means to be acknowledged as having certain functions and prerogatives linked to cultural notions of femininity or masculinity'. However, male and female slaves were largely excluded from these culturally defined functions and prerogatives.⁶³ As people whose gender had been severed so to speak, slave women had to work in the fields like men while men slaves were employed as domestics. Further, female slaves were sexually exploited and could not preserve their honour as free women did. The same applied to their male counterpart; since male slaves lacked free adult males' power and authority they could be used as sexual objects and be penetrated by male members of the master class.⁶⁴

Craig Williams argues that 'from the earliest of times it seems to have been understood that among the services that Roman men might expect their slaves to perform was the satisfaction of sexual desires...it seems always to have been assumed that the master would make such use of his slaves of both sexes'.⁶⁵ In the same direction, Joshel observes that although in the Roman Empire,

Imperial legislation limited the corporal treatment and sexual abuse of slaves; freedom for abandoned sick slaves; regulations against prostitution, castration, and condemnation to the arena; rulings against excessive cruelty and murder, none of this denied the master's physical domination of

⁶² Dale B. Martin, 'Slavery and the Ancient Jewish Family', in S.J.D. Cohen (ed.), *The Jewish Family in Antiquity*. BJS 289. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993, pp. 113-29.

⁶³ Cf. Meillassoux, *The Anthropology of Slavery*, p. 109.

⁶⁴ Cf. Joseph A. Marchal, 'The Usefulness of an Onesmus: The Sexual Use of Slaves and Paul's Letter to Philemon', *JBL* 130 No. 4 (2011), pp. 749-770. I however do not agree with his overall hypothesis that Onesmus must have been sexually useful to Paul while he was in prison.

⁶⁵ Craig A. Williams, *Roman Homosexuality: Ideologies of Masculinity in Classical Antiquity*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 18.

his slave or the slave's vulnerability, nor did it interfere with the master's sexual relations with his own slaves.⁶⁶

With this background, we can justifiably conclude that Exo 21:7-11, Amos 2:7 and Gen 16:1-6 depict common scenarios between masters and female slaves. Having established that Exo 21:20-21, 26-27 and to some extent, Exo 21:7-11, mark a significant departure from the general treatment of slaves in the ancient Near East and that the texts referred not to chattel-slaves but to poor Israelites, debt-slaves who were exploited by fellow countrymen (such that they could be exposed to beating sometimes with fatal consequences and sexual abuse), it is important to conclude the analysis of slavery laws in Exodus by returning to Exo 21:2-6 whose context and interpretation depends on the above texts.

Context and Interpretation of Exo 21:2-6

2 When you buy a Hebrew slave, he shall serve six years, and in the seventh he shall go out free, for nothing.

כִּי תִקְנֶה עֶבֶד עִבְרִי שֵׁשׁ שָׁנִים יַעֲבֹד וּבְשִׁבְעַת יָצֵא לְחֻפְשֵׁי חָנָם:

3 If he comes in single, he shall go out single; if he comes in married, then his wife shall go out with him.

אִם-בְּגִפּוֹ יָבֵא בְּגִפּוֹ יֵצֵא אִם-בְּעֵל אִשָּׁה הוּא וַיֵּצֵאָהּ אִשְׁתּוֹ עִמּוֹ:

4 If his master gives him a wife and she bears him sons or daughters, the wife and her children shall be her master's and he shall go out alone.

אִם-אֲדָנָיו יִתֶּן-לּוֹ אִשָּׁה וַיֵּלְדֶה-לּוֹ בָנִים אִוּ בָנוֹת הָאִשָּׁה וַיֵּלְדֶה תְּהִיָּה לְאֲדֹנָיָהּ וְהוּא יֵצֵא בְּגִפּוֹ:

5 But if the slave plainly says, 'I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free.'

וְאִם-אָמַר יֹאמֵר הָעֶבֶד אֶהְבֵּתִי אֶת-אֲדֹנָי אֶת-אִשְׁתִּי וְאֶת-בְּנֵי לֵא אֵצֵא חֻפְשִׁי:

⁶⁶ Joshel, *Work, Identity, and Legal Status at Rome*, pp. 30-31; Cf. Hezser, *Jewish Slavery in Antiquity*, p. 84; Finley, *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology*, p. 93; Glancy, 'The Mistress-Slave Dialect', pp. 71-87; Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006.

6 then his master shall bring him to God, and he shall bring him to the door or the doorpost; and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve him for life.

וְהִגִּישׁוּ אֹתוֹ אֶל־הָאֱלֹהִים וְהִגִּישׁוּ אֶל־הַדֹּלֶת אוֹ אֶל־הַמְּזוּזָה וְרִצַּע אָזְנוֹ
אֶת־אָזְנוֹ בַּמַּרְצֵעַ וְעָבְדוֹ לְעַלָּם:

As I have argued above, an Israelite who had lost his land, the Hebrew is the one that was referred to in Exo 21:2-6 (and Deut 15:12-18). These texts envisage the sale of persons caused by the defaulting on most likely an agricultural loan. This assumption is well supported by the many references to agriculture in the Covenant Code (cf. Exo 21:28-32, 33-34, 35-36; 22:1). Therefore, it is very plausible that the law in Exo 21:2-6 refers to a landless Israelite who is forced to sell himself because he can no longer maintain himself. Such an Israelite became a foreigner, an enemy because he/she was landless. In spite of the ill-treatment and abuse as implied in the texts above, in this condition of landlessness, the slave was so desperate that the only option as guarantee for facing the next day was to remain in slavery (as implied by Exo 21:5) by claiming to 'love his master, wife and children'. For such individuals who lost the land, the only means of production, it was better to face grilling conditions of slavery than the possibility of poverty, while only claiming to be free.⁶⁷ It should be emphasised that this professed 'love for master' was never genuine, but the only available option, for survival.

On one hand, masters themselves used every trick in the book to make sure the slave would prefer slavery to freedom after six years. For example, if the slave came as a single man, the master gave the wife to the slave during the six years of service. While this may appear as an act of

⁶⁷ Cf. M. Noth, *Exodus: A Commentary*. OTL. London: SCM Press, 1962, p. 178; J. P. Hyatt, *Exodus*. NCBC. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; London: Morgan & Scott, 1971, pp. 229; D. Daube, *The Exodus Pattern in the Bible*. ASSt, 2; London: Faber & Faber, 1963, p. 49; R. E. Clements, *Exodus*. CBC. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972, pp. 132-133; R. A. Cole, *Exodus: An Introduction and Commentary*. TOTC. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973, p. 166; A. Phillips, 'Some Aspects of Family Law in Pre-Exilic Israel', VT 23 (1973), pp. 349-361, (357); Phillips, 'The Laws of Slavery', p. 51; Heinisch, *Das Buch Exodus: übersetzt und erklärt*. DHSAT 1.2. Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1934, p. 164; For criticism of this position, see, Chirichigno, *Debt-Slavery in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, pp. 230-31; See also, Heaton, *Everyday Life in the Old Testament Times*, p. 142, who associates slavery with salvation for destitute individuals.

compassion on the part of the master, the intention was not for the advantage of the slave but for the master's.⁶⁸ In all fairness, it was false generosity, well calculated to disadvantage the slave in the end. It was a ploy by the masters to retain the labour of the slave knowing that after six years it would be difficult for the slave to lose everything including his wife and children, the only 'possessions' he had, so to speak, since he no longer had land. Further, the master knew that even if the slave was so fazed up with slavery and was willing to leave with his family, he would not get the funds to buy their freedom back, hence would be compelled by circumstances to stay put,⁶⁹ which in the end profits the master.

Such a slave by virtue of circumstances of poverty around him would legally see the transition in his life (and that of his family) from the state of temporary slaves, into permanent slavery (Exo 21:6). But again this was too risky since there was a possibility of being sold to pay debt of the owner or transferred as part of an inheritance at the death of the owner, something that was common with permanent, chattel-slaves.⁷⁰ This shows clearly the precariousness of the situation of the peasants/the poor of Israel in their struggle to survive in an exploitative environment.

Context and Interpretation of Deut 15:12-18

That masters gave a wife to a male slave for exploitative reasons other than well-meaning gestures becomes clear in Deut 15:12-18, where masters are told not 'to find it hard' to release their slaves free after six years, 'for at half the cost of a hired servant he has served you six years' (v.18). This phrase suggests that slave masters found it hard to lose cheap labour at the end of six years.

12 If your brother, a Hebrew man, or a Hebrew woman, is sold to you, he shall serve you six years, and in the seventh year you shall let him go free from you.

כִּי־יִמְכַר לְךָ אֶחָיִךְ הָעֶבְרִי אֹו הָעֶבְרִיָּה וְעַבְדְּךָ שֵׁשׁ שָׁנִים וּבִשְׁנָה
הַשְּׁבִיעִת תְּשַׁלְּחֵנוּ חֲפָשִׁי מֵעִמְךָ:

⁶⁸ Cf. B. S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974, p. 468.

⁶⁹ Cf. Matthews, 'The Anthropology of Slavery in the Covenant Code', p. 131.

⁷⁰ Phillips, 'The Laws of Slavery: Exodus 21:2-11', p. 51.

13 And when you let him go free from you, you shall not let him go empty-handed;

וְכִי־תִשְׁלַחְנֹו חֶפְשִׁי מֵעַמְּךָ לֹא תִשְׁלַחְנֹו רֵיקָם:

14 you shall furnish him liberally out of your flock, out of your threshing floor, and out of your wine press; as the LORD your God has blessed you, you shall give to him.

הֲעֵנִיק תַּעֲנִיֵק לוֹ מִצֹּאֲנֶךָ וּמִגֶּרְנֶךָ וּמִיִּקְבֶּךָ אֲשֶׁר בֵּרַכְךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ

תִּתְּזֹנְלוֹ:

15 You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God redeemed you; therefore I command you this today.

וְזָכַרְתָּ כִּי עֶבֶד הָיִיתָ בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וַיִּפְדֶּךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ עַל־כֵּן אֲנֹכִי מְצַוְךָ

אֶת־הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה הַיּוֹם:

16 But if he says to you, 'I will not go out from you,' because he loves you and your household, since he fares well with you,

וְהָיָה כִּי־יֹאמַר אֵלֶיךָ לֹא אֵצֵא מֵעַמְּךָ כִּי אֶהְבֶּדְךָ וְאֶת־בֵּיתְךָ כִּי־טוֹב לוֹ עִמָּךְ:

17 then you shall take an awl, and thrust it through his ear into the door, and he shall be your bondman forever. And to your bondwoman you shall do likewise.

וְלִקְחָתָ אֶת־הַמַּרְצֵעַ וְנָתַתָּה בְּאָזְנוֹ וּבִדְלַת וְהָיָה לְךָ עֶבֶד עוֹלָם וְאָף

לְאִמָּתְךָ תַּעֲשֶׂה־כֵּן:

18 It shall not seem hard to you, when you let him go free from you; for at half the cost of a hired servant he has served you six years. So the LORD your God will bless you in all that you do.

לֹא־יִקְשֶׁה בְּעֵינֶיךָ בְּשִׁלְחָךָ אֹתוֹ חֶפְשִׁי מֵעַמְּךָ כִּי מִשְׁנֶה שָׂכָר שְׂכִיר עֲבָדְךָ

שֵׁשׁ שָׁנִים וּבִרְכֶךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשֶׂה:

There is unanimity in scholarly circles that Deut 15:12-18 is based upon Exo 21:2-6. However, Deut 15:12-18 includes stipulations not found in Exo 21: 2-6, almost reflecting a deliberate departure or improvement from the stipulations of Exo 21. For example, Deut 15:12-18 stipulates the release of female debt-slaves, as well as exhorting owners to provide their debt-slaves, with provisions when they are released, both of which are absent in Exo 21:2-6. Also, Deut 15:12-18 omits the discussion con-

cerning the marital rights of the male debt-slave, as well as reference to taking debt-slaves to God's sanctuary when they wish to become permanent slaves,⁷¹ issues that are quite pronounced in Exo 21:2-6. Two main arguments have been brought forward trying to explain the omissions, which appear deliberate. The first argument is that, the author of Deut 15:12-18 saw no point in addressing issues that were already discussed in Exo 21:2-6. The assumption is that the author of Deut 15:12-18 agreed and was satisfied with the position taken in Exo 21:2-6. On the other hand, the skipping could have been done by the later editors to adapt Exo 21:2-6 to new circumstances and context, especially that Deut 15:12-18 was written after Exo 21:2-6.⁷² In this light, the author of Deut 15:12-18 edited Exo 21:2-6, removing issues that were no longer palatable with the later society. In other words, the editors disagreed with the position earlier adopted in Exo 21:2-6.

Although I disagree with Zipporah Glass' hypothesis that manumission laws of Deuteronomy 15 and the manumission of Hebrew debt-slaves in general, far from being humanitarian, 'served to enlarge the pool of unencumbered free labour available for hire because the cost of maintaining debt-slave labour had reached the point of exceeding the cost of free labour', I however agree with the author's suggestion that these manumission 'laws were quite capable of undergirding exploitative features of Israel's economic system while appearing to accommodate economically vulnerable persons'.⁷³ The explicit demand on masters to liberally provide their slaves upon release with the likes of cattle, grain and wine (Deut 15:13-14) is indeed a 'humanitarian' gesture and thus stands against Glass' hypothesis.

However, that the land was not returned at the end of the seven years means that the now released slave remained vulnerable. This is why the liberal provision was an advantage to the slave-owner and not the slave. It was false generosity, false humanitarian gesture and concealed exploitation, to say the least. That is, it was generosity that was not genuine. It was meant to preserve the exploitative status-quo. This fake generosity could be compared to a scenario whereby someone who after robs a

⁷¹ Cf. Chirichigno, *Debt-Slavery in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, p. 257.

⁷² Matthews, 'The Anthropology of Slavery in the Covenant Code', p. 120.

⁷³ Zipporah G. Glass, 'Land, Slave Labor and Law: Engaging Ancient Israel's Economy', *JOT* 91 (2000), pp. 27-39 (27-28).

family of its fortune only to turn up tomorrow as a humanitarian donor to the same family providing food, shelter and scholarships among others. Would this be regarded as generosity? Would this be considered as humanitarian? This is exactly what Deut 15:12-18 is about. Without demanding that the land be returned to the owners, the slaves, any measure it proclaimed was worthless. Thus, Glass should have premised the hypothesis on the issue of land. There is no mention in the text of the need for the slave masters to return confiscated land at the end of seven years. Therefore, agreeing to release slaves itself could have been one of the major concessions by the masters to the demands of slaves. Hence, the release and liberally providing the slaves was 'humanitarian', but not a genuine humanitarian gesture, for it did not address the fundamental issue of land.

In Deut 15:18 also, slave masters are explicitly told not to fear economic loss by releasing their slaves after six years, for they had already made huge profits, double the profit of a hired hand. And this stands against Glass' hypothesis. The implication of Deut 15:18 is that masters did not want to release their slaves because they feared economic loss. This shows that the giving of wife to the slave by the master may not have been anything out of great love or care for the slave but an economic strategy to maximise profit by retaining free labour, by making it difficult for the slave to go. Thus, while the measures adopted in the Israelite society, as reflected in Deut 15:12-18 are not radical enough, at least the departure from the previous society's position is a positive attempt towards improving conditions of slaves. Hence, Israelite manumission laws were somehow humanitarian and liberational.⁷⁴ The basis for humane treatment of slaves even upon release in Deut 15:12-18 is for the author an act of not only solidarity with the slaves but also an act rooted in the collective history of Israel: the society had to remember that it was founded by former slaves. And that history was supposed to stand as a guide in how they treated the underclasses.

The above position is a possibility considering that the laws contained in this legal collection (Deut 15:12-18) are organised according to the discussion of the Ten Commandments in Deut 5. It has been established

⁷⁴ Cf. Ernest Nicholson, 'Deuteronomy's Vision of Israel', in D. Garrone and F. Israele (eds.), *Storia e tradizioni di Israele: Studi in onore di J. Alberto Soggin*. Brescia: Paideia Editrice, 1991, pp. 191-204 (202).

that Deut 15:12-18 belongs to the large discussion contained in Deut 14:22-16:17, which has been organised around the theme of the Sabbath commandment in Deut 5:12-15. In Deut 14:28-16:17, for instance, there is an 'inner-biblical' connection between the Sabbath, Sabbatical release (Fallow Year), and pilgrimage festivals in Exo 23:10-14. On the Sabbath day, Deuteronomy emphasizes repeatedly that, above all, the slaves, both male and female, must have rest. The basis for this commandment is the remembrance of Israel's bondage 'in Egypt' (Deut 5:14).

We can assume that prior to this legislation, Israelite masters would rest and celebrate the Sabbath while their slaves, fellow Israelites toiled and laboured to maximise profit for the masters. Even after the legislation, there is no guarantee that masters obeyed it. Their concern was profit. In essence, as socially dead persons, slaves were effectively excluded from being part of the Israelite community. It is therefore emphasized literally that 'your manservant and your maidservant may rest *as well as you*' (יָנוּחַ עַבְדְּךָ וְאִמְתְּךָ כְּמוֹדְךָ). If this was followed, this is quite positive and liberating. I agree with Wolff's suggestion that 'here we find one of the first breakthroughs in the direction of thinking which sees the possibilities of equal rights and equal opportunities, and which seeks to overcome class conflict within the social structure'.⁷⁵

The Deuteronomic regulation for runaway slaves in chapter 23:15-16, which is unprecedented in the ancient Near East, is also important in this direction. It says, 'You shall not give up to his master a slave who has escaped from his master to you; he shall dwell with you, in your midst, in the place where he shall choose, in one of your towns, where it pleases him best; you shall not oppress him!' This law, as far as we can tell, is unique in the ancient Near East. In all other law codes the returning of a slave to his master is self-evident (cf. 1 Sam 30:15). But it is here impressed upon the free Israelite who is mindful of his God's acts in the history of salvation to be sympathetic to the runaway slave rather than to the slave master. The Israelite is to take sides with the oppressed, the slave and not with the oppressor, the master. Here therefore, as Wolff concludes, we perceive not only a trend toward the humane treatment of slaves which we already noted in the Covenant Code, but an apparently increasing tendency toward regarding the slave as the equal of a free man, and therefore a tendency which leads in the direction of the libera-

⁷⁵ Wolff, 'Master and Slaves', p. 269.

tion of slaves.⁷⁶ And as the text makes clear, this motive towards liberation of slaves is rooted in the history of Israel; that they had been slaves also.

Thus, in Deuteronomy, the constant reminder that Yahweh freed Israel from slavery in Egypt leads to unambiguous consequences. The slave who is set free is to be liberally provided for with goods (Deut 15:13-14) and thus is to share in the blessings of his master; he shall have rest 'the same as you'; a slave who has escaped shall not be given up to his master. For many scholars, since the origin of the Sabbath is intricately related to liberation from slavery in Egypt, the Sabbath in the land is related to liberation from slavery of fellow countrymen. This literary connection is strengthened by the appearance of the motivation clause **בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם** **יִזְכְּרֶתָּ כִּי־עַבְדֵּר הָיִיתָ** 'Remember that you were a slave in Egypt' (Deut 5:15 and 16:12) which smoothly fits into the context of 15:15 and 16:12.⁷⁷

The motivation clause in Deut 15:15 is aptly connected to the stipulation exhorting a slave owner to provide his released debt-slave liberally with provisions, while the motivation clause in Deut 16:12 is found at the end of the discussion concerning the observation of the feasts of Passover and of Weeks, both of which were first celebrated after God brought Israel out of Egypt.⁷⁸ The experience of slavery in Egypt was supposed to guide the Israelites in their legislature in order to avoid enslaving fellow countrymen (or maybe anyone for that matter). Later in the Israelite history particularly in the Exilic and post-Exilic era, deliverance from Egypt was combined with the concept of creation. The slave and the master were equal because both were created and delivered by the same Yahweh (Job 31:13-15). This is quite revolutionary in a society that associates riches (masters) with divine favour while poverty (slavery) is taken as a curse from God.

⁷⁶ Cf. Wolff, 'Master and Slaves', p. 269.

⁷⁷ Cf. S.A. Kaufman, 'The Structure of the Deuteronomic Law', *Maarav* 1 /2. 1978-79, pp. 105-58; G. Braulik, 'Die Abfolge der Gesetze in Deuteronomium 12-26 und der Dekalog', in N. Lohfink (ed.), *Das Deuteronomium: Entstehung, Gestalt und Botschaft*. BETL. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1985, pp. 252-72; Braulik, 'Zur Abfolge der Gesetze in Deuteronomium 16, 18-21, 23: Weitere Beobachtungen', *Bib* 69, (1988), pp. 63-91; Braulik, *Die deuteronomischen Gesetze und der Dekalog: Studien zum Aufbau Deuteronomium 12-26*. Stuttgarter Bibelstudien 145. Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1991.

⁷⁸ Cf. J.G. McConville, *Law and Theology in Deuteronomy*. JSOTSup 33. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984, p. 85.

One of the important innovations found in Deut 15:12-18 is the addition of the terms *הַעֲבָדִי אֶתְיָדְךָ הָעֲבָדִי* (your brother, a Hebrew man) and *הָעֲבָדָה* 'a Hebrew woman'. Although some scholars are sceptical about the meaning of the term *אָח* (brother) which is ubiquitous in the book of Deuteronomy, considering the overall context of slave laws, it clearly refers to an Israelite of low social class hence he becomes a Hebrew; one who sells himself on account of destitution.⁷⁹ The same position is maintained when one reads together Deuteronomy 15 and Leviticus 25, and by the comparison between the *עֲבָד* with the Habiru. The terms *הָעֲבָדִי אֶתְיָדְךָ הָעֲבָדִי* 'a Hebrew man or woman' from this comparison refer to a lower social class of Israelites who were forced by poverty or debt to 'sell themselves' into slavery.⁸⁰

Furthermore, as I have shown above, these terms in Deut. 15:12 refer specifically to a class of landless Israelites. And this perfectly fits the comparison between the biblical *עֲבָד* and Cuneiform Habiru. Therefore, in Deut 15 the term *אָח* is the one being qualified by *עֲבָדִי* 'Hebrew'. That is the phrase *הָעֲבָדִי אֶתְיָדְךָ הָעֲבָדִי* is a specific qualification of the broader term 'your brother' for the purpose of indicating the Israelite's social status; one who did not have land. Kaufman suggests that Deut 15:13-14, since it stipulates that an owner is to provide an 'endowment' for his released debt-slave, implies that alienated lands were not returned to their former owners at the 'release'.⁸¹ This explains why more often than not slaves would refuse freedom only to eventually profess 'love for the master' (Exo 21:5). Overall, the law in Deut 15:12-18, although quite radical compared with Exo 21:2-6, without addressing the issue of land

⁷⁹ Cf. S. R. Driver, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary of Deuteronomy*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1902, p. 183; Cf. Chirichigno, *Debt-Slavery in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, p. 275.

⁸⁰ Cf. F. Horst, *Gottes Recht: Gesammelte Studien zum Recht im Alten Testament*. Theologische Bücherei Neudrucke und Berichte aus dem 20 Jahrhundert 12. Munich: Chr. Keiser Verlag, 1961, p. 97; R. P. Merendino, *Das Deuteronomische Gesetz: Eine Literarkritische gattungs-und überlieferungsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zu Dt 12-16*. BBB 31. Bonn: 1969, pp. 113, 124; S. I. Cholewinski, *Heiligkeitsgesetz und Deuteronomium: Eine vergleichende Studie*. AnBib 66. Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1976, pp. 232-235.

⁸¹ Cf. Kaufman, 'A Reconstruction of the Social Welfare Systems of Ancient Israel', in W. B. Barrick and J. R. Spencer (eds.), *The Shelter of Elyon: Essays on Ancient Palestinian Life and Literature in Honor of G.W. Ahlström*. JSOTSup 31. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984, pp. 277-286, (p.282). For a critique of this position, see, Chirichigno, *Debt-Slavery in Israel and the Ancient Near East*. pp. 277-279.

alienation, the reason why peasants were enslaved; it was just scratching the surface of the matter. It was only in the later generation that the issue was dealt with decisively (cf. Lev 25:39-55).

Context and Interpretation of Lev 25:39-55

39 And if your brother becomes poor beside you, and sells himself to you, you shall not make him serve as a slave:

וְכִי־יָמוּךְ אֶתְיָךְ עַמְּךָ וְנִמְכַר־לָךְ לֹא־תַעֲבֹד בּוֹ עֲבָדַת עֶבֶד:

40 he shall be with you as a hired servant and as a sojourner. He shall serve with you until the year of the jubilee;

כְּשָׂכִיר כְּתוֹשֵׁב יִהְיֶה עַמְּךָ עַד־שְׁנַת הַיָּבֵל יַעֲבֹד עַמְּךָ:

41 then he shall go out from you, he and his children with him, and go back to his own family, and return to the possession of his fathers.

וַיֵּצֵא מֵעַמְּךָ הוּא וּבָנָיו עִמּוֹ וְשָׁב אֶל־מִשְׁפַּחְתּוֹ וְאֶל־אֶחָזֶת אֲבֹתָיו יָשׁוּב:

42 For they are my servants, whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt; they shall not be sold as slaves.

כִּי־עַבְדֵי הֵם אֲשֶׁר־הוֹצֵאתִי אֹתָם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם לֹא יִמְכְרוּ מִמִּכְרַת עֶבֶד:

43 You shall not rule over him with harshness, but shall fear your God.

לֹא־תִרְדֶּה בּוֹ בְּפָרֶךְ וַיִּרְאֵתָ מֵאֱלֹהֶיךָ:

44 As for your male and female slaves whom you may have: you may buy male and female slaves from among the nations that are round about you.

וְעַבְדֶיךָ וְאִמָּתֶךָ אֲשֶׁר יִהְיוּ־לְךָ מֵאֵת הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר סְבִיבֹתֶיכֶם מֵהֶם תִּקְנֶנּוּ

עֶבֶד וְאִמָּה:

45 You may also buy from among the strangers who sojourn with you and their families that are with you, who have been born in your land; and they may be your property.

וְגַם מִבְּנֵי הַתּוֹשְׁבִים הַגֵּרִים עִמָּכֶם מֵהֶם תִּקְנֶנּוּ וּמִמִּשְׁפַּחְתָּם אֲשֶׁר עִמָּכֶם

אֲשֶׁר הוֹלִידוּ בְּאֶרְצְכֶם וְהָיוּ לְכֶם לְאֶחָזָה:

46 You may bequeath them to your sons after you, to inherit as a possession for ever; you may make slaves of them, but over your brethren the people of Israel

you shall not rule, one over another, with harshness.

והתנחלתם אתם לבניכם אחריכם לרשת אחזה לעלם בהם תעבדו
ובאחייכם בני־ישראל איש באחיו לא־תרדה בו בפרד:

47 If a stranger or sojourner with you becomes rich, and your brother beside him becomes poor and sells himself to the stranger or sojourner with you, or to a member of the stranger's family,

וכי תשיג יד גר ותושב עמך ומד אחיד עמו ונמכר לגר תושב עמך או
לעקר משפחת גר:

48 then after he is sold he may be redeemed; one of his brothers may redeem him,

אחרי נמכר גאלה תהיה־לו אחד מאחיו יגאלנו:

49 or his uncle, or his cousin may redeem him, or a near kinsman belonging to his family may redeem him; or if he grows rich he may redeem himself.

אודדו או בן־דדו יגאלנו או־משאר בשרו ממשפחתו יגאלנו או־השיגה
ידו ונגאל:

50 He shall reckon with him who bought him from the year when he sold himself to him until the year of jubilee, and the price of his release shall be according to the number of years; the time he was with his owner shall be rated as the time of a hired servant.

וחשב עם־קנהו משנת המכרו לו עד שנת היבל והיה כסף ממכרו
במספר שנים כימי שכיר יהיה עמו:

51 If there are still many years, according to them he shall refund out of the price paid for him the price for his redemption.

אם־עוד רבות בשנים לפיהן ישיב גאלתו מכסף מקנתו:

52 If there remain but a few years until the year of jubilee, he shall make a reckoning with him; according to the years of service due from him he shall refund the money for his redemption.

ואם־מעט נשאר בשנים עד־שנת היבל וחשב־לו כפי שניו ישיב

אֶת-גְּאֻלָּתוֹ:

53 As a servant hired year by year shall he be with him; he shall not rule with harshness over him in your sight.

בְּשָׂכִיר שָׁנָה בְּשָׁנָה יִהְיֶה עִמּוֹ לֹא-יִרְדְּנֵנוּ בְּפָרֶךְ לְעֵינֶיךָ:

54 And if he is not redeemed by these means, then he shall be released in the year of jubilee, he and his children with him.

וְאִם-לֹא יִגָּאֵל בְּאֵלֶּה וּיֵצֵא בְּשָׁנַת הַיָּבֵל הוּא וּבָנָיו עִמּוֹ:

55 For to me the people of Israel are servants, they are my servants whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.

כִּי-לִי בְנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל עֲבָדִים עֲבָדַי הֵם אֲשֶׁר-הוֹצֵאתִי אוֹתָם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם:

While the manumission laws in Lev 25:39-55 are generally considered to be complimentary to those in Exodus 21:2-6 and Deut 15:12-18, thus filling the gaps in the earlier laws, these laws appear to be at odds with the laws of Exodus 21 and Deuteronomy 15. For example, the fact that Leviticus 25 prescribes a fiftieth-year rather than a seventh-year release has prompted debate among scholars; some suggesting that they were later additions to the older Jubilee regulations concerning the redistribution of land (cf. Lev 25:8-24),⁸² while some suggesting that they were addressing a *paterfamilias* who had been sold into slavery, previously not covered by Exo 21 and Deut 15.⁸³ Because of its differences from the other manumission laws and the fact that I will discuss it in chapter eight, I give it less attention here. However, its relevance to the subject matter of slavery in Israel remains critical, especially that the Exodus experience is also recalled in the law (Lev 25:42). Again, verse 39 seems to suggest a debt-slave, someone who sold himself into slavery because of poverty.

⁸² Cf. Chirichigno, *Debt-Slavery in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, pp. 302; Bernard M. Levinson, 'The Birth of the Lemma: The Restrictive Reinterpretation of the Covenant Code's Manumission law by the Holiness Code (Leviticus 25:44-46)', *JBL* 124. No.4 (2005), pp. 617-639.

⁸³ Cf. Adrian Schenker, 'The Biblical Legislation of the Release of Slaves: the Road from Exodus to Leviticus', *JOT* 78 (1998), pp. 23-41.

More importantly, unlike Exo 21 and Deut 15, Lev 25:35-42 prohibits the sale or enslavement of poor Israelites by fellow Israelites. In this case an Israelite, who is in financial difficulties, would be reduced to the status of a hired hand or indentured servant rather than a slave.⁸⁴ While there was no big difference between hired hands and slaves in terms of how they were exploited by the elite class, at least hired servants, maybe unlike slaves did not lose their land and family. However, because of poverty their status amounted to being outsiders in the community.

Because of this new and unprecedented dimension in the Israelite society, Lev 25 is very liberating in many ways. Although it talks about the Jubilee; that is fiftieth year instead of seven year as in Exo 21 and Deut 15, its prohibition against enslavement of the poor is a big step towards the right direction of abolishing the institution of slavery among the people of Israel, people of the covenant. In a way, by taking sides with the poor members of the Israelite community, Lev 25 takes Israel back to the days in which they were founded by Yahweh, the egalitarian god, the god of the oppressed. Lev 25 reminds the Israelites of their common history, the Exodus, from oppression (Lev 25:42, 55). According to Lev 25, for a people of the same historical experiences of oppression and the same culture and religion to be enslaving each other is to go against history and the covenant that Yahweh made with their fathers. Claiming to love and follow Yahweh at the same time oppressing and enslaving the poor was indeed a contradiction. It was a slap in the face of Yahweh.

Significantly, since Lev 25 is a late legal code and probably reflects a reaction against previous practice,⁸⁵ captured in Exo 21 and Deut 15, this statute is thus, a further reflection of the fact that law is 'a category of social phenomena and, consequently, changes with time'.⁸⁶ In the same way, the phenomenon of slavery as a social institution was inevitably unsustainable and had to go. What is more encouraging about Lev 25 is the emphasis that the slave must be released 'then he shall go out from you, he and his children with him, and go back to his own family, and return to the possession of his fathers' (Lev 25:41). This is a clear indication that the corruptly acquired, greedily and brutally expropriated land,

⁸⁴ B.A. Levine, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Leviticus*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989, p.179.

⁸⁵ Lemche, 'The Hebrew Slave': Comments on the Slave Law Ex.xxi 2-11', p. 138.

⁸⁶ L. Pospisil, *Anthropology of Law: A Comparative Theory*. New Haven: HRAF Press, 1974, p.22.

was to be returned to its owners. Allusion to land as 'the possession of his fathers' also shows a return to the pre-monarchic set up of tribalisation, where the land was regarded as belonging first and foremost to Yahweh hence an inheritance from the fathers, the tribes. There is thus, a motive towards returning to traditional egalitarianism of the tribes that were settled by Yahweh in early Israel, where everybody had land. Land was not as commercialized as it became resulting in it being speculatively and exploitatively acquired by some unscrupulous individuals at the expense of others; giving birth to abounding slavery among the covenant community.

It is this particular element that makes Lev 25:39-55 relevant to Southern African struggles especially Zimbabwe where the land was forcefully taken from its owners at the dawn of colonisation resulting in its owners being subjected to a situation of slavery in the farms, mines and households. In justifying the government led land reform as a necessary endeavour and a huge step in the right direction, the Zimbabwean Churches in 2006, as the following chapters show, appealed to Lev 25:39-55. Although this was a huge break from the past positions, giving ideological legitimacy alone is not enough. Churches needed to be more engaged. They needed for instance to mobilise the masses into invading the farms, their inheritance.

Date of Composition of Manumission Laws

For the purposes of dating manumission laws, Exodus 21:2-6 is very central. However, there are three scholarly positions regarding the date of composition of Exo 21:1-6. First, there are scholars who date the manumission laws in Exo 21:2-6 in the pre-monarchic period. These scholars interpret comparable similarities between Exo 21:2-6 and the Nuzi service and loan contracts as evidence of the fact that Exo 21:2-6 is also as ancient as the Near Eastern laws regarding slaves. In fact, it is assumed that Exo 21:2-6 must have been written shortly after these ancient Near Eastern laws, during the early days of settlement in Canaan.⁸⁷ From that perspective, Israelite manumission laws are regarded as evidencing a conscious redaction of (or rather as having been deliberately crafted to counter), the ancient Near Eastern ones. However, there are

⁸⁷ Cf. Mendenhall, 'Ancient Oriental and Biblical Law', pp. 38-39; Mendenhall, 'Ancient Israel's Hyphenated History', p. 93; Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh*, p. 58.

scholars who argue against such a conclusion. For them, the fact that Israelite manumission laws show an unparalleled concern for the poor and the weak, personified in the slave is enough evidence that these laws have a different context of origin.

According to Anthony Phillips, one of the leading scholars in this camp, the laws on humaneness and righteousness (Exo 22:20-23:9), together with the slave laws of Exo 21:2-11, betray a more advanced state of social development in which clan society has broken down and dependents such as widows and orphans lack anyone to protect them. Further, there is now a greater disparity of wealth which results in a definable class of poor. For him, this sharp change in the social and economic structure of Hebrew society from the early days of the settlement in Canaan most naturally reflects the period of the united monarchy,...'for it was the particular function of the Davidic king to uphold law and order especially in those fields in which the courts were powerless to act (Ps.72; Isa 11)'.⁸⁸

Although this position is quite appealing, the third position is the most likely. According to scholars advocating for this perspective, Exo 21:2-6 in terms of its contents reflect social conditions that are more closely associated with events depicted in 2 Kgs 4:1-7 and in the eighth-century prophetic books of Amos, Isaiah and so on, during which periods, social stratification and debt-slavery were probably at their highest levels. This suggests that Deuteronomy 15 and Leviticus 25 were written shortly after Exo 21:2-11, if not during the same time. Ernest Nicholson, actually argues that parts of the book of Deuteronomy originated in the Northern kingdom of Israel during the eighth century BCE (in the same environment with Exo 21:2-11 and Amos) and the prevailing socioeconomic conditions of the North must have influenced the contents of Deut 15.⁸⁹ The absence of any direct reference to a sanctuary in Deut 15:16-17, as we have indicated above is used by scholars to date it or at least the final compilation of this law around the time of Hezekiah (715-687/686 BCE)

⁸⁸ Cf. Phillips, 'The Laws of Slavery', p. 53; See also, F. Crüsemann, 'Das Bundesbuch-Historischer Ort und Institutioneller Hintergrund', p. 2; Crüsemann, 'Der Exodus als Heiligung', in E. Blum, C. Macholz and E. Stegeman (eds.), *Die Hebräische Bibel und ihre zweifache Nachgeschichte Festschrift für R. Rendtdorff zum 65. Geburtstag*. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1990, pp. 128-129.

⁸⁹ Cf. Nicholson, *Deuteronomy and Tradition*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967, p.69; Nicholson, 'Deuteronomy's Vision of Israel', p. 202.

and Josiah (640-609 BCE). Finally, since the dating of Lev 25:39-55 has always been influenced by the dating of Deut 15:12-18, Lev 25:39-55 should be dated at the same time with Exodus or Deuteronomy or a little bit later.⁹⁰

Implications for the Struggle of Domestic Workers in Zimbabwe

A long discussion above on the context and date of the manumission laws of the Old Testament has established not only some facts about how the slaves were generally treated, but also provides valuable lessons for the struggling masses world over, struggling peasants of Zimbabwe and domestic workers in particular. In fact, these laws given due attention, could be great weapons of the struggle of the peasants and oppressed peoples of the world. As well articulated by Wolff, 'It is in fact possible to speak of a revolution in the way the Bible relates masters to slaves. This revolution forms the presuppositions for the New Testament's Christology and anthropology, and whenever... given an adequate hearing, it creates movements of unrest which . . . will continue until this revolution finally reaches its goal'.⁹¹ This is profoundly so, given that, from the struggle between Israelite masters and slaves, we derive important lessons about the art of oppression and tactics of resistance to oppressive structures.

Although the Bible does not record specific details about the struggle of the slaves, given that literary sources of the ancient world tend to reflect not only an androcentric perspective, but also reflect the perspective of slave-owners,⁹² who presented a picture of a quite docile slave, I would not believe that slaves were satisfied with their lot, let alone a passive loyal mass that survived at the mercy of the masters. It is this absence of information about slave reactions to their plight, especially from slave themselves that has misled some scholars to conclude that ancient slavery particularly Jewish slavery in the Old and New Testament times was humane and not as brutal as that of the New World, in the West. However, on the contrary, it has been established that slavery was never humane. From the ancient to the modern era, slavery has always been

⁹⁰ Cf. Chirichigno, *Debt-Slavery in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, pp. 356-7.

⁹¹ Wolff, 'Masters and Slaves', p. 259.

⁹² Cf. Glancy, 'The Mistress-Slave Dialect', pp.71-87 (72); Glancy, 'Family Plots: Burying Slaves Deep in Historical Ground', *BI* 10 No. 1, (2002) pp. 57-75, (60).

brutish and violent. The brutality of slavery in the modern West was replica of ancient slavery.⁹³ As in the modern world, an analysis of the history of the struggle between masters and slaves from the Greco-Roman world indicates that these two classes often violently clashed: masters have died violently at the hands of their slaves and vice versa.⁹⁴ And the same could be postulated about the relationship between masters and slaves during the Old Testament and New Testament times. In fact, Exo 21:20-21, 26-27, implies this reality.

As evidence from modern and classical slave-holding societies show, the struggle between masters and slaves required much tact, such that open revolts were just but one of the many forms of resistance available to the slaves. Slaves had many other ways of resisting, protesting and demonstrating their displeasure against the master class, such as being deliberately lazy, dishonest, working slowly or badly, breaking tools, pilfering crops or tools, sabotaging the work or product and running away.⁹⁵ Although the biblical text is not quite clear, these could be some of the crimes the slaves were beaten for (cf. Exo 21:20-21, 26-27). The employment of one tactic or another by either slaves or masters depended on their analysis of the chances of success. This is very true of all societies, ancient and modern: the dominant class and the dominated classes are always engaged in an enduring tug-of-war kind of struggle that involve several tactics from both sides, which tactics, in some cases could be militating against class interests. But this is precisely tactical retreat. Gottwald's observations regarding this struggle between the dominant class and dominated classes during the exploitative Tributary Mode of Production of pre-monarchic and monarchic Israel provide a platform for us to speculate on the possible scenarios characterising the struggle between masters and slaves. According to him,

‘The correlate of these observations about shifting class dynamics in biblical history is that the internal perceptions and interests of both the domi-

⁹³ Cf. Allen Dwight Callahan, et al, ‘Introduction: The Slavery of New Testament Studies’, in David Jobling, et al (eds.), *Slavery in Texts and Interpretation*. SBL. Semeia 83/84, 1998, pp. 1-15.

⁹⁴ Cf. Horsley, ‘The Slave Systems of Classical Antiquity’, pp. 36-37.

⁹⁵ Cf. Allen. D. Callahan and Richard A. Horsley, ‘Slave Resistance in Classical Antiquity’, in David Jobling, et al (eds.), *Slavery in Texts and Interpretation*. SBL. Semeia 83/84, (1998), pp. 133-151 (139); James C Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990.

nant and dominated classes varied in clarity and cohesiveness. There was no unrelieved warfare between two solid social blocs, but a long tug-of-war, with momentary truces and skirmishes, breaking out at times into sharp confrontation and crisis. On occasion, members of the dominant class could take action on behalf of- even make common cause with - the exploited, to lessen their grievances when it was felt that their own social survival depended on it. Similarly, members of the dominated classes could be cooperative with – and not merely sullenly resigned to- programs put forward by their dominators when they saw some marginal advantage in doing so. This "fudging" of class lines in the rough and tumble of actual social history is of great importance to a nuanced reading of the social dimensions of biblical texts'.⁹⁶

On the basis of this observation, it is clear that the Israelite peasant and slave struggle against their oppressors did not take a short time. Beginning with the introduction of the monarch in the eleventh century BCE to the eighth century (Exo 21; Deut 15; Lev 25) and beyond, the struggle raged on. The same struggle continued in the New Testament era, under Roman occupation of Palestine. This serves to show that no matter how long the struggle takes, with devoted minds, it can be won. Since the dominant class sometimes may give in to the demands of the oppressed, as a tactic to sustain their privileged position, it is important for the oppressed to be always on the guard against early celebrations and quickly settling for short-term benefits. The oppressed must remain conscious of the broader goals and objectives of the struggle, total liberation. This is especially imperative considering that during the course of the struggle the dominant class may employ all sorts of diversionary and divide and rule tactics in order to destroy solidarity and unity of purpose among the dominated.⁹⁷

In all societies, these tactics have always been supported by massive propaganda against the strides of the struggle of the dominated classes. Characteristically, media propaganda twists facts to the extent that oppressive structures are misrepresented as liberative structures. Worse still, the dominated classes are presented as villains while architects and

⁹⁶ Gottwald, 'Social Class as an Analytic and Hermeneutical Category in Biblical Studies', p.9; cf. Gottwald, 'The Hypothesis of the Revolutionary Origins of Ancient Israel: A Response to Hauser and Thompson', pp. 43-46.

⁹⁷ Cf. Gottwald, 'Social Class as an Analytic and Hermeneutical Category in Biblical Studies', p. 20.

perpetrators of exploitation are portrayed as victims of oppression. The history of South Africa and Zimbabwe bear testimony to this reality.

Mosala's revolutionary interpretation of Gen 4:1-16, sheds light on this tactic. Contrary to the popular interpretations of the text, Mosala argues that in this story roles are interchanged. Abel represents the oppressors, the elite who unscrupulously dispossessed (and enslaved) the peasants during the Davidic-Solomonic monarchy, while Cain represents the dispossessed peasants, many of whom if not all, were turned into debt-slaves. However, since the story comes to us from the hands of the elite, the victorious party of the tenth and ninth century BCE struggle between these two classes, it depicts the real victims of the exploitative system as perpetrators, thus lending ideological legitimacy to the process of latifundialisation and peasant land dispossession that took place.⁹⁸ In the same way, the oppressed, including domestic workers in Zimbabwe are always blamed and condemned by the dominant classes who because of their wealth, control not only the socio-economic and political space but media outlets as well. And typically, the underclasses are not given access to the media to tell their story from their own perspective.

This is the case in the Cain and Abel story (Gen 4: 1-16). According to Mosala, it is clear that the peasants and the subjugated classes were in constant running battles with their oppressors, resisting encroachments on their ancestral lands, suggesting that they were not just a passive mass of beings crushed and trampled upon. While no indications of their victories exist in the texts of the Bible, except on one occasion in the New Testament (Matt 21:33ff.) where not only the struggle between the two classes is acknowledged as a constant feature, but also their (peasants) victory recorded, it is reasonable to believe that the murder of Abel may stand for one such victory. But since the text is a product of the ruling class, one can hardly expect a celebration of Abel's representative demise.⁹⁹ It is instead Cain who is blamed and vilified and not Abel.

In the majority of cases the dominated classes in Zimbabwe, have unfortunately yielded to this propaganda and have failed to sympathise with each other. As a result, there are many instances in the history of Zimbabwe where the dominated classes have tended to collaborate with the class of their oppressors against their own comrades in poverty. Some-

⁹⁸ Cf. Mosala, *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology*, p. 36.

⁹⁹ Cf. Mosala, *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology*, p. 37.

times, the masses are taken advantage of by some opportunists among them who for cheap and selfish gains, sell-out the struggle. Consistently, these few who decide to sell-out the struggle are given hero status in the elite controlled media, while those who decide to nobly fight oppression to the bitter end are belittled and their achievements in the struggle ridiculed as non-event. In most cases the struggle of the oppressed is actually omitted in the news. But the story of the defectors is positively presented. In Zimbabwe it is also common that when a domestic maid sexually abuses a child of the employer for example, it makes news headlines. But when a maid is sexually abused by the employer, his sons and relatives, the incident is never given attention. When the incident is captured in the news, blame is piled on the domestic maid. She is described as promiscuous and of low moral standing. The same is true when a 'garden boy' rapes either the daughter or wife of the employer, or when they have consensual sex; the blame is heaped on the garden boy.

Thus, from the slave laws that were put in place to curb abuse of slaves by their masters we may glean invaluable wealth of information on the daily struggles between the master classes and the peasants and slave classes. The premise is, 'since legal systems or individual laws are never created in a social vacuum, one of the major questions to be raised about the law is its original intent within the community that formulated it. It is well attested in history that specific events spark the need for restriction by or protection under the law. Recurring events, for example, (i.e., crimes or business transactions) require setting down of legal precedents.¹⁰⁰ Therefore, law codes as a social commentary provide valuable information regarding the daily occurrences in society. By suggesting what must not be done or what must be done to slaves, the laws imply frequent occurrences in the society in which they were formulated. From the slavery texts we read what was not clearly spelt out in the text but what was implied by what the laws demanded on both sides of the struggle. We can glean how slaves were treated from the issues that the slave laws were addressing. From such information we come up with important lessons for the Zimbabwean peasants' struggle as represented by that of domestic workers.

From this perspective, it can be conjectured that while the slave owners subjected them to physical harassment which sometimes resulted in

¹⁰⁰ Matthews, 'The Anthropology of Slavery in the Covenant Code', p. 119.

death, sexual exploitation, changing goal posts so that slaves would not leave upon the expiration of the sixth year, on the other hand, in the struggle against the oppressors, it is possible that slaves enlisted; trickery, stealing from the masters, raping their wives (cf. Gen 39-Joseph and Potiphar wife) and running away (Deut 23:15-16), as weapons of the struggle. The changes in the laws over the years exhibiting improvement of the conditions of the slaves; from Exo 21, to Deut 15 and to Lev 25 are dividends of this struggle. The changes reflected in the laws are in other words, benchmarks of the gains of the slave struggle forcing masters to retreat. Thus, the reforms were not given on a silver platter. They are results of a fierce struggle that involved sweat and blood.

This is very critical for any liberation theologian to understand. The struggle is not a one day event. It is a process that demands all that is; clear vision and ideology; sustainable strategies to achieve the goal of the revolution and most importantly, a clear definition of the oppressive system. In other words, one must clearly define and be able to explain what oppression is and what liberation is. Because, often times when the oppressors are cornered they present various concessions disguised as milestone achievements of the revolution while in real matter it will be the same old story of oppression and exploitation.¹⁰¹

Initially, the master classes in eighth century Israel probably conceded to the demands of the struggle of the slaves by abiding to laws that scratched on the surface of the issue. In fact, as the matters stand Exodus 21 is merely trying to give a humane face to oppression rather than seeking to end oppression. That slaves were not to be killed during the beating, lose tooth or lose eye in the process was of course quite revolutionary considering that in neighbouring states, such incidences were normal for slaves. However that was not radical enough. Such laws did not address the real matter. The issue is; what made slaves, slaves? In other words, what made slavery exist in the community of Israel? This was the real question that the laws were supposed to address not how a slave ought to be treated. Without dealing seriously with this question any other move was chasing the wind. As long as structures that produced slavery were not dismantled, any reform was to make oppression

¹⁰¹ Cf. Marvin L. Chaney, 'Debt Easement in Israelite History and Tradition', in D. Jobling, P. L. Day, and G. T. Sheppard (eds.), *The Bible and the Politics of Exegesis: Essays in Honor of Norman K. Gottwald on His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*. Cleveland: Pilgrim, 1991, pp. 127-39.

acceptable by the oppressed. The reforms treated symptoms without treating the cause of the illness. But with spirited resistance of the peasants and slave classes, the master class was forced to retreat and significantly change the laws to accommodate the demands of the slaves by making legal provisions to make sure slaves were liberally provided for after the six years of slavery (Deut 15). This was a huge concession on the part of the oppressors. Be that as it may, it still fell short of addressing the real demands of the peasants and slaves. The peasants and slaves wanted the removal of an oppressive structure of the economy that created slavery all together. The issue of land was to be addressed.

The attitude of the oppressors expressed in Deut 15 to divert the attention of the struggle of the peasants and slaves by liberally or lavishly providing every other need is thus, as ancient as humanity. Today, in Zimbabwe, the same art is well pronounced. Domestic workers of Zimbabwe, for example are supplied with food, cast off clothes, accommodation in order to exploit them. Their salaries don't get increased and since they have no land and nothing to show they cannot leave employment no matter how exploitative it is. Also, none of them is entitled to pension. This attitude is also reflected nationally. The oppressive systems always want to provide, food, shelter, clothes, good salary etc, and make donations while controlling the means of production which they unfairly and criminally acquired from the very people they are so proud to donate to. They talk of poverty alleviation strategies and not poverty eradication through sustainable development which involves giving people control over the means of production. To meet the challenge, it needs resolved peasant masses that cannot be diverted by these lavish donations and charity. The Israelite slaves continued to fight for their land, the control of the means of production until they received several concessions from the master classes; most importantly that the land was to be returned to the former slave upon release (Lev 25). Although their struggle may not have been decisively won, it is a source of inspiration for like situated peoples.

One of the realities implied by the slave laws is a ruthless oppressive class who did not even respect the laws. Although they would concede to the demands of the slaves which could be legislated, they still would turn back and act against the laws. The book of Jeremiah indicts the slave owners in Jerusalem who swore during the siege of Jerusalem to free their male and female slaves. But as soon as the siege was over, the slave

owners broke the oath and re-enslaved their former slaves (Jer 34:8-22).¹⁰² Thus, it can be seen that law codes, whether ancient or newly formulated, only provide guidance. The enforcement of the law must receive its primary impetus from the society itself. A further reflection of this legal reality is found in the book of Leviticus, which only speaks of foreigners as permanent slaves (Lev 25:44-46). This principle is based on an ideal which probably did not exist in the period before exile. In any case, the law does not protect any Israelite, of any class or status from being enslaved for debt should his economic circumstances justifies it.¹⁰³ It is possible that even Israelites were enslaved for life; otherwise what was the purpose of the law in expressing a non-existent issue. In the same vein, Dexter Callender is even more convincing when he observed that the very existence of such laws, of course, indicates that Israelites were enslaved by fellow Israelites and/or even sold by fellow Israelites to foreigners, a scenario implied in Amos 2:6.¹⁰⁴

For a people that purport to have been enslaved to treat fellow country men and women in this way, although it shows a better situation than the same group of such peoples elsewhere, it is intolerable. The changes they introduced were just cosmetic and did not go a long way in eradicating slavery. Thus the struggles of the poor and peasants continued after the much celebrated deliverance from Egypt, a house of slavery even spilled into the New Testament era. This is just a contradiction. And the same scenario developed in Zimbabwe. After independence and the much awaited 'Exodus from Egypt' (colonial oppression) into Canaan (Zimbabwe) the legal provisions introduced did not deal with the real issues that made black people to be enslaved. The means of production was never distributed equally. The few black people that got access to the formerly privileged positions adopted the colonial master's exploitative skills and hence continued to exploit fellow countrymen. The greatest lesson Zimbabwean peasants and domestic workers whose status is similar to Israelite slaves can get from the Israelite struggle of the peasants and slaves, is not only that slavery was evil, but that the suffering slaves must fight to the bitter end. No matter how long it takes to dis-

¹⁰² R. P. Carroll, *Jeremiah*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986, pp. 648-49.

¹⁰³ Cf. Matthews, 'The Anthropology of Slavery in the Covenant Code', p.127; Cf. Phillips, 'Laws of Slavery', p. 64.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Callender, Jr. 'Servants of God(s) and Servants of Kings', p. 74.

lodge oppression fighters must fight. With resolve and determination, victory is certain! Aluta continua!

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that Israelites enslaved each other on the basis of debt, a development that was very common in the ancient Near East. But this development was quite deplorable for the Israelites, a people who claim to have been rescued by Yahweh from the same scenarios of slavery. However, as the manumission laws we have discussed confirm, Israel was different from the rest of the ancient Near East because of these unparalleled laws which sought to take sides with the oppressed slaves, which laws themselves, as we have argued are both products and weapons of the struggle. From this ancient struggle, important lessons await to be exploited by biblical scholars of liberation and theologians of Zimbabwe today, where the material conditions of exploitation and oppression are strikingly similar to those of ancient Israel and Roman Palestine as we shall observe in the following chapters. Most importantly, biblical scholars of liberation and theologians must take sides with the oppressed masses, offering valuable vision and ideology to dismantle exploitation.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRECOLONIAL SHONA SOCIETY: A TWIN OF PRE-MONARCHIC ISRAEL

Introduction

This chapter demonstrates that from a historical cultural materialist perspective, the pre-colonial Shona society underwent a transition similar to that of ancient Israel, we have described in the previous chapters; from Communal to Tributary Mode of Production. As in ancient Israel and other societies, these modes of production among the Shona were characterised by struggles between various active classes. Again, similar to premonarchic Israel, the Shona transition from Communal Mode of Production to the Tributary Mode of Production brought some advantages to the society but also an equal amount of disadvantages particularly to the underclasses. This transition thus signalled the beginning of another level of struggle. Further, strikingly similar are ways in which the underclasses of ancient Israel and the Shona responded to the ruling elite. In both cases, the underclasses enlisted militancy, mercenarism, banditry and religious ideology as weapons of resistance and survival. As the Israelite peasant and Habiru struggle appealed to the genderless and egalitarian god of the underclasses, Yahweh, the Shona youth and other oppressed classes similarly engaged the ideology of Mwari, the genderless Supreme Being and transterritorial spirits that were not associated with the ruling elite lineages. However the religious ideology was soon hi-jacked or rather snatched by the ruling elite in both contexts to enlist it as weapon against the underclasses. It is this struggle that later produced domestic labour, a Zimbabwean version of slavery. In other words, domestic labour as we have it today owes some of its characteristic features from this pre-colonial struggle. Hence, there is need to devote some space to understanding the nature and character of domestic labour in the Communal and the Tributary Mode of Production, so as to place the struggle of domestic workers in the overall context of exploitation of the underclasses.

Who are the Shona?

Contemporary peoples classified under the rubric 'Shona' are varied and cover most of Zimbabwe and parts of Mozambique, stretching to the Zambezi River in the North and the Indian Ocean in the east. It is uncertain how the word/name Shona was arrived at. In some instances, it appears to have been used by the Ndebele in the middle of the nineteenth century as they crossed the Limpopo northward to occupy the south-western parts of Zimbabwe. In this context, Shona was a derogatory name for the people they had defeated. It should be reckoned that the people called Shona today never referred to themselves as such and they initially disliked the name. Until today, historians dislike the term Shona; they prefer to identify various groups in the so-called Shona family by their chiefdoms or their dialect groups such as Karanga, Manyika, Zezuru, Korekore and Ndau. For African historians, the universalisation of the term Shona to all tribes native to Zimbabwe is a British innovation at colonisation and afterwards, not an indigenous one.¹ In this book, we shall however use the term Shona, for it has become conventional. Also, it has always been used to refer to all the indigenous peoples of Zimbabwe, who are the subject of my research.

It is very important to acknowledge as we begin that we have scattered knowledge about how life broadly went on during the pre-colonial period to help us present a smooth account of the origin of the Shona people. The pre-colonial Shona society was not a writing one, thus kept its most valued traditional treasures in rituals, stories, sayings, songs, proverbs, adages, among others.² When the society became literate at the dawn of

¹ Cf. Bourdillon, *The Shona Peoples: Ethnography of the Contemporary Shona, With Special Reference to their Religion*, (Revised Edition). Gweru: Mambo Press, 1987, pp. 16-19; see also, C.M. Doke, Report on the unification of Shona Dialects. Government of Southern Rhodesia. Salisbury, 1931, whose report reveals that the Shona people were unified by the colonial government on the basis of the linguistic similarities from one dialect to the other; see also, C. Mwandayi, *Death and After-life Rituals in the eyes of the Shona: Dialogue with the Shona Customs in the Quest for Authentic Inculturation*. Bamberg: University of Bamberg Press, 2011, Chapter One, pp. 37-53.

² Cf. Michael Gelfand, *Growing Up In Shona Society: From Birth to Marriage*. Gweru: Mambo Press, 1979; Gelfand, *The Genuine Shona: Survival Values of an African Culture*. Gweru: Mambo Press, 1999; J. Gombe, *Tsika DzaVaShona*, Harare: College Press Publishers, 1995; Cf. Kabweza, O. M. et al, *Pasichigare: Essays on Shona Culture in Retrospect*. Gweru: Mambo Press, 2002.

the colonial era, there wasn't much interest in tracing the lives of the people prior to colonisation. The colonised were understood to be people without a history hence there was no need to invest time and effort in tracing the therefore 'non-existent' history.

The few Western scholars that did some research on some aspects of the pre-colonial society however provide us with scant and disjointed information on the overall picture of the diverse aspects of life especially domestic labour and the general social, economic, religious and political organisation. These scholars certainly had a bias. They interpreted Shona past from their perspective and not the Shona perspective. As Europeans, first and foremost and secondly as superior colonial agents they had interests in writing the history of the Shona. And their interests as colonisers always are at variance with those of the colonised. Because of that, most of our information about the traditional pre-colonial communities is largely a colonial era anachronistic reconstruction based upon what was observable during the colonial era. Of course, there are some few earliest records written by the Portuguese, the first Europeans to have contact with the Shona around 1400. A. D. These are the sources that the later Western writers used and they have been highly rated as dishing out, unbiased authentic history about the Shona.

However, it should be known that these Portuguese were Europeans also and were biased against Shona culture, as they judged African societies according to European perspectives. In other words, they came to Zimbabwe in pursuance of their colonial and economic interests and not Shona interests. It is therefore impossible that their literature had no bias. In fact, at an elementary level, the bias is inevitable since they did not speak Shona language. They also did not know the culture of the people whom they wrote about. There is therefore an attempt by Shona scholars to sort of rewrite the history themselves using mostly oral traditions and spirit mediums as sources, which undertaking does not go down well with European historians who dismiss these sources as 'un-scholarly' or 'unscientific' hence of no historical value.³ On the other

³ Cf. D.N. Beach, *Zimbabwe Before 1900*. Gweru: Mambo Press, 1995, p. 20; For a detailed discussion on the weaknesses of the sources (literary accounts of the Portuguese traders, British missionaries, explorers, travellers, and settlers and oral traditions) used in trying to reconstruct the lives and social organisation of the Shona by historians, see also Beach, *The Shona and Their Neighbours*. Oxford: The People of Africa Series, 1994, p. 9; Bourdillon, *The Shona Peoples*, pp. 3-6.

hand, African peoples regard oral tradition, divine oracles from spirit mediums as more authoritative and truthful than written words, especially those written by foreigners. We therefore, have two competing narratives on certain themes about the Shona, as shall be observed below.

The Shona Communal Mode of Production (CMP)

In order to situate domestic workers' struggles today, as representatives of the underclasses of the Zimbabwean society, I shall begin this section by discussing the key features and institutions of the Communal Mode of Production (CMP). It is my presupposition that each mode of production has different and prominent characteristic features and institutions which ensure its survival and operations. It is these that have to a greater extent influenced the nature of the struggle between various constituent elements. As such, the nature and character of the struggle between classes is dictated by the dominant mode of production.

Socio-Economic Organisation of the CMP

Similar to the premonarchic Israelite setting, the Shona society's communal stage was mainly distinguishable by the fact that property, especially land was communally owned and the products of labour were communally shared according to need. According to Gottwald, in tribal Israel, 'the primary productive units were extended or multifamily households, linked in lineages or protective associations and in tribes. In these farming-herding households, which in some cases included indebted or indentured servants and resident aliens, men and women divided certain tasks and shared others. All members of the household enjoyed the fruit of their arduous collective labour'.⁴ This seems to be the *sine qua non* feature of the Communal Mode of Production. The historical factors that influenced the development of this mode of production are mainly a response to cruel realities of scarcity and environmental dangers. Thus, according to some theorists, life in the primeval forest was hard and dangerous, hence compelled people to form groups and to stay together. Compounding the situation is the fact that food was

⁴ Cf. Gottwald, 'Social Class as an Analytic and Hermeneutical Category in Biblical Studies', p. 7, regards the tribal Israelite system as 'Communitarian Mode of Production'.

scarce, so much so that when men and women found it they must have shared, for that was the only way to survive.⁵

In the Shona Communal Mode of Production, every activity was communally or cooperatively organized, and everyone had to work for the group. As Mosala convincingly argues, in the Communal Mode of Production, there was no place for individual accumulation, in that there was no surplus and no hoarding. It was a strategy of survival in a harsh environment, which presupposes that had things been different a different mode of production could have been appropriate. He thus argues that, it is important to remember that this communalism was a function of the low level of development of the forces of production.⁶ That is, it was the best there was but not the ultimate goal of the society.

Most, communal societies are known to have developed from hunting and gathering to sedentary life. For the Shona, as well as other Bantu groups, the transition happened from about 200 BCE to 300 A.D. Since then, like the pre-monarchic Israelites, the Shona were sedentary agriculturalists, specialising in herding and ploughing fields. However, as Gottwald emphasises in relation to presettlement Israel, hunting and gathering do not entirely cease. They continue as part and parcel of the societal activities to supplement food.⁷ Regarding how the actual transition happened among the Shona of Zimbabwe, there are two contending schools of thought. The first is called the migrationist for it believes that the changes in the culture, social, economic systems and language of the people must necessarily take place by the immigration of new people, often conquerors and displacers of the old. In this case, the invading superior forces came from the North, migrating southward.⁸ Archaeology is even roped in to justify this 'from North to South migration' of a superior breed of people. These newcomers are considered masters of superior civilisation.

⁵ Cf. D. Ross Gandy, *Marx and History*. Austin and London: University of Texas Press, 1979; cf. Barry Hindess and Paul Q. Hirst, *Pre-Capitalist Modes of Production*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul 1975; Cf. Emmanuel Terray, *Marxism and 'Primitive' Societies*. New York: Emmanuel Monthly Review, 1972; Cf. Samir Amin, *Class and Nation, Historically and in the Current Crisis*. London: Heinemann, 1980.

⁶ Cf. Mosala, *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology*, p. 69.

⁷ Cf. Gottwald, 'Were the Early Israelites pastoral nomads', p. 229.

⁸ Bourdillon, *The Shona Peoples*, pp. 6-7; Beach, *Zimbabwe Before 1900*, pp. 9-13.

On the contrary, the rival school of thought, better termed anti-migrationist, since for them, changes in economy, society, and even language may take place without any invasion by an outside force. For them the changes could have been necessitated by need and climatic and environmental change. In response, the society simply invented, passed on new ideas and techniques about confronting the changes, from one hunting band to another until eventually they have all adopted them. And this is probably how the Shona became agriculturalists, herders, iron-users, pot-makers (or speakers of a new language).⁹ It is this position that I submit to and not the migrationist theory. The migrationist theory is a colonial propaganda theory meant to justify colonisation of the indigenous people of Zimbabwe, by misrepresenting them as weaker and less developed than white colonisers. The objective of the propaganda was to make the colonised Zimbabweans appreciate colonisation as development hence duty-bound to thank their colonisers as their saviours whose higher civilisation rescued them from primitivity, backwardness and stagnation. No wonder this theory was pushed vigorously by colonial European writers, as we shall see in the following chapters.

Be that as it may, because of the sedentary nature of the latter stage of communal stage of production, as opposed to purely hunting and gathering, land and cattle became the key means of production. Members of various households did not only willingly contribute their labour on family fields and shared equally in the pastoral and agricultural activities of the community but they also held land as communities. And this egalitarian control over the means of production ensured egalitarian appropriation of the products of social labour.¹⁰ Characteristically and most importantly for Mosala, production in the communal society was intended strictly for use-value and not for any other speculative purpose. There was no need to produce what the society did not use; production was based fundamentally on human needs. At this level of development the family or household was the centre of economic production. There was therefore, no permanent collective or communal labour organisa-

⁹ Cf. Beach, *Zimbabwe Before 1900*, pp. 9-13, discusses the two positions before settling on the migrationist hypothesis, which he claims to be supported by archaeology.

¹⁰ Cf. Mosala, *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology*, p.70.

tion on a national level, since at this stage of development, the state is not yet formed.¹¹

Religious/Ideological Tools of the CMP

The whole system was anchored upon a religious or an ideological system that tallied with the social and economic goals and the struggles of the household with nature. As common among many African peoples, there was a very simple but pervasive religious system among the Shona,¹² characterised by an overarching religious ideology of ancestor veneration which was dominant at family level. This ideology was quite central for the cohesion of the households. The society had not at this time developed institutional super structural processes which presuppose a fairly developed social division of labour, notable by various socio-economic classes. The Shona as other African communal societies structured their relationships primarily through ideology of kinship relations to serve as a regulatory mechanism of the necessary socio-economic processes that households undertook in order to survive that is to create order among individuals and society at large. Such ideology was the pillar and anchor of the whole society, without which the society disintegrated. And this ideology has survived the Christian onslaught to date. As Shona communities were established and functioned on the basis of the ideology of kinship constructed upon real blood relations or fictive kinship based upon totems, everyone in the community was related to the other.¹³ As Beach rightly observed,

everybody on the plateau Shona society, belonged to their father's lineage-although married women joined their husbands' lineage-which was symbolized by a totem, typically drawn from a short list of animals, which drove home the point that no-one of these household, village, ward or territorial units could be composed entirely of people of the same central lineage. Thus in no village or ward would there be much more than a third of the households belonging to the same lineage, though not much more

¹¹ Cf. Mosala, *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology*, p.70.

¹² Beach, *Zimbabwe Before 1900*, p.5, mapping the whole cultural/religious landscape of the Shona observes that 'the main society was patrilineal, without initiation, blood partnerships, secret societies, or even a very complex religious system'.

¹³ Cf. Bourdillon, *The Shona Peoples*, pp. 23-36.

than a quarter of the rest would be completely unrelated to the dominant lineage.¹⁴

In this set-up, however, marriage was allowed as long as there were no blood relations, although there were some exceptions to the rules.¹⁵ It is important to note also that in the Communal Mode of Production, while marriage was essentially a social contract between two families or two communities, it also had economic and religious underpinnings. The ideology of *roora*, is closely linked to the economic needs of the households. However, this economic aspect is not to be construed in commercial value, the sense that European writers have expressed by coining *roora* as bride price.¹⁶ In African mentality, because any individual is an important part of the productive forces of a household, the receiving household in a marriage will have to offset the other's loss of such a constituent part by making an exchange of another part of the productive force. Taken in its context, *roora* was necessary for maintaining equality between households. As the ideology of ancestors is involved at every stage in the negotiations and arrangements in this exchange, the concept of *roora* also serves as symbolic glue that binds the ancestors of the one household to the ancestors of the other. This was done to ensure a relationship of solidarity for productive, protective, and social purposes. In Short, the concept of *roora* enabled otherwise vulnerable individual households to confront the sometimes hostile natural forces as a strengthened unit.¹⁷

Among the Shona, predominant religious rituals, therefore involved those targeted at initiating communication with the living-dead, the family ancestors. Ancestors were consulted regularly, at every stage and about every development within the households. It is not an overstatement to argue that the ancestors were key elements for the survival of

¹⁴ Beach, *Zimbabwe Before 1900*, p.21; see also, Bourdillon, *The Shona Peoples*, especially chapter two 'kinship and village organisation', pp. 23-36.

¹⁵ Cf. Bourdillon, *The Shona Peoples*, particularly his section on 'Shona marriage', pp. 36-49; 61-62.

¹⁶ Cf. Bourdillon, *The Shona Peoples*, p. 41, argues that the use of the term 'bride-price' should not be taken as suggesting that the wife was literally bought as many scholars especially foreigners to African culture, have repeatedly advanced, of which some remarks have insinuated that African women were mere chattel, bought by the husband in a commercial transaction.

¹⁷ Cf. Mosala, *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology*, pp. 76-77.

the families. They were usually summoned to off-set problems orchestrated by nature on humanity, such as pestilences and diseases, droughts, and other natural calamities. These natural misfortunes, sicknesses and strange behaviours of wild and domestic animals were always interpreted as portents, 'divine'-ancestral communication symbols with the living. From this preoccupation with problem wrought by nature on humanity, we may be justified to assume that in the communal mode of production, human relations by themselves were usually very cordial and peaceful. Only nature was the problem. And ancestors had to come in to salvage the situation.

In this context, health-care, physical and psychological was the responsibility of whole households, especially of the father in the home. Knowledge of herbs, mixtures, and divinations by lot or by dreams was a social property, not a specialist or professional engagement of a few, as it became later especially in the colonial era. Each man in the household was a priest, a medicine man, a lawyer.¹⁸ Shona women were also equally active at this stage in economic production, health and wellbeing of the household.¹⁹ I now turn towards demonstrating how this religious and/or ideological background impacted on domestic labour, which marks as point of departure into understanding the struggle of the poor, from one phase of economic production to the other.

The Matrix of Shona 'Domestic Labour' in CMP

As I have already mentioned above, domestic labour was essentially shared among members of the household, depending on age, gender, social or kinship relations, and the nature of the task. Although, domestic labour was essentially unpaid, it was also a source of upward social mobility and in later stages it developed a concept of payment. However, even the concept of payment, it must be emphasised, was only but a way of providing an opportunity for the poor to attain what the other mem-

¹⁸ Cf. Mosala, *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology*, p. 78.

¹⁹ Cf. Elizabeth Schmidt, *Peasants, Traders and Wives: Shona Women in the History of Zimbabwe, 1870-1939*. Harare: Baobab, 1992, especially her section on 'midwives, healers and spirit mediums', pp. 22-26; cf. Isabel Mukonyora, *Wandering a Gendered Wilderness: Suffering and Healing in an African Initiated Church*. New York: Peter Lang, 2007, pp. 19-21, also reveals the centrality of Shona women in the traditional society in all spheres of life, including healing.

bers of the society are expected, such as marriage. Marriage was important in the traditional life for it was a means for increasing labour hence economic survival of the communal society.

Domestic Work for Daughters-in-law and Sons-in-law

Daughters-in-law were supposed to literally run the family doing all the feminine duties. They worked in the fields, collected firewood, cooked and took care of the small children; bathing them, dressing and washing clothes among others. Industriousness was one single subject that was encouraged and reinforced over and over again towards the marriage of a daughter. The aunts and grandmothers took it upon themselves to couch the bride-to-be on the centrality of hard work in the family.²⁰ Failure to perform some domestic duties could result in divorce and that would put the name of the whole family of the daughter-in-law into disrepute. When she was accompanied to her husband, by her aunties and sisters, they would spend three or four days with her in the new family doing all the domestic chores with her. This was a demonstration of what she would need to continue to do after they left. As they left, normally one of the young sisters remained behind in order to help the sister. She could be given some token of appreciation when she eventually leaves say after a month or so, the time when the married sister began to sleep with her husband.²¹

When she was pregnant or sick she could call for her young sister so as to do the domestic chores she was supposed to do. After giving birth, the young sister would also continue to take care of the newly added member of the family. The child-minder would get some token of appreciation after the child is grown up. In most instances, it was the young sister who would take care of her sister's children or father's sister's (aunt), until she is married. It was normal and is still common for an aunt to request the services of a daughter of the brother at critical moments.²² Care for the children was thus easily shared among kin, and were the services that children could offer. This trend has continued to date, as we shall see later. When a relative is living on her own that is if

²⁰ Cf. Hamutyinei, 'Kuraya mwenga oenda kumurume', in *Pasichigare*, p. 46-48.

²¹ Cf. O. M. Kabweza, 'Kupinda Mumba' in *Pasichigare*, pp. 48-50.

²² Bourdillon, *Child Domestic Workers in Zimbabwe*, p. 19.

married, and needs help, she may ask her brother or sister to send a daughter to live with her to help.

Sons-in-law were also supposed to lend a hand in the domestic activities of the family of the wife's parents, as they were usually in the same community. For instance, though not bound to, the son-in-law was expected to lend a hand with the father-in-laws during harvesting and threshing of the harvests, provided it was possible for him to come to the village.²³ In some villages these duties were essentially for the son-in-law. At the end of every cropping season the son-in-law would arrange to visit his wife's village to harvest and thresh the crops, packing and storing them in granaries. And all this labour was unpaid. It was done to meet the needs of the community. As every married man was a son-in-law, every man contributed to labour requirements of the community.

Although one could leave his parents to establish his own 'family' consisting of him, his wife and children, he remained part and parcel of his father's family or tribe.²⁴ Thus he was required to extend a hand in domestic labour at the parents' yard. His wife and children were also required to help his parents, whenever they were asked or whenever it was necessary. The same was true of a daughter who was married; she and her husband and children were expected although not mandatory, to help her parents at certain times of the year. In fact, it was a common occurrence for her children to be permanent feature at her parents' family doing all sorts of domestic labour. In the household setting, children are perceived as the responsibility of the whole family, since they belong to the whole community.

Domestic Work for Children

At the age of six or seven, both boys and girls helped (and still help in the rural areas) with herding domestic animals, beginning with goats, sheep and calves. But as the livestock became fewer such that goats, sheep and cattle could be combined only the boys were expected to look

²³ Gelfand, *The Genuine Shona*, pp. 50-51.

²⁴ For more information on the Shona relations see, Bourdillon, *The Shona Peoples*, particularly Chapter Two dealing with Shona 'kinship and village organisation', pp. 23-36; Gelfand, *Ukama: Reflections on Shona and Western Cultures in Zimbabwe*. Gweru: Mambo Press, 1981.

after them at the same time.²⁵ The boys would not refuse to take care of their uncle's herd as well. Since the society was primarily agricultural in that 'the most important activity of the greatest number of the people was the production of food by growing crops, whereby all other activities including mining, manufacturing, building, trade, politics and religion, were secondary to this, and could not have been carried on without it' sending small boys to look after livestock was to make sure that grown-ups contributed fully to the production of food.²⁶ Further, because young boys were of less value in the fields, tasking them with livestock made sure they also contributed something to the economic wellbeing of the household. Little girls (of the same age as small boys) were to help mothers and older sisters to sweep the huts, wash plates and pots, grind and stamp and winnowing grain and gather firewood.

While in certain circumstances, little girls were also taught certain duties in the fields and gardens,²⁷ generally they were confined to the homestead taking care of other kids thereby contributing fully to the economic threshold of the family. Since, at household level, domestic work was distributed among all members of the family according to gender and age, we can assume the existence of a struggle pitted along gender and age lines. Thus, the struggle is not yet a socio-economic class struggle.

Shona Domestic Labour and Upward Social Mobility

Hokwa and *Kuronza* practices

The communal nature of the traditional Shona system of domestic work provided every member of the community with means to experience upward social mobility. If for example, one member of the community did not have cattle his fields would be ploughed nevertheless by the relatives. One only needed to brew beer or *mahewu* and to feed the people who would be working in the fields. The practice is called *hokwa*, or *humwe*. It was unheard of under such circumstances for any member to

²⁵ Gelfand, *Growing Up in Shona Society*, p.14.

²⁶ Beach, 'The Shona Economy: Branches of Production,' in Robin Palmer and Neil Parson (eds.), *The Roots of Rural Poverty in Central and Southern Africa: Perspectives on Southern Africa*. California: University of California Press, 1977, pp. 37-65. (p. 40, 45); Cf. Bourdillon, *The Shona Peoples*, p. 67ff.

²⁷ Gelfand, *Growing Up In Shona Society*, p.14

demand any other form of payment apart from the food they would have eaten while working. Also, the system was so poor-friendly that if one needed to own cattle so that he would not depend on the generosity of others in perpetuity, the system provided workable and less exploitative mechanisms for one to work for them. There was a common practice called *kuronza* that is, the entrusting of cattle to clients. Although we know very little from the contemporary sources about the nitty-gritty operations of the mechanism, at least we know that cattle-rich and cattle-poor people existed in the same communities. It is therefore reasonable to assume that the custom of *kuronza* was practiced long before colonisation,²⁸ even before the tributary mode of production was introduced.

The owner of cattle may have a bigger herd that would be difficult to manage, especially that children took care of cattle while the grown ups worked in the fields. Therefore giving some cattle to those without could lessen the burden on his part, but at the same time, it helped the poor relatives to build their own herd. What happened generally was that if for example 10 cattle are given to a family, the client family is entitled to the milk they produce; use the cattle for draught labour and to get manure to apply in the fields. However, the family was not allowed to slaughter for meat unless some died of their own or if there was an incident such that it warranted the cattle to be killed but not without the knowledge and permission of the owner. At the end of some years the owner may want to take his herd back, for instance, when he wants to pay bride price for his son or sons, or when his herd has depreciated, or when he has gotten enough labour to take charge of the cattle among other reasons. Upon taking the cattle back, he would always leave some cattle behind with the client who builds his own herd from there on.

***Ufudzi* Practice of Domestic Labour**

In the Shona Communal Mode of Production, labour was so priced that one could engage in domestic labour to gather wealth (cattle) for marriage. In the traditional Shona society, although there were some exceptions, cattle were very important for marriage, to the extent that *roora*

²⁸ Beach, *Zimbabwe Before 1900*, p. 42.

was desirable to be always in form of cattle,²⁹ due to economic and religious value of cattle. Cattle, for Michael Bourdillon, were not merely economic goods; instead they were also important religious symbols, as they were very 'essential to the continuity of the family group and so became important in the relationship between the living members of the family and the spirit elders, their ancestral guardians. The use of cattle in marriage exchanges cannot therefore be regarded simply as an economic transaction'.³⁰ The patrilineal/family ancestral spirits are believed to inhabit bulls while the matrilineal spirits dwell in cows. Due to the centrality of cattle; their religious and economic value, they were not easy to own.

The society however devised mechanisms to make sure everybody in the community could marry so as to contribute labour and perpetuity of the community through children. Since young boys and girls were not very useful in the fields but in herding cattle and other livestock, one would task his neighbour's young boys to herd cattle in return for cattle. This practice is known in many areas of the Shona as *ufudzi*. It basically refers to the loan of a little boy by the family to one who has no sons to herd his cattle. For each year, the loaned child is given a cow (*tsiru*) in payment for the assistance. The animal is usually given to the child's father, who in turn has to carefully look after it and its offspring(s) so that they (cattle) will be available when he grows up and needs cattle for roora. In the mean time, the cows would be providing the family with milk, work in the fields, and manure that essentially improves the harvests.

In some cases, a young girl engaged in almost a similar role to take care of children and to do household chores in return for food and clothing, but not for cattle, for obvious reasons that she did not need cattle as she would be married. Her engagement was basically a societal mechanism to equip her with skills for use in her future home and to help those who may not have girl children to take care of household chores. She was usually free to leave anytime especially towards marriageable age,³¹ by which time she would have acquired skills about taking care of own

²⁹ Cf. Peggy and Clive Killef, (eds.), *Shona Customs: Essays by African Writers*. Gweru: Mambo Press, 1970, see especially the first chapter entitled, 'The Role of Cattle in Shona Society', pp.14-32.

³⁰ Bourdillon, *The Shona Peoples*, p. 42.

³¹ Cf. Gelfand, *Growing Up In Shona Society*, p. 26.

family. In the majority of cases, as I have mentioned above, she normally would be required to help kin. But at the end of the day, she would get some token called *mbereko* such as chicken or goat. If she helped a family not related to her family in terms of having blood relations, in some cases she could end up being married to the husband of the woman she would be helping,³² with the consent of her family. Although at this time, it may not have been outright exploitation of the poor; there is a possibility that some girls were forced into these marriages for the food security of her family, if the husband was rich.

Domestic Labour as Substitute for *Rooro*

For a poor man who did not have cattle and whose family could not give him bride wealth, but intended to marry, the society substituted cattle with domestic labour. Such a man could ask his would-be father-in-law for permission to work for his wife-to-be, while resident with them. This method of roora was called *kutema ugariri*,³³ almost similar to uxorilocal marriage. It is not clear when the practice began among the Shona, but tradition suggests that it is as old as the Shona peoples. The method does not seem to have been common except among the most unfortunate and vulnerable such as the poor orphans and ‘alien’ individuals, with no kin to pay roora for him. An alien (*muranda*) could be an orphan, who upon the death of the parents may have left the tribe of his father to another community where he could be taken care of by someone.³⁴ There are two contradictory scholarly positions regarding the status and nature of *muranda* and the whole institution of *kutema ugariri*. European scholars especially, claim that *kutema ugariri* was exploitative and similar to slavery while the other camp especially African scholars sees it as a humane system created to cater for the vulnerable hence quite noble.

***Kutema Ugariri*: Shona Version of Domestic Slavery?**

Although they have small variations Beach, Bourdillon and Michael Gelfand, assert that *kutema ugariri* was some kind of perpetual servitude. Beach and Bourdillon, for example, see a close similarity between slavery

³² Cf. Hamutyinei, ‘Vacheche Pasichigare’, in *Pasichigare*, pp. 22-26, (26).

³³ Cf Kabweza, ‘Kutema Ugariri’, in *Pasichigare*, pp. 62-63.

³⁴ Cf. Gombe, *Tsika dzaVaShona*, pp. 36-37.

and this practice, in that the son-in-law himself and children belonged to the father-in-law, therefore were not free to leave, to go back to his kinsmen. According to Bourdillon, 'a poor man who had no way of raising necessary marriage payments, was likely to become something of a slave to his father in law's family for the rest of his life. Although he could be freed of his obligations and allowed to set up an independent homestead, nevertheless would not return to his father's family'.³⁵ But according to Gelfand only 'his children were the property of the father-in-law who (father-in-law) would keep the first granddaughter's bride wealth',³⁶ to recover the *roora* that was due to him for the daughter, whose *roora* had been turned into labour. Beach, takes the opposite direction. For him the sons-in-law (*varanda*) and slaves among the Shona were in the same category in that they were unfree for life, but their children were granted freedom.³⁷

Therefore, according to Beach, there were four groups of people among the Shona whose low social position, was linked to a lower level of economic power and wealth: women, children, slaves and bondsmen (*varanda*). For him, although women and children contributed immensely to the economic welfare of the family they were deprived of the fruits of their sweat. He goes on to claim that, 'except a few personal belongings and rarely few beasts they owned nothing. Together with slaves and bondsmen, they were classified as minors'.³⁸ This analysis is not clear. On one hand, Beach seems to imply that this was a traditional set-up but on the other, he says it was 'a Shona response to the situation created by the onset of the capitalist economy in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries'.³⁹

The latter position is sustainable given various legislations that were put in place by the colonial administrators to undermine the social and economic importance of women, children, domestic servants and farm labourers among others. I agree with Bourdillon that the view that women had little or no status in traditional African societies is a miscon-

³⁵ Bourdillon, *The Shona Peoples*, p. 44.

³⁶ Gelfand, *The Spiritual Beliefs of The Shona: A Study based on Field Work among the East-Central Shona*. Gweru: Mambo Press, 1977, p. 167; cf. Bourdillon, *The Shona Peoples*, p. 28; Beach, 'The Shona Economy', p. 56.

³⁷ Beach, 'The Shona Economy', p. 56.

³⁸ Beach, 'The Shona Economy', p.55.

³⁹ Beach, 'The Shona Economy', p. 56.

ception.⁴⁰ For, in many instances women had equal status as men as they also had the opportunities to accumulate wealth independent of men. Also, since they were central to the success of the agricultural economy of the traditional Shona society, they had a lot of influence in the running of the household economy, management of family and society as herbalists, midwives and diviners among other important roles.⁴¹ I therefore submit to the idea that colonisers are responsible for reducing black women as well as black men's social and economic status to fit into their capitalist scheme of things.

However, Bourdillon argues to the contrary. He believes that the exploitation of the poor blacks was not introduced by colonisers. In fact, for him, 'in some African societies, slavery was long established even before colonisation, in which the alienation of a person from all that he does was even more extreme than in modern industrial society'. He goes on to claim that slaves could be bought and sold at will and male slaves were given any kind of domestic work, with no voice to complain and nowhere to report.⁴² But Beach is quick to emphasise that there was very little domestic slavery and very little trade in slaves, such that, slaves were not very common among the Shona, but bondsmen (*varanda*), were. For him however, it was the *muranda* who was like a slave in that he was not a free man, for he could be sent anywhere; do any kind of job as commanded by his master; and that his chief task was to do difficult work and to do all the domestic work.⁴³ I vehemently challenge this conception of *muranda*/son-in-law. Bourdillon and Beach, as I have argued above are somehow trying to exonerate colonisers from blame for mass exploitation of the black people whom they effectively reduced to slaves of the white masters, especially domestic servants. Their description of a *muranda* who had no voice at all is clear testimony that by and large their conclusions were influenced by the colonial images of domestic servants. Given the strict gender demarcations on labour in traditional Shona society, it is not far from truth to suggest that the male *varanda* did not do all the domestic duties. It was only during colonisation that males

⁴⁰ Cf. Bourdillon, *The Shona Peoples*, pp. 50-56.

⁴¹ Cf. Schmidt, *Peasants, Traders and Wives*, pp. 22-26; Mukonyora, *Wandering a Gendered Wilderness*, pp. 19-21.

⁴² Bourdillon, *Religion and Society: A Text for Africa*. Gweru: Mambo Press, 1990, p. 154.

⁴³ Beach, 'The Shona Economy', p.56; Beach, *Zimbabwe Before 1900*, p. 5.

were employed as domestic workers in white people's homes, so as to humiliate them as conquered peoples. The Shona society would not humiliate the poor members to the extent of making them do work related to women, that is treating them as if they were women. It is for these observations that I agree with the second school of thought that treats *kutema ugariri* as a noble system.

***Kutema Ugariri*: A Noble Shona Practice of Domestic Labour**

The second school of thought comprising mostly Shona experts on traditional life argues very much against viewing *kutema ugariri* as an oppressive system. For this group, a prospective poor son-in-law *mukwasha*, (and not *muranda*), would stay with the family of the girl he intended to marry performing domestic labour particular with men for a certain amount of time before being given the wife. Afterwards, he was free to leave to his kin with his wife. The duties he performed would have paid for the wife. He however could be called anytime as would be common to all sons-in-law to perform certain domestic agricultural tasks such as harvesting at the family of the wife, not because he did not pay *roora*. J. Gombe for instance, argues against 'perpetuity subservience'. For him, a son-in-law who married through *kutema ugariri* was free after about three or four years (depending on the time frames the in-laws would have set aside, as a period he should work for the wife) to stay, or go back to his family or establish his own place to stay. Before the rest of the period of working for the wife was over, he was not allowed to sleep with the girl he was working for. That means, he only would be considered married after serving the stipulated period.⁴⁴ Meanwhile the 'would-be' son-in-law was treated as one of the sons of the prospective father-in-law and even after marriage the same relationship continued.

This perspective is based upon the understanding that *kutema ugariri* was one of the many methods of marriage common among the Shona. The method together with others such as *musenga bere*, whereby one could arrange with his friends or relatives to 'steal' a girl for a wife from her family without her consent; *Kuzvarira*, a system whereby parents would give their young daughter into marriage even before she is mature in exchange of food, cattle or some other necessities, were some of the ways put in place to cater for the less privileged members who oth-

⁴⁴ Gombe, *Tsika dzaVaShona*, p.37.

erwise could not raise wealth for *roora*. Some individuals who did not have wealth could use their skills to pay *roora*. They could go hunting and bring the game to the in-laws as *roora*,⁴⁵ while some could pay *roora* in form of a hoe.

Understood in their proper traditional contexts without value judgements, the methods were not as brutal as most Western scholars would like to suggest. These methods provided a noble avenue to salvation especially because it was culturally unacceptable that one remains unmarried. Honour was gotten from marriage and having children among other things such as wealth. But wealth without a wife and children was useless. In order for one to be turned into an ancestor upon death certain qualifications were to be fulfilled and having been married and having children were central.⁴⁶ Thus, *kutema ugariri* (as other methods) was a way of making sure that even the poor members participated in the religious, social and economic affairs of the community without prejudice. As we have emphasised over and over again, marriages were very important among the Shona for religious, social, economic and political status of individuals and the community at large.

With this background to the nature, purpose and function of the institution of *kutema ugariri*, there is no reason for us to believe that the *muranda*, could be badly treated such as to be punished by whipping, going without food or eating left-overs. Or that he would be living separately from the rest of the family in a poorly constructed house completely different from the rest or to be always dressed in rags or cheap quality clothing than the rest of the family. While it cannot be denied that there were socio-economic differences, to a larger extent being rich or poor was at this time, determined by nature; climate, type of soil, amount of labour, among others and not manufactured as things became during the colonial era, where one's race became the sole gateway either to riches or to poverty. There was therefore some form of egalitarianism among the Shona, which continued among peasants throughout colonisation to date.⁴⁷ No one would be allowed to go hungry while others ate. It was inconceivable that in one village others would get vast tracks of

⁴⁵ Lydia Janhi, 'Roora and Marriage' in *Shona Customs*, pp. 33-41; Gombe, *Tsika dzaVaShona*, see chapter 4, entitled, 'Tsika dzokuwanana dzaVaShona', pp. 34-50; Kabweza, O. M. (et al), *Pasichigare*, pp. 41-66.

⁴⁶ Cf. I. Zvarevashe, 'Shona Religion' in *Shona Customs*, pp. 44-47.

⁴⁷ Cf. Gelfand, 'The egalitarian Shona', *Nada*, x, 4, 1972.

land while others barely had a few square metres to build houses, a scenario that characterised the colonial era and which still obtains in Zimbabwe.

The Strength of the Communal Mode of Production

We can therefore conclude this section by noting that the Communal Mode of Production did not afford the society full potential in developing itself by emphasising on the small unit-family. But its egalitarianism is envied and emulated today for its morality. This is contrary to the other phases of economic production, particularly capitalism that characteristically is morally bankrupt. It is because of this feature that 'contemporary people take a nostalgic launch now and again into this distant past to seek weapons of struggle from it'.⁴⁸ Thus, morality is the fundamental strength of this mode of production, particularly its emphasis on the fact that production is for meeting perceived human needs. The welfare of all human beings is not only the starting point but also the goal of production. That is to say, people are the basis and the content of the morality of this economic system. Hence I agree with Mosala that, black theology of liberation must seek to base itself on this economic morality in its attempt to become a liberating weapon of struggle, and its biblical hermeneutics must draw especially from the values of a culture that came out of this stage.⁴⁹

The Rise of the Shona Tributary Mode of Production (TMP)

The Shona society witnessed a transition from the above described Communal Mode of Production to Tributary Mode of Production (TMP), sometime between the eleventh and fifteenth century CE. Thus, like ancient Israel, the Shona introduced an economic system in which tribute paying was a basic means of surplus extraction, which inevitably transformed all other spheres of life. And this transition, as was the first one from hunting and gathering to agriculture and pastoralism, was not engineered by colonial outsiders. Similar to what happened in ancient Israel, the transition brought both positive and negative consequences. For instance, although the transition brought political strength, however,

⁴⁸ Cf. Mosala, *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology*, p.71.

⁴⁹ Cf. Mosala, *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology*, p.72.

unlike in the previous egalitarian setting, the system of tribute collection introduced unprecedented political bureaucracies, religious hierarchies and social stratification. Hence we begin to see from this period the emergence of the dominant class and underclasses. In no time these dominant classes became a burden on the people.

Key Features and Institutions of the Shona TMP

There must have been many factors that influenced the nature of the tributary mode ranging from political, social and religious. It is indisputable that it was during this era that the office of a chief developed as the dominant political structure.⁵⁰ The development of this office did not displace completely the household system where the father was the head of his family, rather it only became the most dominant feature. How one became a chief may be a matter of speculation. Individuals who may have a bigger family or who may have excelled in for example, farming, religious matters and especially political prowess could have naturally become a source of security for the society. Such an individual would automatically declare himself or was declared chief by the society. Or a tribal leader who may have opened a new area could become a chief of that new area. Heroes from the political conflicts with other tribes may have been declared chiefs and began to organise the people into a political unit-chiefdom. Traditions about many chiefdoms however stress on the magical origins of the chiefdom, and position the chief's ancestors as the custodians of the land and the wellbeing of the whole chiefdom. As such, now in the Tributary Mode of Production, the chief (and not the father) was responsible for distributing land and conducting rituals on behalf of the whole society.⁵¹

In this system of production, ownership of the means of production, the land, is still largely communal. But, there has been a development of another system of surplus generation. And this surplus generation and management have already allowed the beginning of class and state for-

⁵⁰ Cf. Mosala, *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology*, p. 80.

⁵¹ Cf. Bourdillon, *The Shona Peoples*, pp.103-105, see also his discussion on the role of chiefs, pp. 111-123; cf. J. H. Tagwireyi, 'Origin of the Vamari Clan', *Nada*, No. 27, 1950, pp. 63-65; J. Chidziwa, 'The History of the VaShawasha', *Nada*, Vol. 9, No. 1, 1964, pp. 16-33; L. C. Meredith, 'The Rain Spirit of Mabota Murangadzwa, Melsetter District', *Nada*, No. 3, 1925, pp. 77-81.

mation. For instance, due to environmental and organisational purposes, there was a development of hierarchy from household heads, village heads, ward heads/chiefs, to the head of state-the king. Thus the development from communal system of production to a tributary one was a natural process. Beach must be absolutely right in observing that,

the basic social and economic unit was the household, consisting of a small cluster of huts containing a man, his wife or wives, their children and sometimes relatives or hangers-on of the same, allied or different lineages. This was the basic unit of production and consumption, although some co-operation with other units took place. But such a household could rarely exist in isolation, because of human or animal marauders, and the village of several such households and of widely differing sizes was the most visible unit of the society. A few, several or many such villages made up a *nyika* (country/chiefdom) or a territory under an hereditary ruler which might be tributary to one of the six big Shona and Nguni states that dominate the pre-colonial history of the plateau but who might just as, or even more, probably be independent. Bigger territories were often subdivided into wards on the same principle.⁵²

The accumulation of wealth through tribute witnessed the Shona building states/kingdoms, sometime from the middle of the thirteenth century, with the building of grand complexes or cities which clearly marked a significant departure from communal system of production. The Great Zimbabwe state⁵³ was the first kingdom to rise and it flourished between thirteenth to fourteenth century in the South, followed by the Torwa state (fifteenth to seventeenth century in the south west), then came the Mutapa State (fifteenth to nineteenth century in the North), the Changamire state (seventeenth to nineteenth century in the south west)

⁵² Beach, *Zimbabwe Before 1900*, p. 20; For Bourdillon, *The Shona Peoples*, p. 57, among rural Shona, a number of extended families live together in a village community as they used to do in pre-colonial times. The English word 'village' for him, does not accurately convey the Shona *musha* (village or home) centred around the family of the headman and associated with him rather than with any locality or buildings: thus should a Shona headman move to new fields, his village is likely to maintain its identity (its name and much of its original population) at the headman's new home. Nevertheless, a village usually does have territorial connotations, perhaps vaguely a cluster of homesteads and the surrounding fields, or often more precisely a ridge between two streams which mark it off from the territory of neighbouring villages.

⁵³ Bourdillon, *The Shona Peoples*, pp. 7-10 suggests that the builders of the Great Zimbabwe state were the Karanga, that is, the karanga are the first of the Shona groups that appeared on the plateau from around 1000 AD.

and the two states of the Ndebele and Gaza. The last mentioned three states were conquest states in that they involved newcomers who defeated the previously established states and then took over the reins, while the Torwa and the Mutapa are out-growths of the Great Zimbabwe state.⁵⁴ Although the communal spirit was retained and maintained, some of the basic responsibilities of the household head (and of the community) were snatched away and adapted to serve the tributary system.⁵⁵

Negative Effects of the Shona TMP

Social Stratification and Incipient Exploitation

The formation of the states to some extent was a positive development among the Shona, particularly in matters of security. The transition shows that the Shona were not comfortable with the low technological and organisational capacity of the Communal Mode of Production. The development of states also well positioned the Shona for intercontinental trade, which, although it was largely skewed against them, to some extent it benefitted them. However, positive as it may have been, the transition introduced some unprecedented negative consequences. Holding political power became an avenue to social and economic and religious importance. It is most likely because of this that human relations began to sour. Apart from struggles with nature, another level of struggle was thus introduced. Evidently, the rise of states gave birth to constant coups.⁵⁶

The stratification of the society into, a class of rulers and class of ruled under the Tributary Mode of Production also gave rise to waning of economic morality. This resulted in the gap between the rich and the poor increasing. According to Beach, the social differences between the rulers and the ruled were at their most distinct at Great Zimbabwe, (1250 to 1440 AD), with the contrasts in housing, living space, diet and imported goods. This distinction was maintained even as the ruling classes soon left to form other states such as the Torwa and the Mutapa.⁵⁷ Al-

⁵⁴ Cf. Beach, *Zimbabwe Before 1900*, p. 26; Bourdillon, *The Shona Peoples*, pp. 6-10

⁵⁵ Bourdillon, *The Shona Peoples*, pp. 59-60, 105.

⁵⁶ Beach, *Zimbabwe Before 1900*, p. 21.

⁵⁷ Cf. Beach, *Zimbabwe Before 1900*, p. 26.

though we must be aware of the possibility of reading back history and exaggeration of facts to present colonial exploitation as nothing new but a continuation of the old oppressive system or even better, there is a likelihood that social classes began to develop as early as this period. Therefore, we assume the rise of incipient exploitation of the ordinary poor citizens by the ruling elite and corruption of the justice system becoming part of the society.

Impoverishment of the Underclasses

This incipient exploitation of the poor by the ruling elite became a real issue soon after the Shona were roped into mercantile capitalism. Shortly, after their blossom, the Shona states were swamped by intercontinental mercantile capitalism that had strong links with Portuguese colonial interests sometimes disguised as Christian mission, as we shall see in the next chapter. The predominance of mercantile capitalism/trade especially with the Portuguese and Muslim traders from 1500 A.D. exposed the poor to double exploitation. While previously they were forced to pay tribute by the ruling elites, they were from now on, subjected to a trade designed to defraud them. For instance, the Portuguese traders and their Muslim counterparts brought with them beads and cloth among other unimportant paraphernalia, while the locals had to provide particularly gold and ivory and copper in exchange.

Apart from the obvious fact that the trade was quite unevenly balanced with the foreign traders (Portuguese) reaping huge profit from little investments, the Portuguese over the years even tried to wrestle power and conquer the Mutapa state in various ways, so as to amass as much profit as possible. Although they eventually failed, the incursions left the local populace especially the poor worse off, since apart from increase in tribute during wars, it is natural that human resources were conscripted for war. During years of peace, on top of tribute requirements, the rulers would just conscript their subjects to dig for gold or hunt for ivory that they (rulers) would trade with the Portuguese so that they could get for themselves various luxurious things, unaffordable to the subject diggers and hunters whose many labour hours went unnoticed, unpaid. On the other hand, both digging for gold and hunting for ivory was in reality

licing with death.⁵⁸ Also, considering that 'the state rulers would take half of the gold and ivory obtained',⁵⁹ as tax, the poor diggers and hunters actually had a raw deal.

Further, there arose a class of local merchants, agents of the Portuguese traders, whose aim was to make profit out of their labour-which profit was made at the backdrop of exploiting the poor masses. Beach must be right when he concluded that from the many years of intercontinental mercantile trade the locals had nothing to show except 'cloth, beads and wars'.⁶⁰ The rulers at least got better deals as they got *ndoro* shells, cowries, manufactured clothing, a few guns and even small cannon, distilled drinks, fancy celadon or porcelain ceramics, etc.⁶¹ For the rest of the population, their sweat and toil got them nothing except death and a few useless items.

Of course, some got clothes which were very critical considering that temperatures during cold seasons fell to freezing levels. However, taking into account the cheap quality of the clothes, the rate of exchange, time and energy spent, dangers faced by the poor Shona people as they either dug for gold or hunt for ivory, the clothes amounted to broad-day robbery by the Portuguese. Besides, on the whole, the poor were still either naked or in animal skins which barely covered the whole body serve for the essential parts.⁶² Intercontinental trade thus never improved the lives of the poor but those of the rich. It in fact further entrenched the class difference, with the poor getting poorer and the rich getting richer.

⁵⁸ Beach, *Zimbabwe Before 1900*, p. 38, observes that 'if gold washing was merely tedious, gold mining was not only unpredictable because of the broken nature of the reefs but dangerous as well, with the collapses and cave-ins claiming lives fairly frequently. And before guns became readily available in the nineteenth century, elephant hunting could also be highly dangerous.... (hunters had) to tackle an elephant by sneaking up behind it to hamstringing it with an axe.

⁵⁹ Beach, *Zimbabwe Before 1900*, p. 38.

⁶⁰ Beach, *Zimbabwe Before 1900*, p. 37.

⁶¹ S. I. G. Mudenge, 'The role of foreign trade in the Rozvi empire: a reappraisal', *JAH*, 15, 1974; pp. 387-8.

⁶² Cf. Bourdillon, *The Shona Society*, p. 63, observes that (only) 'wealthy individuals were able to acquire cloth for clothing instead of goatskins, to wear beads and other ornaments, to have large huts...'

Introduction of State Tax, Free Labour and Court Levies

Since the beginning of intercontinental mercantile capitalism, the court, capital and army of the state were supported by taxes on trade ranging from 5% to 15%, and a tax of about 50% on gold and ivory levied on the people. The people also paid a tribute in agricultural labour. However, it is not certain whether this applied to all the subjects or merely to those who lived near the capital. Tribute in form of crops was also expected. Again it is not known if all citizens paid since transport of crops was difficult.⁶³ Nevertheless, there is evidence suggesting the existence of regional tributes, although they were in small quantities, they exerted a burden on the poor, especially during bad seasons. What it means from this scenario is that tribute and tax had become impoverishing factors on the people, especially considering that tax on gold and ivory was 50%.

Closely related, is the concept of *Zunde raMambo* (the king's granary) an arrangement in which a field was set aside in every chiefdom so that the produce from this field would be stored in the king's granary who in pursuance of egalitarianism and humanitarianism would redistribute to the hungry; orphans, elderly people, disabled and sick people and others who were in need of food especially during droughts. The grain was also used to feed the chief's soldiers, guards, subjects (complainants and accused) awaiting trial, the chief's advisors, the destitute and travellers.⁶⁴ Although the programme was quite legitimate, it had some grey areas which caused dissent. For example, all the citizens were supposed to contribute free labour working in these fields, from ploughing, seeding, weeding, harvesting and preparing the grain for storage. This was not a small job. It required one to neglect his fields and his household responsibilities prioritising the king's project, which in turn affected his produce. Also, working in the field was not guarantee that one would one day benefit from the produce. There was a great possibility of using the grain for patronage purposes.⁶⁵ The rulers could have used the same grain to reward the loyal citizens and punish the disloyal ones.

⁶³ Cf. Beach, *Zimbabwe Before 1900*, p. 28.

⁶⁴ For more information on the 'Zunde RaMambo' concept, refer to Francis Machingura, *The Messianic Feeding of the Masses: An Analysis of John 6 in the Context of Messianic Leadership in Post-Colonial Zimbabwe*. BiAS 8. Bamberg: University of Bamberg, 2012.

⁶⁵ Cf. Claude G. Mararike, *Survival Strategies in Rural Zimbabwe: The Role of Assets, Indigenous Knowledge and Organisations*. Harare: Mond Books, 1999, p. 15.

Another burden on the people was the legal levies paid in court cases. While in the former times, there was no need for legal levies, as the issues were easily dealt with at household level, the rise of the state, meant that there were people responsible for sitting to adjudicate cases between individuals at all levels; village, ward and territory. Noble as it may have been, soon it became a source of moral corruption of the society. From the 1640s there was increasing evidence that the legal system of the state and larger territory had become, to some extent, a branch of the economy for both the rulers and the ruled. A successful prosecution of a wealth defended brought wealth to the claimant and to those who ran the courts. Although, the ordinary people used this tactic against each other, by the eighteenth century, when intercontinental trade was in decline, the traders were becoming tempting targets-as evidenced by Portuguese traders' complaints.⁶⁶ On one hand, one can even assume that corruption or bribery at the courts was not unknown, such that the poor could have been always found guilty, while the rich would go scot-free after bribing the judges.

Hijacking of the Religious System by the Ruling Elite

From around the time when the Shona developed the state and a Tributary Mode of Production, evidence on religion is slight, although it is consistent in giving a simple picture of how things could have been like. Ideologically, it seems this model vested the king with powers, rather than the fathers of the households, to become the priest whose mediatory capacity between the dead ancestors of his and the living under his control sustained the political organisation and guarantees its security and perpetuity. The relative development of technology and labour organization in the tributary mode of production necessitated the end of the dominance of kinship which although it continued to exist it was radically reshaped for it was dominated by another rationality that required dependence on the chief. The forms of property corresponding to this second step are those which enable the dominant class to control access to the land and by means of this to extract tribute from the peasant producers. The extraction of this tribute itself is controlled by the dominance of an ideology, which always takes the same forms: state

⁶⁶ Cf. Beach, *The Shona and Zimbabwe 900-1850*. Gweru: Mambo Press, 1980, p.109; Cf. Beach, *Zimbabwe Before 1900*, p. 28.

religion or quasi religion.⁶⁷ That is, in as much as the Communal Mode of Production could not survive without family ancestor ideology which was a weapon of the struggle against nature, the tributary economic system adapted and appropriated the communal ideology of ancestor veneration to sustain a different socio-economic set-up.

The older system of ancestor veneration is thus, stratified depending on the social and political position of the living. We thus have in ascending order the family ancestors, village ancestors, ward ancestors and territorial ancestors. In that order, all the ancestors are juniors and responsible to the ancestors of the king. Consequently, all the subjects of the kingdom were bound to recognise the ancestors of the king. In fact, the ideology of the ancestors is 'royalised' in such a way that its basic character as a symbol of how a communally structured society lived its relations to its material conditions is fundamentally eroded. Instead, what emerges is a new ideology (called by an old name).⁶⁸ Because of this newly established system, new struggles were also introduced between the various classes. While under the Communal Mode of Production 'the central contradictions were between elders and juniors and between elders and women', under the tributary system the contradictions are between the chief, nobility, and retainers on one side, and the elders, commoners, foreigners, and slaves on the other.⁶⁹

The centre of the struggle has shifted from struggle with nature and environment to struggle between humans in different social and economic classes. And according to Mosala, this is reflected in a widespread belief in *uroyi* or witchcraft. While in the Communal Mode of Production all misfortunes were understood as divine communication which could be dealt with at household level, in the tributary system the interpretation has changed. Misfortunes were understood to be caused by witches and to combat witchcraft; the services of a specialist-n'anga or diviner were required. Hence during the tributary system, medical and psychiatric activities were also removed or transferred from the household to a specialist group of n'angas (traditional medicine men/and women) who became responsible first of all to the chief, although not

⁶⁷ Cf. Amin, *Class and Nation*, p. 49; Mosala, *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology*, p. 81.

⁶⁸ Cf. Mosala, *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology*, p. 84.

⁶⁹ Cf. David Cooper, 'An Interpretation of the Emergent Urban Class Structure in Botswana: A Case Study of Selebi-Phikwe Miners'. Ph.D. Diss., University of Birmingham, 1982, p. 65; Cf. Mosala, *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology*, p. 81.

always. They were the source of the power of the chief in as much as they were also dependents of the chief. It was only in the Tributary Mode of Production that the roles of n'anga became specialized roles. According to Michael Gelfand,

European society has no one quite like the n'anga, an individual to whom people can turn in every kind of difficulty. He is a doctor in sickness, a priest in religious matters, a lawyer in legal issues, a policeman in the detection of crime, a possessor of magical preparations which can increase crops and install special skills and talents into his clients. He fills a great need in society; his presence gives assurance in the whole community.⁷⁰

In the previous Communal Mode this function was not a specialist activity as we have seen. It was one of the tasks of each household. There was no specialist of the ancestors since every household venerated its own ancestors. The existence of specialists in divine matters suggests the existence of greater spiritual forces responsible for greater religious, socio-economic and political issues than the household set-up. Thus, religion has begun to take shape of the social hierarchies. And this corresponds closely with evidence available so far regarding the religious system of the Shona of the north-east. Archaeological evidence shows that from about 1500 A.D. to 1700 A.D. the society was now based upon ancestral spirit 'cults', based on the ancestors of the ruling lineage.⁷¹

The Response of the Underclasses to Exploitation

Emergence of Militia, Mercenaries and Bandits

While in the Communal Mode of Production, military service was a collective or cooperative activity of the able-bodied persons of each household; from around 1500 A.D. we begin to notice the drafting and

⁷⁰ Gelfand, *Witch Doctor: Traditional Medicine Man in Rhodesia*. London: Harvill Press, 1964, p. 55; See also, G.L. Chavunduka, *Traditional Healers and the Shona Patient*. Gweru: Mambo Press, 1978; Chavunduka, *Traditional Medicine in Modern Zimbabwe*. Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications, 1994; Chavunduka, *The Professionalisation of Traditional Medicine*. Harare: Jongwe Printing and Publishing Company, 1998; Mwandayi, *Death and After-life Rituals*, especially, pp. 229-262.

⁷¹ Cf. Beach, *The Shona and Zimbabwe*, p. 104; J. K. Rennie, 'From Zimbabwe to a colonial chieftaincy: four transformations of the Musikavanhu territorial cult in Rhodesia', in J. M. Schoffeleers, (ed.), *Guardians of the Land: Essays on Central African Territorial Cults*. Gweru: Mambo Press, 1999, pp.257-285.

mobilization of age regiments under the control of the king or the king's deputies. The central lineage by dint of the numbers of armed men it could command began to dominate the allocation of its land resources. For Beach, the Mutapa and the more powerful territorial rulers, for instance, had a hard core of 200-500 regulars whose dual function was to stiffen the levies from the whole state or territory in time of war with others and to act as an internal security force in peacetime.⁷² While this was important for the security of the state, the established economic system introduced unwelcome demands on the subjects pushing some, especially the youth to become militia, mercenaries and bandits.

Around 1720s there were major and significant changes in the military and social structures of the prevailing and competing states.⁷³ There was unprecedented dissent from the youth, protesting against an economic system that blocked every opportunity to advance themselves. As such, they took certain practical measures to mitigate the cruel effects of the socio-economic environment. Most notably the youths turned to military service, dissidence and raids for a living. By about 1695, there arose a new phenomenon at the Mutapa court. The *nyai* began to be noticed, although they became quite prominent by about 1750.⁷⁴ The *nyai* were a group of young men who lacking cattle to get wives in the lowlands, left their homes to become clients who did military service for a period of time to get wives from their patrons-usually the house-heads who squabbled for the Mutapa throne. They were thus sort of employed for mercenary activities.

The Changamire state on the other hand had its own *nyai* militia. Since they lived in a cattle-rich part of the plateau, they can hardly have been recruited in the same way as the Mutapa's *nyai*, which suggests that other factors may have uprooted them apart from the need to get wives. Unbearable economic life in general may have been the reason for the youth to avail themselves for military, mercenary and raiding activities. Apart from engaging in military and mercenary activities, it is also assumed that the *nyai* herded the Changamire's cattle,⁷⁵ a scenario quite common especially for the *amabuto* (warriors) of the Ndebele state in the

⁷² Cf. Beach, *Zimbabwe Before 1900*, p. 28.

⁷³ Cf. Beach, *Zimbabwe Before 1900*, p. 46.

⁷⁴ Cf. Beach, *The Shona and Zimbabwe*, pp. 150-1.

⁷⁵ Cf. Beach, *Zimbabwe Before 1900*, p. 46.

following century. This may sustain the assumption that life in general had become unbearable for the ordinary people.

Management and control of these armies of these poor adolescents, and young men by the Changamire and the Mutapa's house-heads was quite an unenviable task. There is evidence that the *nyai* did not only fight off the Portuguese (the culprits blamed and hated for the introduction of a kind of economy that was unfriendly to the poor) but they also mugged travellers (and traders) between Zumbo and Tete,⁷⁶ evidence that discipline was not a character of these militia. It may also, reflect the reality that they were not well provided for and looked after by their hirers, such that they had to fend for themselves. Some of these armies dissented the hirers to become dissidents wrecking havoc in nearby communities. They were very difficult to quell.

In most cases it would require specially trained troops to manage the dissidents menace. For example, in the 1760s, the *Hiya*, a group of emigrants from the middle Sabi valley and the south-eastern highlands, broke away from a larger migration which had reached Buhera, and set off on a career of raiding. They ransacked a large area from Nhowe to the Mazowe valley, to the Mufure-Gweru river. All these areas had become very unsafe for the people and their property. The groups were finally crushed by the Rozvi and they eventually settled near Gweru, by the 1790s. But for the 30 years or so that they had been marauding, they left a trail of violence. Since the push factors were almost the same (resistance against exploitation, oppression and hunger) from one community to the other, it seems the *Hiya* were not alone in their tendency to take up raiding. Thus, Beach concludes that for the first time we begin to see the beginnings of a 'youth revolution'.⁷⁷

There was an explosion of youth groups that took up banditry for a living, a confirmation of the harsh socio-economic effects of the Tributary Mode of Production that had become almost unsustainable, as it neared full-blown capitalism. There arose, the *Dumbuseya* (or *Dumbuzenene*) a name that means sway bellies in reference to well-fed people. Two groups of the *Dumbuseya* emerged from around 1820s-30s and took up raiding as their sole career for survival. They were made up of young Shona men who had been very briefly caught up by the Ngoni and

⁷⁶ Cf. Beach, *Zimbabwe Before 1900*, p. 46.

⁷⁷ Cf. Beach, *Zimbabwe Before 1900*, p. 47.

trained in *mfecane* fighting methods popular with the military personnel of Tshaka the Zulu, thus became expert raiders. One group was defeated by the Duma and vanished from history,⁷⁸ but the other engaged in quite a flourishing career of raiding on the southern plateau edge before being partly absorbed by the Ndebele system.⁷⁹ Also, naturally, old age, marriage and increased responsibility mellowed the *Dumbuseya*. However, their existence, as well as the speed with which many young Shona adapted to the Ndebele and Gaza identities suggests that by the early nineteenth century there was a strong dissatisfaction among the young with the social and economic environment prevailing in the Shona states.⁸⁰

The *modus operandi* of these youth groups and the response of the underclasses to exploitation by the ruling class that demanded tribute echo the reaction of the Canaanite masses who took to Habiruism. It is encouraging to note that like the masses of pre-settlement Israel, the Shona underclasses even went on to appropriate religion as a weapon of the struggle for liberation.

The Emergence of Mwari 'cult' of Resistance

Around the same time, late eighteenth or early nineteenth century, in the midst of the confusion and struggles for survival, there emerged an unfamiliar diverse picture on the religious landscape. Spirit cults that had no relationship to the local lineages, such as Chaminuka, Nehanda and Kaguvi began to gain prominence in all territories.⁸¹ They were thus transterritorial spirits, not confined to a particular tribe or ruling class. It was during the same era that the notion of Mwari became pronounced. It is not quite clear how the concept of Mwari (God) came into being. Although the Shona believe that Mwari is the personal name of the deity who is commonly addressed by attributes such as Musikavanhu (the creator of people) or Nyadenga (the owner of the heavens) suggesting

⁷⁸ Cf. R. M. G. Mtetwa, 'The 'Political' and economic history of the Duma people of south-eastern Rhodesia from the early eighteenth century to 1945' University of Rhodesia: Unpublished D. Phil. Thesis, 1976, p. 149; Cf. Beach, *Zimbabwe Before 1900*, p. 47.

⁷⁹ Cf. J. D. White, 'Esitshebeni' unpublished book, Shabani: 1974, pp. 252-358; Cf. Beach, *Zimbabwe Before 1900*, p. 47.

⁸⁰ Cf. Beach, *Zimbabwe Before 1900*, p. 47.

⁸¹ Cf. Beach, *The Shona and Zimbabwe*, p. 104.

that Mwari has always been there and approachable through family ancestors, the emergence of Mwari cult in the midst of the afore described turmoil is suspicious. Interestingly, Mwari-Musikavanhu has not assumed gender at this point. In contexts where gender was implied, Mwari-Musikavanhu was feminine.

There are suggestions that Mwari could have been a Rozvi family ancestor projected into being an all-inclusive spirit with the rise of the dynasty to power,⁸² thus making Mwari masculine. However, with the above background, I strongly suspect that the Mwari cult may have arisen together with the transterritorial spirits as counter ideology to the ruling class ideology. Considering that religion was a central ideological tool for the ruling elite to promote and safeguard their socio-economic and political advantages (suppressing other spirits particularly of the subjects), the appeal by the underclasses to a genderless and supra-territorial ideology was a tactic of the struggle. This is what we have observed in the first chapter with the Habiru and peasants when they appealed to Yahweh, a transtribal deity. In that way, the Mwari cult and these spirits acted as fuel of resistance to the youth and other underclasses' revolution, as did Yahweh to the struggle of the oppressed underclasses in Israel. The fact that Mwari cult was co-opted and adapted by the Ndebele conquerors when they overpowered the Shona, (something that appeared to be an anomaly, hence N. Bhebe sees it as 'a religious conquest of the conquerors by the vanquished'),⁸³ serves to point to the possibility that at a later stage the Mwari cult could have been hi-jacked by the elite, as was the Israelite Yahweh.

What is particularly significant to point out is that Mwari, at this time, like Yahweh was not yet gendered. It was after Zimbabwe was conquered by the British in 1890 that Mwari through biblical translation became synonymous to the colonial political, social and economic set up where white men were superior to white women and blacks in descending order. Thus, Mwari was made into an all powerful male god, by missionaries, adopting the gender of the conquerors.

⁸² Cf. Beach *The Shona and Zimbabwe*, pp. 247-253; Cf. Beach, *Zimbabwe Before 1900*, p. 50; G. Fortune, 'Who was Mwari?' *RH* 4 (1973), pp. 1-20, (13); see also, J. T. Bent, *The Ruined cities of Mashonaland*. London: 1892, pp. 310-341.

⁸³ N. M.B. Bhebe, 'The Ndebele and Mwari before 1893: A Religious Conquest of the Conquerors by the Vanquished' in J. M. Schoffeleers, (ed.), *Guardians of the Land: Essays on Central African Territorial Cults*. Gweru: Mambo Press, 1999, pp. 287-295.

Implications for the Struggle of Domestic Workers Today

It is important to finish this chapter by an evaluation of the two systems of production so as to pick weapons of struggle for the poor from the traditional culture and history. Thus, I am fully conscious that not all aspects of the Shona pre-colonial life are weapons of the struggle worth of appropriation by the poor against effects of colonisation still manifesting in domestic service in Zimbabwe today. By so doing, I purposefully avoid a common trend among liberation theologians of uncritically idealising the African past as blissful. Mosala is therefore right in arguing that while we seek to establish the black struggle in the past, we must be careful in choosing which aspects of the past are appropriate for our generation. We must be able to see the weaknesses in the past economic systems,⁸⁴ in order to avoid falling into the same pit.

Thus, far from being paradisaal, the communal stage of African development was characterised by battles against nature and environment. That is why the black (poor) struggle took the form of technological development and ideological instruments to mediate between producers and the natural environment. However, although life was difficult and obviously unenviable today, what is admirable about the traditional Shona society is its morality evident in egalitarianism. Although, I am alive to suggestions against idealising Shona egalitarianism beyond reality by some scholars,⁸⁵ I will still insist that the differences between the haves and have-nots were determined by nature and environment rather than by a certain class of people who use their political and social positions and religious ideology to unnecessarily accumulate wealth and to greedily control the means of production while others remained without. Even as the society transitioned into Tributary Mode of Production, it should be noted that by and large, at this stage of development in Africa, production was still the production of use-values and not exchange-values.

⁸⁴ Cf. Mosala, *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology*, p. 71.

⁸⁵ Beach, *Zimbabwe Before 1900*, pp. 22-23; see also Bourdillon, *The Shona Society*, pp.62-63; Bourdillon, *Religion and Society*, p. 154, further suggests that 'there have always been poor people in Africa, people who had limited access to land and were dependent on others for their livelihood, and who had little say in political matters'.

Because at this stage, the Tributary Mode of Production remains characterized by the persistence of communal values and practices, which naturally exist side by side with new practices peculiar to the tributary mode, the incipient economic exploitation in the form of transfers is offset and neutralised by redistributive economic justice,⁸⁶ as we have observed with for example, the *Zunde RaMambo* concept, which, although had elements of exploitation of the people, the grains were for poverty mitigation and not for speculative hoarding. Samir Amin perfectly observes that at this stage,

the product kept by the producer is itself directly a use-value meant for consumption, in general, for the producer's own consumption. But the product extracted by the exploitation of class is also directly use-value for this class. The essence of this tributary mode then is natural economy, without exchange but not without transfers (tribute is one) and redistributions.⁸⁷

The call for the re-establishment of this concept therefore, must not only be the preoccupation of liberation theologians today, but must also be the guiding principle in biblical hermeneutics. In other words, the struggle for liberation of the poor from a social and economic system skewed against the poor, nevertheless, supported by a warped biblical interpretation, thus putting on a religious face but devoid of morality, as we shall see in the following chapters, must necessarily offer a radically different alternative which makes it revolutionary. That means, any theology that purports to support the struggle of the poor must be rooted in the culture of the same poor so as to craft a biblical exegesis well informed by the experiences of the poor, if it has to be revolutionary and of value in the liberation agenda.

What must be clear in a liberation biblical hermeneutician's mind is that the transition to Tributary Mode of Production did not end the struggles of the communal system. Instead, another level of struggle was piled on top of the existing one. Notable development in this new system is the creation of socio-economic classes, closely linked to access to religious and political power. Thus, while, in the tributary mode-in addition to the ongoing struggle to tame nature for meeting human needs-the black struggle became a political and ideological resistance to a ruling class

⁸⁶ Cf. Mosala, *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology*, p. 82.

⁸⁷ Amin, *Class and Nation*, p. 51.

that forever imposed its will on the rest of the populace, as we have observed with the youth revolution. Therefore, even in this capitalist economic system, as Mosala argues, a theology of liberation, must of necessity trace the trajectory of the struggle in which it seeks to participate. This is necessary in order to avoid neo-colonial pitfalls that have characterized most African struggles which have displayed lack of appreciation of African history and culture as weapons of the struggle.⁸⁸ For that reason, I have deliberately invested some time in tracing the Shona cultural and historical dynamics of labour to situate in context the struggle of domestic workers whose predicament mirrors the overall state of the poor in Zimbabwe.

Conclusion

This chapter, by dwelling on the history of the Shona, has provided the necessary background for understanding the Shona struggle against the economic system of capitalism that is inseparable from colonialism and Christianity, which systems radically configured the cultural and material lives of Africans. This is the reason why African biblical exegetes of liberation have no option but to interpret the Bible in the light of African cultural and historical struggles. The following chapter, as such looks at the onset of capitalism, its effects on Shona culture, religion and history, and the role of Christianity especially in offering a biblical interpretation that served capitalism, colonialism and racism thereby legitimating the exploitation of the blacks. Circumstances of domestic workers as the only class of blacks who had unparalleled proximity and occupational intimacy with white people bear testimony to the evils of colonialism and capitalism that were premised on biblical interpretation.

⁸⁸ Cf. Mosala, *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology*, p. 84.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE ROLE OF CHRISTIANITY, BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION AND TRANSLATION IN ENTRENCHING COLONIALISM AND EXPLOITATION OF AFRICANS

Introduction

This chapter investigates the contribution of religion, specifically Christianity, through missionaries, biblical interpretation and translation to the rise and entrenchment of capitalism and colonialism in Zimbabwe. It is my argument that Christian missionaries and Western scholars were foot soldiers of capitalism and colonialism; the task they expeditiously executed through various ways but above all, biblical interpretation and translation well crafted to make Zimbabweans embrace and actually adore capitalist and colonial exploitation as development. In other words, the chapter argues that Christianity, missionaries and the Bible were deployed in Africa by Western colonial powers as 'Weapons of Mass Destruction'. Their main mission was to prepare the ground for the colonisation and exploitation of the Africans. In fact, serving capitalist and colonial masters was interpreted as serving God. This background is of particular importance to this study as the current racial, class and gender struggles evident countrywide especially within the institution of domestic work were decisively formulated in this colonial era. Thus, the status, nature and characteristic features of labour in general and domestic labour in particular, was significantly influenced by the Capitalist Mode of Production and the ideological institutions that supported it. The paradox is, the transformation, from communal, to tributary and to capitalism, represents steps forward in technological and economic advancement, yet the plight of the ordinary people worsened. In other words, the so-called development is actually underdevelopment of the masses. The methods and means by which the exploited underclasses waged the struggle against their exploiters are important weapons for the struggle of domestic workers today.

The Rise of the Capitalist Mode of Production Among the Shona

The rise of capitalism among the Shona is inseparable from colonialism and Christianity. The first attempt at establishing capitalism and colonialism began with the onset of intercontinental mercantile capitalism, championed by the Portuguese. Thus, since the 16th century, there have been overt and covert attempts at dominating the Shona not only in economic sense but in social, religious, cultural, and political spheres as well. Stan Mudenge clearly shows this interconnectedness between Portuguese trade and colonial intentions through the activities of a Portuguese Christian missionary called Fr Gonzalo da Silveira and other Portuguese in the Mutapa court. For Mudenge, Fr. Silveira was an agent of Portuguese imperialist interests sent to pave way for colonisation by ideologically dispossessing the Shona of their history, religion and culture, which aspects themselves are major weapons of the struggle. Fr. Silveira therefore wanted to disarm the Shona in preparation for Portuguese colonialism. That is why in response to his (Silveira's) murder (in 1561) by the Shona who had rightly interpreted him as a spy and a magician, the Portuguese King demanded unfettered rights over gold claims and trade. When Mutapa refused, Portugal invaded the Mutapa Kingdom. Upon failure of the General Barreto expedition, the Portuguese undertook to divide so as to rule the Zimbabweans by sponsoring numerous coups to destabilise the kingdom.¹ In other words, the Portuguese began to sponsor rebels, their puppets. But Mutapa prevailed over them all.

The second phase, from the late 18th century saw the capitalists and colonialists more resolute and determined. Large volumes of Western fortune seekers; gold miners, ivory hunters, travellers and traders, began to criss-cross the country. The Ndebele migrations Northward in mid 19th century from South Africa, which itself had become a hive of capitalist activities well known to some Shona young men who had periodic visits there in search of employment,² and the subsequent trips of missionaries into Matabeleland in mid 19th century were obviously signs of the gloom that was to follow.

¹ Cf. Mudenge, *Christian Education at the Mutapa Court: A Portuguese Strategy to Influence Events in the Empire of Munhumutapa*. Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1986; see also, Vengeyi, 'Gona and the Bible', (p.115).

² Cf. Beach, *Zimbabwe Before 1900*, Chapter Eight, 'The Advance of Capitalism', pp. 60-66.

As a premise to understand historical events among the Shona, one should bear in mind that the advent of the Capitalist Mode of Production, in Africa as it was in other parts of the world was preceded by a historically and logically prerequisite stage, which for Karl Marx is called 'primitive accumulation phase.' It also could be called a phase of substitution by elimination, since in this historical phase, the interest is at transforming or reordering the society through 'destruction and reconstruction'³ to fit the model favourable for capitalism to flourish unhindered. In other words, this stage is the phase of ground preparation, whereby the original producers and owners of the means of production are dispossessed and transformed into the possessors of marketable labour power. This is the reason why for Marx,

the capitalist system presupposes the complete separation of the labourers from all property in the means by which they can realize their labour....The process, therefore, that clears the way for the capitalist system, can be none other than the process which takes away from the labourer the possession of his means of production; a process that transforms, on the one hand, the social means of subsistence and of production into capital, on the other, the immediate producers into wage-labourers.⁴

The history of Zimbabwe, as well as that of the rest of Africa has shown that to achieve the above described intention; there are two dominant strategies that were deployed. First, the earliest phase of this transformation is ideological conquest that aimed at stripping people naked or dispossessing people of their history, culture, creativity and civilisation. The second stage was characterised by military conquest that was usually supported by a series of laws and the continuation of ideological conquest. That is to say, in the end throughout the colonial period, the two approaches ran concurrently. However, it should be known that brutal force was introduced latter when ideological conquest failed or appeared to take long to bear the required fruits.

³ Cf. Jeff Guy, 'Destruction and Reconstruction of Zulu Society,' in S. Marks and R. Rathbone (eds.), *Industrialisation and Social Change in South Africa*. London & New York: Longman, 1982, p. 167ff.

⁴ Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1: *The Process of Capitalist Production*. New York: International Publishers, 1967, p.715; Cf. Mosala, *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology*, p. 85.

The Role of Christian Missionaries in the Rise of Capitalism in Zimbabwe

As we have observed with the Portuguese missionary Gonzalo da Silveira above, from about 1500 A.D. paving way for colonisation has been the responsibility of missionaries, travellers among others, all over Africa. To do this, propaganda was a necessary ideological tool. Africans were regarded as people without any concept of the Supreme Being, religion, culture, morality and civilisation. Hence, the numerous reports produced by these Europeans described Africans as people living in total darkness, and many other derogatory terms.⁵ Christianity, but especially Western values were regarded as the light that should shine in Africa displacing the darkness therein. In that light, missionaries and Western scholars understood themselves as bearers of the light. They thus felt duty bound to enlighten the dark continent. Africans were their burden!

This is the context in which the introduction of Western values couched as Christianity among Africans was described as a mission to civilise or bring light to the world of darkness. A London Missionary Society Rev David Livingstone could actually pride himself as an ambassador of 'Christianity, Commerce and Civilisation' to Africa.⁶ In order to flash out this so-called darkness from the minds of the Africans, the missionaries undertook to establish mission stations, which functioned as churches, schools and health institutions. The agenda was nothing but to ideologically dispossess African people of any cultural, religious and political heritage, so as to award them with foreign religion, culture, language, civilisation, history and everything that defines being.⁷ Indeed, this was a useful strategy to make Africans subservient to capitalist and colonial dictates. The activities of the missionary churches, beginning with the London Missionary Society in Matabeleland from 1859 until colonisation

⁵ For a detailed discussion on the evaluations of early missionaries, explorers and travellers about Africans and response by African scholars, see, B. C. Ray, *African Religions: Symbol, Ritual and Community*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1976; E. Bolaji Idowu, *African Traditional Religion: A Definition*. London: SCM Press, 1973; J. S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1975.

⁶ Cf. J.H. Worcester Jr. *David Livingstone: First to Cross Africa with the Gospel*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1990.

⁷ Cf. Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*. London: Earthscan Publications Ltd, 2003.

in 1890 and even after bear testimony to this covert operation.⁸ The story was the same in South Africa and Botswana. Colonial missionaries always prioritised supplantation of indigenous cultures through Christianity before establishing capitalism and colonisation.⁹

It is possible to talk of a European grand plan for the whole of Africa, to destroy their values so as to pave way for colonisation. And missionaries were to oversee this assault and complete destruction of African value systems that would run counter to the capitalist system. The Bible was the most deadly arsenal that the European empires employed to utterly destroy Africans. In fact, missionaries from the start, as I have said, were servants of the European empires. King Leopold II's charge in 1883 to the Belgian missionaries in the Congo laid the plan bare for all to see. He sent them on a mission to serve the Belgian economic interests and nothing more. The interpretation of the Bible was supposed to help achieve these interests. He said:

“Reverends, Fathers and Dear Compatriots: The task that is given to fulfill is very delicate and requires much tact. You will go certainly to evangelize, but your evangelization must inspire above all Belgium interests. Your principal objective in our mission in the Congo is never to teach the niggers to know God, this they know already. They speak and submit to a Mungu, one Nzambi, one Nzakomba, and what else I don't know. They know that to kill, to sleep with someone else's wife, to lie and to insult is bad. Have courage to admit it; you are not going to teach them what they know already. Your essential role is to facilitate the task of administrators and industrials, which means you will go to interpret the gospel in the way it will be the best to protect your interests in that part of the world. For these things, you have to keep watch on disinteresting our savages from the richness that is plenty [in their underground. To avoid that, they get interested in it, and make you murderous] competition and dream one day to overthrow you.

Your knowledge of the gospel will allow you to find texts ordering, and encouraging your followers to love poverty, like “Happier are the poor be-

⁸ Cf. Bhebe, ‘Christian Missions in Matabeleland 1859-1923’. London: University of London, (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis) 1972; Bhebe, *Christianity and Traditional Religion in Western Zimbabwe, 1859-1923*. London: Longman, 1979; Bhebe, ‘The Ndebele and Mwari before 1893’.

⁹ Cf. Mosala, *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology*, p. 88; see also, Anthony J. Dachs, ‘Missionary Imperialism in Bechuanaland, 1813-1896. (Ph.D. thesis), University of Cambridge, 1972, p. 22.

cause they will inherit the heaven” and, “It’s very difficult for the rich to enter the kingdom of God.” You have to detach from them and make them disrespect everything which gives courage to affront us. I make reference to their Mystic System and their war fetish – warfare protection – which they pretend not to want to abandon, and you must do everything in your power to make it disappear. Your action will be directed essentially to the younger ones, for they won’t revolt when the recommendation of the priest is contradictory to their parent’s teachings. The children have to learn to obey what the missionary recommends, who is the father of their soul. You must singularly insist on their total submission and obedience, avoid developing the spirit in the schools, teach students to read and not to reason. There, dear patriots, are some of the principles that you must apply. You will find many other books, which will be given to you at the end of this conference.

Evangelize the niggers so that they stay forever in submission to the white colonialists, so they never revolt against the restraints they are undergoing. Recite every day – “Happy are those who are weeping because the kingdom of God is for them.” Convert always the blacks by using the whip. Keep their women in nine months of submission to work freely for us. Force them to pay you in sign of recognition-goats, chicken or eggs-every time you visit their villages. And make sure that niggers never become rich. Sing everyday that it’s impossible for the rich to enter heaven. Make them pay tax each week at Sunday mass. Use the money supposed for the poor, to build flourishing business centres. Institute a confessional system, which allows you to be good detectives denouncing any black that has a different consciousness contrary to that of the decision-maker. Teach the niggers to forget their heroes and to adore only ours. Never present a chair to a black that comes to visit you. Don’t give him more than one cigarette. Never invite him for dinner even if he gives you a chicken every time you arrive at his house.¹⁰

However, as hinted by King Leopold’s letter, the use of persuasive measures to turn people against their history, religion and culture by and large failed to yield results, not only because of poor communication methods on the part of the missionaries to convince the indigenous people but also because the indigenous people themselves fiercely resisted any foreign teaching. Across Southern Africa, indigenous people particularly chiefs and other traditional leaders were suspicious of the intentions of missionaries from the start. They correctly suspected mis-

¹⁰ Cf. ‘Letter from King Leopold II of Belgium to Colonial Missionaries, 1883’, Universidade Federal De Minas Gerais.

sionaries to harbour other agendas, greater than only preaching.¹¹ The same suspicion was raised about the activities of the London Missionary Society in Matabeleland, whose association with fellow white traders and fortune seekers raised more questions than answers. True to the observation of the Ndebele leaders, the London Missionary Society by the 1880s was already contemplating the colonisation of Zimbabwe after failing to persuade the indigenous people to discard their culture and religion so as to adopt Western culture misrepresented as Christianity. A Roman Catholic Priest Fr Prestige wrote on 29 May 1883 that ‘until the Matabeles are put down by brute force...they (missionaries) will never improve’.¹² With these feelings, expressing the slow pace of things and the need to change strategy from persuasion to military conquest, the prominence of missionaries at the Berlin conference only the following year is logical and easily explainable.

Military Conquest and the Scramble for Africa

After the primitive accumulation process was unable to overcome the cultural resistance from the indigenous people by using purely cultural mechanisms, there was need for more repressive measures such as military and legal siege on the indigenous people as preconditions for this process to be successful. In other words, dispossessing owners of their natural and human resources required an organised and some legal framework also to avoid stampede and quarrelling, on the part of capitalists. It is in this view that the Berlin Conference of 1884/5 was convened, resulting in African lands, natural resources in the land and animals on the land including its peoples being shared among colonisers. No Africans were consulted and neither were they part of the delegates. Musa Dube is indeed justified to regard the Berlin Conference as ‘gang rape’ of mother Africa.¹³

¹¹ Gerald West, ‘Early Encounters with the Bible Among the BaTlhaping: Historical and Hermeneutical Signs’, *BI* 12, 3 (2004), pp. 251-281.

¹² C.J.M. Zvobgo, *A History of Christian Missions in Zimbabwe 1890-1939*. Gweru: Mambo Press, 1996, p.1; Cf. Gelfand, *Gubulawayo and Beyond: Letters and Journals of the early Jesuit Missionaries to Zambesia, 1879-1887*. London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1968, pp. 442-3; Bhebe, *Christianity and Traditional Religion in Western Zimbabwe*, especially chapter 3.

¹³ Musa W. Dube, ‘Exegeting the Darkness’. Alexander von Humbolt Lecture. Bamberg University, 02 July 2011.

The role of missionaries in the whole saga is not to be underestimated. The parceling of Africa itself was done following Christian missionary trends and recommendations from missionaries themselves who were part and parcel of the gangs who raped Africa. They were prominent delegates at this infamous Berlin Conference. Emphasising the prominence of Christian missionaries in the colonial project at the Berlin Conference, J.N.K. Mugambi argued that:

during the 1884-5 Berlin Conference on Colonial Questions, European powers based their claims for 'spheres of influence' mainly on the presence of their missionaries in particular regions. Thus Germany claimed those areas where German missionaries were present, while Britain claimed regions trodden by British missionaries. Likewise, France claimed the lands which had, no matter how remotely been connected with the French missionary enterprise. Ironically, Portugal was allowed to claim Mozambique and Angola, more because of her missionary contact with those regions in the 16th century, than her actual presence in the 19th century...although the Berlin conference allowed missionary societies to operate without regard to the imperial spheres of influence, in practice, each missionary society tended to concentrate on the territory protected by the government in which it was chartered.....it is impossible to separate the denominational partition of Africa from the political scramble and partition which was endorsed by the 1884-5 Berlin Conference.¹⁴

The conference therefore mandated the brutal invasion of Africans and their dispossession with the full cooperation and blessings of the missionaries. It would have been interesting to get to know the kind of prayer the missionaries prayed. Nevertheless, it is logical to assume that in their prayer they asked God to quicken the process of colonisation and make the Africans cooperate and not to resist. With the feeling of frustration at the slow pace of events among missionaries, before the Berlin Conference, and their outstanding participation throughout the conference, it is no surprise that a missionary Revd. C.D. Helm facilitated the colonisation of Zimbabwe by misinterpreting the scandalous Rudd Concession to king Lobengula,¹⁵ thus paving way for not only capitalism but colonisation as well. When the Pioneer Column under Cecil John Rho-

¹⁴ J.N.K. Mugambi, *From Liberation to Reconstruction: African Christian Theology After the Cold War*. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1995, p.205.

¹⁵ Cf. Mary Stocker, 'The Rudd Concession: A Reappraisal Of An Intricate Controversy', *Zimbabwean History*, X, 1979, pp. 1-20; C. E. Fripp and V. W. Hiller (eds.), *Gold and The Gospel in Mashonaland*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1949.

des made its maiden trip north of the Limpopo, invading Zimbabwe which they achieved in 1890, it was well represented by two missionaries; a Roman Catholic and an Anglican priest,¹⁶ whose main role was to give spiritual and moral sanction to colonization. They prayed for the colonizers to kill as many Africans as possible, as they were chaplains of these European crusaders.

In short, these activities tell us that missionaries and colonizers were one and the same. The constitution adopted at the Berlin Conference makes startling revelations about this intimate relationship between all the various Western individuals who came to Africa prior to colonisation such that it is no longer reasonable to still argue today that missionaries were not in the same boat with imperialists, traders, explorers and hunters. Citing a part of the Berlin constitution, that reads, 'Christian missionaries, scientists and explorers with their followers, property and collections, shall likewise be objects of special protections', Musa Dube believes that missionaries and others may have been granted this special protection on the basis of their usefulness 'in promoting imperialism of their countries'.¹⁷ While this assumption is vindicated in many parts of Africa, I will focus here on the settlers' 'scramble for Zimbabwe' through brutal invasions and mass land dispossessions, and the 'denominational partitioning of Zimbabwe' that took place at colonisation, whose effects are responsible for the state of labourers today, who are all blacks.

Christian Missionaries and the Scramble for Zimbabwe

The scramble for the land started immediately after the official colonisation of the country in 1890. Initially the programme was headed by an Administrator, Archibald Colquhoun. This 'orderly' scramble was however short-lived as it did not open up space quickly for the ever land-hungry settlers. This saw the coming in of Jameson who is remembered

¹⁶ Cf. Michael Lapsley, *Neutrality or Co-optation: Anglican Church and State from 1964 until the Independence of Zimbabwe*. Gweru: Mambo Press, 1986.

¹⁷ Cf. Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*. Missouri: Chalice Press, 2000, p. 4; cf. Louis L. Snyder, ed., *The imperialism Reader: Documents and Readings on Modern Expansion*. New York: Van Nostrand, 1962, p. 211; Andrew F. Walls, 'British Missions' in Torben Christensen and William R. Hutchinson (ed.), *Missionary Ideologies in the Imperialist Era: 1880-1920*. Aarhus: Aros, 1982.

in history as one of the most merciless whites against black people. He never saw black people as anything but slaves. He granted freedom to individual settlers to willy-nilly peg their own lands. The size of the land depended mostly on the energy of the settler to peg and scout and his ruthlessness to protect it against resistance from its owners, the Africans. Although there was an official position restricting settlers from taking lands that were used by the natives such as gardens and fields, the reality on the ground is that this restriction was never obeyed. Settlers removed settled Africans from their ancestral inheritance, land.

Prominent among the early land-grabbers were quasi-aristocrats, speculative companies, fortune-hunters and missionaries. By 1899, about 15.8 million acres of land from the total of 96 million acres that Zimbabwe is were in the hands of Europeans having been alienated from blacks. Of this 15.8 million about 9.3 million acres were in the hands of the aristocratic company syndicates. It is historical that 'the missionaries also helped themselves liberally. By the turn of the century they had acquired almost a third of a million acres, with Catholics taking nearly half this amount. From Rhodes' point of view it clearly made good sense to allow the various denominations to acquire such large vested interests.'¹⁸ This was the best plan reward the church for the services it rendered to the colonisation programme. It is therefore not coincidental that the church did not criticise the settlers for the better part of the colonial era. The church and colonialists had the same interests.

Although the Church denied and continues to deny that they were indeed full time land-grabbers with no difference from the rest of the settlers, hence enemies of the Africans and conscious and willing accomplices in the underdevelopment, exploitation and oppression of the blacks, evidence is overwhelming even to date that the church is the biggest contributor to economic deprivation of the masses owing to the amounts of lands they hold. One Douglas Pelly shows that by 1892 he was already tired of carrying orders of Knight-Bruce, the Anglican Bishop of Mashonaland to acquire vast tracts of land on his behalf, dispossessing African owners. Pelly wrote in a letter to his parents in Europe that, 'The one thing I strongly object to is to go looking for more farms,...He already has more than 40!! All over 3000 acres! And not one

¹⁸ Cf. Robin Palmer, *Land and Racial Domination in Rhodesia*. California: University of California Press, 1977, pp. 36-7.

of them is being worked, either as farm or station as far as I can discover'.¹⁹

The seizure of land by the settlers was even more ruthless in Matabeleland following the war of 1893 (in which the Ndebele resisted colonial encroachment into their ancestral lands). Here the invading Europeans were granted farms of 6, 350 acres, double the size of the Mashonaland farms and the *high veld* on which the Ndebele lived was precisely the area coveted by the invaders. A senior Native Department official observed that, 'Within a few months of the European occupation practically the whole of their most valued region ceased to be their patrimony and passed into the private estates of individuals and the commercial property of companies'. In a short space of time, about 6 months of the conquest, almost all the land was in the hands of the conquerors, the Europeans.²⁰

Even so, land was regarded as a speculative asset, whose value would increase as the country gradually settled down rather than something of immediate value. As it turned out, the displacements and occupation of African lands was a strategy to deprive Africans of any means of survival until they would seek employment offered by white men in the mines (and in households). In Bulawayo for example, Palmer reveals that in 1895 only 'about 150 of the 1, 070 white farms were occupied but engaged in minimum farming activities. In Fort Victoria, from a total of 70 registered farms in 1897, only 20 were occupied and again with very little serious farming. In Hartley around 21 farms were pegged between 1891 and 1896, but only three were occupied with some farming activities taking place. Similarly in Umtali, about 224 farms had been alienated by 1895, but only two were worked and involved in some agriculture. At Mazoe, by 1899 there were 13 farms pegged but not even one was occupied. As such, Palmer observes that 'absentee landlordism was the rule rather than an exception...'²¹

The above described trend continued for a better part of the colonial era and even continued in some cases until around year 2000. Prior to the land reform programme of 2000 onwards, it was normal, for one farmer to own 10 farms; each being more than 6 000 acres. Many settlers held

¹⁹ Palmer, *Land and Racial Domination in Rhodesia*, p. 37.

²⁰ Cf. Palmer, *Land and Racial Domination in Rhodesia*, p. 38.

²¹ Cf. Palmer, *Land and Racial Domination in Rhodesia*, pp. 39-41.

land for yet to be born children and grandchildren. Vast tracts of land were reserved for friends and relatives in Europe who would come later to occupy, at retirement. As such rural poverty in Africa, (Zimbabwe in particular) to a greater extent is structural poverty—a direct product of land disposessions during the colonial era.²²

Immediate Effects of Capitalism and Colonisation on the Zimbabweans

From Owners to Mere Labourers

Through brute force and legal measures since the establishment of the colonial rule in 1890 the much celebrated agricultural expertise among the indigenous people disappeared as it was suffocated. It was all programmatically set to manufacture abundant poverty. As history will tell, poverty was manufactured to such magnitudes that even the die-hards who had sworn never to work for colonial capitalists had no option but to reconsider their stance for the sake of survival.²³ Concerted efforts were made to destroy the flourishing local industries so as to deprive the indigenous people of any alternative source of livelihood but to serve the capitalist economy that was introduced. From the onset of colonisation, Africans were turned from being owners to mere labourers,²⁴ whose welfare was not different from slaves.

As Allen Isaacman rightly observes, colonisation saw the imposition of economic, political, and social arrangements predicated upon the exploitation of the human and natural resources of the indigenous population of Zimbabwe such that the most immediate effect was the transformation of Zimbabweans from self-sustaining agriculturalists to peasants producing for, and subordinate to, an economic system regulated by the

²² Cf. John Ilife, *The African Poor: A History*. SAH 58. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987, pp. pp. 143-163, (p.150).

²³ Cf. Palmer, 'The Agricultural History of Rhodesia', in Palmer and Parsons, (eds.), *The Roots of Rural Poverty*, pp. 221-254; Palmer, *Land and Racial Domination in Rhodesia*; Ian Phimister, 'Peasant Production and Underdevelopment in Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1914, with Particular Reference to the Victoria District', in Palmer and Parsons, (eds.), *The Roots of Rural Poverty*, pp. 255-267.

²⁴ Cf. Barry Kosmin, 'The Inyoka Tobacco Industry of the Shangwe People: the Displacement of a Pre-Colonial Economy in Southern Rhodesia, 1898-1938', in Palmer and Parsons, (eds.), *The Roots of Rural Poverty*, pp. 268-288.

colonial state.²⁵ Initially the indigenous people had responded to colonisation by boosting their agricultural produce: grains, sweet potatoes and groundnuts to meet the high demands of the many sprouting European towns, mines and farms. The profitability of this agricultural activity not only facilitated the quick transformation of the rural populace into the capitalist economy but it on the other hand, also mitigated against the formation of cheap labour force to supply manpower for the mines and European farmers.²⁶ In this regard, until something was immediately done to reverse the trend, the indigenous peoples' response had the possibility of scuttling the newly established capitalist system which desperately needed cheap labour in the mines and farms.

Exorbitant Taxes and Ground Rents

In order to coerce the indigenous people to work for the Europeans, various economic and physical mechanisms were introduced. In 1895, the settler regime imposed hut tax. This measure was to compel Africans to sell their labour in order to raise money for tax. Failure to satisfy this obligation led to confiscation of cattle, loss of land and imprisonment.²⁷ The trick was that no one would be exempted to pay and the tax was collected in cash, or in grain, cattle, or even alluvial gold,²⁸ or in labour, usually of two months' duration. An attempt was also made to 'encourage' payment in cash through the simple expedient of pricing cattle and grain below their market value.²⁹ To make sure all doors for survival independent of the settler economy were firmly closed, the colonial government also imposed trade restrictions, especially prohibiting commerce across the Mozambican border, thus closing off an important market and source of income to Shona peasants residing in the frontier region.³⁰

²⁵ Cf. Allen Isaacman, 'Social Banditry in Zimbabwe (Rhodesia) and Mozambique 1894-1907: An Expression of Early Peasant Protest'. *JSAS* 4 No. 1, Special Issue on Protest and Resistance, (1997), pp 1-30, (p.7).

²⁶ Cf. Isaacman, 'Social Banditry in Zimbabwe', p. 7.

²⁷ Cf. Isaacman, 'Social Banditry in Zimbabwe', p. 7; Reginald Austin, *Racism and Apartheid in Southern Africa: Rhodesia*. Paris: Unesco Press 1975, p. 32.

²⁸ Cf. Phimister, 'Alluvial gold mining and Trade in Nineteenth-Century South Central Africa,' *JAH* 15, (1974), pp. 445-56, (453).

²⁹ Palmer, *Land and Racial Domination in Rhodesia*, p. 43.

³⁰ Isaacman, 'Social Banditry in Zimbabwe', p. 7.

Further, the black masses that refused to vacate designated farms for European farmers were overnight reduced to semi-slaves either as rent-paying tenants or as labourers compelled to work for the new owners of their fields—the Europeans. The blacks who elected to go were crowded into the reserves, which had been created across the country since 1894 strategically located in areas of very poor soils, very arid and disease infested.³¹ This was a well calculated strategy to create a situation whereby the only viable option to sustain oneself and the immediate dependents was to work for the capitalists.

Forced Labour, Corporal Punishment and Exploitative Tax

After realising that the African response to their impoverishment strategies was slow, the colonial regime initiated a more systematic policy of forced labour for their mines and farms, commonly known by the indigenous people as *Chibaro*.³² *Chibaro* literally means predatory raids on unsuspecting villages and the conscription of the most physically fit inhabitants to work for free. Despite the ensuing struggles with the Africans resisting it, *chibharo* was the order of the day throughout the first decades of colonisation.³³ The majority of those captured and forced to work did so in the farms, mines and homes of the settlers. The Native Commissioner of Hartley said in 1895, 'I am at present forcing the natives of this district to work sorely against their will, using such methods as I think desirable'. Earlier in 1892 one pioneer had written home, 'we have great trouble in getting native labour up here, the only way we can do it is to go and catch them at dawn and compel them to work'.³⁴

Colonial officials also provided the indigenous chiefs and village heads with specific quotas in the farms nearby, so that their people would work free of charge, making it perfectly clear that failure to satisfy these quotas would lead to harsh reprisals. In March 1893, for example, a headman, Amanda, received fifty lashes in public, a fine of six goats and

³¹ See for example, Palmer, *Land and Racial Domination in Rhodesia*; Palmer, 'The Agricultural History of Rhodesia', pp. 243-244.

³² Cf. Charles van Onselen, *Chibaro: African Mine Labour in Southern Rhodesia 1900-1933*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1980.

³³ Cf. van Onselen, *Chibaro*; Palmer, *Land and Racial Domination in Rhodesia*, p. 42.

³⁴ Palmer, *Land and Racial Domination in Rhodesia*, p. 43.

three head of cattle for rejecting a demand to send some of his boys to work, saying his men were 'not going to work for white men' and for suggesting that he would 'fire on the police if they came' looking for the boys.³⁵ As Africans were forced to work on these farms, they were constantly harassed and beaten thoroughly. Palmer claims that the conditions of labour were generally appalling and always dehumanising to say the least. There was frequent recourse to corporal punishment; the use of *sjambok* or *chikoti*, (the hide whip), by the farmers, miners and domestic employers, (including their children) and the Native Commissioners.³⁶

Describing Charlie Slatter, one of the main characters in her novel that is based on reality in the Zimbabwean colonial farms, homes and mines in the 1950s, Doris Lessing says,

he was hard with his wife,...with his children...and above all he was hard with his farm labourers (servants). They were the geese that laid the golden eggs,...Slatter believed in farming with a sjambok. It always hung over his front door, with a motto on a wall: 'You shall not mind killing if it is necessary.' He had once killed a native servant in a fit of temper, but was fined by the courts, a paltry thirty pounds. Slatter usually advised other settlers that 'one should buy a sjambok before a plough or a harrow.'³⁷

In all fairness, black people were reduced to a status less than human beings. The most disheartening scenario is that these farms and mines had been forcibly taken from them. Yet, it was legally made the duty of the Africans to cultivate and work for free in these farms and mines so corruptly appropriated by the colonisers. Villages in the vicinity of the newly established white farms were also prone to constant harassment and accusations of theft, even without proof. The people whose land had been stolen were accused of theft! How absurd! Nevertheless, the law was not even followed, but each settler took it upon himself to search every village and discipline the suspected black villagers. When the police were involved, it was even more ruthless.

Reginald Austin gives an example of the March 1892 incident when Ngome's village was attacked in an early dawn raid. He claims that

³⁵ Cf. Austin, *Racism and Apartheid in Southern Africa*, p. 24

³⁶ Cf. Palmer, *Land and Racial Domination in Rhodesia*, p. 43.

³⁷ Doris Lessing, *The Grass is Singing*. Heinemann Educational Publishers: African Writers Series, 1950, p. 15.

maxim guns and seven-pounder were used by Captain Lendy to punish the kraal for having struck a settler who demanded to search the kraal, having accused men of theft. No evidence was produced to substantiate the allegation neither was arrest and trial considered. In the incident twenty one men were killed and forty seven head of cattle were confiscated.³⁸ The same scenarios were widespread country wide. Black people were killed at will like wild animals and the law would do nothing about it.

African Resistance to the Demands of Capitalism and Colonialism

The First Chimurenga-Peasant Revolution

The exploitation and humiliation compelled the indigenous people to organise resistance to occupation in order to revert to the traditional set up whereby all the people owned the means of production. Hence, 1896 signalled the beginning of the First Chimurenga with the killing of the native commissioner Pollard in Mazowe (1896) whose reputation was indiscriminate flogging, of the old and young black people.³⁹ The spirit mediums of the transterritorial spirits; Mbuya Nehanda, Sekuru Kaguvi, and Chaminuka (who cropped up with the genderless Mwari), together with traditional chief Mkwati and several chiefs, such as chief Mapondera and chief Mashonganyika and village heads,⁴⁰ as the guardians of the land, became central rallying points in organising the resistance. In fact, it was Mbuya Nehanda, a woman who tried and authorised the killing of Pollard, suggesting the prominence of women in the traditional organisation of the society, contrary to what women became throughout the colonial era, where they were reduced to legal minors.

³⁸ Cf. Austin, *Racism and Apartheid in Southern Africa*, p. 24.

³⁹ Palmer, *Land and Racial Domination in Rhodesia*, p. 43.

⁴⁰ Cf. Hubert Bucher, *Spirits and Power: An Analysis of Shona Cosmology*. London: Oxford University Press, 1980, p. 51.

Unlike the previous sporadic and uncoordinated attacks on the settlers since 1890, the 1896-8 was a well organised and spirited resistance.⁴¹ According to Palmer,

the Risings, or Chimurenga as they were called by the people, were the most violent, sustained and highly organised instance of resistance to colonial rule anywhere in Africa. They were a genuine people's war, in which individuals fought because they chose to, not because they were ordered to by their leaders. A wide cross-section of society was involved, not merely, as so often elsewhere, simply the official army. The European casualties were much higher than in any comparable revolt; 372 were killed and 129 wounded, representing about 10 percent of the entire white population.⁴²

This well-organised resistance was however met with savage brutality from the settler Government, resulting in scores of the indigenous population being subjected to barbaric mass murder; a majority of them being women and children.⁴³ While the number of African casualties cannot be ascertained, it is known that they were mercilessly butchered without any consideration of morality. Caves full of people, were blasted with dynamite until the last pockets of resistance were utterly crushed,⁴⁴ compelling Palmer to describe the suppression as an unusually brutal process, even by the standards prevailing during the 'Scramble'.⁴⁵ The medium of Nehanda was captured and brought before the courts and was charged with treason. She was sentenced to death by hanging in 1898. The medium of Kaguvi surrendered on his own accord, and he was executed by hanging together with Nehanda.⁴⁶ The arrest and killing of the religious mediums marked the end of the First Chimurenga as the population was deprived of access to the national ancestor spirits of resistance, who were the guardians of natural and social order.⁴⁷

⁴¹ Cf. Beach, 'Chimurenga': The Shona Rising of 1896-97', *JAH* 20, No. 3 (1979), pp. 395-420; Terrence O. Ranger, *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia, 1896-97: A Study in African Resistance*. Evanston: North Western University Press, 1967.

⁴² Palmer, *Land and Racial Domination in Rhodesia*, p. 55.

⁴³ Austin, *Racism and Apartheid in Southern Africa*, p. 28.

⁴⁴ Cf. Ranger, *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia, 1896-97*, pp. 268-310.

⁴⁵ Palmer, *Land and Racial Domination in Rhodesia*, pp. 24, 55.

⁴⁶ Cf. Zvobgo, *A History of Christian Missions in Zimbabwe 1890-1939*.

⁴⁷ Isaacman, 'Social Banditry in Zimbabwe', p. 8.

Counter-revolutionaries: Collaborators/Sell-outs

It is usually assumed that the attitude of all the Africans including their chiefs was total resistance to settlers. This is one weakness that could be found in Ranger's book on the revolt.⁴⁸ It should be categorically stated that the First Chimurenga failed not just because the white people used higher and sophisticated weaponry, but rather it failed precisely because of the attitude of some African peasants including certain chiefs towards the struggle. David Beach in his study of south-west Mashonaland has unravelled a complex pattern of attitudes ranging from, resistance, collaboration and neutrality. These attitudes were predominantly informed by among others; traditional Shona political rivalries, fears of an Ndebele resurgence, and realistic assessments of the likely outcome of the fighting.⁴⁹ The revolt in brief, failed because of some Africans who chose to collaborate with settlers. According to Palmer, 'the 'collaborators' were ultimately responsible for the failure of the Risings, though any 'success' achieved by Africans in 1896 would almost certainly have been of short duration'.⁵⁰ In Matabeleland for example, one headman Gambo decided to collaborate with the whites against the popular revolution 'with the result that supplies and reinforcements were able to reach the besieged *laager* in Bulawayo' through him. In Mashonaland too, 'collaborators' played a vital role for they influenced the spatial expansion of the Rising and also limited the possibilities of combined 'rebel' military operations.⁵¹

The Aftermaths of the First Chimurenga

Further Land Disposessions

To avoid further revolts, the settler government muted the idea of strictly monitoring Africans. And to afford to do that the settlers first decided to disperse the people by moving them to separate areas created for specifi-

⁴⁸ Cf. Ranger, *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia, 1896-97*.

⁴⁹ Beach, 'The Rising in South-Western Mashonaland, 1896-97'. PhD Thesis, University of London, 1971; Beach, "Chimurenga": The Shona Rising of 1896-97'.

⁵⁰ Palmer, *Land and Racial Domination in Rhodesia*, p. 55.

⁵¹ Cf. Palmer, *Land and Racial Domination in Rhodesia*, p. 55.

cally for Africans, the reserves, where new life would begin under strict control of the Native Commissioners. Palmer rightly observes that,

as peace was slowly restored in Mashonaland, it became Company policy to move the Shona into reserves where practicable. It was decided that they should be moved away from their inaccessible kopjes into more open country and settled in much larger villages than hitherto, thereby it was hoped, reducing the chances of a further rising and making it easier for Native Commissioners and chiefs to exercise control.⁵²

Since the creation of reserves was intimately related with the suppression of the First Chimurenga, in Mashonaland as a general rule it was agreed that, 'rebels' be rounded up first and then when the district seemed secure, 'neutrals' and 'collaborators' were to be attended to. One might logically have expected the 'collaborators' to be singled out for generous favours/rewards by the settler regime, but nowhere in the written records is there any mention of a Native Commissioner specifically rewarding a chief or any individual for that matter for his/her 'loyalty' during the period of the revolt by assigning him/her a large reserve.⁵³ The settlers were not concerned about the Africans at all; their prime concern was European economic and political interests.

As a matter of fact, the indigenous revolt against colonial exploitation must have increased the anger and brutality of the settlers, particularly having realised that the whole country had exploded thus clearly showing them the seriousness of the threat they lived with. Several other barbaric laws were enacted to keep the Africans as slaves in their own land.⁵⁴ The whole country was divided up, not haphazardly but carefully for a long period to ensure the best possible conditions (roads, rail, schools among others), to whites who were born in Rhodesia or those who immigrated to Rhodesia.⁵⁵ White farmers who chose to occupy the farms were given interest-free loans for more than 25 years to develop

⁵² Palmer, *Land and Racial Domination in Rhodesia*, p. 65.

⁵³ Cf. Palmer, *Land and Racial Domination in Rhodesia*, p. 67.

⁵⁴ Bucher, *Spirits and Power*, p. 51, observes that after the revolt was ruthlessly put down, the surviving chiefs and mediums remained in a ready mood to fight the white men. The hut tax was increased in 1903, which also was met with unusual activities amongst the spirit mediums. Notably, these activities coincided with the coming out of a new medium of Chaminuka in Chegutu who was claiming that he had 'caused the downfall of VaRozvi and the Ndebele and shall cause the white men to leave the country'.

⁵⁵ Austin, *Racism and Apartheid in Southern Africa*, p. 34.

the farms. However, the same loans were not availed to black farmers. In the end, indigenous agriculture was killed off. Since the Land Apportionment Act of 1930 for example, the Europeans were entitled to possess more than half of the country's land, although they were a very small minority. Together with a variety of laws such as the Maize Control Act of 1934 that was calculated at short changing blacks by buying the black farmers' produce at lower prices than the agricultural produce of white farmers, it became clear that black men's agriculture had summarily been eroded away.⁵⁶ Land dispossessions continued and even increased as time went on, almost becoming the only preoccupation of the colonial administrations. The land issue is still a bitter topic until today owing to this colonial history. It is one of the main issues determining racial, class and gender relationships in Zimbabwe.

The Land Tenure Act of 1969 concretised the European land holding advantages over black people, a scenario that is sadly a reality even today, 33 years after independence. The 1969 Act was indeed the straw that broke the camel's back. Under its provisions, total authority was assumed by the colonial government to take any land they wanted without any consultation with the inhabitants, without any compensation and without appeal to the courts of law. Morris Nyagumbo describes the not uncommon ruthlessness countrywide when his father and all the members of his village lost their ancestral land, under this law:

The whole of Makoni country was cut into numerous European farms. The old Nyagumbo was evicted from his land by a European named Viljoen, who had often been a welcome guest at the old man's home. The old man resisted eviction. Later that afternoon two white policemen and three African police arrived and arrested Nyagumbo. On their arrival at the Rusape Police Camp, Nyagumbo was caned on his buttocks with ten strokes. He was shocked to be told that the land on which he was staying (the ancestral land) had now become a European farm and that he should supply labour to the white man whenever it was required. The sickly old man walked with great difficulty and managed to reach home at midnight. He then asked everybody in the village to get up and to be ready to move away from their village. Small boys drove the cattle and goats while men and women carried bundles of their belongings on their heads. They walked from early hours of the morning till midday when they arrived on top of a mountain, at Manyema. Nyagumbo who had suffered a terrible shock from strokes by

⁵⁶ Cf. Palmer, 'The Agricultural History of Rhodesia', pp. 243-244.

police, was unable to recover and died just after a year's stay at Manyema.⁵⁷

This description is quite representative of the many horrific scenarios that accompanied land appropriations during the colonial era. As clearly attested in the description above, most of the white men who later came to dispossess blacks were known to these villagers as visitors. Some came as hunters, some as historians gathering information on various subjects, but in the process they would be investigating about the land; how fertile the land was and risks in that area and other issues related to land use. They usually would come to evict black farmers, from their ancestral lands at strategic moments of the agricultural calendar. It was always, just before planting, as soon as the ground was already prepared for planting or soon after planting, or when the crops were ripe or just before or soon after harvesting. Thus, colonial masters always started at an advantage. In many cases white farmers would just order the owners to harvest their crops for him. Short notices were also common, for they knew that families could not carry all the grains in the barns, so that they would take over. The whole process of taking away land from its owners was a necessary step toward turning owners into suppliers of labour, with no rights over the same labour.

Intensified Abuse and Ill-treatment of Labourers

While blacks were forced both by law and poverty to work in colonial farmers' fields, mines and homesteads, the humiliation continued. White farmers throughout the country did not regard the native servants as real human beings who get tired, thirsty, or with rationality. In all farms, mines and homes black labourers were treated like domestic animals if not really wild animals. In fact, white men's animals such as horses, cattle, dogs, cats and others had by far better status than black people in general and labourers in particular. Lawrence Vambe vividly describes the colonial experiences of black people in farms, based on his personal experience as a child in 1927 in Chinyika. He confirms not only the fact that black people were by law required to work for the white farmers for almost free of charge, but he also reveals the abuse, humiliation, poor conditions of service black people suffered in the hands of

⁵⁷ M. Nyagumbo, *With the People: An Autobiography from the Zimbabwean Struggle*. London: Allison and Busby, 1980, p. 20; Cf. Bakare, *My Right to Land in the Bible*, p. 60.

white farmers and the brutal effect of the various laws in causing poverty such that families would work for daily food, whose quality was pathetic. Vambe says,

Grandmother's sister lived on the edge of the farm belonging to a white man called Bucha (probably Butcher), a very fat individual, who went about his extensive lands on a well groomed brown horse. Chinyika was an African area. But the many Africans who lived near Madzidza's (grandmother) sister were obliged to work for Bucha and other white farmers nearby. For a whole day's sweat and toil, a man, woman, or child was given so many pounds or ounces of maize-meal, *upfu hwe mugaiwa*. There was no mistaking the fact that Bucha, like all other white farmers, had strong authority over these black people. I worked for him once and I hate it. We did not get any food during the day. Working in boiling sun and on only one meal which we had at home, we had to get rid of the quantities of weeds, which grew in profusion between the maize plants. We were not expected to take rest-breaks and if we did and were noticed by Bucha, that meant less maize-meal at the end of the day....the thing that struck me most forcibly was the white man's attitude to black people. Bucha, in particular, did not seem to regard us as human beings. When he rode through his fields to see how well we were working, he shouted at us and made lewd jokes at the women. He also pinched their buttocks, a revolting thing to do openly in the eyes of the African people.⁵⁸

The above described attitude of white people in general, farmers, miners and household employers continued to define white-black relations throughout the colonial era. Although no longer as common as during the colonial era, such attitudes and behaviours of white people against black workers are yet to die, as I will show in the following chapters.

Targeted Underdevelopment of Africans: Colonial Education

Africans were put in a situation where they had no power over their circumstances, thereby became only useful tools for the capitalists. This status of Africans did not surprise white colonialists at all; they in fact planned it to result in exactly the same scenario. During the course of colonisation, there were deliberate policies to entrench apartheid by depriving Africans of the fundamental human rights and to restrict opportunities for Africans in terms of education, training, enterprise and

⁵⁸ Lawrence Vambe, *From Rhodesia to Zimbabwe*. Britain: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1976, pp.23-24.

collective bargaining.⁵⁹ The educational system for example, trained Africans to provide service at lower levels while ensuring for Europeans a superiority designed to fulfill a racial mythology in which they were cast as a perpetual leadership elite who alone can ensure continued 'standards of civilization'. Until 1980, at independence, there were two departments of education, one for Europeans in which coloureds and Asians were included and another for Africans. Government educational spending on a European child was ten times higher than on a black child. Over 75% of government expenditure on black education was in primary school. Secondary schools only became available to blacks from 1940 onwards but were pitifully few hence far away that many children did not attend them. On the other hand, education for Europeans was compulsory since 1930 with the enactment of the Education Act but for Africans it was voluntary,⁶⁰ until at Independence.

Deliberate bottle-necking system was put in place to deprive Africans of education so that they become useful labourers. Only 50 percent of African children who managed to complete primary education could get places for secondary education. Most of the 50%, that is 37.5 could be admitted for vocational education. The rest 50% would be absorbed immediately after primary education into white farms, homes and mines. Also, African education itself was very inferior to that of Europeans, as the statistics of government investment show. Africans were to be provided with 'a systematic training in household work (domestic service) or agriculture. The Rhodesian Front policy (in 1966) was very clear that it intended 'to gear the African educational output to the job opportunities which Europeans are willing to offer to Africans'.⁶¹ It is clear therefore that colonial education was provided to indigenous people in order to manufacture 'usable resources' for the white families and the white economy.

This was not the same with European children. Secondary schools were in towns mostly in European areas; hence they had no option but to further education as much as they could. Since secondary schools in cities and towns were in Europeans areas, black children who resided in black locations needed government permission to attend school in white

⁵⁹ Cf. Austin, *Racism and Apartheid in Southern Africa*, pp. 43-51.

⁶⁰ Austin, *Racism and Apartheid in Southern Africa*, p. 43.

⁶¹ Austin, *Racism and Apartheid in Southern Africa*, p. 44.

areas. Apart from the difficulties in obtaining the permission, the fees were too high for blacks and it was unimaginable that a black child would attend school with white children. In the end, the destinies were set even before birth. One was born a master while another was born a slave.

Christian Villages and the Enslavement of Africans

Contrary to the claims by some scholars who want to exonerate missionaries from the colonial project and that they took part in the exploitation of Africans, by emphasising that missionaries came earlier and devoted to preaching good news, history shows that alongside the settler scramble for land, the missionaries also invaded lands. It is well attested that missionaries have conquered territories alongside settlers, 'gun in one hand and Bible in the other'.⁶² This is especially true in Zimbabwe as we have observed above, with the missionaries being at the forefront of colonisation. Instead of taking sides with the exploited Zimbabweans, during the suppression of the 1896-8 revolt, missionaries killed some large numbers of black people for demanding their land back.⁶³ There is credence to the claim that the missionaries also stole the land together with settlers.⁶⁴ Besides, the missionary churches always stood in a position of great privilege throughout the colonial era.⁶⁵

The vast farms which the missionaries received as they shared the loot of colonisation with settlers were converted into Christian villages, each denomination being given jurisdiction over the indigenous people living

⁶² Gordimer, 'New Introduction', p. 40; see also, Gerald O. West, *The Academy of the Poor: Towards a dialogical Reading of the Bible*. England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999, p. 9; West, 'Early Encounters With the Bible Among the BaTlhaping: Historical and Hermeneutical Signs', *Biblical Interpretation* 12, 3 (2004), pp. 251-281.

⁶³ Zvobgo, *A History of Christian Missions*; See also, Vambe, *An Ill-Fated People*. London: Heinemann, 1972 and Vambe, *From Rhodesia to Zimbabwe*, who discusses in detail how the black owners of the land were dispossessed by settlers cooperating with missionaries in Chishawasha in order to establish a Roman Catholic (Jesuit) Christian mission station.

⁶⁴ Cf. Bakare, *My Right to Land*, p. 74.

⁶⁵ Cf. Adrian Hastings, *A History of African Christianity 1950-1975*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1979, p. 20.

in their territory of influence.⁶⁶ In these Christian villages every element of life was controlled and traditional ceremonies were prohibited. In fact, it was the duty of colonial legal experts to draft ridiculous laws that would see to it that the indigenous people were enslaved and that institutions that are responsible for ideological intoxication of the masses such as these Christian villages which housed mission schools, hospitals, and churches were empowered to govern and control all aspects of life including minute and private subjects such as sex, marriage, dressing, food and drink among others. And the missionaries as head of Christian villages were granted powers to use any measure they deemed fit, including expulsion and corporal punishment to force subjects under their areas of jurisdiction to comply with settler rule. In the Christian villages, traditional leadership was subverted. Traditional chiefs who resisted missionary demands were deposed and 'Christian chiefs'-puppets were put in place.⁶⁷ The whole indigenous life was turned up-side-down.

In recognition of the sterling work done by these missionaries who controlled Christian villages in furthering colonial interests in Zimbabwe, Rhodes himself evidences his indebtedness to like situated missionaries in a letter to the parents of a Dutch Reformed Church missionary Rev A. A. Louw of Morgenster mission in Masvingo. In the letter, Rhodes wrote, 'Your young son among the natives is worth as much to me as a hundred of my policemen'.⁶⁸ How could one white man be more valuable than hundred white men? This letter is acknowledgement of the power of evangelization and a carefully selected interpretation of scripture and history meant to create instruments of the capitalist colonial regime in black masses. Sermons, songs and Bible study of the missionaries always emphasized the unimportance of material wealth such as land and cattle. A Ndau hymn composed by missionaries, for example said: *Tora*

⁶⁶ For a detailed discussion on the Christian villages in Rhodesia, see for example, Zvobgo, *A History of Christian Missions*, pp. 35-49.

⁶⁷ Cf. Vambe, *From Rhodesia to Zimbabwe*, Chapter Four, pp. 35-49, whose analysis of a Roman Catholic Christian Village at Chishawasha near Harare, gives a miniature representation of how difficult life became in the Christian villages country wide under the missionaries.

⁶⁸ Paul Gifford, *The Religious Right in Southern Africa*. Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications, 1988, p. 46, citing, P. Zachrisson, *An African Area in Change: Belingwe 1894-1946: A Study of Colonialism, Missionary Activity and African Response in Southern Rhodesia*. Gothenburg: University of Gothenburg Press, 1978, p. 267.

nyika ndipe Jesu ndodakara ndiye-(Take all the land, simply give me Jesus and am happy).⁶⁹ Ironically, all white men including the same missionaries had accumulated vast tracts of land and still extending by dispossessing blacks.

This song corroborated the carefully selected biblical verses in sermons, in which there was always reference to heaven and not earthly riches. Vambe cites Fr Hesse's dramatic performance during sermons where he would always cry at the conclusion of the sermon in which he would have dwelt on the glory of heaven. This was quite characteristic of a notable trend among missionaries nationwide. In their sermons and prayers, white missionaries would make no reference to the troubles faced by the black people especially land alienation whose effects were ravaging the masses. Vambe says:

in the Christian village at Chishawasha, Fathers dwelt at length on the sins of the world, the unimportance of earthly life and its material wealth in contrast to the sheer intoxicating glory of the world to come. Some of these priests were splendid characters, whose vision of heaven became more and more realistic and mesmerising as they grew older. Old Father, Hesse, for example used to burst into tears at the end of his sermons in which he had stripped naked the wickedness of the world....one really needed to be living in the Mission at this time to properly appreciate how far removed these priests were from the earthly problems of the VaShawasha, and their exploitation by the Christian European community. The fathers said nothing to suggest that they understood the implications of the Land Apportionment Act, discrimination and other problems. People were urged to live in a state of grace, to count material possessions as nothing because they were obstacles in the path to heaven. The very implication of the message was that the semi-slave status served as a sign that you would find it easier to go to heaven than the avaricious and rich white man.⁷⁰

One of the most favourite and popular biblical text during the colonial era was Luke 16:19-21; the story of Lazarus and the Rich man. This story was always an example of how God is not delighted with material riches but with poverty. In fact, poverty was depicted as a licence or guarantee to entering heaven. Africans were thus encouraged to aspire to be like

⁶⁹ Gifford, *The Religious Right*, p. 46, citing T. J. Mafico, 'The Role and Mission of the Church in Independent Zimbabwe', talk at the Zimbabwe Christian Council Symposium on Evangelism, Bulawayo, 13-19 December 1980.

⁷⁰ Vambe, *From Rhodesia to Zimbabwe*, p. 38.

Lazarus rather than to be the Rich man/white men, who get every kind of wealth on earth; land, food, clothes, money and every necessity. Another popular scripture was Gen 9:24-27. Using the image of labourers especially of domestic servants, all Africans were generally depicted by missionaries and settlers as sons and daughters of Canaan, the cursed son Ham (Gen 9:24-27), whose descendants were condemned to be servants of the other descendants of Shem and Japheth (white people), the sons of Noah, for the rest of their lives.⁷¹

Such scriptures were meant to make Africans docile and regard their fate as divinely ordained. They also intended to make Africans accept exploitation and domination, in the vain hope that questioning the status-quo and resisting colonization would inhibit one's chances of entering the kingdom of heaven. Even as the blacks laboured in the farms, mines and homes of white people at close to nothing, they were expected to know that their reward was in heaven and not on earth. It was the main goal of all colonial apparatus even missionary schools and hospitals to create a bunch of people loyal to their masters in all circumstances.

Missionary Education and Colonial Interests

M. L. Daneel observed that missionary facilities (schools, hospitals and churches) were primarily for conversion. According to him, 'most churches made it part of their explicit mission policy to build hospitals with specific aim of 'winning souls'....(and) for many years the only purpose in erecting mission schools was that they could help people to read the Bible,'⁷² and nothing more. Characteristically, the reading of the Bible opened the day and its reading closed the day. Every pupil was supposed to attend Bible classes. The whole curriculum was designed to preserve and protect 'Christianity', Capitalism and western culture awkwardly called 'Civilisation', almost making the learners neglect and

⁷¹ The same attitude was expressed in describing Africans in general, in ancient and modern slave holding communities; Cf. David M. Goldenberg, *The Curse of Ham: Race and Slavery in Early Judaism, Christianity and Islam*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2003.

⁷² M.L. Daneel, *Quest for Belonging: Introduction to a Study of African Independent Churches*. Gweru: Mambo Press, 1987, p.78.

abandon their own language, culture, religion, social and political heritage.⁷³

Contrary to one of the universal principles of education that requires incorporation of the cultural as well as religious heritage of the people for whom the education system is intended in every programme, Africans were expected to curse their culture and their past, as they embraced another culture, another language and another worldview. So interwoven was the missionary education curricula with colonial propaganda that after the studies, African students would admire colonisation and concede that indigenous cultures and languages were inferior and even primitive compared to Western culture and English language. Vambe is one victim (among maybe millions in Zimbabwe) of this scheme. Commenting on the situation at Kutama Mission where he studied, Vambe says,

deeper I went into the analysis of the ugly facts of our past and present, the more I tended to rationalize and to accept the view that colonial rule and its misfortunes were the prerequisites of an eventually united, free and industrious people, with the necessary wisdom and experience to endure hardships....I told myself that, if the Europeans were at that point to fade from the African scene, the black people would be the losers. There would either be inter-tribal strife and bloodshed or once again time could stand still in Africa.⁷⁴

The prevalence of mission stations in rural areas was a very strategic move by the missionary churches. It was to disguise their main intention by appearing as if they were not the same with the colonisers, while in reality they were the same. They deliberately chose rural areas, the hub of African culture to destroy this culture by incorporating it into the colonial scheme. Ngwabi Bhebe argues along those lines when describing the influence of the Evangelical Lutheran Church on the lives of people in reserve areas of Mberengwa, Beitbridge, Gwanda and north-west of Mwenezi as colonisation. According to him, while the colonial state employed violent means of integrating those districts into the colonial capitalist economy, such as the imposition of the hut-taxes, forced labour, and expropriation of productive land as well as livestock, among many, the Evangelical Lutheran Church achieved almost the same goal

⁷³ Cf. Mugambi, *From Liberation to Reconstruction*, p.102.

⁷⁴ Vambe, *From Rhodesia to Zimbabwe*, p.82.

and more than that by the peaceful means of formal education, religious instruction and western medical healing.⁷⁵ Hence, it is impossible to separate the mainstream church from colonisers especially in Southern Rhodesia during the colonial period,⁷⁶ for until today, the colonial churches are not yet singing from the same hymn book with the black people. More often than not, they pretend to be neutral when in fact they sup with the oppressors.

The attack on the culture, religion and history of the people is an important phase and very tactical move to conquer the people especially considering that these are weapons of the struggle. So far we have made it clear that depending on who uses them and for what intentions, they have the capacity to liberate or to oppress. This is why always, when the people became naked of their culture, history and religion; there followed directly a prescription of another worldview, contrary to the previously held. It is not accidental that missionaries in most African countries preceded colonialists. It was well thought out and carefully planned to be so. The culture of the colonised people, being both the outcome and a determinant of their history, represents a contradiction to the mode of production of the colonising forces, that is why it has to be distorted first before it can be used against the history and people of which it is a product.⁷⁷ But even this process of attempting to distort and subjugate black culture represents an arena of fierce struggles, as the history of the missionaries attests.

Western Biblical Scholarship and Definition of Colonial Race Relations

‘Biblical Roots’ of Master and Servant Relationship

Recently there has been a considerable interest from biblical scholars in trying to understand the role played by scholars of the Bible in shaping the process of colonisation and the spreading of capitalism. It is also an

⁷⁵ Cf. Bhebe, ‘The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe and the War of Liberation, 1975-1980’, in Carl F. Hallencreutz and Ambrose Moyo (eds.), *Church and State in Zimbabwe*. Gweru: Mambo Press, 1988, pp 163-194, (163); Zvobgo, *A History of Christian Missions in Zimbabwe 1890-1939*.

⁷⁶ Banana, ‘Foreword’ to Michael Lapsley, *Neutrality or Co-option*, p. 6.

⁷⁷ Mosala, *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology*, p. 87.

attempt to understand how the spirit of colonisation shaped the process of biblical interpretation. Already there are some quite fascinating insights into how Old Testament interpretation, by Western scholars was not only influenced by colonial experiences but also how it gave backing to the colonial project. Holter Knut, for example points us to the interpretation of 2 Sam 18:21-32 by Henry Preserved Smith in 1899 who qualified a Cushite (black or African) warrior in King David's army, as a Negro 'naturally a slave'.⁷⁸ The inclusion of the qualification 'naturally a slave' is certainly not accidental. It actually reflects an interpretative background of unequal power relations between whites and blacks (in the colonies). On another level, it depicts the relationship between the West and Africa; the relationship between the colonisers and the colonised; the masters and the slaves. It confirms the colonial myth that regarded Africans as the descendants of Canaan as I have pointed out shortly.

While it should be appreciated that Smith was not just a Western scholar but also an American where history of slavery was still fresh and black people still occupying low places in society, politics and economy and that the publisher was British,⁷⁹, which context may have shaped his opinions, we should nevertheless not forget that he wrote during a period shortly (only 14/15 years) after the Berlin Conference, in fact during the primitive accumulation phase in the colonies; a time when Africa was dismissed as uncivilised hence a dark continent. With this context, his views, are quite representative of the popular thinking, not only in the academic circles but also in church and elsewhere, as we have observed above.

This position seems true, given that six years later, after Smith's infamous rant 'Negro, naturally a slave!', W. J. Harper's Commentary depicted a Cushite/an African in Amos 9:7 in colonial terminology as 'uncivilised' and 'despised'.⁸⁰ Harper just followed a tradition that was set in academia and something well acceptable in the society of the day. How-

⁷⁸ Cf. Holter Knut, 'A Negro, Naturally a Slave': An Aspect of the Portrayal of Africans in Colonial Old Testament Interpretation', *OTE* 21/2 (2008), 373-382; Cf. Henry Preserved Smith, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Samuel*. Edinburgh: T & T. Clark, 1899, p. 359.

⁷⁹ Cf. Knut, 'A Negro, Naturally a Slave', p. 374.

⁸⁰ Cf. W. J. Harper, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Amos and Hosea*. Edinburgh: T & T. Clark, 1905, p. 192; 'A Negro, Naturally a Slave', p. 380.

ever, with time scholars began to question the association between a Cushite and a slave. It seems this was partly in correspondence with the changing attitudes about colonisation in the West but not necessarily in the colonies themselves. It is not clear if the rising African nationalism had anything to do with causing introspection in certain quarters in the West which led to questioning the morality of colonisation. What is clear is that from mid 20th century, biblical scholars became uncertain and uncommitted to the equation-‘a Cushite equals a slave’. For example, G. B. Caird’s interpretation of 2 Sam 18: 21-32 shows some scepticism for he uses, ‘probably a slave’.⁸¹

The above described scholarly positions regarding the status of an African in relation to others especially Europeans had far reaching consequences, especially in the colonies. It informed white attitudes and perceptions regarding black people. Since an African was naturally a slave as the Bible allegedly claimed, white people were naturally slave masters and divinely appointed to dominate the Africans in all spheres. Logically, since a slave cannot be greater than his master, Africans were considered inferior in all matters while whites considered themselves a superior race! That means in matters of labour, it was the duty of the slave to serve the master and not the other way round. Ill-treating Africans even as they served the master was therefore no drama, since slaves were subjected to all kinds of harassment. Intellectually, it was claimed that Africans had nothing to contribute to civilisation as they waited to be discovered by their colonial masters. Every aspect of African life was considered borrowed or prescribed by superior outsiders.

African aspects of life were largely conceived by western scholars to be similar to what they had learnt in schools and in the church about the ancient Jews of the Old Testament.⁸² Of course similarities are overwhelming; not only in matters of political organisation, social and economic affairs but they even stretch to religious or cosmological views. As a matter of fact, the similarities are also spread across the entire ancient

⁸¹ Cf. G. B. Caird, ‘The First and Second Books of Samuel’, *The Interpreter’s Bible*, Vol. 2, 853-1176. New York: Abingdon Press, 1953, p. 1142; Cf. J. M. Ward, ‘Cushi’, *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*. Vol. 1. New York: Abingdon Press, 1962, p.751, uses, ‘perhaps a slave’.

⁸² Cf. Knut, ‘Like Living in Old Testament times’: The interpretation of assumed affinities between traditional African culture and the Old Testament. *Analecta Bruxellenisa* 11, pp. 17-27.

Near East. Theories explaining these affinities between the Old Testament Jewish cultural and religious practices and the African worldviews were forwarded. Instead of seeing Africa through Egypt as the one that influenced the cultures of the Bible and the entire Near East (which position is historical), tables were turned up-side-down. For instance, one German colonialist M. Merker interpreted the similarities between nomadic Maasai and Israelite cultures as evidence that the Maasai and the ancient Israelites sometime back in history, constituted one single people.⁸³ This conclusion in a way denies development and civilisation of Africans independent of 'superior mentors', in this case, the Israelites. In West Africa, theories that linked the indigenous peoples there with Israelites were also proffered.⁸⁴ Parallels between the Ashanti of Ghana and ancient Hebrews were identified in all areas of life; from sociological structures to narrative traditions, and from ritual expressions to theological concepts in which even Yahweh, the Old Testament name by which God is known, is said to have an etymological parallel in the name Yame, the supreme being among the Ashanti. It was interpreted as clear testimony to the existence of an historical interaction (in the past) between the two groups.⁸⁵ Granted that there was a historical interaction between the two groups; Africans and Israelites, how do we know which group influenced the other? Is it not possible that the Ashanti or Masaai-Africans influenced the Israelites? Contrary to this assumption, from J.J. Williams' interpretative framework, 'the Ashanti (Africans) represent the receiver'⁸⁶ and not the other way round. In fact, this is very schematic and very well calculated ploy to entrench colonialism in Africa. If Africa becomes the giver, there would not be any need to colonise Africa. But if Africa is presented as the receiver, it means eternally Africans are receivers of everything from outside, from the better civilised.

⁸³ M. Merker, *Die Maasai: Ethnographische Monographie eines ostafrikanischen Semitentvolkes*. Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, (1904) 1910, p. 338-344; Cf. Knut, 'A Negro, Naturally a Slave', p. 375.

⁸⁴ J.J. Williams, an American ethnographer and historian, in 1930 published a book *Hebrewisms of West Africa: From Nile to Niger with the Jews*. New York: Biblo & Tannen, (1930) 1967, in which he suggests that across West Africa there are several Hebrew traits in the cultures of the peoples.

⁸⁵ Cf. Williams, *Hebrewisms of West Africa: From Nile to Niger with the Jews*; Cf. Knut, 'A Negro, Naturally a Slave', p. 375.

⁸⁶ Cf. Knut, 'A Negro, Naturally a Slave', p. 375; Cf. Williams, *Hebrewisms of West Africa*. p. 340ff.

The two stories given above schematically agree in that there is a basic colonial concept in both cases. It all has to do with the relationship between Africa and a non-African source of (assumed) higher culture, civilisation, political organisation, religion etc.⁸⁷ The colonialists, missionaries and their counterparts positioning themselves as ‘the children of light’ and ‘the civilised’ had to feel duty bound to destroy savage culture of the people so as to provide a higher civilisation. It was an attempt as I argued earlier to redefine Africans by disarming them of their weapons of the struggle; religion, culture, history and self esteem to pave way for colonial capitalism. The great civilisation that I described in the previous chapter as a result of the Shona development from a communal to Tributary Mode of Production evident at Great Zimbabwe began to be redefined as belonging to outsiders. The aim was the same as the above two examples; to distort people’s history and culture so as to conquer them.

‘Biblical’ Interpretation of Zimbabwean History

The Western interpretation of the Old Testament texts in the 19th century has also been witnessed in the case of the Great Zimbabwe ruins.⁸⁸ K. Mauch, a German geologist who is claimed to have been the first European to arrive at the Great Zimbabwe, in September, 1871, was so impressed with the magnificent building structures around the Great Zimbabwe that he could not think it was constructed by the Shona. Immediately, he thought of the Old Testament narrative about the Queen of Sheba visiting King Solomon’s in Jerusalem (1 kgs 10:1-13). Thus he claimed that one part of the Great Zimbabwe ruins, is a copy of Solomon’s temple, while another part is a copy of the house that the Queen had been living in during her visit to Jerusalem. The building complex is then a result of Phoenician workers, brought to Africa by the Queen of Sheba for this purpose.⁸⁹ Despite the fact that Solomon’s kingdom is close to two thousand years earlier than that of the Mutapa kingdom such that there is no possibility of Solomon having been visited by a Mutapa Queen (the purported Queen of Sheba), several other western

⁸⁷ Cf. Knut, ‘A Negro, Naturally a Slave’, p. 375.

⁸⁸ Cf. Knut, ‘Interpreting Solomon in colonial and post-colonial Africa’. *Old Testament Essays* 19, pp. 851-862; Knut, ‘A Negro, Naturally a Slave’, p. 376.

⁸⁹ Cf. Knut, ‘A Negro, Naturally a Slave’, p. 376.

writers followed this line of argument. For them, the Great Zimbabwe ruins were not an indigenous project but a result of an ancient colonisation of Semitic origin.⁹⁰ It was incomprehensible for them to associate such magnificent and grand complexes with a people they regarded as living in darkness, uncivilised and unsophisticated.

To back up their claims about foreign origins of the complex at Great Zimbabwe, the colonialists had to find a theory to explain the connection between ancient colonial project and the complexes. It was suggested that the Great Zimbabwe and the surrounding areas, had several gold mines which could easily be associated or rather identified with the legendary gold mines of Ophir known from the Old Testament as Solomon's source of gold and precious stones (cf. 1 Kgs 10:11). Therefore, the Phoenicians and Sabeans with whom Solomon as is claimed to have interacted with (cf. 1 Kgs 10:14-29) were trading gold in these areas. Hence, Solomon is therefore supposed to have become part of this trade. Since the area was able to produce large quantities of gold, the hypothesis goes, the Phoenicians, the Sabeans and Israelites once colonised Great Zimbabwe. As such, according to the colonial propaganda, the late 19th century Western colonisation is but part of a very long colonial tradition.⁹¹

The characterisation of Great Zimbabwe by Western scholars as a production of a long colonial history is both in tone and content quite colonial and very racist propaganda. What is more striking is the equating of Western colonialists to Old Testament King Solomon. The colonialist wanted to equate themselves to the wise king Solomon, while associating the Africans with the unwise. The underlying motive of the myth is to portray the cultural and technological level of the colonialists, as well as their political and military supremacy, as equal to the legendary wisdom of Solomon. This propagandistic motive is further hinted by the fact that in the Old Testament, Solomon narratives emphasise his wisdom as divinely instituted (cf. 1 kgs 3:4-15; 2 Chr. 1:3-13). And the very plot of the Old Testament version of the Queen of Sheba narrative is that

⁹⁰ See for example, C. Peters, *Das goldene Ophir Salomons: Eine Studie zur Geschichte der Phönisischen Weltpolitik*. München & Leipzig: Verlag von R. Oldenbourg, 1895; Peters, *Im Goldland des Altertums: Forschungen zwischen Zambesi und Sabi*. München: J. F. Lehmann's Verlag, 1902.

⁹¹ Peters, *Das goldene Ophir Salomons*, p. 60-64; Peters, *Im Goldland des Altertums*, pp. 325-327; Cf. Knut, 'A Negro, Naturally a Slave', p. 376.

she had to leave her own Zimbabwean context (Africa) to go to Solomon in Jerusalem to find wisdom there (1 kgs 10:7-9; 2 Chr 9:5-8), suggesting that there was no wisdom in Africa.

Thus, from this paralleling, the colonisers were interested in showing that we have two colonisers, both from the West and representing unquestionable wisdom that transcends whatever cultural expressions the colonised (Africa) is able to come up with. Further, the two colonisers are depicted as representing a political power that is divinely instituted and legitimised to lift the colonised Africa up to the cultural level of Israel in the days of Solomon or the West in our days.⁹² From the Western colonial narrative therefore, Africa was indeed the burden of the Europeans. Consequently, Africans were expected to see colonisation as a great divine favour. Indeed, a very huge step forward. With this myth, Africans were supposed to be loyal servants of the colonisers. To date the same myth has continued to survive in various forms. Africa is the biggest recipient of humanitarian and ideological Aid from the West and not the other way round. Teachers in Africa come from the West and not the other way round. In cases where Africans are teachers in the West, they must be teaching African related subjects. But still they are supposed to use Western theories to describe African issues; theories that were developed outside the realms of Africa. It is no surprise that because of this setup, Africans until now cannot be understood as experts on Western culture, religion, science, politics and economics among other subjects. This is irrespective of how long such an African has stayed in the West. Some Africans have lived in the West for more than twenty years but still do not qualify to be experts on Western values. Ironically, some Westerners who have never been to Africa or who have visited Africa for only a week are described as experts on Africa! And all this is emanating from the colonial biblical interpretation and translation process.

Bible Translation and the Colonisation of Indigenous Heritage

Missionaries, wearing several hats; as biblical scholars, spiritual advisors, educationists, social transformers and political advisors, took it upon themselves, as I have observed above, to reach home their western perspectives about life in general through Bible translation. Useful as it is in

⁹² Cf. Knut, 'A Negro, Naturally a Slave', p.376-7.

spiritual, social, economic and political spheres of Africans, missionaries engaged in Biblical translation for the purpose of destroying African religions, cultures and history; very important spheres that gave vitality to the society. Thus, the process of translation as was the process of interpretation was not an innocent and objective undertaking.⁹³ Logically, since there is no word to word correspondence from one language to another, every translation is in reality, an interpretation.⁹⁴ In turn, every interpretation transmits certain amounts of ideological bias of the translator/interpreter.⁹⁵ As we have observed, interpretation of the Bible either by scholars or missionaries was aimed at making African people curse their own history, culture and lives so that they embrace foreign culture. It was a process of restructuring the society to fit a scheme desirable for capitalism and colonisation.

Bible Translation and Gendering of Mwari-Musikavanhu

The above observations become clear when one considers the traditional Shona conception of Mwari, and the outcome of the process of Bible translation. Mwari, as I have observed in the previous chapter, was genderless. *Mwari Musikavanhu* was neither male nor female. According to Nisbert Taringa, the concept of *Mwari* (God) among the Shona may be expressed as: 'Thou art woman, Thou art man'.⁹⁶ As such, Mwari could speak to the Shona through both males and females with equal authority. In that way, Mwari managed to speak to Mbuya Nehanda, a woman and Kaguvi (male) as mediums during the First Chimurenga without gender discrimination. In fact, Nehanda was more authoritative, stronger and resolute than Kaguvi who converted to Christianity when incarcerated before execution. But Nehanda being possessed by the spirit of Mwari

⁹³ Cf. Togarasei, *The Bible in Context: Essays Collection*. BiAS 1. Bamberg: Bamberg University Press, 2009, p. 19.

⁹⁴ Cf. Andre Lefevere, 'Introduction' in Lefevere (ed.), *Translation/History/Culture: A Source Book*. London and New York: Routledge, 1992; Levy Jiri, 'Translation as a decision Process', in Lawrence Venuti (ed.), *The Translation Studies Reader*. London and New York: Routledge, 2000; Cf. Togarasei, *The Bible in Context*. p. 19.

⁹⁵ Cf. Tate Randolph W. *Interpreting the Bible*. Zondervan: Hendrikson Publishers, 2006, p. 381.

⁹⁶ Nisbert Taringa, 'African Metaphors for God: male or female', *Scriptura: International Journal of Bible, Religion and Theology in Southern Africa*, Vol. 86. (2004), pp. 174-179.

rejected the whole notion of conversion even as she faced death by hanging.

It was only through the process of translation of the English Bible into Shona that Mwari became gendered. Mwari from then onwards became male,⁹⁷ and is always referred to as *Mwari baba*, (God the father) following rigid western societal hierarchy where a man was in all spheres of life positioned higher than a woman. Women, according to the western culture that was imported to the colonies were regarded as inferior to men hence were not active in political, economic, religious and even social affairs. Their roles revolved around taking care of the children and the husband and confined to the household. This was unprecedented in the Shona culture; both males and females were equal partners in all affairs; economic, social, religious and political. The domestication of Shona women is a colonial development through missionary education,⁹⁸ Bible interpretation and translation.

Tafataona Mahoso traces the roots of the idea of a male gendered God to the process of translation of the Bible from Hebrew to Greek, to Latin, to English and later to Shona, by the Europeans, who had the idea of a male God. For Mahoso,

looking at Africa in relation to Europe, we see that the historical record gives us three belts: A belt, mostly in Africa, where Mwari, Musikavanhu (God), is neither male nor female; a belt where God is depicted as mostly female... and a belt far in the North, where God is projected as a male warrior God. What makes this geography important is not only the fact that the culture of the aggressive warrior God has overrun the belt of the Goddess and the belt of the non-gendered Mwari (Musikavanhu)...Even our idea of Mwari (Musikavanhu) has also been overrun and overturned. Mwari Baba, though in Shona, is not a Shona expression. It is a translation from Eurocentric language and thought. Consider the impact of this Northern tradition and language on translations of the Bible from Hebrew to Greek, to Latin, to English and later to Shona....Consider the opening to the Book of John in the New Testament in view of three belts I have outlined...The Shona translation from English says: “Pakutanga Izwi rakanga

⁹⁷ Cf. Dorah Mbuyeyesango, ‘How local divine powers were suppressed: A Case of Mwari of the Shona’, in Musa Dube (ed.), *Other Ways of Reading the Bible: African Women and the Bible*. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001, pp. 63-77.

⁹⁸ Cf. Elizabeth Schmidt, *Peasants, Traders and Wives*, particularly Chapter Five, dealing with ‘Missionary Education for Women and Girls: The Domestication of African Women’, pp. 122-154.

riripo, Izwi rakanga riri kuna Mwari, Izwi rakanga riri Mwari.” We get some relief that in Shona there is no need to put a “he” or “she” to represent Mwari. But the translation of the Greek term *logos* to mean *izwi* or word is a problem for *vanhu* (the Bantu). *Logos* combines the sense of word with that of thought and that of reason and wisdom. But *Izwi* may mean only voice or word. In terms of African relational thinking and philosophy, the opening of John could read as follows: “Pakutanga Mwari akapa simba rekufunga nokutaura. Simba repfungwa nokutaura zvaive na Mwari, zvikauya muvanhu sechipo chaMwari. Pasina simba rekufunga nokutaura hapana unhu, hapana ruzivo. Ruzivo rwa Mwari runojeka murima, nerima harina kurukunda.”⁹⁹

Bible Translation and the Colonisation of African Ancestors and Ceremonies

The process of colonising African worldviews through Bible translations extended to all religious spheres. In order to ban traditional ceremonies, particularly ancestor veneration which was vital to the survival of every household, missionaries had to make the ceremonies undesirable before God by translating ancestor as evil spirits, demons or ghosts among others. The missionary translated Setswana Bible (of Botswana), for example, had *Badimo* (ancestor) translated as demon.¹⁰⁰ Lovemore Togarasei, also observes the politics behind the translation of the Bible as a covert attempt to ban traditional rituals for communicating with ancestors and Mwari among the Shona. Thus far, ‘banqueting’ in 1 Pet 4:3, for instance, was translated as *mabira* (traditional rituals to communicate with the ancestors) although there is no connection between the two concepts, at all. It was obviously intended to ban traditional ancestral ceremonies. And the translation remained so, until in 2005 when *mabira* was changed to *kuraradza* (drunkenness).¹⁰¹ Even so, there is doubt whether *kuraradza* is the appropriate Shona equivalent translation of

⁹⁹ Tafataona Mahoso, ‘Language rescue and African Liberation’. *Zimpapers*. 03 September 2011.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Dube, ‘Consuming a colonial Cultural Bomb: translating ‘badimo’ into demons in the Setswana Bible (Matthew 8:28-34; 15:22; 10:8)’, *JSNT* 73 (1999) pp. 33-59.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Togarasei, *The Bible in Context*, p. 19; For further details regarding the politics of translation of the Bible in Zimbabwe from English into Union Shona Bible, see for example, George Fortune, ‘75 Years of Writing in Shona’, *Zambezia*. Vol. 1, 1. pp. 55-67; W. J. Van der Merwe, *The Day Star arises in Zimbabwe*. Morgenster: Morgenster Press, 1953.

banqueting in 1 Pet 4:3. Be that as it may, it is a better development than condemning ancestor veneration in the name of 1 Pet 4:3.

While others may interpret these distortions as genuinely a result of a handicap on the side of the missionaries in both, local Shona dialects and ancient Biblical languages such as Hebrew and Greek, it is equally possible that the translations were deliberate, especially that there seems to be a trend across the continent of Africa where similar issues are raised. As a matter of fact, a reading of King Leopold II of Belgium's letter above,¹⁰² will dispel any doubt that missionaries deliberately misinterpreted and mistranslated passages of the Bible to suit the colonial agenda. Knowing that the translated Bible has almost miraculous powers to cause African people to believe,¹⁰³ it is plausible that missionaries wanted to manipulate this reality and present their displeasure at strong challenge from traditional cosmology, rituals and ceremonies, as God's displeasure.

Instruments of Oppression Turned into Instruments of Liberation

Although missionary Bible translation in Africa, Zimbabwe in particular, was designed to alienate indigenous people from their land, their culture and their history, it eventually was counterproductive. The indigenous people began to find for themselves some new truths that affirmed their struggles, new insights that affirmed their culture and their history to the extent that at the end of the day, Bible translations helped the indigenous people wrestle the Bible from the firm grip of the missionaries and colonisers. They began to read it for the benefit of the struggle against colonisation. It became a ready weapon for the liberation of their cultural heritage and their struggles for humanhood that was stolen and crushed by colonisation with full support of the Church through biblical interpretation. This benefit by default is clearly captured by many scholars, especially in addressing how the translated Bible contributed to the sprouting of African Initiated Churches (whose close association with

¹⁰² Cf. King Leopold II, 'Letter from King Leopold II of Belgium to Colonial Missionaries, 1883', Universidade Federal De Minas Gerais. expresses facts that have been witnessed in reality in some parts of Africa.

¹⁰³ John Mbiti, *Bible and Theology in African Christianity*. Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1986, p.26.

African nationalism is unquestionable), which found the African traditional world affirmed in the Bible, something that missionaries had hidden from them.¹⁰⁴

The same conclusion could be reached regarding colonial missionary education, churches and all the institutions of colonialism which although they were first and foremost meant to deprive the African people, eventually the people turned the tables up-side-down and began to use all the skills they acquired for the prosecution of the struggle for liberation. In other words, skills imparted by the master class began to serve the interests of the underclasses not the interests of the master. In this regard, we begin to witness the underclasses making history by turning Weapons of Mass Destruction into Weapons of Mass Liberation. Rev. Ndabaningi Sithole, the first president of ZANU confirms this in relation to missionary education. He argues that it was carefully crafted to blind Africans not to see the evil of colonisation but to make Africans appreciate Western culture as superior, as most subjects taught in mission schools emphasised the value of 'modern' European civilisation. In the area of history, however, according to Sithole, this backfired:

The study in African schools of European, English, and American as well as African history has had a profound influence upon African people. The European struggle for liberty, for religious toleration, for freedom of thought and expression, and European resistance against tyranny thrilled the African students... 'Please tell us about Mr. Government-of-the-people-by-the-people-for-the-people' (Abraham Lincoln). Europe, American and Indian heroism thrilled African students. They admired the firm stand against tyranny. But sooner or later the African admirer sought to overthrow the tyranny of his European hero.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Gunda, *The Bible and Homosexuality in Zimbabwe*, pp. 88-111; Mbiti, *Bible and Theology*, p. 29 observes that to a larger extent, the independent churches (in Africa) are the product of Bible translations; David B. Barrett, *Schism and Renewal in Africa*. Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1968, pp. 109.f, 127-134, also observes the centrality of the (translated) Bible in the formation and practice of the independent churches; The same was observed by, Daneel, *Quest For Belonging*, pp. 84-86.

¹⁰⁵ Ndabaningi Sithole, *African Nationalism*. 2nd ed. London: Oxford University Press, 1968, p.90.

Implications for the Second Chimurenga and Today's Biblical Appropriation

I have deliberately concerned myself in this chapter with the role of European/colonial scholarly and missionary biblical interpretations and translations to show the role of the Bible in marking the parameters of existence that are still with us today. The basic argument is; the Scramble for Africa was done through the Bible, as perfectly captured by the commonly cited short story during the struggle for independence in most countries in Sub-Saharan Africa: 'when the white man came to our country (or to Africa) he had the Bible and we had the land. The white man said to us 'let us pray'. After the prayer, the white man had the land and we had the Bible.'¹⁰⁶ It is this history of the Bible among the colonised that informed the negative perception of the Bible, Church and missionaries by the liberation fighters. And the same should inform the former colonised's appreciation of the role played by the Church, missionaries and the Bible in the plundering of African natural and human resources. The way the former colonisers and the former colonised read and interpret the Bible and understand the role of the Church and missionaries in the colonial era cannot be the same. While the former coloniser still insists that the Church and missionaries were saviours of the Africans, Africans, as former colonised must see the opposite. Even when the former coloniser still insist on reading and interpreting the Bible, with an interest at preserving the colonial status quo, the former colonised must read and interpret the Bible in a way that reverses the colonial set-up. In other words, the former colonised must use the Bible to reclaim their stolen land.

As indicated above, the understanding of the role of the Bible in colonisation and twisted missionary interpretations and translations must be the reason behind incidences in Zimbabwe, where the liberation fighters at some point destroyed churches and burnt Bibles. A research by Michael Bourdillon and Paul Gundani in Chivhu reveals an attempt by nationalists to enforce anti-Western and anti-Christian sentiments on the masses, although the situation was not uniform countrywide.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation*, p. 3; Cf. Takatso Mofokeng, 'Black Christians, the Bible and Liberation', *JBT*, Vol. 2, (1988), p. 34.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. M.F.C. Bourdillon and Paul Gundani, 'Rural Christians and the Zimbabwe Liberation War: A Case Study', in Moyo and Hallencreutz, (eds.), *Church and State in Zimbabwe*.

However, the situation in Chivhu provides a general picture of the nationalist ideology in relation to colonisation, missionaries and the Bible. Generally, countrywide, during the liberation struggle, the nationalists were highly critical of Christianity, telling Africans not to worship Jesus Christ but the pre-colonial genderless and egalitarian Musikavanhu, because before the Church came to Africa, our ancestors worshipped Musikavanhu (God). Nationalists also encouraged people to stop going to Church. Mary the mother of Jesus was castigated as a prostitute and Jesus a bastard/illegitimate child. Jesus was further criticized as the ancestral spirit of the white people,¹⁰⁸ making it illogical for African people to worship him. Some rural people who yielded to this nationalist doctrine, burnt their Bibles, or returned them to the missionaries and completely stopped going to Church. Nevertheless, in some instances, nationalists just re-read the Bible from a Marxist and African cultural perspective to advance the cause of liberation.

Given the history of biblical interpretation and missionary activities in Zimbabwe, this change was deliberately arrived at after realising that the colonial missionary Churches provided biblical interpretation and religious symbolisms that were abstract, irrational and completely divorced from the cultural and material struggles of the black people. Gottwald is thus justified when he claimed that,

all forms of religious faith and practice that fail to grasp and to act upon their connection with and dependence upon the cultural-material evolution of humankind are doomed to irrationality and irrelevance, whatever diversionary consolation they offer at the moment. Forms of religion capable of grasping and acting on that connection and dependence have something to contribute to the next stages in the long struggle for human liberation; and in commitment to that project, they will have something to learn, or to relearn, from the social religion of liberated Israel.¹⁰⁹

It was thus upon this realisation that the nationalists provided another reading of the same Bible; a reading that was informed by history and culture of the underclasses. They did the same with Christian songs which were turned into songs of the struggle against colonialism. Also,

Gweru: Mambo Press, 1988, p. 147-161; Frans J Verstraelen, *Zimbabwean Realities and Christian Responses: Contemporary Aspects of Christianity in Zimbabwe*. Gweru: Mambo Press, 1998.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Bourdillon and Gundani, 'Rural Christians and the Zimbabwe Liberation War', p. 152.

¹⁰⁹ Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh*, p. 708.

this nationalist stance against Christianity could have been a maturation of the cultural and emotional nationalism seed that was planted and nurtured over the years by Robert Mugabe from 1960 as he returned from Ghana.¹¹⁰ European and Christian symbols were soon replaced with traditional cultural symbols such as traditional music and emotions. It became clear that from the 1970s, missionaries, European education, and everything else associated with colonisation were officially recast, in black and white terms.¹¹¹ Lazarus Mpofu, writing in 1969 states that, 'Christianity has been used as the subtle instrument to destroy Zimbabwean culture. By one stroke every form of African culture has been called heathen and therefore full of evil which bars an individual from entering heaven after death. This form of blackmail has been seen through.'¹¹²

In the same light, a ZANU publication: 'MWENJE No. 2. ZANU's Political Programme' of 1 August 1972, issued from Lusaka, Zambia, clearly reveals the party's policy on cultural nationalism. The eighth article on, 'The New Zimbabwe Culture' states that:

Eighty years of colonisation have warped the minds of our people and shaken their confidence in themselves by a process of cultural alienation. The settler stage, screen, mass media, literature, school and church, have combined to create a false impression that a foreign culture was good and ours was bad. Consequently, our rich cultural heritage has been lost and at times despised by the young generation which has been indoctrinated and intoxicated with western cultural values.¹¹³

When searching for a religious and cultural base of the struggle, a conscious revival of traditional African religion took place. The role of pre-colonial national spirit mediums that had fought colonialism at its in-

¹¹⁰ Cf. David, Smith and Colin, *Sympson Mugabe*. London: Sphere Books, 1981; Shamyarira, *Crisis in Rhodesia*. London: Andre Deutsch, 1965, p.67-68; Sithole, *African Nationalism*; Ngwabi Bhebe, 'The Nationalist Struggle, 1957-1962', in Canaan Sodindo Banana (ed.), *Turmoil and Tenacity: Zimbabwe, 1980-1990*. Harare: The College Press, 1989, pp. 50-114, (101).

¹¹¹ Thomas Turino, *Nationalists, Cosmopolitans and Popular Music in Zimbabwe*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2000, p. 195.

¹¹² Mpofu Lazarus, 'Pan-African Symposium: Zimbabwe Culture and the Liberation Struggle.' *Zimbabwe News* 10 (3), 1978, 13-15. p. 14, as cited by Turino, *Nationalists*, p. 195.

¹¹³ Cf. Nyangoni Christopher, and Gideon Nyandoro, *Zimbabwe Independence Movements: Select Documents*. London: Rex Collings, 1979, 261, as cited by Turino, *Nationalists*, p. 196.

fancy, in the First Chimurenga, became especially important and more pronounced in guiding the freedom fighters during the Second Chimurenga,¹¹⁴ and they have remained so even in today's struggles for black emancipation. This is a step towards the right direction. However, in today's struggles we do not seek to completely dismiss the Bible and Christianity for they have become an integral part of the culture of the Zimbabweans. The only logical position to adopt is to appropriate these from the experiences of the underclasses as opposed to how they have been used in the colonial era. As I have insisted, domestic service for example, being a product of this struggle, is still an all-blacks profession because nothing has changed from the colonial era. Therefore, the Bible and Christianity must provide answers why this is so and craft a way of changing the order. Unfortunately, the churches, especially missionary churches have barely changed; they still advance the economic cause of the elite, minority. They cannot therefore ask relevant questions and craft biblical hermeneutical positions informed by the experiences of the underclasses, majority blacks.

The same is true with the recent phenomenon of Pentecostalism. In some cases, these churches are even worse than missionary churches. While missionary churches have advanced a bit in appreciating African culture and worldview, Pentecostals through Biblical interpretation vehemently castigate African culture, language, spiritual worldview and anything associated with African past as evil. They neatly replicate the colonial missionary churches. By spiritualising poverty and wealth, as we

¹¹⁴ Verstraelen, *Zimbabwean Realities and Christian Responses*, p. 53; For a detailed analysis of the relationship between nationalists and African Traditional spirits, see D. Lan, *Guns and Rain: Spirit Mediums and Guerrilla War in Zimbabwe*, Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1985; T.O. Ranger, 'The Death of Chaminuka: Spirit Mediums, Nationalism and the Guerilla War in Zimbabwe', *African Affairs*, Vol. 81, No. 324 (Jul., 1982), pp. 349-369; Ranger and Ngwabi Bhebe, *Society in Zimbabwe's Liberation War*. Oxford: Currey, 1996; M. Daneel, *Guerrilla Snuff*. Harare: Baobab Books, 1995; D. Sweetman, *Women Leaders in African History*. London: Heinemann, 1985, p. 91 and 97 who says that the liberations fighters consulted Nehanda spirit medium; M.F.C. Bourdillon, *The Shona Peoples: An Ethnography of the Contemporary Shona, with Special Reference to their Religion*. 3rd edition. Gweru: Mambo Press, 1987, p.274; Christine N. Qunta, 'Nehanda of Zimbabwe (c.1862-1898)', in: Christine N. Qunta (ed.), *Women in Southern Africa*. London: and New York: Allison & Bussby, 1987, p.55-64; Marja Spierenburg, *Strangers, Spirits, and Land Reform: Conflicts about Land in Dande, Northern Zimbabwe*, Leiden: Brill, 2004, and Tabona Shoko, 'My Bones Shall Rise Again': War Veterans, Spirits and Land Reform in Zimbabwe.

shall discuss in the following chapters, they are devoid of solutions to the problems faced by the underclasses of the Zimbabwean society, such as domestic workers.

Conclusion

This chapter has observed that it is impossible to separate Christian missionaries from colonialism. In other words, missionaries fully and willingly participated in the exploitation and oppression of the black people in Africa, through biblical interpretation, translation, biased education, targeted at manufacturing docility and destroying African history, cultural values and traditions so as to make them useful tools in the capitalist economy. The essence of this chapter was therefore to set the platform for the discussion on domestic labour which itself is a direct by product of the oppressive colonial system and the face of black people's struggle against the kind of oppression we have witnessed so far. It is important to note that, while all the black people faced exploitation, domestic labourers by virtue of being the only black people who spent almost all their time; day and night close to white colonialists bear all the marks of colonial exploitation and injustice. Thus, it is not by mere coincidence that to a larger extent, the black struggle was informed by the experiences of (labourers) domestic labourers more than any other group of black people. As the next chapter shows, the black struggle used the same instruments of mass oppression such as the Bible and education to liberate, rather than to oppress the masses. This is a valuable strategy worth of employing in the struggles today. Aluta Continua!!

CHAPTER SIX

MASTERS AND DOMESTIC SERVANTS IN COLONIAL ZIMBABWE

Introduction

This chapter discusses the struggle between domestic servants and masters in colonial Zimbabwe as a miniature of the broader struggles that we have depicted in the previous chapters. The choice of the struggle of domestic workers as representative of all the other underclasses is based not only on the centrality of domestic service to the economy by being the largest occupation of black labour during and after the colonial era, but the choice is also based upon its unique status. Since the colonial era, domestic labour is an institution in which all the struggles; racial, class, gender, age and cultural manifest at once. It is also in the household that racial, class and gender ideologies are manufactured. In other words, the household has always been the epicentre of all the struggles that Zimbabwe is engaged in; political, social, economic and cultural/religious. As we have observed in the previous chapter, the impoverishment of Africans took several strategies that left Africans close to if not actually under slavery itself in their own land. Having been robbed of not only land, but also, history, culture, religion and basically everything, they stood stark naked awaiting to be clothed in completely 'new regalia'. Ironically, all these impoverishment measures were justified by/and/or based on a twisted biblical interpretation by settlers, missionaries and scholars, to portray Africans as 'naturally slaves'. And this status was most evident in domestic servants. This chapter argues that the daily struggles that domestic servants were exposed to both at legal and socio-economic level are similar to slavery in ancient Israel. To that effect, the social and economic implications of the colonial Master and Servants Act, which Act almost 'authorised slavery', informs the bulk of the discussions.

Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century British context

While Southern Rhodesia/colonial Zimbabwe is our main focus, as a point of entry, eighteenth and nineteenth century Britain provides nec-

essary background without which it is difficult to understand the state and nature of the struggles in domestic service. It is mandatory therefore to give brief reference to the nature of domestic labour in eighteenth and nineteenth British context. Domestic service in Britain was structured in such a way that it was regarded as a total institution. According to Goffman,

a total institution may be defined as a place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life. Prisons are examples; however we have other total institutions that comprise people that have not broken the laws....Institutions in the everyday sense of that term are places such as rooms, suites of rooms, buildings,...in which activity of a particular kind regularly goes on...Total character of institutions is symbolized by the barrier to social intercourse with the outside and to departure (characterised by features), such as locked doors, high walls, barbed wire,.....e.g. army barracks, ships, boarding schools, work camps, colonial compounds and large mansions from the point of view of those who live in the servants' quarters.....A basic social arrangement in modern society is that the individual tends to sleep, play, and work in different places, with different co-participants, under different authorities and without an overall rational plan. The central feature of total institutions could be described as a breakdown of the barriers ordinarily separating these three spheres of life.¹

Coser however consciously departs from the vocabulary and concept of 'total institutions'. He chooses to coin the similar institutions as 'greedy institutions'. For him, although there are evident overlaps between 'total' and 'greedy' institutions, these terms denote basically different social phenomena. The main difference is that while Goffman focuses on the physical arrangements separating the 'inmate' from the outside world, Coser contends that greedy institutions, though they may in some cases utilize the device of physical isolation, more often than not, they tend to rely on non physical mechanisms to separate the insider from the outsider and to erect symbolic boundaries between them. For example, a servant serving a prince, serves with his whole person and is not separated physically from the prince and the other people with whom they are. For him, the main difference between servants and the ordinary

¹ Goffman, *Asylums*, pp. 11-17.

citizens is that servants are socially distant from the ordinary run of citizens because of the nature of their statuses and prerogatives.²

Greedy institutions, therefore, unlike total institutions are not typically marked by coercion. In most cases, they tend to rely on voluntary compliance and evolve by means of activating loyalty and commitment through various strategies. For example, some people may choose a life in which they engage themselves totally even though they may be subjected to rigid social controls. In that regard, greedy institutions, as opposed to total institutions, aim at maximizing assent to their styles of life by appearing highly desirable to the participants. Greedy institutions are also known to exercise pressures on component individuals to weaken their ties, or not to form any ties, with other institutions or persons that might make claims that conflict with their own demands. This was the scenario with domestic service in eighteenth and nineteenth century Britain. As observed by Coser,

the historical family with its household servants and the wife-mother in the modern middle class family provide typical examples. The traditional household servant typically resides in the home of the master and hence has no resources for separating the private from the public spheres of life. This occupational role is hence incongruent with most others in the modern world. Being continually observable by the master, being continually on tap, the servant has no structural resources to shield his or her personality from the master's omnivorous demands.³

The situation created by greedy institutions is in direct contradiction with what society expects. For instance, in modern society, the amount of time that an individual legitimately owes to his employer is normative and even legally established. This makes it possible for the employee to have time for family or other non-occupational associations. That is, one is far from being fully immersed in a particular sub-system. One is in fact, segmentally engaged in a variety of social circles, and none of which should demand exclusive loyalty. For instance, one could be a father, an employee, a trade unionist, and a church member, and he may learn to navigate, as it were, among the various obligations that these various roles impose and require without much conflict. In a normal environment, the demands of competing claims to allegiance are

² Cf. Coser, *Greedy Institutions*, p. 6.

³ Coser, *Greedy Institutions*, p. 11.

handled in such a way that they can be reconciled with each other, and this is feasible because modern social institutions tend to make only limited demands on the person.⁴ But this is contrary to demands of greedy institutions such as domestic service even today in Zimbabwe and many parts of Africa.

Although, as we have just observed, total and greedy institutions may not be one and the same thing, since they use different strategies albeit to achieve the same goal. In colonial Zimbabwe, both scenarios were available in domestic service, and continue to be practically inseparable from the institution of domestic service. In other words, various laws made sure that domestic service was both a 'total and greedy' institution. It is even possible that in Britain both cases applied to domestic servants. However, while in nineteenth century Britain domestic service saw the struggle between masters and servants being centred on or largely determined by class and gender, in Africa, race played a significant role in shaping the nature of the struggle between masters and servants.

Nineteenth Century South African Context

The British came to South Africa in 1820, with already well oiled economic and social traditions of exploiting domestic servants, but sooner or later, as Jacklyn Cock argues, these class-based attitudes were transposed to the South African scene and quickly incorporated into a racist ideology which then operated to legitimize a system of domination.⁵ By the time the British extended their rule north of the Limpopo, (into Zimbabwe) which the colonialists renamed Rhodesia after the name of Cecil John Rhodes, the owner of the British South Africa Company (BSACO) which got the charter to colonise, they had a well perfected art of exploitation, anchored not only on capitalism but also on racism. While the exploitative colonial and capitalist policies enacted by the settlers affected every African, the effects weighed more on domestic servants than on any other group, even more than mine, farm and plantation labourers who were legally bunched under the rubric, 'servants'.

Domestic servants were the only group of blacks the white community would come into contact with on a daily basis. From 1893, when an

⁴ Cf. Coser, *Greedy Institutions*, pp. 2-4.

⁵ Jacklyn Cock, *Maids and Madams: A Study in the Politics of Oppression*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1984, p. 181.

apartheid system was established whereby it was prohibited for Africans to stay in certain urban areas designated European areas, only servants were exempted. Because of their unique position, domestic servants were privy to intimate details about the households in which they worked which knowledge they shared with fellow blacks and in turn, such knowledge shaped opinions Africans generally had of settlers. According to Jock McCulloch, the popular notion that white women were more racist than their husbands may have emanated from their relationships with domestic servants, as white women found a chance to vent their oppression and exploitation by their male counterparts on black male servants.

This is understandable given that in both Southern and Northern Rhodesia (Zambia), domestic labour had been predominantly a male province, until the 1980s.⁶ The semi-slave status of domestic servants obviously was very influential in shaping the black struggle for independence as the treatment of servants show cased what was wrong with colonisation and capitalism. It is plausible that their almost slave status informed the nationalist reading of the Bible in which a neat comparison between Israelite slaves in Egypt and the blacks under colonisation was made.

Master and Servants Act: History and Practical Implications

Until 1980 with Zimbabwean Independence, Southern Rhodesia servants operated under the terms of labour laws which had their origin in the eighteenth century Europe. The Masters and Servants Act or (Chapter 247) became operational from the 29th November 1901 having evolved out of Ordinance No. 1 of 1899. The Ordinance itself was based on legislation originally introduced into Cape Province of South Africa in 1856 by British colonisers. While, from a legal interpretation of the Masters and Servants Act, in Southern Africa (South Africa, Southern and Northern Rhodesia) the term 'servant' comprised domestic labourers, farm labourers, and those employed in trade, manufacture,⁷ and mining,⁸ in popular usage the term was restricted to domestic servants. This corresponded well with the British tradition where, 'by the early

⁶ Cf. McCulloch, *Black Peril, White Virtue*, p. 111; see also, Lessing, *The Grass Is Singing*.

⁷ Cf. McCulloch, *Black Peril, White Virtue*, p. 111.

⁸ Cf. van Onselen, *Chibaro*, p. 81.

nineteenth century 'servant' had generally come to mean domestic servant, and had sunk in connotation as being associated with lack of independence, subservience and servility; if not quite the status of slavery, it was not far removed from it.⁹ The implementation of such an Act that curtails every freedom and the term, 'servant' which literally by this time meant 'slave' was a well calculated move, to confirm the underlying racial philosophy among colonisers that 'Africans are naturally slaves'. As I have noted in the previous chapter, this myth was concretised by a twisted biblical interpretation of certain texts.

Although at theoretical level all the unskilled labourers were to be designated as 'servants' hence were supposed to be bound by the provisions of the Masters and Servants Act, Southern Rhodesian colonial authorities, made sure that to be 'master' or 'servant' was a prerogative of skin colour. While due to the many ruthless measures we have discussed in the previous chapter, it is a fact that a majority of blacks were unskilled compared to whites, it is also true that a sizeable number of whites were unskilled, yet they were still classified as masters. Thus whites were divinely ordained masters in as much as blacks were naturally servants 'slaves'. To achieve and reinforce this conclusion, the settlers created in 1934 the Industrial Conciliation Act, which established a dual system in labour relations by the simple device of defining an 'employee' as 'any person engaged by an employer to perform work...but shall not include a native'.¹⁰ By this simple phrase, unskilled whites could not be 'servants' but employees, while equally unskilled black people were never 'employees' but servants. Unlike in South Africa where domestic work has once involved all races in its development into an 'only blacks' institution,¹¹ in Southern Rhodesia the case was different. Domestic labour (and any manual labour) at its introduction had successfully completed its metamorphosis into an 'exclusively blacks' occupation.

With this racial bias, it is not by chance therefore that the Act left several critical labour issues unattended to. Despite the explicit legal function of

⁹ Cf. John Burnett, *Useful Toil, Autobiographies of Working People from 1820s to the 1970s*. New York: Routledge, 1994, p. 165; Cock, *Maids and Madams*, p. 180.

¹⁰ Austin, *Racism and Apartheid in Southern Africa*, p. 63.

¹¹ Cock, *Maids and Madams*, p. 173. She argues that over the last two hundred years of South African history, domestic service is a kaleidoscopic institution. It has involved slaves, San, Khoikoi, 'Coloureds', Indians, Europeans and African men and women. Its development reflects changing patterns of both racial and sexual domination.

the Act being allegedly to regulate the rights and duties of both Masters and Servants, the implicit function was to enslave Africans who had already been segregated by the law itself on the basis of skin colour. For instance, the specific conditions of each contract were left to be individually worked out between the two contracting parties (as if they were equal negotiating partners). There was no provision in the Act for trade unionism, collective bargaining or other wage setting machinery. No minimum wage was established in the Act and no provisions in it regulated any minimum 'rations' level. As Duncan Clarke rightly observes, all these factors that have a direct bearing on the economic welfare of the servant and his dependants were left to the influence of market forces, master's discretion, and bargaining power of the individual servant, to custom and historical practice.¹²

The only aspects of masters and servants contracts included in the Act were those affecting the contract of service, that is, its termination and the penal provisions upon a servant's misconduct thereby setting the tone for its purpose. The Act was promulgated only to punish black offenders who naturally were presumed guilty even without proof. The normal content of labour legislation; hours of work and overtime pay, conditions of employment, rates of remuneration, provisions for leave and related matters was hardly mentioned, except in certain matters such as minimum number of free days per year and the maximum hours of work daily. Although, Section 5 of the Act stipulated that no one day may consist of more than 10 hours work,¹³ this was never followed. The Act was designed like all other laws to serve the white capitalist economy by extracting free labour from blacks.

¹² Cf. Clarke, *Domestic Workers in Rhodesia*, p. 51.

¹³ Cf. Clarke, *Domestic Workers in Rhodesia*, p. 51; These poor conditions were just adapted from Britain to South Africa, then to Southern Rhodesia; Cock, *Maids and Madams*, p. 73, observes that domestic workers in nineteenth century Britain as well as in twentieth century South Africa were deprived of critical rights as workers, especially the right to collective bargaining and legal protection. Domestic workers were therefore in a legal vacuum. No laws stipulated the minimum wages, hours of work or other conditions of service.

Demographic Patterns of Domestic Servants in Colonial Zimbabwe

After Agriculture and Forestry (which always had the highest number of servants), domestic labour comprised the second most important employment sector in the economy of Southern Rhodesia. As colonisation established roots, with settlers coming in droves, this sector continued to show growth. Through the period, 1954-1971 employment patterns showed serious growth from 76 100 to 114 200 domestic servants that is about 50, 1 percent in these 17 years, as Europeans migrated to Southern Rhodesia after World War II, in search of better economic fortunes. The centrality of this sector to the economic wellbeing of the country is evidenced by the fact that 23,8 percent of all black non agricultural workers were employed in this sector; and on occasion, this proportion reached as high as 26,8 percent (1963).¹⁴ Apart from this immigration dimension, the increase in domestic servants is on the other hand revelatory of the maturation of the devastating effects of the various mechanisms put in place to manufacture poverty in the black communities, so as to force them to supply labour to the colonisers for a living.

Despite, these statistical numbers, domestic servants contributed to the social and economic activities of the country in many other ways. Their presence relieved whites of their family responsibilities to contribute their energy to other sectors of the economy. Domestic servants also enhanced social and economic status of whites who by engaging them got time for leisure. Whites regarded the employment of domestic labour as a *sine qua non* of their social and economic position. It was an exception to do without domestic labour, not a rule. There were therefore very few white households during the colonial times that did not employ domestic servants.¹⁵ Most of these would have recently immigrated to Zimbabwe from Britain and felt embarrassed at having any servants at all, thinking that in being waited on by another human being they degrade them.¹⁶

Quite a sizeable proportion of servants were 'alien natives' from Northern Rhodesia (Zambia), Nyasaland (Malawi) or Mozambique. These were preferred by the settlers to Shona and Ndebele people. Settlers had

¹⁴ Cf. Clarke, *Domestic Workers in Rhodesia*, p. 13.

¹⁵ Cf. Clarke, *Domestic Workers in Rhodesia*, p. 19.

¹⁶ Cf. Weinrich, *Mucheke: Race, Status and Politics*, p. 223.

created a myth that alien natives performed better than the indigenous in domestic work, mines and farms. However, the main reasons behind hiring alien natives were more historical and economical than anything else. Unlike the Shona and Ndebele, migrant servants were prepared to work for very little pay. And since most of them did not have sufficient documentation they would not withdraw labour when better opportunities arose,¹⁷ or during rainy seasons to concentrate on farming in the village (as did the Shona and Ndebele servants). Also, the Shona and the Ndebele were feared by settlers since the first revolt of 1896. The South African environment had also in a way taught the settlers to rely on foreign labour more than on indigenous peoples.¹⁸ This 'international' link on the supply side of the domestic labour market was also of critical importance in the process of underdevelopment. Since labour was easily available, the wages remained pitifully low,¹⁹ and it forced the Shona and the Ndebele to accept any wage proposed.

Although there was a general feeling that female domestic servants were good with children, they were characterized as lazy and dishonest and lustful thus causing much trouble with their boyfriends. One European house wife complained, 'whenever I have a woman well trained, she becomes pregnant and goes home'. Male servants, on the one hand, were praised as hard working, trustworthy and good cooks.²⁰ That explains why domestic labour had been largely a male province, until the 1980s. However, due to economic consideration on the part of employers, only 'poor' European families hired females and children since they were cheaper than male servants.

On the other hand, economic pressure pushed everyone from the rural areas resulting in an increased proportion of female and juvenile labour employed in domestic service. By 1961, 13, 2 percent of domestic servants were women while, 12, 2 percent were children.²¹ Eventually, eco-

¹⁷ Cf. McCulloch, *Black Peril, White Virtue*, p. 109; Weinrich, *Mucheke: Race, Status and Politics*, p. 227.

¹⁸ Cock, *Maids and Madams*, p. 204, says that in South Africa, the Colonists preferred the Tswana, Mfengu and Bhaca who had been brought on to the market by the Mfecane disturbances in the interior, and who, being more uprooted and more distant from their kin, were less likely to desert or to steal their employers cattle.

¹⁹ Cf. Clarke, *Domestic Workers in Rhodesia*, p. 13.

²⁰ Cf. Weinrich, *Mucheke: Race, Status and Politics*, p. 227.

²¹ Cf. Clarke, *Domestic Workers in Rhodesia*, p. 14.

conomic pressure in the reserves, led to a scenario whereby only too old or too young Africans remained in the rural areas. Most of the men (and women) aged even 12 but especially between 20 and 45 had to flee to towns to make a living.²² In order to tap into this almost free labour the Masters and Servants Act permitted children under the age of 16 years to be entered into contracts of service by the parental guardian (section 17).²³ With the absence of manpower in the rural agricultural economy that meant a further damage to the rural economy, with predictable consequences of extreme poverty. This was very important scenario for the settlers for it did not only produce more labour but also effectively exposed labourers to exploitation as they were stripped of bargaining power.

Domestic Service: The Site for Racial and Gender Struggles

The racial and gender struggles were most evident in this area. Domestic servants were expected to possess a wide a range of skills, which expectations in most cases did not augur well with the indigenous culture. It was impressed upon them that they understand English and a good knowledge of white (and not African) domestic arrangements as their work included cooking, child care, cleaning, washing, and gardening and waiting at table, standing at attention.²⁴ They were also expected to remove their hats or kneel when talking to members of the master's family, including children. In the equation, only a servant, the weaker part in the relationship was supposed to bend his culture and language and not the master. The underlying racial ideology is that there was nothing to be learnt by the superior colonisers from among the colonised black people. Lawrence Vambe was surprised by the level of colonisers' dependence upon domestic servants, yet they did not want to learn anything from blacks. He observed that 'black servants were a necessity of life to every white person in his home, at his office and in every sphere except in his thinking'.²⁵ The same pattern has roots in

²² Cf. Austin, *Racism and Apartheid in Southern Africa*, p. 69.

²³ Cf. Clarke, *Domestic Workers in Rhodesia*, p. 53.

²⁴ Cf. McCulloch, *Black Peril, White Virtue*, p. 113.

²⁵ Vambe, *From Rhodesia to Zimbabwe*, p. 33.

Britain.²⁶ Servants were not supposed to think but to act upon commands.

One European woman said, 'the uneducated servants are the best because they always say, 'Yes, baas!' but the younger servants who have been to school think that they are all professors, though they just know the six times table.'²⁷ Nearly all white masters enjoyed servants who did not question them but who acted upon their commands even if the commands were against the servant's feelings, culture, customs and traditions. According to Vambe, 'black servants worked in white bedrooms, kitchens, dining-rooms and gardens. Black nannies, nursed, washed, clothed, and fed white children and also gave them the love and affection which their parents were reluctant to show them'.²⁸ As they gave all this love to other people's children, theirs were miles away and almost neglected. The colonial policies did not allow black children to accompany or visit their father (or mother) in town.

Further, the responsibilities that servants were expected to do were not sensitive to culture and Shona traditional gender prescriptions. Male servants for example, were expected to perform female tasks which a white man would not do under any circumstances. In the indigenous society, it was the responsibility of women to serve their husbands, say food, bath water, and take care of children and the other household chores. But in white households, males were to serve white women. This was the main source of anger among servants.²⁹ By demanding service from their male servants, white women communicated that black males were emasculated or de-sexualised. This is an indelible stigma of slaves;

²⁶ Cf. Coser, *Greedy Institutions*, p. 70, citing an anonymous author of a book entitled *Home Truths for Home Peace or Muddle Defeated* which appeared in England in the middle of the nineteenth century, clearly brings this: 'the servants are the hands,...the mistress should be the head of the house. It is hers to think, to order, to arrange, to provide, to over-look, to remember, to remind; and she has no more right to expect these things from her servants than they have to demand from their mistress that she should get up first, light the fire, and take their place in the kitchen'.

²⁷ Weinrich, *Mucheke: Race, Status and Politics*, p. 225.

²⁸ Vambe, *From Rhodesia to Zimbabwe*, p. 33; Cf. McCulloch, *Black Peril, White Virtue*, p. 111.

²⁹ Cf. Cock, *Maids and Madams*, p. 6, noted that while boys worked as domestic servants in nineteenth century England, the exploitation that male domestic servants experienced in South Africa, derived from the violation of traditional male roles that the nature of domestic work involved.

once in the hands of the master, slaves could be assigned to any task, irrespective of their sex (or age).³⁰

In all slave holding societies, slaves of either sex could perform men's or women's work. In other words, the male servants were wives of both the white man and his wife. Male servants had to temporarily suspend their manhood and forget that they had wives and children at home, since they had become wives themselves. This was humiliation at its worst. Sometimes, the situation was made worse when a white lady would slap the male servant in full view of not only the public but the servant's family (wife and children). As a survival strategy in the racial struggle, many domestic workers therefore resolved to adopt a 'mask of deference', enabling them to conform to the master's expectations and shield their real feelings.³¹ This was the reason why servants, out of the need of financial necessity as well as avoid the consequences of the law, even chose to lead dismembered family lives. Because of this, they were able to give no consideration to family and personal choices in their work environment and conditions of employment.³²

One of the most enduring characteristic features of domestic labour is its diffuseness even from as early as the eighteenth century England.³³ In Rhodesia, it was one site of the struggle, as domestic servants could be required to do anything and work anywhere by their masters. Like slaves, their consent was neither sought nor required; neither their preference nor feelings had any legal grounding. The Masters and Servants Act made it a criminal offence for a servant in domestic service to:

refuse to accompany his master, or any of his family, by desire of the master, on any journey within Southern Rhodesia...on which his master ordered him to go, or to be in charge of, or to drive, herd, or take care of any

³⁰ Cf. Meillassoux, *The Anthropology of Slavery*, p. 100.

³¹ Cf. Cock, *Maids and Madams*, p. 7.

³² Cf. Clarke, *Domestic Workers in Rhodesia*, p. 55.

³³ Cf. J. Jean Hecht, *The Domestic Servant in Eighteenth Century England*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1956, pp. 8-8, argues that some women were domestics but frequently those who performed the duties of an indoor servant did outdoor work as well. The distinction between indoor and outdoor servants was not always clear. For instance, dairy maids usually were engaged as domestics and were on the same general footing as other domestics; yet their work was essentially that of farm servants; Burnett, *Useful Toil*, p. 35, observes that the duties of domestic servants depended on the size and wealth of the household they served and on the number of the staff kept. In small households many roles had to be combined-the extreme instance of this being the 'maid-of-all-work'.

carriage, horse, or any kind of cattle, horned or otherwise, the property or in the lawful possession of or under the lawful control of his master, which such servant would by reason of his contract be bound to do at his master's residence or on his premise or farm (Section 25 (1) and (2)).³⁴

With this provision, although one was engaged as a gardener, one could end up doing all duties including cooking, serving, caring for children, the sick, massaging white women, washing them in the bathroom and literally anything commanded them to do. Cruel masters would for instance, call the servants to flush the toilet after use and servants would do it with a smile on the face. The philosophical basis to this provision almost unequivocally demonstrates the property-status of the servant in the eyes of both the law and the Masters and Servants institution. The instituted Acts empowered masters while disempowering servants to an extent that black servants saw white men as super humans.

Hours of Work for Domestic Servants

Although the law prescribed 10 hours a day, it was silent about what time work for a domestic servant could begin or end. Together with the fear of the master and lack of knowledge of the law, work for servants normally began at 5am until evening when the master went to sleep, without time for breaks either to eat or to visit the toilet. Also, the only time off was usually a half day on Sundays.³⁵ According to Clarke, surveys done in 1974 showed that most of the domestic servants worked as long as 16 hours per day. More than 60 percent of employees interviewed received ½ day or less off during the week. Very few servants were afforded specific time for lunch. This was not simply in reference to time on 'call' but time 'on the job'. No one interviewed worked less than 8 hours daily.³⁶

Be that as it may, the above statistics applied only to the servants who resided away from the premise of the employer. Those who were offered accommodation were always at work. In other words, they worked 24

³⁴ Clarke, *Domestic Workers in Rhodesia*, p. 54.

³⁵ McCulloch, *Black Peril, White Virtue*, p. 113.

³⁶ Clarke, *Domestic Workers in Rhodesia*, p. 36.

hours a day, a situation Goffman equates to a kind of slavery.³⁷ The masters would always wake the servants up at night if there was need. An early immigrant to Rhodesia wrote:

I must say I like my native servants, or rather not the individual servant but the service they render. What our menfolk would do without it I cannot imagine. You can keep them up half a night- no complaints; meals can be forgotten and then demanded long after they should have been served. Baths and hot water demanded at any time of the day or night and no sighs and groans from the Elijahs and Sixpences. They wash, and clean, and scrub, and scour, from early dawn till late at night, dodging it if they can, grinning cheerfully when the attempt is a failure, and for food get 2 ib of mealie meal a day as ration, with ½ ib of meat twice a week and are more than content.³⁸

These views portray a situation of complete subservience and exploitation of servants and echoes of slavery. Interestingly, it is a description of daily experiences of servants rather than seldom scenarios. It exposes the high class, luxurious life experienced by the whites at the expense of exploiting black servants. While whites ate presumptuously; the best of meat and food, servants were either starving or given poor quality. On top of that, very few servants received free days on public holidays, but would not receive any compensation, in terms of leave or additional pay, for public holidays forfeited.³⁹ Instead of being afforded rest as normal workers, during public holidays, servants had to cope with a lot more extra work as the master may have visitors and the rest of his family present. On the one hand, it was during such holidays that the servant would be required most by his/her own family. Hence, servants were basically cut off from the rest of the family, tribe and society. Being a servant was as good as being dead, socially dead that is, the *sine qua non* of slavery.⁴⁰ But on the other hand, white masters saw a cheerful and

³⁷ Cf. Goffman, *Asylums*, p. 21, says 'in some institutions there is a kind of slavery, with the inmate's full time placed at the convenience of staff; here the inmate's sense of self and sense of possession can become alienated from his work capacity'.

³⁸ Clarke, *Domestic Workers in Rhodesia*, p. 41.

³⁹ Clarke, *Domestic Workers in Rhodesia*, p. 37.

⁴⁰ Cf. Patterson, *Slavery and Social death*, p. 5, says, 'the definition of slave, however recruited, is a socially dead person. Alienated from all 'rights' or claims to birth, he ceased to belong in his own right to any legitimate social order. All slaves experienced, at the very least, a secular excommunication'; Cf. Goffman, *Asylums*, p. 25, argues that total

contented servant, almost taking servants as fools who smile at their oppression. And this myth of the contentment of servants was very influential in the determination of their salaries by masters.

Salary for Domestic Servants

Although domestic service was the second largest employment for black labour, hence quite important economically, it was always ranked as the second lowest paying sector in terms of average servant earnings.⁴¹ Domestic servants always had a very low salary owing to among other things, the myth that servants did not need cash or anything apart from accommodation and food and cast off clothing from the masters. As such, salary for domestic servants was always in two parts; cash and kind.⁴² Weinrich noted that about 79 per cent of housewives in Fort Victoria (now Masvingo) thought that it was best to pay servants low wages, but then provide them with food and accommodation, for they considered their servants too irresponsible to spend their money wisely. These housewives also wanted their servants at hand day and night, that is the reason they did not like them to live in townships.⁴³ It is clear that the provision of low wages, accommodation and food to domestic servants by masters was a ploy to create child-like dependence in servants so that they are easily controlled.

The intention of creating paternalism and dependence was so evident in big cities such as Salisbury (Harare) and Bulawayo. In 1961 for example, in Harare, about 95, 7 percent of servants were paid in the form of cash, housing, 'rations' meals, etc., or a combination thereof. In 1971 an even higher proportion (97, 3 percent) were rewarded in cash and kind, indicating the lack of shift towards putting domestic servants' payments on a monetary basis.⁴⁴ Thus the domestic services sector was the most non-monetized of all employment sectors of the economy. While masters argued that it was necessary to maintain the worker's health and efficiency since if all wages were paid in cash workers would not provide

institutions are characterised by role dispossession and a legal aspect of this permanent dispossession is found in the concept of 'civil death.'

⁴¹ Cf. Clarke, *Domestic Workers in Rhodesia*, p. 14.

⁴² Cf. Clarke, *Domestic Workers in Rhodesia*, p. 39.

⁴³ Weinrich, *Mucheke: Race, Status and Politics*, p. 228.

⁴⁴ Clarke, *Domestic Workers in Rhodesia*, p. 38.

themselves with nourishment and that it provided security and guarantees quantum of cash income for 'non-essentials' or 'luxuries',⁴⁵ their real intention was to bolster a system of paternalism and conditions of dependency.

According to Clarke, the idea that cash wages were 'extra' emolument after rations, did not only reinforce the dependency nature of masters and servants relationships at the economic level, but also on the psychological plane. From the legislative and practical household and national labour policy level there was a clearly detectable intention at conferring 'child-like' status upon domestic servants. The minister of labour once remarked that 'the actual cash wage (domestic workers get) is unencumbered and in the nature of pocket money'.⁴⁶ Because employer choices (not only in respect of wage rates) were so dominant, the perception of the child-like status of domestic workers, held by many white Rhodesians, as evidenced in wage practices, had profound influence on worker welfare as dictated by employer benevolence. In such a situation, as in an adult-child relationship, the adult (employer) decides what is 'good' for the child (employee) and sets conditions according to what requirements satisfy this subjective, perhaps impressionistic, criterion. This situation led white masters to create and develop widespread myth of a contented domestic servant. One employer unashamedly said in 1973: 'my domestic worker is content with his lot. He has his food. Everything is provided for him. He has no worries; and he has spare money'.⁴⁷ However the low wage level could be attributed to a well thought out plan and well calculated move by the settlers, when we consider market and non market factors.

Impact of Market and Non Market Forces on Wages

When we consider population growth since the onset of colonialism, the low wage policy on domestic workers was a logical economic response to the principle of supply and demand in business. However, population growth alone would not have been a real issue had it not been the process of under development that was targeted at Tribal Trust Lands/rural

⁴⁵ Cf. Clarke, *Domestic Workers in Rhodesia*, p. 40.

⁴⁶ Clarke, *Domestic Workers in Rhodesia*, p. 40.

⁴⁷ Clarke, *Domestic Workers in Rhodesia*, p. 40.

economy.⁴⁸ Due to poverty in the rural areas, caused by land dispossessions, taxes and a skewed education system, among others, droves of people, both young and old came to look for employment in the cities, as I have mentioned above. Conditions were therefore deliberately created to make sure that black people would work for the foreigners.

Apart from market forces, institutional arrangements were similarly designed to deprive black people of any chance to bargain. We are going to discuss only a few such institutional forces here. The first and foremost, the internal character of the domestic service labour market was designed in such a way that black people would serve white people on the conditions designed by the master. The law did not provide the need for meaningful negotiations between the masters and servants. The master was legally empowered to unilaterally set the wage rate and stipulate the conditions of service that had to be adhered to by the servant.⁴⁹ With the background of mass unemployment, obviously this determined the low wage policy within the domestic service.

The second institutional mechanism to keep the salaries for domestic workers pitifully low had to do with the absence of representative unions for domestic workers. Throughout the colonial era, it was illegal to form a domestic workers' union. In other words, there was no legal provision for the registration and operation of a legally incorporated union; to form, to hold meetings or for a union to intervene in bargain setting.⁵⁰ On the contrary, masters used to collude among themselves, informally to set the wages and the general conditions of employment for their servants, which they did not fix but left to individual discretion. An Information Booklet given to new immigrants to Rhodesia in 1972 by the University of Rhodesia Women's Club had the following statement: 'it is left to the discretion of an individual, and depends on conscience, elasticity of employer's purse and the capability of the employee'. Wage rates therefore it assumes, are not set through bargaining, or after discussion

⁴⁸ Cf. Clarke, *Domestic Workers in Rhodesia*, p. 21.

⁴⁹ Cf. Clarke, *Domestic Workers in Rhodesia*, p. 23; Vambe, *From Rhodesia to Zimbabwe*, p. 32, describes a typical scenario when soon after getting a job; within few minutes another African came through and in search of a job as a servant. Immediately Vambe was dismissed as the other African was prepared to work for lesser amount although he was very experienced.

⁵⁰ Cf. Clarke, *Domestic Workers in Rhodesia*, p. 25

with servants about their minimum needs.⁵¹ Yet, domestic servants could get arrested if caught influencing other servants either to go on strike or to demand a wage increase.

The third, and very important institutional mechanism for the promotion of low wage policy for domestic servants was the absence of political will to correct the situation. The colonial Government, being both masters and racists had no interest in defending the cause of the black people. As such it did not establish a minimum wage for domestic service and at no stage (until 1980 with independence) had it sought to properly regulate wages paid to domestic servants, despite a 1948 strike in which domestic servants played a significant role. Further, there was no legal provision for annual or regular review of wages policy in the sector and most importantly, there were no initiatives coming from government aimed at improving the economic lot of domestic servants. The Masters and Servants Act was therefore a politico-economic instrument used to increase labour supplies.

The net effect of institutional factors was therefore to promote low levels of wages and low rates of wage growth. The desired supply of domestic labour was obtained at the desired (low) wage rate, as a result of both market and non-market/institutional conditions.⁵² It is in the light of this unfair background and legislation tilted against the blacks that I turn to discuss accommodation of domestic servants which was also affected by both market and institutional forces.

Effects of Residential Laws on Domestic Servants

While Section 13 of the Master and Servants Act stipulated that domestic servants be provided accommodation by the master, many servants however did not get accommodated at the master's residence, in the *kia*,⁵³ servants quarters, that is. Consequently these servants were forced to live in townships, which were designated as 'African Areas'. As these locations were located very far from the European areas (where they worked), their journey to and from work every day lengthened their

⁵¹ Cf. Clarke, *Domestic Workers in Rhodesia*, p. 24.

⁵² Cf. Clarke, *Domestic Workers in Rhodesia*, pp. 26-27.

⁵³ Pape, 'Still serving the Tea', p. 388, observes that the name *kia* refers to servants' quarters in European suburbs-low and medium density suburbs of Zimbabwe. It is a bastardisation of the Zulu word '*kaya*' for house; Clarke, *Domestic Workers in Rhodesia*, p. 48.

working day considerably. Domestic workers had to wake up early in the morning to be able to be at work in time and walk they walked home usually at night usually alone. This put their lives at great risk of being attacked by robbers. Also, living in the locations left servants worse off since they would not be entitled to food rations and also they would have to fork out an extra amount on transport, from the meagre salary they were given.⁵⁴ Although, living in African Areas could be associated with some advantages in that, servants got some form of freedom from strict control and monitoring by the master even at night, generally several accommodation laws were very prohibitive of family and relations, even in the locations, African Areas.

Even, for those domestic servants who were provided with accommodation, they were supposed to fulfil several cumbersome requirements of the governing law, the African (Urban Areas) Accommodation and Registration Act (Chapter 110) first passed in 1951 to consolidate laws such as Masters and Servants Acts. Section 13, for instance, made sure that domestic servants would not have their wives and children in towns, and that they could not host visitors. The law prescribed that no person could permit children to live on licensed premises except under special circumstances/authority (Section 24). Further, this permission required the consent of the master of the servant. And this consent was not usually forthcoming. Because of that, it was very exceptional to have a husband and wife together in towns unless both were servants of the same master, which again was not common. The Act further prohibited persons who were not employed as servants to be accommodated in licensed premises (Section 25 (2) and (3)).⁵⁵

Another colonial law that made it impossible for domestic servants and any other black person for that matter to live with families and relatives in cities, was the Principal Act. This Act stipulated that all servants be issued with 'Certificates of Occupation' (Section 33). It further stipulated that 'any servant who lends, sells or delivers this certificate 'to any other African' was guilty of an offence and liable to a \$20 fine, or imprisonment up to one month' (Section 34 (1)).⁵⁶ This clause itself implies that Africans usually resorted to these strategies as a means of survival in a

⁵⁴ Cf. McCulloch, *Black Peril, White Virtue*, p. 113.

⁵⁵ Cf. Clarke, *Domestic Workers in Rhodesia*, p. 46.

⁵⁶ Cf. Clarke, *Domestic Workers in Rhodesia*, p. 47.

difficult environment. However, it is also clear that under these circumstances, it was very difficult for servants to have members of their family. In addition to these laws, the Vagrancy Amendment Act, 1973, stipulated that persons without 'legal' accommodation or residence could be endorsed out of the urban areas for 2 years. This means domestic servants who were caught accommodating either a wife, child or relative was automatically thrown (with his dependents) into the rural economy where there was great poverty.⁵⁷ The implication of the laws was that it was not possible for servants to live with any family member or relative, let alone show solidarity with other desperate Africans.

Given the background we have laid so far, that black servants conducted dismembered families was not coincidental. It was the desirable and intended scenario. And this makes domestic labour a typical greedy institution, since the basic logic of greedy institutions is that only those servants fully absorbed by the master's household can be trusted. Married men and women or men and women with sexual ties to partners outside the master's household, are hence relatively undesirable servants. That is why the ideal servant is unmarried, even asexual, so that all the energy is channelled toward productive use of the master. Alternatively if there are married servants, it is highly preferable that both be members of the master's household and subject to his control.⁵⁸ This was the purpose of providing servants with accommodation and prohibiting visitors such as wife and children and relatives of the servant. An ideal servant was a de-socialised one.

Describing the process of de-socialisation in slavery, Claude Meillassoux, observes that in status societies man's socialisation, that is, his position and his rank within society, are established through the following successive relations. First, affiliative (or ancestral), that is, relations in terms of which an individual belongs through birth and upbringing to a community of individuals within a common patrimony. This gives access to the means of subsistence. Second, a man established through conjugal relations and relations of affinity. This establishes rights over junior dependants and thus gives access to the means of social reproduction. Third, individuals establish and exist through and in relations of ascen-

⁵⁷ Cf. Clarke, *Domestic Workers in Rhodesia*, p. 49.

⁵⁸ Cf. Coser, *Greedy Institutions*, p. 77.

dance or of elderhood. This allows an individual to establish authority over these descendants and over the product of their labour. Fourth, an individual exists in relations of alliance with neighbouring communities which are mediated by the individual's belonging to his or her own community. The rapture or the dissolution of the relations listed above led to the de-socialisation which turned an individual into an alien.⁵⁹ Thus, servants in colonial Zimbabwe, like slaves had to be de-socialised, alienated from their social ties and from their culture.

The Politics of Language in Domestic Service

Another area of fierce struggle between masters and servants was the area of language. As masters claimed to be superior, racially, culturally and more civilised than blacks, they insisted on the supremacy of their language. On the other hand, black servants were either not keen on relegating their languages so as to learn English, or were illiterate after all. Thus a compromise had to be reached in a mixture of languages. In the domestic services and in farms the *lingua franca* was *chilapalapa* or as white employers called it, 'kitchen kaffir'. It was a language of commands fabricated from Zulu, English, Shona, and Afrikaans.⁶⁰ This was the best the masters could bend, to accommodate the background of the blacks. If a maid or any other servant would teach or speak one of the indigenous languages to or in the presence of the master's child, punishment was usually instant dismissal.

The master's children were not supposed to speak any indigenous language which was regarded as inferior and even considered vulgar. The practice of sending children to boarding schools or to Britain for education was common among white parents who could afford to do so. Besides the educational advantages, the tradition of sending children to Britain especially precluded white children from learning indigenous Zimbabwean languages. They only needed to come back as masters, uncorrupted by local cultures. The belief was that white children who could not speak Shona or Ndebele were, like their parents, effectively sealed off from indigenous society laced with vices of every sort. They were thus unlikely to undermine parental authority by colluding with

⁵⁹ Cf. Meillassoux, *The Anthropology of Slavery*, pp. 102-3.

⁶⁰ Cf. McCulloch, *Black Peril, White Virtue*, p. 113.

servants.⁶¹ This explains why most whites, born and bred in Zimbabwe cannot speak Shona, Ndebele or any other indigenous languages until today. Yet, all blacks are expected to speak and write in English.

Names and Forms of Address between Domestic Servants and Masters

Related closely to language was the battle about identity and names. For Africans, as it is in all cultures, a name is a lot more than just a label to differentiate individuals. A name is pregnant with social, historical, cultural, political information, expressing the total worldview of the people, their struggles with human and non-human enemies. But with the coming of Christianity and colonisation, the Shona and Ndebele had to be labelled anew; having to recant their culture-bound names since missionaries associated them with 'heathenism'. Missionaries insisted, as did all the white settlers, that indigenous people take on new names from the Bible either at conversion to Christianity, at baptism or during enrolment for school. Biblical and other western names misrepresented as Christian, were viewed as outward signs of the convert's acceptance of God's grace.⁶² Because of this background, biblical names such as Moses, Elijah, Joseph, Isaac are common in literature on domestic servants. On the whole, servants were rarely called by their African names but demeaning appellations such as 'Sixpence' or 'Lucky',⁶³ garden-boy or just 'Boy', house-girl or just 'Girl', Kaffir and Negro.

It was better if one had an English name already. Chances were high that he/she would maintain his/her name, but generally masters did not want their servants to be called by the family names. Those with African names had to change or be changed by the master upon getting employment. The master had all the privileges of giving a new name to the servant. Some cruel masters would call their servants with vulgar names

⁶¹ Cf. McCulloch, *Black Peril, White Virtue*, p. 124.

⁶² Cf. Alec J. C. Pongweni, *What's in a Name: A Study of Shona Nomenclature*. Gweru: Mambo Press, 1983, p. 2; see also, Ezra Chitando, 'Signs and Portents? Theophoric Names in Zimbabwe', *Word & World*. Volume XXI, No. 2 (2001), pp. 144-151; Cf. Pedzisai Mashiri, "Terms of Address in Shona: A Sociolinguistic Approach," *Zambezia* 16, (1999), p. 96.

⁶³ Cf. McCulloch, *Black Peril, White Virtue*, p. 113; Cf. Clarke, *Domestic Workers in Rhodesia*, p. 41.

among other derogatory names such as Toilet, Lavatory, Spanner, Dollar, Pound, Penny, Baboon, Monkey, Piccaninni and Tiki. In response after being called by the master, or his wife or his children, the servants had a set of appropriate ways indicating their social, economic and political position of subjugation. For the male members of the master's family, servants were supposed to say, 'master!, Lord!, Baas!⁶⁴, even to a small boy. As long as he was white, he qualified the title of Baas! To every white woman including very young girls, servants were supposed to address them as: Madam! Missus! or Missis! These names reveal an attitude of superiority and conquest over the blacks.

Since servants and masters were engaged in a declared and undeclared struggle, servants had a variety of weapons at their disposal to vent their anger and communicate their frustration against the master class. Servants also gave names to their white masters, their wives and their children which the master's class never knew. Most of the names given to the masters and their class were descriptive of the attitude, favourite demeanour, facial appearance, body shape of the bearer and they communicated deep-seated hatred and displeasure of servants with such individuals. Thus, the process of naming was a sphere of struggle. It was attack and counter attack kind of scenario. Indeed, Cock is right to identify forms of address, the wearing of uniforms for servants, and the use of *chilapalapa* as the three most pervasive devices (weapons) used by settler employers to try to enforce subordination.⁶⁵ This explains the renaming process championed by nationalists during the armed struggle for independence, whereby fighters renamed themselves with Shona names laden with political and ideological meaning.⁶⁶ The renaming process is in itself an act of refusal to be subordinated. Names were therefore weapons that fought the struggle.

Corporal Punishment and Killing of Domestic Servants by Masters

Canning was the common way of treating misbehaving servants and was not limited to domestic servants but spread to all other servants in For-

⁶⁴ Cf. Austin, *Racism and Apartheid in Southern Africa*, p. 64, *Baas* is colloquial language for overseer or employer in general, but was commonly used to refer to any white man.

⁶⁵ Cf. McCulloch, *Black Peril, White Virtue*, p. 114.

⁶⁶ Cf. Pongweni, *What's in a Name*; Cf. Chitando, 'Signs and Portents?', pp. 144-151

estry and Agriculture. Although whipping was originally put into law (African Juveniles Employment Act) as punishment for defaulting juveniles, it was applied indiscriminately. It did not take a law enforcement officer to whip the servants, for in practice, nearly all white individuals had the prerogative to whip black servants, sometimes for no apparent reason, besides instilling fear. White children would usually make funny by beating black servants who were the same age with their grandfathers and grandmothers. Justifiably, according to Cock, many white children learnt the attitudes of racial domination from these domestic relationships with servants.⁶⁷ And servants also learnt to struggle for their liberation from such experiences and humiliation.

The offences for which servants were most severely punished included: being late for work, late to serve food, burning food, burning clothes while ironing, or failing to set a table correctly.⁶⁸ It is not possible to know exactly how common beatings of servants were (in terms of statistics) or how often they led to injury or death. Servants did not always report the cases of beatings to the police. The colonial police being predominantly white themselves had no interest in such cases except when it was a servant who beat or killed the master. Such was understood as a big crime that every resource would be channelled toward making sure such a culprit was brought to book and mercilessly dealt with. Lessing's novel makes this position abundantly clear.⁶⁹ Be that as it may, the little information allows us to assume that during the colonial era, a servant could be killed for a minor infraction.

In February 1915, for example, a preliminary hearing was held into the death of a servant named Tom at Hillside, a Harare suburb. Tom's employer Mrs. Samuels told the court that he had been threatening to leave employment and had been making menacing gestures. To frighten him, she fired her gun and hit him in the head. Although a charge of culpable homicide was preferred, the Attorney General decided not to proceed and the case was dropped.⁷⁰ Mrs. Samuels' attitude and behaviour was not uncommon among whites throughout the colonial era as the following sections will show.

⁶⁷ Cf. Cock, *Maids and Madams*, p. 8.

⁶⁸ Cf. McCulloch, *Black Peril, White Virtue*, p. 113.

⁶⁹ Cf. Lessing, *The Grass is Singing*.

⁷⁰ McCulloch, *Black Peril, White Virtue*, p. 114.

Reactions of Domestic Workers to Exploitation

As slaves and persons in total institutions, every aspect of domestic servants' lives were controlled and strictly monitored. Anytime their rooms could be searched by the master who legally had all the rights to do so. They were not allowed to be visited, always stayed at work without outside contact, and sometimes always indoors. As a rule, servants were not allowed to switch on and to listen to the radio, to use the telephone, to watch television and even to read newspapers. Servants were also not allowed even to use the toilet of the masters, even when nature called while cleaning the same toilet. They had to go out to the boy's *kia* to relieve themselves. Both male and female servants were not allowed to sit on chairs or sofas even in the absence of the masters. The overriding clause was Section 30.1 of the Masters and Servants Act which stipulated that the servant was guilty of an offence and liable to a fine not exceeding eight dollars, or in default of payment, to imprisonment, with or without spare diet, for up to one month if he, 'without permission, makes use of the master's property for his own purposes'.⁷¹ That is why, although they cooked meat and other delicious meals in the master's house, they were not allowed to eat or even taste the food except leftovers, in few cases.

As is true in every struggle, even the weak have ways of retaliating. They may not be as effective or as pronounced as the weapons of the strong, but they were weapons nevertheless. Servants thus had other very crude ways of responding to the abuse at the hands of the masters. For instance, most of the servants watched television, listened to the radio and even used the toilet of the master during his absence. Some servants set on the chairs and sofas of the master and went as far as sleeping in the master's bed with dirt clothes and shoes on. Those servants whose masters were too harsh and brutal could go as far as washing the toilet seat with the master's tooth brush, prepare tea with water from the chamber. Some would put on the master's clothes, drink tea in the master's cup, drink his beer, wine, juice and pour water to fill up the bottle.

This has been a typical response of slaves from time immemorial. The same was true of the servants everywhere even in Europe, as Jean Paul Satre beautifully captures the facets of this master-servant relationship:

⁷¹ Clarke, *Domestic Workers in Rhodesia*, p. 56.

‘in the presence of the Masters, the truth of a domestic is to be a fake domestic and to mask the man he is under the guise of servility; but, in their absence, the man does not manifest himself either, for the truth of the domestic in solitude is to play at being the master. The fact is that when the Master is away on a trip, the valets smoke his cigars, wear his clothes and ape his manners. How could it be otherwise, since the Master convinces the servant that there is no other way to become a man than to be a master’?⁷²

From a variety of laid down penal provisions for failure to comply with the demands of the contract, one can also tell the kinds of strategies servants used to fight back. The ordinance specified twelve varieties of misconduct, including failure to commence work at a stipulated time, being absent or intoxicated, not performing work or performing it carelessly, making illicit use of a master’s property, or disobeying a command. Section 8 allowed for a fine of 4 pounds or one month’s jail ‘if (a servant) shall be abusive or insulting, either by language or conduct, to his master or his master’s wife or children or any person lawfully placed by his master in authority over him.’ In addition to jail and fines, penalties included a sparse diet and solitary confinement.⁷³ Thus, servants used a wide range of strategies to protect themselves against cruel masters.

Resistance took the form of desertion, theft, sabotage, the defacing of passes, and the temporary withdrawal of labour. Petty theft was common and it was often used as revenge. Women stole cutlery, dresses, food, and sheets, while men were given to stealing bicycles.⁷⁴ White masters always thought these attitudes were inherent in black people; the typical attributes of slaves,⁷⁵ without realising that they were reactions to their abuse. Some few may have gone as far as raping daughters or wives of the masters but because of the preconceived fears in white settlers about black men’s ‘uncontrollable sexual appetite’, such few incidences ignited

⁷² Coser, *Greedy Institutions*, p. 79; Cf. Jean Genet, *The Maids and Death watch*. New York: Grove Press, 1962, pp. 20-21.

⁷³ Cf. McCulloch, *Black Peril, White Virtue*, p. 111.

⁷⁴ Cf. McCulloch, *Black Peril, White Virtue*, p. 114.

⁷⁵ Cf. Meillassoux, *The Anthropology of Slavery*, p. 127, ‘the stereotype of slaves (sometimes supplied by the slaves themselves) is of persons who are ugly, strong-limbed, lying, lewd, coarse, dirty and lazy. The slaves were also described as smelly, stupid, nasty, stealing, aggressive, anthropophagous, naked, and gay for no reason’.

a protracted racial, gender and class struggle throughout the colonial era. These battles were waged under the guise of 'black peril'.

Black Peril Fears and Domestic Servants

Black peril in general connotes the white men's fears of sexual violation of their female counterparts by black men. In other words, miscegenation was regarded as such a fearful problem that the settlers generally referred to it as 'the black peril',⁷⁶ which fear warranted an Act of law to 'protect' white women. While the fear was based upon the conviction that all white women (and girls) in close contact with (any) black men lived under constant danger of being raped or otherwise molested, the impact of the Act that was enacted to contain the fear was more on domestic servants. Thus, it is undoubtedly true that in most 'Black Peril' cases and nearly all cases of *crimina injuriae* the culprit was or had been a domestic servant.⁷⁷ Black peril was thus personified by the black male domestic worker, who as all other blacks was mythologised into an uncontrollable sexual animal who had to be blocked at every opportunity from satisfying his primitive urges.⁷⁸ The story of 'black peril' accusations is in essence also the story of domestic labour in colonial Zimbabwe.

Black Peril Fears: Ensuing Race and Gender Struggles

Several suggestions were proposed in order to tame the ugly feature of 'black peril'. One Rusape missionary proposed castration without anaesthetic of black male offenders, while one Legislative council member, a Mr Frames, suggested a preventative measure such as enacting a law that enforced black males to cover their faces with their hands each time they passed a white woman on the street.⁷⁹ These options were however not followed neither were they put into law. But these could have been better had they seen the light of the day than what followed.

⁷⁶ Vambe, *From Rhodesia to Zimbabwe*, p. 107; Schmidt, *Peasants, Traders and Wives*, pp. 169-173; McCulloch, *Black Peril, White Virtue*, p.109.

⁷⁷ John Pape, 'Black and White', p. 699; McCulloch, *Black Peril, White Virtue*, p. 109; Vambe, *From Rhodesia to Zimbabwe*, p. 109.

⁷⁸ Pape, 'Black and White', pp. 717, 720.

⁷⁹ Pape, 'Black and White', p. 703.

The white male community decided to put the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1903 which stipulated death penalty for attempted rape. While every man in theory could be condemned to death under this Act, in practice only black men who allegedly attempted to rape white women were executed. White men who not only attempted to rape but actually raped women of any race were not sentenced to death, nor were black men who raped black women.⁸⁰ Hence, laws regulating sexual relations across racial lines were fraught with racial and gender prejudices that resulted in contradictions and double standards. What the law presumed is that white women could not enter into a consensual sexual relationship with a black man. On the other hand, it presupposed that black women could not be raped by white men, since they were lustful and of loose morals by nature.

Although it was assumed that no European woman would willingly have sexual relations with an African man, which in itself was a racist false impression and a misjudgement of the situation on the ground,⁸¹ on the part of white males, the Immorality Suppression Ordinance took precautions to account for the presumably exceptional case. The law rendered it a criminal offense for European women to cohabit with African men. A European woman found to have had sexual relations with an African man could be sentenced to 2 years in prison with hard labour, while the African man could be sentenced to five years. Cohabitation between European men and an African woman was however not prohibited.⁸² It defies logic how on earth a law could be this blatantly racial. Politics of race is the only explanation for the discrepancy otherwise, why would a black man get more years in prison than the white woman for the same crime? It is equally illogical that a white woman is prohibited to cross the racial boundaries but a white man is tacitly granted unlimited sexual

⁸⁰ Schmidt, *Peasants, Traders and Wives*, p. 175; Vambe, *From Rhodesia to Zimbabwe*, p. 107.

⁸¹ Reality on the ground is that while some white women may have been indoctrinated by the white male propaganda to look at black people as dangerous creatures hence unattractive, some white women got attracted to black men especially those they spent lonely times with when their husbands had gone to work. Cf. Schmidt, *Peasants, Traders and Wives*, p.170; Cf. Lessing, *The Grass is Singing*, pp. 27, 150-152, 158, 163, 165, 170, 197.

⁸² Schmidt, *Peasants, Traders and Wives*, p. 176; Sheila MacDonald, *Sally in Rhodesia*. London: Heath Cranton, 1927; reprinted ed., Bulawayo: Books of Rhodesia, 1970, pp 170-171, 179.

freedom by the same law. It is clear that the males who happened to be powerful on the basis of gender and race were in the legal driving seat. Be that as it may, we can already observe that domestic servants were just caught in between a gender and racial struggle they did not provoke. Despite protests from various groups; white women, black men and women against the bias of the law in that it left out white males' sexual offenses unattended to, in 1916, the racist and gender biased-all European males parliament went on to enact the Immorality and Indecency Suppression Ordinance, which rendered it a criminal offense for white women to make 'indecent' suggestions to African men and vice versa. Such suggestions on the part of white men to African women however were not criminalised.⁸³ Not even one white man was ever executed for sexual crimes against a black woman, although evidence reveal white men's sexual abuse of black women far exceeded the sexual contact between black men and white women.⁸⁴ In very few cases where European men were arrested for raping black women, the sentences were usually very light; but where the offender was a black man and the victim white woman, the punishment had been extremely savage to say the least. From 1903 until 1935 for instance, a total of thirty black men (domestic servants) had been hanged for rape or attempted rape.⁸⁵ This contradiction is the rationale behind McCulloch's book title; '*Black Peril, White Virtue*', for what black males were denied by law, the same law allowed it for white males.

When a sexual assault had been committed against a black woman by a white man, the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) usually took

⁸³ Pape, 'Black and White', p.717 notes that despite outcries from the white women and other quarters of the population white men remained untouched by penal sanctions of immorality legislation throughout the colonial period. He thus concludes that 'in the political realm, especially with regard to sexual politics, white men guarded and nurtured their power. These men were not prepared to yield even to the petitions and pleadings of their own women, let alone those of the black majority. Only the bullets of the guerrillas could pull them down from their throne. But even military conquest has not quickly erased whites' virulent racism. The sexual dynamics described as the 'perils' were an essential part of the development of that racism. Not surprisingly, the legacy of the 'perils' remains evident in race relations in independent Zimbabwe where whites continue to try to maintain their own segregated social environment and thereby protect themselves and their daughters from any perilous contact with black Zimbabweans.

⁸⁴ Pape, 'Black and White', p. 720.

⁸⁵ Vambe, *From Rhodesia to Zimbabwe*, p. 108.

little interest. In fact, as I have pointed out above, it was rare for a white man to be brought to trial, let alone convicted. In an environment where black women, like their black counterparts were considered immoral and as lustful as wild animals, which ideology abounded in the European community, it was even very difficult if not impossible for a black woman to convince the courts manned by mostly white males that she was raped by a white man. Writing to the Rhodesia Herald in 1926, N. H. Wilson reveals key conceptions among the white community about African female behaviour: 'Their passions are stronger....they have more of the animal about them in sex matters and they have not the restraint and control that the white women have'.⁸⁶ Thus from a legal and structural perspective, black women could not be raped by white men. In instances where there was sex between a black woman and a white male, the blame was on the 'immoral' black woman.

Socio-Economic Mechanisms to Combat 'Black Peril'

The fear of 'black peril' did not only spawn a wide range of legislation that included the prohibition of sexual relations between white women and black men, but it also triggered a number of debates exploring other mechanisms that could be put in place, such as the employment of female domestic servants. Racial, gender ideology and economic considerations guided the whole debate. A number of white women as well as males suggested the employment of black women in the domestic service. But in this camp, the reasons were more than just to solve black peril fears. They extended to economic interests. However, the same option was criticised for potential of creating another danger-'yellow peril'. Another section of the white community proposed to completely abandon the culture of employing black people in the domestic service, both males and females. The proposal was a hard one; for it went further to call for the employment of white women in the domestic service or alternatively to revert to domestication of the white women in accordance to Victorian standards.

⁸⁶ A letter in *Rhodesia Herald* 30 June 1926; Cf. Schmidt, *Peasants, Traders and Wives*, p. 174.

Employment of Black Females as Solution to 'Black Peril'

European men, because of their fears that their wives, could be sexually violated by African men (since they were always to be at home in accordance to Victorian upper-middle class standards.), favoured African females in the domestic service.⁸⁷ A section of white women were in favour of the employment of black female domestic servants also. Among the most vocal advocates for this position was Southern Rhodesia's first female MP Elizabeth Tawse Jollie, who in 1925 suggested that:

There is only one remedy for the evil as it exists, and that is the employment of women as house servants....Rhodesia has not, fortunately, the large supply of coloured women who are now filling the domestic service ranks (in South Africa) and it is presumably out of the question to suppose that the many women of education who find life so hard in England will be prepared to take posts as children's nurses or mothers' help in Rhodesia.⁸⁸

One cannot fail to notice the pervasive racial and class ideology in this suggestion. Domestic labour in her opinion was not for white women let alone, white men. It was fit for the black race. Although coloured women (and not their men) may have been ideal for the domestic service, they were not available hence the last resort was to employ black women. For her and other women, gender and race were fixed boundaries. Society was racially and gender stratified with white men on top of the hierarchy, followed by white women, coloured men, coloured women, black men and at the bottom of the heap were black women.

According to Jollie, in her subsequent testimony to the Federation of Women's Institutes in 1930, 'a house staffed with women (is) far less of moral danger than one in which (black) boys are in intimate contact with white women.' It was important therefore to employ black women as domestic workers since, 'no native would attempt to rape a white woman when a woman of his own race was near.' She advised that in order to protect the white woman from being sexually attacked by black men, 'the female servant should always sleep under the same roof as her mis-

⁸⁷ Schmidt, *Peasants, Traders and Wives*, p. 157.

⁸⁸ Elizabeth Tawse-Jollie, *The Real Rhodesia*. Bulawayo, 1971, p. 284; Pape, 'Black and White', p. 717.

dress.’⁸⁹ Other options proffered to lower the levels of attacks on white women and daughters by black male domestic servants included, making sure that male servants do not ‘take in early cups of tea to possibly sleeping women and girls in unconscious semi-undress’,⁹⁰ and making sure white girls keep their skirts down so that black men would not see their knickers’. Ironically these same knickers would be washed, and ironed by the same black men that should not see them.⁹¹ White women were to avoid any familiarity with their male servants at all times. But on the whole, it was assumed that all these measures would stop to matter when black females were employed in the domestic service.

This position was supported by a bigger section of the European captains of industry. For them, the employment of African girls would free African men for European farms, mines, and in other primary industries.⁹² After all, black females were to be paid less. Thus, while white women were more concerned about the supposed fear of black peril, white men were interested in maximising profits. However, a sizeable number of white women opposed the employment of black women in the domestic service not just because they were considered slow to conceptualise orders, weak, lazy, but were also considered immoral, hence unable to control their sexual desires. White women were afraid that these ‘creatures’ with unbridled lust would stop at nothing to get sex from their husbands, sons and male relatives. In their opinion, this was a real danger that it had to be avoided at all cost. This fear was called ‘yellow peril’.

The Fear of ‘Yellow Peril’ and ‘White Peril’

The option of employing black women in domestic service generated the fear of ‘yellow peril’-miscegenation as a result of sexual relations between European men and African women.⁹³ While, due to European male propaganda, ‘black peril’ was on everyone’s lips, the real issue was

⁸⁹ Jollie, *The Real Rhodesia*, p. 276; CNC S235/475, Federation of Women’s Institutes, Report, Testimony of E. Tawse Jollie, pp. 64-65; Schmidt, *Peasants, Traders and Wives*, p. 171.

⁹⁰ Cf. Federation of Women’s Institutes, CNC S235/475, Report, Testimony of A Campbell, p. 35; Schmidt, *Peasants, Traders and Wives*, p. 171.

⁹¹ Schmidt, *Peasants, Traders and Wives*, p. 172.

⁹² Schmidt, *Peasants, Traders and Wives*, p. 157.

⁹³ Schmidt, *Peasants, Traders and Wives*, p. 172.

what some Europeans particularly women, were more apprehensive about; the less publicised 'yellow peril'. Instead of blaming their husbands, however, white women blamed it on black women. While this yellow peril was a fear among white women particularly, whereby they blamed black females for their untamed sexual desires, in the black community, the same fear was called 'white peril'.

Although there is overwhelming evidence to prove the existence of white peril, white people as the dominant race however never publicly acknowledged its existence.⁹⁴ In essence, acknowledging its existence would expose their hypocrisy. While the fear of white women was imaginary and not based upon real facts, in reality, as it was in U.S. South, European masters frequently had sex with black women employed in their homes. Hence the term 'white peril',⁹⁵ is quite befitting. Further, contrary to public discourse about black peril, white women always have had sexual relations with black servants at will. According to Vambe, the true position about this problem has been that 'most white women, as most white men in Rhodesia, especially if they were employers, could have sexual intercourse on demand with their African servants'. As a journalist in Rhodesia, Vambe was told so many times by African domestic servants that if the 'missus' employer ordered her cook or waiter to sleep with her, he had no choice but to obey. On the other hand, if he were so misguided as to refuse to do so, wounding her pride, she would report him to the police for trying to rape her.⁹⁶

As a matter of fact the resort to claiming attempted rape or rape by white women was quite common, especially when caught in action. A black man and a European woman in love would have little hopes of escaping punishment if found out. For the white woman, there was only one option out; she could always cry rape and some of them turned to it on crucial moments.⁹⁷ An African man's testimony in self-defence was not

⁹⁴ Pape, 'Black and White', p. 701, notes that while a few writers used the term 'white peril' in reference to white males forcefully pounding on black women, the official study, of course controlled by male administrators, undertaken in 1914 only included the activities of white women, namely 'white females who prostitute themselves with natives'.

⁹⁵ Schmidt, *Peasants, Traders and Wives*, p. 174.

⁹⁶ Vambe, *From Rhodesia to Zimbabwe*, p. 109.

⁹⁷ Vambe, *From Rhodesia to Zimbabwe*, p. 109; Schmidt, *Peasants, Traders and Wives*, p. 170 argues that the vast majority of black peril accusations were based on unfounded claims and they seemed to be intentionally fomented in order to forge racial unity in the white

believed. On one occasion an African domestic servant approached his white female employer on a Christmas day and said, 'Kisimisi, Missus!'. The woman had him arrested by the police on the charge that he had asked her for a kiss. The court accepted her word and the servant was sentenced to twelve months in jail with hard labour. But the truth was that this man wanted to say, 'Christmas Missus or Christmas Box' which most domestic servants did on Christmas day expecting to get presents from the employers (masters). He told the court exactly that but the court could not believe him.⁹⁸

On the other end, white males although they pretended as if they were perfect and never messed with black women, evidence suggests the contrary. Since towards the end of the 1930s, an increasing number of African women were employed as nannies for European children, it is known that sometimes these women were 'expected to sleep with their white masters while the 'missus' was away',⁹⁹ a characteristic feature of all slave systems from the ancient times to present. While black women may have subtly resisted the mistress in the kitchen, to resist the master in the bedroom was a much more serious matter. Resistance to the master's sexual advances, when his meaning was unequivocally clear, was to show blatant insubordination. A black woman who engaged in such actions was asking to be fired or worse.¹⁰⁰ John Pape notes that besides their domestic servants, white masters often incited black servants to procure for them black females for sexual purposes. In many instances such arrangements amounted to rape, for it is known that in rural areas parents who were working for a white farmer for instance were often

community during periods of social and economic duress. Rallying to protect white womanhood, the colonizers resurrected the united front necessary for the maintenance of political and economic domination. In other cases claims of black peril were used as pretence to harden the repressive laws against blacks so that they would not fight for their rights and their land. The same pattern is observable in South Africa during economic stress; Charles van Onselen 'Witches of Suburbia: Domestic Service on the Witwatersrand, 1890-1914, in *Studies in the Social and Economic History of the Witwatersrand, 1886-1914, vol. 2 New Nineveh*. London: Longman, 1982, pp. 37, 48-54, observes that in order to both dismiss their servants and defraud them of their wages, mistresses claimed they had been sexually assaulted.

⁹⁸ Vambe, *From Rhodesia to Zimbabwe*, p. 109.

⁹⁹ Vambe, *From Rhodesia to Zimbabwe*, p. 107-109, 190-191, 217; McCulloch, *Black Peril, White Virtue*, p. 111.

¹⁰⁰ Schmidt, *Peasants, Traders and Wives*, p. 174.

threatened with sacking if they did not surrender their daughters to the master's desire.¹⁰¹

The powerlessness of the parents over their daughter suggests that they also did not have any power over their own bodies. It is not misplaced therefore to argue that both black servants and female domestic servants were also in essence sexual toys of the master and his relatives. Pape is right when he argued that, 'those white men who would have failed such character tests in colonial Zimbabwe did not confine their offences to black women. Even young boys were known to be forced into sex with their masters'.¹⁰² While such homosexuality cases were few in criminal records, it is possible that the occurrences were often. Compounding the situation is that black men could not easily talk about such kind of sexual behaviour that is totally alien in their culture. Be that as it may, even the few cases that were reported, perpetrators were not arrested, only because they were white.

Africans, Christian Missionaries and Government Responses to 'White Peril'

While white men continued to lie about 'black peril' as a real danger to their wives hence a justification for establishing a quasi-apartheid system in Southern Rhodesia, 'white peril' posed a real danger than the much hyped 'black peril'. Because of this 'white peril', Africans that is, fathers and mothers did not like their daughters to be employed in the domestic service.¹⁰³ Christian missionaries also are among some Europeans who objected to the employment of black females in domestic service. The reasons for many of them were not so much to do with the fear of 'white peril', but were constructed around so called Christian values although it was European gender ideology, an ideology that domesticated women. Women, according to Victorian standards were supposed to take care of the family hence were not allowed to get employed.

¹⁰¹ Pape, 'Black and White', p. 713.

¹⁰² Pape, 'Black and White', p. 714.

¹⁰³ Schmidt, *Peasants, Traders and Wives*, p. 157, observes that among other reasons why African males objected to the employment of their daughters in the domestic service was the fear that their daughters would be ruined not only by the black men in towns but also by white men, and that would render the daughter less valuable when she is luck to get married.

It is the same foreign ideology missionaries wanted to foster among the Shona.¹⁰⁴ A few of the missionaries really acknowledged the 'white peril'. One Salisbury's Reverend Simpson said:

Looming behind this unhappy case (the murder of a native called Titus by a Sam Lewis who had accused him of trying to rape his two daughters) is the 'black peril' a grave and loathsome peril indeed, to be dealt with effectively yet justly every case on its own merits. We may not forget, however, that from the side of the native there is the 'white peril'. It is common knowledge that in these parts native women are not immune from the attentions of men whose skin may be white, but who are white in other sense. The shame of this...we should feel as keenly as the dread danger of the other peril.¹⁰⁵

Although it was common knowledge that white men sexually abused black women as the Reverend unequivocally revealed, in a world ruled on the basis of racism and gender ideology the white legislators continued to enact laws against black men and white women pretending as if all was well in their quarters. The most painful reality of the sexual misdeeds of white males is the refusal to take responsibility of the children they sired with black women either through rape or consent.¹⁰⁶ It was the sole responsibility of the black woman 'to clothe, feed and decide the future of these offspring'.¹⁰⁷ As soon as the domestic servant got preg-

¹⁰⁴ For Schmidt, *Peasants, Traders and Wives*, p. 129, 'according to Victorian Christian ideals, good mothers stayed at home raising their children according to Christian values while fathers went out to work in order to feed the family. Thus missionaries began to train black girls into model Christian women, to be married by African teachers, evangelists and other members of the emerging African elite. Even the Christian missionary education was designed in such a way that it produced these results. But this ideology was foreign to the life of the Shona. Before colonisation, the Shona society never domesticated women.

¹⁰⁵ NAZ, S144/4-5, *Rhodesia Herald*, 25 August 1911; Pape, 'Black and White', p. 711.

¹⁰⁶ Pape, 'Black and White', p. 713.

¹⁰⁷ Vambe, *From Rhodesia to Zimbabwe*, p. 24, after observing the Covenant of the Sacred Heart, a Catholic institution that was run by nuns taking care of coloured children, concluded that even 'at an early age of settlement there was a colossal amount of miscegenation going on in Rhodesia, which made the white people appear illogical as well as callous. Many Europeans were willing to sleep with black women, but they would not accept the responsibility of the children born of these unions'; See also, Helen. Callaway, 'Purity and Exotica in Legitimizing the Empire: Cultural Constructions of Gender, Sexuality and Race'. In Terence Ranger and Olufemi Vaughan, (eds.), *Legitimacy and the*

nant from the master, she would be sent away without any benefits even for the child.

The rapid increase of coloured community in Southern Rhodesia is clear testimony to the rampant sexual activities involving white men and black women especially domestic maids. The first coloureds who arrived in Southern Rhodesia in the 1890s were skilled or semi-skilled artisans from the Cape, South Africa. But the census of 1911 revealed that there were 2, 042 people of mixed race in Rhodesia, which represented a 50 per cent increase.¹⁰⁸ While there were some white men who married black wives, a lot frequently visited black ladies at night such as their servants and the other group slept with black prostitutes. Doris Lessing also captures the hypocrisy of the patriarchal colonial legislation, when she observed that coloured children appeared plentifully among the natives wherever a lonely white man was stationed.¹⁰⁹ Equally, Pape is justified in arguing that, 'white males in Rhodesia often soothed their feelings of isolation by sexual relations with black women. These sexual encounters were not usually based on mutual attraction but on coercion....similar to those between master and slaves, feudal lords and serfs, conquerors and conquered in other countries'.¹¹⁰

In order to cover up for the white males' sexual misdemeanours, in 1924, the racist and minority regime leader, Prime Minister Moffat recommended that separate schools and hostels be established and that children, if necessary, be forcibly removed from their mothers. The child was not supposed to be influenced by kraal life (life in the black communities), which according to whites was laced with vices.¹¹¹ Ironically, it was the same kraal that produced and nurtured the same woman whom the white men sexually abused. It is clear that sex between the white males and black women particularly domestic servants was not a matter of mutual consent. White males forced themselves upon black women on the basis of them being males and so-called 'superior' white race.

State in Twentieth-Century Africa: Essays in Honour of A.H.M. Kirk-Greene. London: Macmillan: 1993, p. 52.

¹⁰⁸ McCulloch, *Black Peril, White Virtue*, p. 167.

¹⁰⁹ Lessing, *The Grass is Singing*, p. 230.

¹¹⁰ Pape, 'Black and White', p. 701, citing C. A. Rogers and C. Frantz, *Racial Themes in Rhodesia*. New Haven, 1962, p. 284.

¹¹¹ McCulloch, *Black Peril, White Virtue*, p. 180.

Employment of White Females as Solution to Sexual Perils

The most ideal option, the one that would solve both 'black and yellow peril' fears was to employ European girls, those born in Rhodesia or brought from Europe for that purpose into domestic work; or to revert to the Victorian model of domesticating white women. But the problems with this set up were economic and social at the same time. To import European girls was economically unproductive since white women would need to be paid more than the paltry that black men received. White women unlike black men would also require better food, better accommodation and better conditions of service than were available for black men who were treated like animals-beasts of burden. Sheila MacDonald once remarked in trademarks reminiscent of 'negro naturally a slave': 'I do not hate the negro. I quite like him as a servant, an animal, a beast of burden'.¹¹² And according to Pape, it was precisely on that basis that these 'beasts of burden', domestic servants were subjected to physical torture such as *sjambokking* and psychological intimidation.¹¹³ Therefore engaging white maids would require a different treatment and the master would need to fork out an extra amount to provide labour-saving devices so that white women would not do everything manually as did the 'beasts of burden'-black servants.

It was also observed that white women in Southern Rhodesia would not like to be employed as domestics-'beasts of burden' as that amounted to demotion to the status of black people who are 'naturally slaves'. In a society where white race conferred socio-economic and political privileges and superiority status, to employ a white person in domestic service was a great humiliation for the dominators to be equally footed with the dominated.¹¹⁴ At least the employment of blacks especially males would provide them with an opportunity to exercise authority in 'revenge for their own demoralization in a world so dominated by men'.¹¹⁵ Domestic service was thus a miniature site of the broader struggle for

¹¹² Sheila MacDonald, *Sally in Rhodesia*. Sydney, 1932, p.7.

¹¹³ Cf. Pape, 'Black and White', p. 709.

¹¹⁴ Schmidt, *Peasants, Traders and Wives*, p. 178.

¹¹⁵ Lessing, *The Grass is Singing*, critically observes this dimension in the relationship between Moses, the male domestic servants and Mary Turner the wife of Dick, which relationship is a miniature of the whole picture, during the colonial era; McCulloch, *Black Peril, White Virtue*, p.111.

power between white colonisers and colonised blacks, on one hand, and between the coloniser males and coloniser females on the other. In the struggle it was black domestic servants who suffered the most as their status amounted to slavery. Had it not been the fear of black peril, white women would have preferred the status quo to remain.

Possible Explanations to Sexual Perils

Scholars have tried to understand the 'black peril' fears in the context of the early years of colonisation where there were no women allowed in the colony.¹¹⁶ This shortage of white women, it is argued, created a crisis among white men. In such a situation, it was inevitable that male settlers should turn to black women, since white women were very few and inadequate to meet the sexual desires of their many white males. From that perspective, legislation prohibiting black men and white women to have sexual relations while giving male settlers free reign was a logical survival strategy. However, others observe gender and racial power struggles in both the legislation and sexual abuse of black women. Helen Callaway, for instance opines that the Acts masked European men's possessiveness and control over women's sexuality, their sexual jealous as males of the dominant groups, and their anxieties over their own sexual shortcomings.¹¹⁷ In other words, although white males dominated blacks in all other spheres, sexually they were weak. That is why white males since they wanted dominance and authority in all spheres-political, economic, social and sexual, enacted laws to prohibit close contact between black man and white woman.¹¹⁸

From this perspective, we may be right to suppose that sexual relationships between white men and black women, in Southern Rhodesia, were not simply the result of an imbalance in the ratio of European women to European men during the early colonial period. Victorian racial and gender ideology which placed European women on a pedestal and held

¹¹⁶ Pape, 'Black and White', p.701, for example cites G. H. Tanser, *A Scantling of Time*. Salisbury, 1965, p. 45, who argues that since for first two years after occupation, white women were not allowed in the colony, the first woman to enter Southern Rhodesia came in disguised as a man; see also Vambe, *From Rhodesia to Zimbabwe*, p. 107.

¹¹⁷ Callaway, 'Purity and Exotica in Legitimizing the Empire', p.53; Cf. Schmidt, *Peasants, Traders and Wives*, p. 169; Cf. Lessing, *The Grass is Singing*, p. 197.

¹¹⁸ Schmidt, *Peasants, Traders and Wives*, p. 170.

them up (in idealised state rather than reality) as the epitome of purity and chastity were at the forefront. Considering this racial and gender dynamic to be true, black women, who are not only women but also black and colonised for that matter, were simply less than pets in the eyes of white men, hence could be used whichever way they pleased. Elizabeth Schmidt's contention that 'in a settler society dominated by Victorian sexual mores, the "virginal" European woman was bound firmly to her pedestal, while the supposedly "animal like" and "wild" African woman was the secret object of white men's sexual desires,' holds water.¹¹⁹

In the minds of the Europeans during the colonial era, 'colonised women around the globe refracted multiple images; they offered romantic fantasies of female sensuality behind veils, visions of conquest, intimacy, and gratified pleasures'. European doctors' focussed study and conclusions on 'the genitalia and buttocks of Hottentot women as exhibits of uncontrolled sexuality at the lowest stage of evolution',¹²⁰ confirmed and concretised the created myths. Because of such mentally constructed myth to create difference between the colonisers and the colonised, nearly every white male in Rhodesia was dying to sleep with a black woman. This put the colonised women in greatest danger especially female domestic servants. White masters, their sons, relatives and friends, all demanded sexual favours from the female servants. Compounded by the lack of proper and secure accommodation for domestic servants, female servants were in constant danger of sexual exploitation by the marauding white men, who were legally given unlimited access to the servants' quarters-*kia*. Since, servants usually had few fellow workers; their isolation increased their vulnerability at the hands of the white male employers.

Given the overwhelming evidence of the presence of the real danger of 'white peril' against the imaginary danger 'black peril' one cannot be wrong to argue that the much hyped black peril was a white men's creation in order to cover up for their naked lust and cruelty that knew no limits. Thus, rapes or attempted rapes connected to 'black peril' if ever they happened should be looked at from the total picture of the humiliation of black women at the hands of white males and the total oppres-

¹¹⁹ Cf. Schmidt, *Peasants, Traders and Wives*, p. 174.

¹²⁰ Callaway, 'Purity and Exotica', p. 34.

sion that colonial laws impressed upon the black people, which laws impacted more on domestic workers than any other group of black people. Taken from this perspective, the rapes become desperate compensative measures by a desperately oppressed creature that they sometimes become justified. As Pape rightly observes, 'this whole range of oppression of domestic workers within such an extensive system of labour coercion makes sexual attack on the 'madam' seem like one of the few possible outlets for exacting justifiable revenge'.¹²¹

That most supposedly offenders were male domestic servants has nothing to do with the so called immoral character of black males, as was almost always intimated by white colonisers, both males and females. It has everything to do with the recruitment of domestic labour and the broader context involving the issues of racial segregation,¹²² gender constructions and the art of domination. With the above background, that 'black peril' fears affected domestic servants other than any other group of black people is understandable. It is also due to their humiliation and ill-treatment that domestic workers participated in the liberation war to dethrone colonialism.

Contribution of Domestic Servants to the Second Chimurenga

While most studies of Rhodesian Africans have shown that religion, education and political attitudes are linked, domestic workers in Rhodesia were not always willing to share their thoughts about politics. This does not suggest however that they did not have political consciousness. In her research in Masvingo at the height of the war of liberation, in the colonial era, Weinrich observed the difficulties involved in getting to prove the level of political consciousness of domestic servants owing to her being European. African servants were not always willing to share their political thoughts with whites. She observed that 'although domes-

¹²¹ Pape, 'Black and White', p. 709, cites an Ndebele chief who in 1912 had told a colonial official that 'there will never be peace between the black man and the white man...until you give our women the protection you demand for your own' p. 717); A letter to the *Manchester Guardian* took the analysis to the logical conclusion: 'There would be no danger to white women in Africa if the white men behaved as gentlemen...if people in England only knew what goes on in Africa they would not be surprised at anything black man does. At his worst he is a mild copy of his 'master'', NAZ, S 144/4-5, *Rhodesia Herald*, 25 August 1911; see Pape, 'Black and White', p. 711.

¹²² Cf. McCulloch, *Black Peril, White Virtue*, p. 109.

tic servants spoke readily about their religion and education, they were most reluctant to express their political attitudes'.¹²³ Therefore she justifiably expressed doubt over the reliability of the information the servants gave her. And the same could be said about any research that was carried out by white people on any matter concerning domestic servants.

According to Weinrich, from the few domestic servants who expressed their political opinions, it was clear that they gave opinions that were complimentary to the European government and condemnatory of African nationalism. One domestic servant said: 'I want to fight for my country and to free it from terrorist invaders from across the Zambezi',¹²⁴ almost reproducing the white community and their government's propaganda transcript. While this one and a few others could have actually succumbed to white propaganda, most of the domestic servants, uneducated as they were, never believed the blatant lies propagated against nationalists. They only told Europeans what they wanted to hear. Their experiences in the hands of European masters had given them enough lessons of political consciousness. Chigweshe Muringo says, 'nearly every domestic servant supported the nationalists based upon our experiences of exploitation in European families'.¹²⁵

Apart from personal experiences, Weinrich observed that, in Masvingo several domestic servants occasionally visited the African community of Mucheke, where they picked up political views and news in the beer halls and they would ask their European employers to explain politics to them. It was then that the Europeans would indoctrinate the domestic servants with their own version of Rhodesian politics. Eventually Europeans would think that their servants were on their side, while in reality most domestic servants understood quite well the political dynamics. Asking the European employers was only deceptive, to disguise, as they professed ignorance so that white employers would not suspect them of supporting the nationalists. It was also to tap into the white mentality which information was very useful in the prosecution of the struggle. Violet Maweru, says that, 'most of us domestic servants were conveyors of a lot of important information for the nationalists who were in the

¹²³ Cf. Weinrich, *Mucheke: Race, status and politics*, p. 233.

¹²⁴ Weinrich, *Mucheke: Race, status and politics*, p. 233.

¹²⁵ Chigweshe Muringo has been a domestic worker for the rest of his working experience. Having begun in 1970, he only retired in 1990 due to health issues. (Interview with Chigweshe, October 2007, Harare)

townships. Each time we came into the location we briefed our comrades about white ideology and the state of affairs. Some contributed money, some stole cast off clothes from the employers to send to the nationalists'.¹²⁶

Domestic servants did not only provide logistical support to the national struggle, but they even contributed several men and women to the battle front. Runesu Vhiyai says that most Europeans during the liberation struggle were fearful of the contact between their domestic workers with fellow Africans because they thought domestic workers would be influenced to join the struggle, which was quite common.¹²⁷ He is among the many domestic servants who ran away from European employers in 1977 to join the struggle. Vhiyai escaped to Mozambique, with ten other domestic servants to join the struggle. Their experience of exploitation in the European households was very fundamental in breeding consciousness of the need for revolutionary change. It is therefore not by chance that the liberation struggle was led by people who have at some point in their lives been servants, either in the household, or farms or plantations. This experience exposed them to the centre of all the problems in the country. One of the fierce fighters of the Second Chimurenga, General Josiah Magama Tongogara, for instance was born and raised by a maid of Ian Douglas Smith, the Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia. He grew up at the farm. In a way he has been a domestic servant for Smith. In South Africa, the situation is the same; renowned nationalists had been exposed to domestic service in their lives. Today, Julius Malema, a staunch advocate of the black struggle for empowerment was born to a domestic maid in a white household.

While many domestic servants joined the struggle, in hope that their lives would be changed, some were recruited by whites to entrench their oppression. White colonialists tried all the tricks to portray the struggle for independence as a political and not a racial issue. For example, the white Rhodesian state had managed through various forms of coercion both legal and economic to recruit large numbers of Africans into its army. Masters also, as I have indicated brainwashed and misled some of

¹²⁶ Violet Maweru is still working as a maid for the fifth European family since she started in 1978. (Interview, on 7 April 2011, Kwekwe).

¹²⁷ Runesu Vhiyai is a war veteran who once worked as a domestic servant in Mutare from 1974 until 1977 when he joined the war. I had an informal exchange of ideas with him sometime in 2008.

their domestic servants to join the struggle on a false notion that the war was not a racial one but political. A white racist Anglican Bishop Burrough declared, 'this is not a race war: the majority on both sides of the struggle are black Africans of this land. This is a political struggle in which most of the thousand or so who have died have been black Africans.'¹²⁸ But the reality is; the struggle was, as it has remained to date, first and foremost, a racial issue that cascades to political and economic spheres. The purpose of the blacks who took sides with the whites in the struggle was; to fight and die and to kill their fellow black citizens in order to preserve white supremacy.

The same tactic to recruit blacks to fight and die for the preservation of white privileges is still intact. Domestic workers as I will show in the next chapter are recruited to the political side of their employers. In other instances, it has become so sophisticated that one would mistake the endeavours for something noble. They talk of fighting for democracy, human rights, rule of law while in reality it is the fight to entrench colonial white oppression. As it stands today, we have many black people who are fronts of the white interests; it is their responsibility to fight for the fraudulently acquired privileges of the white colonialists in Zimbabwe and abroad, especially the land; it is their responsibility to defend those rights against the rights of the fellow black people of Zimbabwe who lost everything to colonisation.

Conclusion

This chapter has concentrated on the racial, gender, class and cultural struggles between masters and domestic servants in Southern Rhodesia, in a bid to show that the domestic service sector offers a microscopic view of the whole political, social, and economic drama in Zimbabwe since the colonial era. Eighteenth and nineteenth century British context of domestic servants and the subsequent South African environment provided valuable comparative interpretational framework on the matrix of master and servant relationships in colonial Zimbabwe. The perception that domestic service in Zimbabwe is both a total and greedy institution was largely influenced by this comparison, where the servant role

¹²⁸ Cf. Lapsley, *Neutrality or Co-option*, p. 52.

had become synonymous to slavery. Symbolising the defeated enemy within; domestic servants were similar to ancient Near Eastern and Israelite debt-slaves who were deprived of everything that makes them free and normal human beings. As demonstrated in the chapter, domestic servants were deprived of culture, language, identity, nationality, and the capacity to make and live in history. They were denied responsibility over self and family. Their status required that they be desexualised, depersonalised hence dehumanised so as to be rebranded or assigned a new identity, sex and indeed humanity. This new identity had to fit the master's desires, imagination, culture, social, economic and political interests. It was from these experiences of exploitation of domestic servants and similar groups, such as farm and mine servants and the influence of the Bible (and Christianity) in legitimating such oppression that Africans began to read and interpret the same Bible with the aim of crafting a way of liberation. Thus in as much as the Bible was used as a weapon to oppress the Africans, nationalists undertook to read and interpret the Bible from their experiences of oppression; having understood their situation to be similar to Israelite slaves in Egypt they called for an exodus to the promised land of Canaan (Zimbabwe). Unfortunately the promises were never fulfilled, as the next chapter shows. Domestic workers are still waiting for the Exodus.

CHAPTER SEVEN

DOMESTIC WORKERS IN POST-COLONIAL ZIMBABWE

Introduction

This chapter shows that like the egalitarian ideals of the underclasses and slaves of ancient Israel which were not fulfilled at the emergence of Israel from the exploitative feudal system of Canaanite city-states, the aspirations of domestic servants (and the generality of the Zimbabweans) encapsulated in the metaphor of the 'Exodus from Egypt to Canaan' were equally not realised as the nation transitioned from colonial rule to independence in 1980. An investigation into the institution of domestic service in post colonial Zimbabwe shows that notwithstanding the legal regime overhaul, domestic workers, contrary to the much hoped for 'Exodus from Egypt to Canaan', they are still languishing in 'Egypt'. And the same could be said about the generality of the poor. Thus, like Israelite slavery/manumission laws in Exo 21:2-6, 20-21, 26-27 and Deut15:12-18, the Employment (Domestic workers) Regulations Act among other institutions that were created at independence to advance the cause of domestic servants, are only liberational when we consider the exploitative background of colonisation, but not enough to bring about any meaningful transformation of the status-quo. Without addressing the causes of poverty that push peasants into domestic labour, the gains of independence were quickly reversed to the extent that for many domestic workers, independence meant nothing but a continuation of 'Egyptian slavery'-the colonial set-up. As such, this chapter explores some of the reasons contributing to the failure of the 'Exodus', the radical reordering of domestic service and the Zimbabwean society in general. The chapter traces the political, legal and socio-economic journey the domestic workers have travelled from 1980 to date as the mirror of the Zimbabwean society in general.

'Exodus from Egypt to Canaan': Biblical Hermeneutical Premise for the Second Chimurenga

Although the liberation struggle for Zimbabwe was anchored upon Marxist interpretation of the society hence a strong anti-religion inclina-

tion especially Christianity, somehow the Bible proved to be usable as a tool to advance the ideology of socialism. The Bible was thus, re-read and re-interpreted from a standpoint of the black experiences of colonial exploitation and oppression. Distinctively noticeable about the process of reinterpretation of the Bible was its devotion to African cultural, emotional nationalism and the Marxist perspective where return to communal egalitarianism as opposed to capitalism, itself blamed for the present experiences of racial, class and gender exploitation. In pursuance of this cultural, nationalist and Marxist biblical exegesis, Janice McLaughlin, observed that during the liberation war, in the refugee camps outside the country, in Mozambique and Zambia among others 'teachers' (nationalist fighters) adapted their lessons to the ideological context of nationalism. One of the teachers at Matenje (Mozambique), explaining how they integrated politics and academic education, gave the following example, which clearly spells out the intentions of the black struggle for liberation. She said,

you may deal with the topic: A Bad King Rules Egypt'. You may give the children the example of Herod as Smith, Egypt as Zimbabwe, the Israelites as the people of Zimbabwe who were troubled by Smith for many years, Moses as Cde Mugabe who was selected by the vadzimu to lead the people of Zimbabwe out of the hands of Pharaoh. Up to the liberation of Zimbabwe which you compare to Canaan; the country of milk and honey.¹

Domestic servants, whose participation and contribution to the shaping of the liberation struggle is yet to be told in full, anticipated nothing but the realization of this dream: 'Exodus from Egypt to Canaan', a radical transformation or a reversal of the status quo, when they became masters while white colonial masters became domestic servants. While this was far-fetched, on average, blacks expected equality between the black and white races such that whites could also engage in domestic service one day serving a black Baas! However, without other necessary reforms such as land redistribution, the real cause of African strife and cause of war, in no time the egalitarian/socialist policies were bound to fail. Do-

¹ Janice McLaughlin, "We did it for Love': Refugees and Religion in the Camps in Mozambique and Zambia during Zimbabwe's Liberation Struggle", in C.F. Hallencreutz and A.M. Moyo (eds.), *Church and State in Zimbabwe*. Gweru: Mambo Press, 1988, pp. 127-145 (p.134).

mestic workers found themselves 'still serving tea' to the white Missus and Baas!²

Domestic Servants' Journey from 'Egypt to Canaan': 1980-1990

The independence of Zimbabwe in 1980 saw sweeping legal changes across the political, socio-economic and religious spheres. In many instances the legal changes were so radical that the society was reordered; almost an upside down scenario, abolishing nearly everything that characterised the colonial past. Schools, hospitals, residential places, job opportunities that had previously been a preserve of whites were opened to all the races. Towns no longer had specified European areas and the same was true with sports and other entertainment areas. The previously uneducated and deprived Africans got access to free education, free health and some land was redistributed and people got resettled, refugees were rehabilitated, guerrilla fighters were demobilised and sent back to their homes. It nearly became a complete overhaul.

For the first time in the history of African servants, a new legal regime was put in place making it possible for them to form workers' unions. This saw Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) being formed by the government in 1980, as the umbrella organ to represent workers. Domestic servants, on the other hand were legally upgraded from being servants, to the status of workers or employees, as did all African servants. Most importantly, the Government also helped them form a workers union, the Zimbabwe Domestic and Allied Workers Union (ZDAWU). The salaries were for the first time significantly reviewed upward and former masters were legally bound to pay the new salaries. Domestic workers who at independence earned \$10 per month got a windfall of \$30 a month. It was dawn of a new era indeed.³ These were unprecedented changes that brought happiness and hope for a future with dignity in 'Canaan, a country flowing milk and honey'. However the most outlandish promises that were being made during the struggle for liberation did not see the light of the day.

The outright takeover of land, companies and mines from whites to the black masses for the purposes of pursuing Marxist policies of egalitarianism were not fulfilled. That means the minority former colonisers

² Cf. Pape, 'Still Serving the Tea'.

³ Cf. Verstraelen, *Zimbabwean Realities and Christian Responses*, p. 54.

continued to run the economy. This mistake had adverse effects on the future of Zimbabwe, as I will discuss shortly. To date the consequences of this fatal miscalculation on the part of Zimbabwean leadership are still with us and not promising to disappear anytime soon. Nevertheless, the upgrading of the status of domestic servants to workers was a welcome move.

From Domestic Servants to Domestic Workers

As soon as Zimbabwe became independent, the black government wasted no time but enacted forthwith legal instruments to protect the formerly vulnerable domestic servants and other members of the black communities. The government repealed the colonial Masters and Servants Act. Through the Statutory Instrument 925C of 1981/the Employment (Domestic Workers) Regulations, 1981, the government addressed various contentious issues among domestic workers. Issues dealt with, include; food, accommodation, maternity leave, overtime, records of employment, and hours of work. The instrument stated that a maximum working week was not to exceed 54 hours, with no single day greater than 9.5 hours. Whereas, during the colonial era servants would get only half day per week or none as off, the new law stated that an employee was entitled to one full day (24 hours) off (Article, 31). In instances where workers were required to work more than the normal day, the employer was supposed to pay overtime at the rate of one and half times the normal rate. National days and public holidays, that were previously denied to domestic servants were to be given as off-days, according to the new law.

In another unprecedented move, the new law guaranteed every employee, 12 days of annual leave and two months of unpaid sick leave. Equally unprecedented was the granting of maternity leave. Regardless of marital status, any woman was entitled to maternity leave; 42 days prior to and 42 days following delivery (Article, 24). Employees who would have gone on maternity leave were to return to their duties and not to be retrenched, which was a common scenario during the colonial era. Because of this radical overhaul of the legal system it could be suggested that, while during the colonial era the law was to protect the white master against the servants, the new law did the opposite. Employers no longer had the sole right to wantonly dismiss the workers. If that so

happened, the employee was entitled to one month salary, unless the Minister agrees otherwise (Article, 26).

To ensure white employers' compliance with the new law, every employer was supposed to keep a log book of domestic employees' hours worked, pay and benefits. Harsh and punitive consequences awaited employers who failed to comply with any or all of the laid down regulations. Such an employer could face a fine of up to a thousand dollars or imprisonment for a maximum of three months. Although these were positive developments for domestic workers, the measures were met with spirited resistance from white masters.

Domestic Workers' Trip Back to Egypt!

Resistance of Former Masters

While domestic workers and all the other African workers celebrated these gains of independence, white people cursed every action that the government took. For them black majority rule and the whole talk of racial equality was an affront to their cultural DNA. They could not accept being ruled by a black man. A good number of white people left the country to South Africa, Britain and some Western countries at independence. According to Pape, many of the white employers who opted to remain in the country were engaged in resisting the tide of change, at all cost. In utter violation of the law and clear defiance to the government policies, a large number of white employers rather than paying the gazetted minimum wage, simply dismissed their domestic workers. As early as 1982, ZDAWU had received reports of hundreds of domestic workers who had been retrenched over the issue of pay rise, to which the General Secretary of ZDAWU Carlton Moyo responded:

their actions is a slap in the government's face. The Minister of Labour and Social Services should act quickly and stop the mass sackings taking place in the suburbs throughout the main centres of the country...Most of the domestic workers who refused to be exploited have been dismissed by...employers whose mentality is still in Rhodesia.⁴

Because of this unwillingness on the part of white employers to cooperate with the black government, domestic workers were left with very few

⁴ Carlton Moyo, *The Herald*, 27 May 1982; cf. Pape, 'Still serving Tea', p. 392.

options. The government on the other hand, had done nothing radical and revolutionary about the reduction of poverty at household level by redistributing all the land. Hence, a domestic worker who would be thick-headed so as to insist on government designated minimum wage and legally set conditions faced retrenchment and the grinding poverty back in the overcrowded village. As such, many domestic workers decided to go against the law, taking into consideration personal circumstances to negotiate with employers so that they get paid the same colonial wages. These domestic workers and their employers would lie to ZDAWU and government officials when they recorded in the log book about work hours, salary and the like.⁵ They only recorded what the law required but not reflected in reality. Most of the whites remained stark in the Rhodesian mentality that saw black people as inferior beings, beasts of burden. They regarded themselves as eternal masters while blacks were divinely ordained slaves.

Due to the resistance of whites to comply with the new laws that targeted to dismantle segregation, accommodation situation remained the same for domestic workers. Most *Kias* were neither renovated nor upgraded in order to expand them to accommodate family of domestic workers, husband/wife (or wives) and children. They remained only one small room, without electricity, without indoors, kitchen, without indoors toilet and without water. The same room therefore was the kitchen and sitting room during the day and bedroom at night. The same one room housed the domestic worker's family, relatives and visitors. On the other hand, the mansion of the master was literally unoccupied, as most of them had more than seven bed roomed houses while having only one or two children. As a result, a number of their bedrooms were not used at all. However, that the domestic worker's family was crammed in one little room with very little ventilation did not bother them at all. For Pape, in general white reformers; those who adjusted to the new reality, by enlarging their houses so as to accommodate the families of domestic workers in accordance to government instituted employment regulations were clearly a distinct minority.⁶

Unfortunately this same mentality has remained alive to date. Accommodation for domestic workers has not improved at all. In most cases,

⁵ *Sunday Mail*, 3 January 1982; Pape, 'Still serving Tea', p. 392.

⁶ Cf. Pape, 'Still serving Tea', p. 396.

the situation has even gotten worse, as the chapter will show. Domestic workers therefore have remained detached from family life, as it was in the colonial era, without the possibility to experience freedom, responsibility and full being. This situation constitutes not only oppression but also violation of fundamental human rights. According to Paulo Freire 'any situation in which 'A' objectively exploits 'B' or hinders his or her pursuit of self-affirmation as a responsible person is one of oppression; such a situation in itself constitutes violence ... because it interferes with the individual's ontological and historical vocation to be more fully human'.⁷ It is this situation that needs to be dethroned in Zimbabwe, for it is a reality, clearly visible in domestic service. In all fairness, domestic workers are still servants. Only name 'servant' has been replaced by 'worker' or employee, but the overall conditions are the same as during the colonial era.

This has to be understood in context; that is, the practical economic implications of independence on whites and economic status of blacks. The Zimbabwean Independence, in practice neither deleted racial boundaries nor created equal economic opportunities for blacks and whites. In other words, it did not translate to economic emancipation of many of the black people as was anticipated. Only a few black people ascended the socio-economic ladder. On the other hand, there was no downward movement of whites from the apex of the social and economic system. That means, the economy continued to be run and manipulated by the minority white people although they had lost political power.⁸

A meaningful 'Exodus from Egypt, the house of slavery' needed to be accompanied by economic and social justice. Without this important component, Canaan Banana argues that political independence is meaningless, since 'according to Karl Marx, economic power gave the wealthy the resources which enabled them to control man's political destiny'.⁹ In the same vein, Gottwald argues that 'those who have this power of economic disposal tend also to have political predominance and ideological

⁷ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, pp. 2-3. <http://marxists.anu.edu.au/subject/education/freire/pedagogy/ch01.htm> (retrieved, 12.06.2009).

⁸ Cf. Randolph, *Dawn in Zimbabwe*, 46.

⁹ Banana, *The Gospel According to the Ghetto*, p. 47.

hegemony'.¹⁰ This is particularly true given that the political elites in Zimbabwe in the first decade of independence were almost owned by owners of capital. The voice of the minority who controlled the means of production at the exclusion of the majority was the loudest, while the voices of the underclasses were largely ignored. While poverty was multiplying at alarming rate in the African villages and households, the white elite, through various political strategies and media propaganda, presented Zimbabwe as the most economically progressive and model of democracy in Africa.

On few instances, when the peasants organized and attempted to wrestle their land back from white farmers, the whole world witnessed the ruthlessness of the government against them. Armed troops, dogs and helicopters were sent to the farms and the leaders were rounding up. Yet, the same black leaders of Zimbabwe were honoured at various international fora and lauded as international icons, committed to democracy, peace and tranquility. The same is happening in South Africa. The black leadership protects former colonial masters and remnants of apartheid more than it protects the black peasants and labourers who ushered it into government. On 16 August 2012 for instance, the South African government unleashed its rogue police force on innocent labourers who were striking for pay rise. The police deliberately (maybe as per government instruction) shot at close range resulting in a massacre of 34 poor labourers and more than 70 wounded. Of the wounded, many died in hospitals. But since the government assassinated the poor labourers to protect economic interests of whites, capitalist oppressors, their sins went unnoticed. They were forgiven before they were committed! The so-called international champions of human rights kept their mouths shut. Not even one Western country called for the president of South Africa to resign. Instead, he has been praised as a champion of human rights and democracy. In fact, regardless of its unmatched history and reality of violation of black people's rights, South Africa is regarded by capitalists as a model of democracy. One wonders what kind of democracy it is that protects only the minority against the majority; democracy that legitimises dispossession of the majority by the minority!

¹⁰ Gottwald, 'Social Class as an Analytic and Hermeneutical Category in Biblical Studies', (p.4)

It seems, in some quarters, democracy in Africa means preservation of the colonial status-quo. African governments are supposed to regard as sacred the colonial structures that oppress the black people. Through various incentives from the West, they are silenced and actually bought out. In Zimbabwe, with the passage of time, it became clear to all and sundry that the government had been bought out of the struggle of the underclasses. For almost the first two decades of independence, what remained for the underclasses from the government were empty slogans about equality. Together with the flooding of the country by humanitarian organisations, the various awards that the leadership received were meant to negotiate them out of the struggle for the majority. The owners of capital, as we have observed in ancient Israel are not prepared to let go the means of production. They want to appear to care for the poor through humanitarian assistance. But in reality, humanitarian assistance is concealed exploitation.

This background is very important in appreciating the events that followed. For, without the redistribution of the economy especially land, Zimbabwe had never fully experienced the Exodus. This also explains why not even one white individual lives in high density suburbs let alone being engaged in domestic employment as is common among the poor in the country. Political independence left their social and economic life unscathed. And this state of affairs was a time bomb.

Attitude of New Black 'Elites' on Domestic Workers

While the Rhodesian mentality in white employers and the grinding poverty in the rural areas forced domestic workers to opt for less wages, cheating the government and legal experts were challenges, equally menacing was the new phenomenon of black (masters) employers. As early as 1982, ZDAWU had already received reports about the abuse of domestic workers by black employers. The few black elites who socially moved upwards, occupying job positions previously reserved for whites and those who moved to the low density suburbs or residential areas that used to be exclusively for Europeans, adopted the white-European mentality of exploitation that characterised the colonial era. Thus, while newcomers (black employers) used capital or social class, whites continued to use both race and socio-economic class as they still controlled capital. As Pape rightly observes, 'whereas in the colonial era race was a major

factor underlying household power relations, after 1980 class came to be the dominant force'.¹¹ It is not by coincidence that popular Zimbabwean TV dramas always captured this class struggle between domestic workers and black employers throughout the 1990s. Enock Chihombori's *Gringo* drama series got so popular, for concentrating on this struggle in the households of the new black elites.¹²

From 1980 therefore, domestic workers, in the low density suburbs were subjected to a double tragedy; exploitation on the basis of race and socio-economic status. Black employers thought and behaved as though they had 'become whites' by virtue of them having moved to places that used to be for whites only. That is why they are regarded by their domestic workers as *Murungu wangu* (my white employer) or *Baas* although they are black. Such individuals were from 1980 called *Vana Chasaraiganda*,¹³ that is, only the skin is still black but (in everything especially life-style) they have become white. Like white employers, they did not want to pay government gazetted wages. Samuel Ngwenya, a domestic worker at such black people who had 'become white' said: 'some of these black Europeans pay us 25 dollars a month (instead of the government gazetted \$30). And then they disconnect the chain on your toilet. You will be using a bucket for the whole night and your house will be smelling so they can save a few cents on water'.¹⁴

Such exploitation of blacks by blacks seems quite surprising in a country such as Zimbabwe where such an intense military and political struggle against a racist system took place. However, according to Paulo Freire this must not be surprising at all, because it is one of the ways in which the formerly oppressed behave. For him, 'during the initial stage of the struggle, the oppressed, instead of striving for (total) liberation (for all), tend themselves to become oppressors, or 'sub-oppressors'. It is a rare

¹¹ Pape, 'Still serving the Tea', p. 387.

¹² Cf. Enoch Chihombori's drama series that showed on ZTV include, 'Gringo', 1998, 'Ndi-Gringo Chete', 1999; 'Gringo Mari iripi?', 2003.

¹³ Haruperi, a gardener in Harare's posh Borrowdale suburb where he works for a white family, told me in an interview (20 April 2011) that soon after independence there were very few black elites who moved to the low density and occupied houses that were either sold or deserted by white owners. Such individuals were coined 'Chasaraiganda'. The name suggests a black man who has lost his/her brain by adopting white people's culture and life style.

¹⁴ Cf. Pape, 'Still serving the Tea', p. 398.

peasant who, once 'promoted' to overseer, does not become more of a tyrant towards his former comrades than the owner himself. This is because the context of the peasant's situation that is oppression remains unchanged'.¹⁵

Domestic workers in some of these black households were expected (as they are still expected today) to address their black employers as *Baas* or *Shefu* when the employer is male and madam or *misisi* when the employer is a woman. Often times one hears domestic workers saying, '*madam vangu...*' that means (my employer's wife or woman employer) or *Bhasa vangu* (my Baas or Master) said this and that. In many urban areas even today, the most common designation to employers, irrespective of gender, age or race is *murungu wangu* (my white employer). Failure to designate the black employer as such, sometimes leads to the domestic worker being fired for insubordination. In 1989, for example, a 22-year old black female domestic worker was fired by her 19 year old black employer for failing to address her as 'madam'.¹⁶ By insisting on the titles 'madam' or *Baas*, the black employers are suggesting that the relationship between them and the domestic worker should be defined on the same bases as that of white master and black servant during the colonial period. The same social distance that was demanded by the white masters is to be maintained between the employer and his family on one hand and the domestic worker and his family on the other.

As soon as one is engaged in domestic service, his/her name is ignored. In typical colonial attitude, black employers address their domestic workers in relation to the duties they perform or duties they are commonly known to perform. In urban areas whether low, medium or high density, domestic workers are addressed as *Garden boy* and *House girl*. This is indifferent to the age of the domestic worker. In some cases especially when they work for black employers they are called *Sekuru* (uncle/grandfather), *Mukoma* (brother) or *Sisi* (sister) instead of their actual names. One could be aged over fifty years but is still addressed as boy or girl; *mukoma* or *sisi*. The designations again do not consider age; one could be aged only eighteen or twenty years but is called *sekuru*.

Domestic workers themselves do not like to be called *Sekuru*, *Mukoma*, or *Sissy*; they prefer their names, because titles such as *Sissy* communi-

¹⁵ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, pp. 2-3.

¹⁶ Pape, 'Still serving Tea', p. 404.

cate to everybody that they do not belong to the family.¹⁷ While the English translation may be polite and respectful, the message communicated by such designations in the context of Zimbabwe is quite as denigrating as the terms 'Garden boy' and 'House-girl'. Cock argues that names such as *Sissy* among others imply the depersonalisation motif.¹⁸ Equally depersonalising is a trend whereby domestic workers are normally addressed by the possessive title *mukomana wekwaMudyiwa* (boy 'male' worker belonging to Mudyiwa family) or *musikana waMai Nthingi* (girl or maid belonging to Mrs Nthingi). Quite many people in the rural areas address domestic workers as *mubhoyi wekwa* (the Boy of) so and so. *Mubhoyi* is sometimes used without reference to gender but with colonial connotations where it denoted slave-like status, hence it carries a denigrating tone.

Although exploitation of black servants by black employers was quite known in the upper class as I have intimated above, the most frequent instances of oppressive black employers were found and are still among the black middle and working class. The middle class prefers to hire young child-minders since they are cheaper than institutional child care such as day care or crèche.¹⁹ This is related to the financial and cultural inclinations of the black people and the consequences of limited economic reordering exercise at independence. While the government opened schools for free education, industries did not expand. Also the removal of colonial pass laws that restricted rural to urban inflows meant that young men and women would upon completion of secondary education try to escape rural poverty by coming to cities to look for employment which again was non-existent. Most young women would submit to any available opportunity in the domestic service as child-minders. Thus, whereas in colonial times, male domestic workers were the major victims of oppression in the domestic service sector, the post 1980 changes in the political economy led primarily to the exploitation of women household employees.

¹⁷ Calvin Muchenje says, 'I have no option but I would prefer my name because I am not old to be called *sekuru*' (interview: 9 April 2011); the same was true with Martha Fireyi, she does not feel comfortable in being called *sisi* by everybody in the family. For her that alone singles her out as not belonging (interview: 9 April 2011, Harare).

¹⁸ Cock, *Maids and Madams*, p. 94.

¹⁹ Cf. Pape, 'Still serving Tea', p. 400.

This change in the gender composition of domestic workforce in Zimbabwe was not a displacement of male domestic workers by women, since in wealthy white and black households, men continued to be the cooks, general houseworkers and gardeners. However new job openings for child-minders appeared in black households, both middle and working class, where the mother was employed.²⁰ In these scenarios, there is no talk of hours, day off, or minimum wage. Young girls could get as less as \$10 per month, instead of facing poverty in the village. In fact, this is the situation across the country. On average, domestic workers are getting \$20.00 to \$30.00 per month against \$120.00 that ZDAWU has proposed²¹ and the government-gazetted \$100.00 per month for live-in domestic workers. Employers complain that since they are also lowly paid, it is illogical for the government to impose a minimum wage.²² But even those who can afford are not willing because labour is plenty. As is normal in any economic environment, when supply outstrips demand, wages go down.

This situation has to be appreciated from a historical, political and economic context. From 1980, domestic workers had no choice but to accept whatever degrading conditions, considering the state of affairs country-wide. Due to free education policies pursued by the government from 1980, there was a rising number of school leavers in urban areas, ready and willing to take up any available job, including being gardener, cook, or child-minder. According to Pape, from around 1990, all long-term domestic workers agreed that it was easy to find a job in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s than then. But because by 1990, more than 100, 000 O-level students were graduating from the school system per year, yet the economy absorbed only 10, 000 to 20, 000 people annually; naturally those employed had to protect their jobs by agreeing to anything the employer offered. Often this meant accepting extra hours, shortened leave and even heavy restrictions on visitors, typical colonial scenarios. Therefore, from 1980, if employers feared the government, domestic workers feared unemployment far more.²³ As the economy continued to deteriorate over the years, domestic work was reduced to almost slavery.

²⁰ Cf. Pape, 'Still serving Tea', p. 401.

²¹ Cf. Daniel Nemukuyu, 'Salary Blues for Maids' *The Herald*, 30 August 2011.

²² Cf. Peter Matambanadzo, 'Government pegs domestic workers' wages', *The Herald*, 29 September 2011.

²³ Pape, 'Still Serving the Tea', p. 397.

Incapacity of ZDAWU

Another factor that negatively contributed to the poor conditions of domestic workers soon after independence was corruption and lack of finances in the domestic workers' union. By around 1989 ZDAWU was so broke that it was struggling to pay their subscription fees to ZCTU where it is affiliated, let alone to operate the many branches they had opened countrywide. Yet another impediment to advancing the cause of domestic workers in Zimbabwe was the history and the nature of the union. According to Pape,

both the nature of the union itself and government legislation such as instrument 925C were formulated to deal with the domestic sector as it existed in 1980. At that time the overwhelming majority of domestic workers were employed by white families living in low density suburbs, in addition most employees were officially recorded through the registration system. But independence altered this situation....it is perhaps more accurate to say that nearly all black urban households, regardless of their class, became employers of domestic workers during the 1980s. The union and government legislation were not created to handle a domestic sector of this nature.²⁴

As a result of this situation, the law may have left a bigger section of the domestic workers not covered, hence exploited; those employed by black middle class and low in-come earners. Apparently these were the biggest employers. Also, changes in the Zimbabwean political economy minimised the effect of government policy. By 1990, inflation, unemployment, lack of political interest in the domestic sector and lack in capacity of the domestic workers' union to enforce the law meant that many conditions similar to those of the colonial era were reappearing in household labour relations. Although the government continued to draft and implement socialist policies, at household level theory and practice were beginning to part ways. Thus in many ways, domestic workers had come in full circle after just one decade of independence.²⁵

²⁴ Pape, 'Still serving Tea', pp. 393-4.

²⁵ Pape, 'Still serving Tea', p. 404.

Effects of Political and Socio-Economic Factors on Domestic Workers: 1990s-1999

If the 1990s saw the re-emergence of colonial scenarios, the following developments saw worst scenarios in domestic service as well as the rest of the country's poor. Everything just plummeted. ZDAWU itself was very weak and unable to represent the domestic workers. It became clear during this period that without land and economic redistribution, Zimbabwean independence had come empty handed. And according to the 1979 Lancaster House agreement that brought independence, the land was supposed to be redistributed to the blacks after 10 years; that is from 1990. To protect the white farmers and industrialists, by making sure that land reform was not carried out, the IMF and World Bank forced the government of Zimbabwe to ditch the socialist policies toward a free market system with the adoption of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programmes (ESAP) in 1991.²⁶

As soon as the Zimbabwean Government adopted these programmes, the poor were exposed to untold economic abuse as the newly introduced free market system meant that the government no longer had control over prices and could not subsidise basic commodities (mealie meal, milk, cooking oil, etc.), educational, health and other fields of social services as it previously did. At the same time inflation affected mainly the low-income groups,²⁷ especially domestic workers, peasants and all the vulnerable classes whose existence had already been precarious from the start. And now they were stripped naked by the vagaries of market forces. The resultant scenario was that Zimbabwe had reverted to the colonial era where education, health and essential services were affordable exclusively by whites and a few black elites.

For the first five years after the introduction of these economic measures, thousands of labourers were laid off. Their only option was to return to the rural villages. Coupled with drought which coincided with the introduction of these economic measures, the inflow of new members into the villages stretched the rural economy to limits. Equally exposed were

²⁶ Cf. Alois Mlambo, *The Economic Structural Adjustment Programme: The Case of Zimbabwe, 1990-1995*. Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications. 1997; Cf. Peter Gibbon, (ed.), *Structural Adjustment and the Working Poor in Zimbabwe*. Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 1995.

²⁷ Cf. Verstraelen, *Zimbabwean Realities and Christian Responses*, p. 58.

those few labourers who remained at work; they no longer had any bargaining power at all. With a pool of untapped labour lying in the cities and rural areas, employers could fire and hire at will. The watershed to Zimbabwe's social, economic and political history was however witnessed from 1997-1999, in which the whole country exploded. And this transition greatly shaped the struggle of domestic workers. Students, war veterans, peasants, workers engaged in country wide demonstrations and protests against the government and owners of capital. In particular, they were angry about the government's protection of farmers and company owners against the masses. All sectors called upon the government to quickly appropriate land from white farmers for redistribution and to ditch forthwith the IMF and World Bank economic policies that had basically reduced all the poor blacks to slaves once again, by raising the status of whites to even higher levels than the colonial times.

Meanwhile, the Zimbabwean Government was locked in protracted negotiations with Britain to honour the Lancaster House Agreement to fund the land reform programme in Zimbabwe. Britain, in 1979 had committed to buying off white farmers from the land to redistribute to the blacks after 10 years of independence. However, from 1989 when the first talks started, Britain began to change goal posts until 5 November 1997 when they revealed that they were not prepared to fund the transfer of land from their kith and kin, white former colonizers to blacks, former colonised. It is important to quote part of the letter written by then Britain's Secretary of State, Clare Short, to Minister of Lands, Cde Kumbirai Kangai in detail here:

George Foulkes has reported to me on the meeting which you and Hon John Nkomo had with Tony Lloyd and him during your recent visit. I know that President Mugabe also discussed the land issue with the Prime Minister briefly during their meeting. It may be helpful if I record where matters now rest on the issue....I should make it clear that we do not accept that Britain has a special responsibility to meet the costs of land purchase in Zimbabwe. We are a new Government from diverse backgrounds without links to former colonial interests. My own origins are Irish and as you know we were colonised not colonisers....I am told Britain provided a package of assistance for resettlement in the period immediately following independence. This was, I gather, carefully planned and implemented, and met most of its targets. Again, I am told there were discussions in 1989

and 1996 to explore the possibility of further assistance. However that is all in the past...I thought it best to be frank about where we are.²⁸

The Zimbabwe Government as well as the generality of the peasants and all Africans, interpreted this letter as backtracking on the promise on the part of Britain coated by arrogance and feeling of racial superiority. Armed with this letter, immediately, the call from all the cross section of the society was the need for urgent land redistribution. War veterans especially became more prominent in mobilising peasants and most of the retrenched and disgruntled masses to invade white owned farms.²⁹ Students supported the move and also demanded that the government continues subsidising education, tame corruption, and revert to socialist policies. The same was true with workers. ZCTU as an umbrella body of various workers' organizations including domestic workers was more vocal and pro-active in mobilizing workers for job stay-aways and demonstrations against white employers and farmers who resisted land redistribution and against IMF policies. The then Secretary General of ZCTU Morgan Tsvangirai once said: 'The IMF (and World Bank) are devils and Economic Structural Adjustment Programmes have extended the suffering of African people,'³⁰ hence he forcefully called for compulsory land acquisition. With all these scenarios, Ezra Chitando is indeed right to describe this period as 'things fall apart' era in Zimbabwean history.³¹

Now in Egypt Again!: From 1999 to Present

We are here focusing of the effects of political, social and economic developments on domestic workers. The above mentioned letter from Clare Short triggered not only a new political and economic dispensation

²⁸ Clare Short, 'Letter to Honourable Minister of Agriculture and Land, Kumbirai Kangai', 05 November, 1997.

²⁹ Cf. Z.W. Sadomba, *War Veterans in Zimbabwe's Land Occupations: Complexities of a Liberation Movement in an African Post-Colonial Settler Society*. (PhD Thesis), Wageningen Universiteit, 2008; *War Veterans in Zimbabwe's Revolution: Challenging Neo-Colonialism & Settler & International Capital*. Harare: Weaver Press, 2011.

³⁰ Joseph Winter, BBC Correspondent on Africa, carried an interview in which Tsvangirai said 'IMF are devils'. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/1773946.stm>.

³¹ Ezra Chitando, 'Down with the Devil, Forward with Christ!' A Study of the interface between religious and political discourses in Zimbabwe'. *African Sociological Review* 6, (1), 2002, p. 2.

in Zimbabwe, but it also marked the beginning of a new diplomatic chapter internationally. Since then, the Zimbabwean society has never been the same again and the effects are quite enduring; both positive and negative. And both effects were directly felt by domestic workers, as they had a direct impact on them. War veterans, peasants including some domestic workers and farm workers, took it upon themselves to invade white owned farms. Thus, 1999 witnessed the beginning of the Third Chimurenga/peasant agrarian revolution in Zimbabwe. But it also triggered 'war' between Zimbabwe and the West.

Faced with angry masses and the letter from Britain reneging on its promises, the Zimbabwean Government had no option but to switch sides and support the struggle of the underclasses. The government therefore stopped arresting the farm invaders as opposed to what it had done before. The government further moved toward ditching IMF policies and forthwith put in place legal instruments to compulsorily reclaim land without compensation for redistribution to the peasants. With this new twist, Western governments, white farmers and industrialists who had all along put faith in the government for the protection of their interests were left in a quagmire. As soon as the land reforms started, unprecedented media propaganda against it from Western scholars, journalists, governments and churches started. And in no time, local journalists, scholars, churches, NGOs, individual pastors and radio stations began to churn out this Western narrative against the peasant struggle.³²

To put the land question into perspective, it is important to remember that until 1999, 70 percent of the arable land in Zimbabwe was controlled by a mere 4 500 white farmers, less than 1 percent of the population.³³ An equally small population of white still controls mines and companies to date. Unlike peasants who need land for crops for household consumption, white farmers were into commercial farming. They were into large scale cattle ranching, dairy farming, sugarcane, tea and plantation estates, poultry production, wine production, tobacco farming, wildlife conservancy, citrus farming, flower production and many other

³² Cf. Vengeyi, *Davidic Royal Psalmody and Propaganda: A Comparative analysis with Zimbabwe's Third Chimurenga Songs*. Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller, 2011, pp. 45-68.

³³ Tabona. Shoko, 'My Bones Shall Rise Again': War Veterans, Spirits and Land Reform in Zimbabwe'. Leiden: African Studies Centre, Working paper 68, 2006.

sophisticated export related agricultural activities. As all these products were for the European and American markets mainly, Zimbabwe earned the much needed foreign currency for the economic survival of the country. We can safely conclude that it is these few white farmers who contributed to Zimbabwe's Gross Domestic Product, as most of the other sectors of the economy depend on agriculture. As such, any distalilisation to agriculture is in effect tampering with the whole economy.

With this brief background, it is easy to explain not only the devastating consequences of the land reform programmes on the Zimbabwean economy as a whole but also the solidarity between white farmers, mine owners, company owners, and Western governments against the Zimbabwean peasant revolution. According to their well choreographed propaganda, the land reform was a complete failure; it contributed to mass starvations, enrichment of the few elite-cronies of Mugabe, at the expense of the majority poor Zimbabweans. However, facts on the ground suggest the opposite.

According to the government report, the land reform programme that acquired a total 14, 9 million hectares benefitted a total of 213 656 households countrywide.³⁴ Also, contrary to Western propaganda claiming that the land reform was a total failure as it benefitted a very tiny percentage of people especially President Mugabe's cronies, independent research has confirmed that far from being a total failure, the land reform was a resounding success as it has not only boosted production but also salvaged hundreds of thousands of households from the jaws of poverty. According to Ian Scoones (et al) statistically, research in Masvingo District shows that two-thirds of the people who were given land were 'ordinary'-low income, Zimbabweans, while the remaining one-third includes civil servants (16.5%), former workers on white-owned farms (6.7%), business people (4.8%) and members of the political-military-security elite (3.7%), the so called cronies of Mugabe and about 12% of women had land registered in their names.³⁵ And this situation is representative of the land distribution pattern countrywide. Therefore, while Zimbabwe's distractors claim that the national economy collapsed

³⁴ Cf. *Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation*, 'President Mugabe Speaks on Poverty Eradication', 20 September, 2011.

³⁵ Cf. Ian Scoones, et al, *Zimbabwe's Land Reform: Myths and Realities*. Harare: Weaver Press, 2010.

from year 2000 due to the land reform, the reality is that the land reform greatly improved not just the lives of the ordinary people but also the national economy. Zimbabwe's economy actually has registered unprecedented growth rate. An in depth investigation into the contribution of the land reform to the economy shows that while of the 167 000 employees that depended on agriculture before the land reform, 67 000 lost their jobs, the same land reform created more than one million new jobs in agriculture. And the potential for improvement is still enormous.³⁶

Be that as it may, as white farmers resisted eviction orders by the government and peasants, violence flared in the farms. White farmers teamed up with each other and with some of their farm and domestic workers to fight war veterans and peasants who invaded the farms. It may be difficult for one to stomach how on earth domestic workers, whose exploitation by white farmers and employers is well documented, could constitute one team, until one realizes the power of propaganda and threat of poverty. Together with media propaganda, white farmers, (company owners and mine owners) threatened to leave the country if the farms were occupied, the same tactics they used to recruit blacks during the liberation war. This scared a lot of farm and domestic workers (as well as those who were employed in mines and companies) who had nowhere to go, given the background of grinding poverty I have just described. Hence circumstances forced them to support their employers against their class interests. On the other hand, farm invaders attacked white farmers together with their black workers.

From 2000 to about 2003 farming areas became war zones, the centre of the struggle between status quo and the peasant revolution. A few white farmers got killed in the struggle as did a few war veterans and peasants. However, Western media, regional and local media houses controlled by owners of capital only covered the deaths of white farmers. Instead of taking sides with the victims of oppression and exploitation for more than hundred years since the onset of colonialism, the peasants, media even that which is manned by blacks took sides with the oppressors against their own. Mosala's observations about the ideological and historical production of Gen 4, which he regards as propaganda emanating from the ruling class attempting to justify land dispossessions of the

36 Cf. Joseph Hanlon, Jeannette Manjengwa and Teresa Smart, *Zimbabwe Takes Back Its Land*. London: Kumarian Press, 2012.

poor peasants by members of their class, are important here. According to him, in this propaganda, the victim of land dispossessions and the oppression of the ruling class, Cain is condemned instead of being praised for killing Abel, the land grabber and oppressor.³⁷ This is strikingly similar to what is happening in Zimbabwe even today. Instead of getting the kudos for championing the revolution for the underclasses, war veterans, unemployed youths and peasants are daily subjects of ridicule in the media. Some scholars and public alike have been persuaded by media reports to look down upon their own fighters.

I therefore agree with Michael Lapsley's observation that people's view of the world is influenced not just by the material conditions under which they live and their relation to the process and ownership of the means of production. Their perception is also greatly influenced by the ability of those who control mass media to affect the thinking of its own class as well as other classes. In other words, media always reflects a class bias. Because of this, it may in some cases, seriously distort reality in a way that prevents intelligent people from analysing social reality even from the perspective of their own interests. This has been a strategy tried and tested in Rhodesia and even in Zimbabwe. According to Lapsley, the Rhodesian Front during the struggle for liberation was not unaware of ideological weapons in its fight for survival, to the extent that even Church leaders were not exempt from mental manipulation to serve racial ideological ends and many church leaders co-operated unwittingly.³⁸ This is the logical position to explain the involvement of black domestic workers, farm labourers, journalists, academics, church leaders and the labour movement on the side of the rich white farmers against their own comrades in poverty.

Effects of the Formation of the MDC on ZDAWU

Instead of taking sides with the oppressed in the struggle for black emancipation through the control of the means of production; that is, joining hands with the government in taking over the land and resettling peasants, the former champions of the oppressed and dispossessed peasants, ZCTU and its affiliate organisations including ZDAWU, contrary to their mandate, formed a political party, Movement for Democ-

³⁷ Cf. Mosala, *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology*, pp. 33-37.

³⁸ Cf. Lapsley, *Neutrality or Co-option*, p. 70.

atic Change (MDC) in 1999. Its support base was drawn from variegated forces: labour, students, academics, churches, NGOs and civic groups.³⁹ While there is nothing untoward about forming a political party to further the struggle of the workers and the oppressed against the oppressors, the MDC did the opposite. It took sides with the oppressors and began to fight in the same corner against the peasants and the oppressed. MDC surprised the whole world by becoming probably the only labour based political party that is supported and controlled by owners of capital. Commercial farmers, industrialists, mine owners and Western governments openly ideologically and financially sponsored the MDC. And as Mosala argues, 'nothing,...could be more subversive to the struggle for liberation than enlisting the oppressors and exploiters as comrades in arms'.⁴⁰

The consequences for MDC's partnership with white farmers and owners of capital were however quickly noticed, warranting the designation of its leadership as stooges. Almost confirming this status, contrary to their previous position against exploitative IMF and oppressive white farmers and owners of capital, MDC leadership began to speak for these elements. In essence, it became the black face of the white struggle to retain their colonial privileges. There are three related possibilities to the scenario. It is possible that MDC was formed by the owners of capital and some Western nations;⁴¹ infiltrated/hijacked by these forces⁴² or the struggle of the underclasses was hijacked by some political opportunists in MDC together with the forces that benefitted from the oppression of the masses before the land reform.

This last option is very likely not entirely because it does not dismiss the possibility of the first two scenarios but also because such a scenario is

³⁹ Cf. Vengeyi, 'Israelite Prophetic Marks among Zimbabwean Men of God: An Evaluation of the Conduct of Selected Zimbabwean Church Leaders in Recent Politics'. *Exchange: Journal of Missiological and Ecumenical Research*. Vol. 39 No. 2 (2010), pp 159-178; See also, Blessing Miles-Tendi, *Making History in Mugabe's Zimbabwe: Politics, Intellectuals and the Media*. Britain: Peter Lang, 2010, who discusses in detail how all these forces worked together with the international community to effect regime change.

⁴⁰ Mosala, *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology*, p.33.

⁴¹ Cf. Jonathan Moyo, 'Unity Accord vs the politics of factionalism'. 20. December, 2009.

⁴² Cf. Munyaradzi Gwisai, 'Behind the headlines speaks to Munyaradzi Gwisai' SW Radio Africa. 24. 05. 2005 ; Cf. Gabriel Chaibva, 'Chaibva quits MDC-M, joins ZANU-PF'. New Zimbabwe.com. 2010; Cf. Job. Sikhala, 'Job Sikhala forms new party, calls it MDC 99'. SW Radio Africa News. 2010.

not at all uncommon in liberation struggles. According to Gottwald, underclasses suffering oppression often do not know what exactly they seek beyond immediate relief from their burdens. This is why for him, in every articulate revolution there are many more diffuse uprisings that lack clarity of aim and effective organization. Some of these are either without leadership or are easily manipulated by opportunist leaders.⁴³ This, for him was probably the same in pre-settlement Israel for it is not to be assumed that all the suffering underclasses in Canaan had the same level of revolutionary consciousness and practice. It required dedicated Levite cadres to constantly direct and guide the struggle to remain on track.

Failure to do this, opportunists may divert the struggle of the underclasses by making treaties with the opponents. The treaties after all serve selfish interests of the opportunist leadership and not the underclasses. Because of these agreements, the underclasses may end up committing the fatal mistake of demonizing their cadres only to support their adversaries. Mosala is therefore right when he observed that in the struggle, 'it is fatal to mistake oppression for liberation and an oppressor for a liberator'.⁴⁴ This is the fundamental mistake the MDC has committed.

Given the behaviour of the MDC and its ally-organisations against black economic empowerment programmes, it is quite convincing to suspect that the underclasses have been taken advantage of and now are sustaining what they must demolish; celebrating their oppression and demonising their liberation. Through the MDC, the struggle of the underclasses to control the land, the means of production was changed to the struggle for human and property rights, rule of law and democracy, subjects that were neither on the agenda of the poor, nor lacking in Zimbabwe. To be precise, these are pretext issues which in reality became a concern to the owners of capital only after their economic interests were threatened by the peasant land revolution.

The partnership between MDC and white employers on one hand and its formation from the ZCTU had other far reaching negative consequences for the struggle of the workers, domestic workers included. Workers were left without any proper labour representation; both at local and national level. ZDAWU, for instance could no longer champion the

⁴³ Cf. Gottwald, 'The Hypothesis of the Revolutionary Origins of Ancient Israel', p. 43.

⁴⁴ Mosala, *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology*, p. 26.

cause of the domestic workers against their employers as vigorously as they used to. Its voice was indirectly compromised. Employers had become the sponsors and members of MDC, a product of ZCTU, a national labour union where ZDAWU is an affiliate. Reuben Rukweza is quite explicit about this, as he argues:

they ditched us for the employers. Since the day ZCTU turned political, ZDAWU has also changed. They like MDC are on one side with our employers. I used to pay my subscription as a member of ZDAWU but now I no longer pay. It is meaningless. I know a friend who was underpaid and mistreated by his white employer here in Marlborough around 1995 and he reported to ZDAWU. They came and arranged that he (employer) be arrested. And he paid a fine. It was really effective; but not now. All the domestic workers have deregistered from ZDAWU, but our white employers want us to be members, so they pay the subscriptions for us. And it is for their good and not ours. ZDAWU now represents the employers and not workers.⁴⁵

This awkward position of ZDAWU can also be said to be true of ZCTU. It no longer has any power to advocate for the rights and conditions of the workers. From the time MDC was formed, ZCTU undertook to deliberately misdirect its anger and frustration at the peasants and government instead of facing the status quo, white farmers and employers. As a matter of fact, history has shown that MDC, ZCTU, and their allies including ZDAWU, white farmers and company owners, various Non Governmental Organisations and various churches; individual pastors, including some bogus and briefcase Christian organisations, formed a formidable team against the government, peasants, and exploited workers. In other words, the black oppressed and white oppressors teamed up to entrench white oppression. The government and war veterans became the only voices for the workers and underprivileged, the oppressed and exploited black people. On many instances workers unions, MDC, white company owners and white farmers organized job actions, workers' strikes that would go on for months in order to completely paralyse the national economy. In solidarity with white farmers whose farms had been acquired by the government, many white company owners sabotaged the economy by closing down their businesses under the

⁴⁵ Reuben Rukweza, has been working worker for one white employer in Marlborough, Harare since 1986. I had an interview with him on 19 March 2011.

camouflage of protest against runaway inflation and poor business environment, so as to blame the peasant land revolution for the crises.

All these measures had direct impact on the situation of domestic workers especially. As soon as white employers became sponsors and office holders in the MDC they indirectly controlled ZDAWU and in turn would trash the rights of domestic workers at will, including freedom to choose, a political party. In one reported incident, Mr Daniel Nyoni who worked as a gardener was kicked out of employment and out of the house for voting ZANU (PF) in 2005 parliamentary elections. Mrs Morrison a friend to Mr Williams (Nyoni's employer) instructed Nyoni to take a day off so that he could vote. But he was instructed explicitly to vote for the opposition MDC saying that it was the party she and Mrs Williams supported. Few days after the votes, Nyoni confided in the maid next door that he voted for ZANU PF against the wishes of the white employers. The maid, maybe in need of special favours later reported this to Mrs Morrison who then confronted Nyoni accused him of betrayal. Immediately Nyoni lost his job and his property was thrown out. Nyoni said:

Mrs Morrison told me that I should vote for MDC, but I don't because I am mature enough to vote for any party I want...Mrs Morrison came to the house and began howling insults at me for voting ZANU. She also shouted at me for wearing a ZANU campaigning T-shirt. She went on to tell me to leave Bulawayo and live in Harare where the president lives.⁴⁶

Many similar stories have been reported countrywide. I talked to more than thirteen domestic workers in Gunhill, a Harare low density suburb and eleven of them confirmed such developments. The other two just said that their employers do not talk politics. Interestingly, the eleven employers who told their domestic workers who to vote for in 2008 presidential elections are both whites and blacks. James Chenyu was told by his black employer to register to vote so as to remove Mugabe. The employer said: 'you must mobilise your friends to vote this old man out; MDC ndizvo! (MDC is the deal!) It is the only party with whites who can create jobs and stabilise the economy'.⁴⁷ Every day, James received

⁴⁶ Chronicle Reporter, 'Man fired for voting ZANU (PF)', *The Chronicle*. 09 April 2005.

⁴⁷ James Chenyu, is a gardener for a manager of a big retail shop in Zimbabwe, and the manager lives in Gunhill. James told me (in an interview on 23 March 2011) never to share the information with anyone else, because he was still working for the same employer.

MDC-T political 'lectures' from his employer although he (James) stressed that he remained loyal to Mugabe. One maid, Muchaneta Rupinge narrates an almost similar story. She said:

Towards the March 2008 elections we were gathered by our white employers in the neighbourhood and told to vote for the MDC-T. My Baas is an organising secretary for the party here. They said, if MDC-T would lose the elections they would relocate to neighbouring countries and we would lose employment. But what will I do in the village, how am I going to take care of my children? One of them is here in primary school. So we voted for MDC-T. We have no option.⁴⁸

Taken in the broader picture, these specific incidences reveal the general trend in the households in Zimbabwe. Evidence has been revealed to the effect that in 2000 when the government lost the referendum vote that would have allowed the take-over of white owned farms without compensation, it was largely because MDC and 'Whites forced (their) farm workers and (their) domestic workers to vote against the referendum'.⁴⁹ This evidence is difficult to be dismissed forthright given the later events. For instance, after the first round of the Presidential elections in Zimbabwe (of 28 March 2008) in which Tsvangirai was unofficially announced as the winner, domestic workers have told me several stories about the reactions of their white employers. The reactions were almost uniform and revealed some past fears that they had always harboured since the start of the land reform. Tarusenga Muchenje of Marlborough East in Harare told me of an incident in which his colleague was assaulted with clenched fists and kicked with booted feet by his white male employer as the employer reacted to Tsvangirai's victory:

He (white employer) after watching news on satellite from South Africa called him (domestic worker) with a harsh voice. When he came running to him (employer), he was met with clenched fists and kicks without any explanation. He (domestic worker) fell on the ground, for he was not pre-

⁴⁸ Muchaneta Rupinge is aged 26 and she works for a white family that lost three farms during the land reform and the employers are bitter about the loss. Each time they talk with friends, it is always about the farms and their losses. I interviewed her on 23 March 2011, in Gunhill.

⁴⁹ Cf. *Media Monitoring Project Zimbabwe*, 'Weekly Media update 2000-7'.

<http://www.mmpz.org/content/weekly-media-update-2000-7>.

pared at all. The white man shouted: now Tsvangirai has won, go and tell your father that he must leave our farms!⁵⁰

In this incident, as narrated by Tarusenga above, it is difficult to connect the loose ends, but what is discernible is Tsvangirai's victory was also the white farmers and employer's victory. Tarusenga told me that the domestic worker who was beaten up had been secure and feared all along since 2001 when he got the job simply because he had claimed to be a son of a war veteran. Because he told the white employer, soon after getting the job, the white employer feared him a lot. Hence he (white employer) used to advance certain favours to him, which favours were not always extended to other domestic workers. For the past 8 years, the white man used to tell his friends to be careful about what they said to domestic workers because of the 'son of a war veteran'. But now that Tsvangirai had won, the colonial era scenario had been restored; white men would return to farms and remove the resettled war veterans.

This was the general attitude throughout the country after the election results. Chipika Maidei, a domestic maid in Bulawayo saw more than 30 white farmers who lost the land return to Zimbabwe after Tsvangirai 'won' the first round of elections. She observed that at a party organised on their plot, all the white farmers who came back were discussing the victory of Tsvangirai as their victory. But one reality she could notice was the change in their attitude against domestic workers and all the black people in general. They had become very harsh and almost reverting to Rhodesian times. She said:

Soon after elections, we hosted a party at our plot, right here in Bulawayo. Many white farmers came and I think they were around 30. During the party, they were celebrating the win of Tsvangirai over Mugabe and saying they now are going back to take their farms and remove the resettled black people. Nearly all of them wanted to be addressed as Baas, something that had almost been forgotten. In the past, since about 2000, white people were no longer impressing upon their domestic workers to call them Baas, but now they all want to be called Baas and Missus.⁵¹ Even at the party they addressed us as Negro and Kaffir in very harsh tone.

⁵⁰ Tarusenga Muchenje, told this story in an interview on 17 April 2011, in Marlborough East. he saw the whole drama unfold.

⁵¹ Chipika Maidei, interview in Bulawayo on 24 March 2011. Chipika, is now very old and contemplates retiring but she has nowhere to go. She has not been married and she does not have pension; neither will she get any other benefits. She has been employed

Unless one has been to Southern Africa and witnessed for him/herself the attitude of white employers, these stories seem untrue particularly for Westerners. Black people, especially domestic workers have for a long time lived under very cruel conditions without anywhere to turn to. Political independence has not improved racial relations at all. To date, many white farmers in Zimbabwe still address blacks as 'Kaffir'. Joram Nyati gives reference to M.L. Cremer, a white farmer in Chegutu, some 110 kilometres West of Harare, who addressed Dr Arikana Chihombori as 'a cold stupid kaffir'. He even vowed that he would not 'take instructions (to vacate the farm) from a kaffir. Nyati believes many white people are still beholden to this mentality, when he argues, 'my worry is that this mental attitude about kaffirs could be more pervasive than is acknowledged'.⁵² True to his assumption, several white farmers still address their domestic workers and farm workers as kaffirs.

Phillip Barclay, a top British diplomat after spending 3 years (from 2006-2009) in Zimbabwe, mingling with fellow whites, employers and mostly commercial farmers, confirmed this sad reality. He says:

Most Zimbabwean Farmers I have met have attitudes that would simply not be tolerable in modern Western society....As they got used to my presence, they started to joke about farm dogs chasing black labourers. In no time they were happily talking about niggers and kaffirs. With a change in accent, they would have fitted right into 1950s Mississippi....⁵³

This attitude has been hidden to the rest of the society since independence, but domestic workers and farm workers faced it daily.⁵⁴ They knew

in the domestic service since 1976 and has only worked for three different white families. But each time a white family left, they could give her a cup or plate as (Danke!) parting gift. The previous employer who went to London in 2002 was at least more generous. He gave her a chair.

⁵² Joram Nyati, 'Why I want to be a white man', New Zimbabwe Blog. (posted on 18 June 2009).

<http://www.newzimbabwe.com/blog/index.php/2009/06/jnyathi/why-i-want-to-be-a-white-man/>.

⁵³ Phillip Barclay, commenting on his book, *Zimbabwe Years of Hope and Despair*. USA: Bloomsbury, 2011, as cited and reported by: Zimeye.org. 'UK Diplomat Blasts White Farmers'.

<http://www.zimeye.org/?p=30542>.

⁵⁴ Cf. Verstraelen, *Zimbabwean Realities and Christian Responses*, p. 114, cites a parliamentary debate in *The Herald* of 5 Feb. 1998, where Minister of Lands Kumbirai Kangai appealed to fellow Members of Parliament, to submit names of farmers who were on re-

what their employers thought about black Zimbabweans but they had no choice but to work under those harsh conditions. Because of poverty in the villages, very few domestic workers opted to leave employment over being subjected to racism and cruelty by white employers. Muchaneta Runganga worked as a domestic maid for a white family in Mutare in 1987, but quit the job after being shouted at; Baboon! She says:

I immediately packed my bag and left. I never bothered to seek payment. All along this white man and his wife always spoke negative about the black government. At every moment, they showed disgust for the new black government. They gave us instructions never to follow what the socialist government said. I do not remember any day when they spoke of Zimbabwe for the three years I worked for them; they always referred to Rhodesia. They told us boldly that Zimbabwe was outside the gate, inside, it was Rhodesia and Rhodesian laws applied.⁵⁵

Generally speaking, white people in Zimbabwe have never changed from their colonial mentality. They have used every trick in the book to maintain their colonial concept of racial superiority. James Kilgore argues that, contrary to the rewritten history by White Zimbabweans such as Eric Harrison⁵⁶ who after losing the farms try to portray whites as innocent victims of a tyrant black leader, Mugabe, white people never changed their ideological position on blacks. They have tried by all means possible, including corruption of the black political elite to cling to their colonial privileges, especially, the most prized resource for the white man, land. Cecil Rhodes once remarked; 'I prefer land to niggers'.⁵⁷ And that positions still holds for many of the white people in Southern Africa. Kilgore's observations of this consistent attitude among whites are quite appropriate here:

A new history of post-independence Zimbabwe has emerged in the wake of those land seizures. Conservative Western reporters and white Zimbabweans

cord of speaking bad about the government and claiming that 'this is Rhodesia (their farms), Zimbabwe is outside', so that the farms would be designated for land reform.

⁵⁵ Muchaneta Runganga, is a vendor in Budiriro, one of Harare's high density suburbs. She narrated her story to me when I had visited her, sometime in January 2006.

⁵⁶ Eric Harrison is the author of, *Jambanja: The true life story of a Zimbabwean farmer*. Harare: Baobab, 2007.

⁵⁷ Schreiner, Oliver. *Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland*. T. Unwin Fisher, 1897, in Gordimer, Nadine. 'New Introduction' to Albert Memmi's *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, p. 30.

babweans who view themselves as the ultimate victims of Zimbabwean independence are writing that history. Their project is to re-resuscitate colonialist historiography, take us back to bosses, madams and “natives”..... And as the myth goes, throughout the ensuing two decades these beleaguered “European” warriors did everything in their power to make a non-racial, democratic Zimbabwe work. There have been some suggestions that white farmers themselves were trying their best to redistribute land and share the land with the black majority. Nothing could be further from the truth. Nothing. For those who arrived in Zimbabwe from other countries in the 1980s, one of the most striking facets of Zimbabwean society was how the white population clung to racist ideas and the extent to which they tried to win over white ex-patriates to their notions about “primitive natives” and so forth. The local whites maintained separated social clubs; in many cases they opened up separate schools so their children would not have to be in the same classroom with blacks, particularly poor blacks. A look at the actions of the major force that represented white agricultural wealth and power, the Commercial Farmers’ Union (CFU), will dispel any fantasy that whites bought into reconciliation. The CFU fought tooth and nail to block land redistribution and to maintain white ownership of the lucrative commercial farming sectors in Zimbabwe, particularly tobacco, the biggest cash crop in Zimbabwe. The CFU often did this by making alliances, often quite corrupt alliances in fact, with the ruling elements in the government....These unchanging attitudes of whites become important down the road because in the late 1990s and early 2000s, when Robert Mugabe and the war veterans began to openly attack the whites of Zimbabwe for their racism and lack of transformation, such comments had a certain resonance within the black population.⁵⁸

Effects of Western Sanctions on Domestic Workers

While there is this overwhelming evidence on the ground suggesting the unrepentant attitude of white farmers and their kith and kin in households and industries, Western governments assisted by the MDC and allies imposed economic sanctions against Zimbabwe. Zimbabwean leaders were accused of violation of human rights, especially for failing to protect Western interests represented by white farmers whose lands were being invaded by the peasants. The USA government in 2001, with full cooperation of the MDC as drafters of the Act, enacted Zimbabwe

⁵⁸ James Kilgore, review of his novel, *We are all Zimbabweans Now*. Review published in Newzimbabwe.com News. 28 February 2010; see also Pape, ‘Black and White’, p. 717.

Democracy and Economic Recovery Act (ZDERA) and the EU instituted various economic sanctions including travel bans on top government officials, journalists, academics, preachers, peasants, lecturers and almost anyone who showed some sympathy with the peasants. Although these Western imposed sanctions were presented as targeted at some few individuals on the travel ban list, evidence shows that these sanctions had an adverse effect on the ordinary poor black people more than on the so-called targeted violators of human rights and government officials. Probably, this is exactly what the countries who imposed them intended them to achieve. With what followed after they were imposed, one is justified to claim that these sanctions were meant to punish the ordinary people for demanding justice.

Because of sanctions mainly, companies closed down, resulting in massive job layoffs, uncontrollable world record inflation, crippling shortage of foreign currency, closure of schools, colleges and universities. There was a massive exodus of professionals from the country; some to Europe, USA and across the globe but a majority moved into the region; South Africa, Botswana, Namibia, Mozambique among others, where even professionals such as medical doctors, university lecturers, school teachers and nurses engaged in domestic work for a living, exposed to physical exploitation, underpayment and various forms of violation of fundamental rights.⁵⁹ Grocery shops had literally empty shelves. One could not get basic commodities, such as, mealie-meal, sugar, salt, bread, and butter, flour, cooking oil, paraffin and soft drinks, through normal channels. Fuel service points ran dry, water points were equally dry and several neighbourhoods went for days or even months without electricity. The country's economy was literally devastated, almost justifying the logic behind calling the Western imposed sanctions, 'Sanctions of Mass Destruction.'⁶⁰ For in reality, economic sanctions are more destructive than any of the much-feared Weapons of Mass Destruction.

⁵⁹ Cf. Juma Donke, 'SA's immigrant housemaids—a desperate tribe'. *The Zimbabwean*. Co. uk. 11 September 2010; Cf. Ray Mungoshi, 'Violence, Exploitation Fail to Dissuade Female Migrants', *Domestic Workers Research Project*, University of the Western Cape, 06 December 2010.

⁶⁰ Mueller John and Mueller Karl, "Sanctions of mass destruction", *Foreign Affairs* 78, No. 3, (1999), pp. 43-53; Stephen Gowans, 'US Senator Comes Clean on Zimbabwe Sanctions.' 21.08. 2010.

The imposed sanctions did not spare anyone. ZDAWU itself was greatly affected, as it lost not only manpower but also the morale. The few domestic workers who previously could pay subscriptions stopped completely. With the record inflation that ran into 230 000 percent, any amount proposed by ZDAWU and gazetted by government as salary for domestic workers became worthless only a day after it was scheduled. On the other hand, employers, especially whites in the affluent suburbs insisted on paying the government-gazetted salaries instead of upgrading the salary depending on the rate of inflation. An article in *The Herald* observed that,

Many white, Indian and Asian employees are said to be sticking to the Statutory Instrument 42 of 2005 that awarded domestic workers their current wages (Z\$800 000). Most domestic workers said that their employers are paying them according to the Statutory Instrument 42 of 2005 while a few said employers were adjusting their salaries in accordance with inflationary levels.⁶¹

Ironically the same employers spend more money on their pets: dogs, cats, snakes, rats, birds and others than on their domestic workers. In effect the domestic workers are less important than these pets.⁶² Yet, these workers are expected to care for these pets. Since the colonial era, domestic workers who are employed by whites feel that pets are more valued and treated better than them. It only became worse during the times of crises where all the available resources had to be channelled toward the welfare of the pets. While employers do not financially or otherwise support their domestic workers when sick or their children, they spend thousands of dollars on their pets when they get sick. Some even send their pets to top of the range hospitals where they are given beds and visited by the employer more than two times a day.

These employers, especially whites hold expensive funerals and even literally mourn the pets when they die. Yet, they do not visit their domestic workers when they get sick let alone contribute towards the funerals when their domestic workers die. It is common sight in Zimbabwe that when a white family is travelling with the domestic worker, he or she sits

⁶¹ The Herald Reporter, 'Domestic Workers cry foul over salaries', *The Herald*. 03. May, 2006.

⁶² The same attitude has been noticed in South Africa among whites and black elites alike; cf. Everson Luhanga, 'Pets treated better than maids and gardeners', *The Times*. 04 May 2012. <http://www.timeslive.co.za/ilive/2012/05/04/pets-treated-better-than-maids-and-gardeners-ilive>

in the back of the pickup truck, irrespective of weather conditions. It could be raining, windy, sunny, all is the same. Dogs or cats sit in front with the owner. If the employer does not have to travel with the dog or cat, he/she sits alone in front while the domestic worker sits behind in the open truck. The same dogs, cats and other pets even eat better quality food than the domestic workers. They drink fresh milk every day, eat choice food, meat etc. On the other hand, domestic workers' salaries could not sustain one for a week. In some cases the salary could not afford one loaf of bread. One news reporter observed that:

Domestic workers, whose salaries have been pegged at Z\$800 000 (about US\$1.00) per month since March last year, (2005) are crying foul over the recent salary increments that did not include them. Domestic workers live below poverty datum line,...they no longer afford to pay their day to day expenses. "In fact everything has been adjusted upwards save for our wages" said Joseph Nyabira, a gardener.⁶³

Complicating matters is the fact that ZDAWU, due to the lack of funding, no longer could run domestic workers' rights awareness campaign programmes through the radio, television, newspapers, or through seminars and workshops as they used to, thus effectively shutting any communication with domestic workers. Most of the domestic workers are almost ignorant about their rights, the gazetted salary and other important issues between them and employers. The bulk of domestic workers in Zimbabwe are not even aware of what is called minimum wage, let alone where to go in the event of unfair treatment by their employers.⁶⁴ Precisely because the union was so weak and financially incapacitated to seriously campaign and lobby for a better deal for domestic workers, they were usually forgotten when talk of workers' salaries was concerned.⁶⁵

Militating against every effort by the government and ZDAWU efforts for better wages for domestic workers was total economic collapse and the resultant high levels of inflation, mass unemployment triggered by ESAP policies since the 1990s, combined with sanctions and sabotage of the economy. Domestic work became the only available option for the majority of the Zimbabweans in the country and throughout the South-

⁶³ The Herald Reporter, 'Domestic Workers cry foul'. *The Herald*. 03. May, 2006.

⁶⁴ Cf. Idah Mhlanga, 'Treat domestic workers humanely'. *The Herald*. 01. May, 04.

⁶⁵ Chronicle Reporter, 'Domestic Workers Lobby for better wages'. *The Chronicle*. 07.03.07.

ern African region. In many residential areas in Zimbabwean cities one meets Ordinary and Advanced Level graduates desperately roaming the streets, knocking from door to door looking for opportunities as domestic workers. Since around 2000, the unemployment levels have not decreased but increased to unimaginable levels. In 2008, the national unemployment rate was estimated to be about 90 per cent. In such circumstances therefore, upon getting a job as a domestic worker, there is no insistence on signing a contract let alone turn down the opportunity on the basis of the unfavourable conditions of service. A majority of the domestic workers enter into a verbal contractual agreement wherein he or she is told the duties and responsibilities.⁶⁶ At least by its nature one would be guaranteed of food, poor quality as it could be. Thus, the poverty stricken children, widows, orphans, married women and men as domestic workers are sometimes engaged for food and accommodation, and nothing more.

Sexual Exploitation of Domestic Workers by Male Employers

Since the dawn of independence, sexuality was a focal point of the exploitation of young women domestic workers by male black employers, almost reverting to pre-colonial scenarios where the master had all the powers over the female servant but the blame being laid on the violated black servant. We have also observed the same behaviour and attitude of the rich during the eighth century Israel whereby a father and son would sexually abuse the maid (Amos 2:7).⁶⁷ Thus, sexuality in the household is one area where class and gender battles are fought. From late 1990s, middle-class black female employers in particular often expressed a fear of rivalry for their husbands' sexual attention by young women domestic workers. Such fear has not died down yet. Had it not been for financial and cultural constraints black women would prefer to hire older women who are unattractive to their husbands or men as child-minders. As a matter of fact, in low and a number of medium density suburbs men and older women are preferable. And this preference has something to

⁶⁶ Cf. Hilarious Ruyi, in an interview in Harare on 05 April 2011.

⁶⁷ Cf. Vengeyi, 'Appropriating Amos 2:7 against Sexual Exploitation of Domestic Maids of Zimbabwe: A Challenge for the Church', in Ezra Chitando and Sophia Chirongoma (eds.), *The Church and Gender Based Violence: Traversing the Terrain for Restoring Gender Justice*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2012 (forthcoming).

do with this rivalry. But because older women and men are much expensive to hire than young girls, for some middle class families, most women have argued that they would prefer an ugly and unattractive young maid straight from the village, so that the husband would not be tempted to approach her.

Although most women quite admit that males, their husbands have the problem and not the maids, the public narrative blames maids whenever they are sexually abused. With the increasing poverty from about 2000 in the black community that has led to vulnerability of young maids and some cited incidences where the husbands are reported as having been intimate with the maids, one often hears women saying: *regai timhanye kumba unowana murume aenda naSisi* (let me hurry home, otherwise I could find my husband gone with the maid). In that regard, female domestic workers suffer a double tragedy; they are exploited on the bases of their poor socio-economic background by both males and females and are often suspected by wives of snatching their husbands.⁶⁸ According to Pape, around 1990, more of under 16 girls were the most frequent targets either of sexual harassment on the job or had been enticed into sexual relations with promises of domestic employment.⁶⁹

As life became more difficult over the years, even grown up women are prone to sexual abuse by employers at will and would not raise alarm for fear of losing the job. In one reported story, a 45 year old widow who worked as a maid was impregnated by a 15 year old son of the employer.⁷⁰ Also, a story presented by Masimba Biriwasha confirms this vulnerability of young and older domestic workers in Zimbabwe in matters of sexual violence by black male employers. He said,

When Tobina Madai, 23, received a love proposal from her employer, she found it difficult to say 'no'. Soon she found herself engaged in an affair with him, and she received many gifts and extra salary. According to Tobina, her life went through a transformation, until her employer's wife found out about the affair. "We fought in public when my employer's wife discovered that I had been intimate with her husband and then I was fired

⁶⁸ Cf. Metro Reporter, 'Woman jailed for assaulting housemaid'. *The Sunday Mail*. 16.10.05

⁶⁹ Pape, 'Still Serving the Tea', p. 402.

⁷⁰ Cf. *NewsdzeZimbabwe*, 'Maid impregnated by employer' 15 year old son, jailed for two years', 27 May 2012.

<http://www.newsdezimbabwe.co.uk/2012/05/maid-impregnated-by-employers-15-year.html>

from my job without pay," said Tobina. Tobina thought that her lover would protect her but she was mistaken. Instead, he beat her up and professed love for his wife.⁷¹

This story is not unique as it mirrors the daily experiences of hundreds of thousands of young women not only those with little or no education but those educated and aware of their rights that find themselves employed as domestic workers. Due to poverty, domestic workers when they face sexual abuse and violence at the hands of their employers, they suffer in silence. But the other problem is, as domestic maids suffer gender based violence, not many organisations dealing with gender issues are interested in fighting for the rights of maids, almost agreeing with the public perception of maids as trouble makers. Gender violence talk has become only an elite women project, divorced from the people who face it every day, maids. A respondent to Masimba's article acknowledges this suspicious silence on the part of women organisations dealing with gender based violence in Zimbabwe. According to the writer,

.I have attended a lot of events to commemorate the 16 Days of Activism against Gender based Violence in Zimbabwe and the issue of violence against house girls has never been mentioned yet this is one of the most marginalised group of people. They have been taken advantage of just because they are poor and mostly uneducated. As you rightly pointed out, their employers entice them with gifts to get sexual favours but once the affair is discovered, they take side with their wives and begin battering the helpless girls. Civil society groups in Zimbabwe especially women's organisations should start talking about this issue. Sometimes, I find these organisations to be biased towards the rich and the educated. Why is it that they don't have any programmes responding to the needs of these house girls? The plight of house girls is well known by every human being in Zimbabwe.⁷²

Contribution of Accommodation Crisis to Sexual Exploitation

While, separate accommodation is mostly provided by the employer especially in low and medium density suburbs, the main problem is that

⁷¹ Masimba Biriwasha, 'The plight of domestic workers'. HealthDev.net.Zimbabwe. 16 February 2009. <http://healthdev.net/site/post.php?s=4152>. (Accessed, 24 September 2011).

⁷² Cf. Masimba Biriwasha, 'The plight of domestic workers'.

the urban laws have not been constantly reviewed to meet the new challenges over the years since independence. As I have mentioned, accommodation of domestic workers has not been expanded since the colonial era to accommodate family. The implication is therefore very predictable: if a domestic worker is married, he/she is separated from the family for a long period of time, which scenario does not only violate family union codes but also exposes the maids especially to sexual abuse by employers. This is especially true of maids who live-in. As during the colonial era, sexual abuse of maids by male employers is still rife. However, in post-colonial Zimbabwe, it is no longer a matter of race but class between black employers and maids especially. In other words, very few cases have been recorded of white males sexually abusing black maids in post colonial Zimbabwe.

Owing to accommodation crisis in urban areas, mainly caused by rural to urban migration and the failure of the economy, some black employers in the low and medium density suburbs to cushion their monthly budget, have rented *kias* to tenants. This has prompted a scenario whereby either or both male and female domestic workers being housed in the main house, the employer's house. Apart from loss of privacy, domestic maids so housed complain about sexual abuse by the employer, his children and relatives.⁷³ This is also true of domestic maids who work in flats, where there are no *kias* to begin with. Since employers find it economically impossible to rent a house in the high density locations and provide extra cash for transport for their domestic workers, they have naturally taken them in. But due to their small sizes, flats are not always conducive for family, life let alone an extra member. There is total break of privacy, as maids usually have to sleep in the sitting room or kitchen. Hence, there is no space to accommodate visitors of the domestic worker, either husband or children or other relatives.⁷⁴ This situation leaves the maids vulnerable to sexual abuse by their employers. As a matter of public secret, sexual exploitation of maids knows no political, social or religious boundaries within the black community. Live-in domestic maids, as I have repeatedly suggested are the most vulnerable to this unwanted reality, which has actually become a societal scourge. A man was caught red handed by his wife raping the maid in

⁷³ Cf. Hilarious Ruyi, in an interview in Harare on 05 April 2011.

⁷⁴ Cf. Teverai Nhapi, in an interview in Harare on 04 April 2011.

Mkhozana high density suburb of Victoria Falls. Because the maid lived-in and slept in the sitting room, it is reported that at 10.30 pm the husband sneaked out of his bedroom pretending to visit the toilet but he proceeded to rape the 16 year old maid.⁷⁵ If this maid had separate accommodation or her own bedroom which she could lock, this rape may have been prevented.

In another case where accommodation contributed a major role in the sexual abuse of a maid, Rev Obadiah Musindo, the founder of Destiny of Africa Network and New Generation Church, on the 5th of July 2004, employed a maid from the Employment Bureau to take care of his two daughters since he was divorced. The same evening he ordered the maid to sleep in the sitting room while his two daughters slept in the spare bedroom. At night he woke up and raped her and repeatedly raped her for about 5 times in two days.⁷⁶ While, Obediah Musindo was arraigned before the courts, he was not finally sentenced. We would have hoped ZDAWU to always lobby for the law to take its full course, but nothing completely is being done to follow up on the issue. At the end of the day, the domestic worker is the one who suffers without protection and without justice. By virtue of being a man of cloth (God), Musindo could have been known for protecting the poor who are exploited in various ways by the rich. Instead, he like the rest of the society uses his status not only to abuse the vulnerable he must protect but maybe to evade justice as well.

In a similar case involving a man of the cloth, a Family of God Church pastor, Tobias Chinoda of Mount Darwin was arrested for raping his maid. The pastor took advantage of the absence of his wife and any other member of the family and raped the maid. After being raped by the man of God, the one she thought should be a father figure, the maid was so disturbed that in retaliation, she stole cash and clothes amounting to Z\$16 million, and disappeared.⁷⁷ The resort to stealing rather than reporting the case to the police is to be seen as an attempt by a powerless

⁷⁵ Owen Gajare, Chief Crime reporter, 'Wife catches hubby raping housemaid'. *The Chronicle*. 09.02.06

⁷⁶ Daniel Nemukundu, 'Obadiah Musindo arrested'. *The Herald*. 04.04.06

⁷⁷ The Herald Reporter, 'Pastor nabbed over rape claims'. *The Herald*. 25.04.06; see also, Staff Reporter, 'Priest jailed over maid sex attacks', NewZimbabwe.com news. 01 May 2012.

<http://www.newzimbabwe.com/news-7846-Priest+jailed+over+maid+sex+attacks/news.aspx>.

person to seek redress for the injury incurred in the hands of the powerful. What this maid did is similar to compensative behaviours demonstrated by maids generally in Zimbabwe. And such behaviour should not be connected to the character of domestic workers, rather it should be linked to the ill treatment they face but feel powerless to challenge. The police on one hand had become so corrupt that they would not intervene without bribe. At the end of the day, the rich pay bribe and get away with it.

Georgina Chitemwe of Mkoba in Gweru claims that she was raped by her employer several times during the absence of the wife but although she reported the case nothing was done. According to her, the wife of her employer was a cross-border trader spending sometimes three months in Botswana selling her wares. In the three months she was not at home, the husband would sleep with her. She finally reported the matter to the police who came for investigations on the same day she reported. What shocked her is that despite her claims that the previous night her employer had raped her and she hadn't taken a bath which could have provided evidence, the police officer after interrogating the employer in a closed room, came out and asked her to take a bath. The issue was never followed up, suggesting that the police officer was bribed. And she left employment utterly dejected.⁷⁸ The story of Georgina clearly captures the well known plight of live-in maids in Zimbabwe. The Herald of 10 December 2011 carried two stories of domestic maids who were raped by male employers in the absence of wives of the employers. One involved a 15-year-old housemaid who was raped on several occasions by her employer aged 40 in Highlands. The employer is alleged to have started raping the girl on 06 September 2011 while his wife was in South Africa. The employer entered the bedroom in which the complainant was sleeping and raped her once, before he continuously raped the girl in the following days. Another case involved a 25-year-old housemaid who was raped by her employer's son in Mount Pleasant after turning down his proposal. It is alleged that the maid was left alone

⁷⁸ Georgina Chitemwe, worked as a maid in Mkoba high density suburb of Gweru from 2006-9. And for the three years she worked, she had been treated as a sex slave. I got the story from her friend in whom she had confided. (interview with Georgina Chitemwe's friend was done on 25 March 2011).

at the house while her employer went to South Africa.⁷⁹ It is clear that the vulnerability of the maids is related to accommodation. If they were not sleeping in the same house with the employers probably they could have escaped the ordeal. Similar stories are too many to consider here.

Public Awareness of Sexual Abuse of Domestic Maids

The plight of domestic maids is well known in Zimbabwe. In one joke that captures this prevalence of sexual abuse of domestic workers, a wife tells her husband: 'darling our housemaid is pregnant. Husband replies; That's her problem. Wife says, but I am worried. Husband responds, That's your problem. Wife says, The neighbours are talking. Husband says; That's their problem. Wife says; They are saying it is your pregnancy. Husband; That's my problem!'⁸⁰ Unlike in this joke where the husband seems to fully accept responsibility, on many occasions such husbands are unwilling either to marry the maid or to maintain both the maid and the child. While it is just a joke, it certainly expresses common realities in Zimbabwe. It is almost accepted that husbands command maids to be intimate with them each time the wife is away, closely following the nature of the relationship between the colonial white master and black female servants.

Musicians have also raised awareness to the prevalence of this scourge. Kireni Zulu's song *Muzvibate*⁸¹ comically depicts a scenario similar to the stories above, whereby in full glare of children, the husband sleeps with the maid every time when the wife is away, on business. Another musical group, Extra Large, in a song entitled House Girl, counsels wives against abusing the maids, since some of the maids purposefully entice the husband to fix the abusive wife and ill treat children in retaliation. But on the other hand the song blames the maids for such behaviour. Equally strong is the condemnation of the husbands for treating the maids as sexual toys.⁸²

⁷⁹ Cf. Crime reporter, 'Boyfriend sodomised, lover raped twice', *The Herald*, 10 December 2011.

⁸⁰ *Zimbabwe Daily news*. <http://www.zimdaily.com/index.php> (accessed 5 October 2009)

⁸¹ Kireni Zulu, 'kuzvibata' from music album titled, *Mupata Wachidembo*. Zimbabwe Music Corporation, 2005.

⁸² Extra Large, 'House Girl', Zimbabwe Music Corporation, 2006.

The blame game depicted in this song is the order of the day. The Zimbabwean society has not really come up with a clear analysis of the cause of this phenomenon. Garikai Mazara asks very pertinent questions as he tries to unpack the subject of sexual abuse of maids. He rhetorically asked; 'where does the problem lie: wife, husband or maid? Has any wife wondered why maids always leave unceremoniously, usually pregnant and not wanting to disclose who fathered the pregnancy? Think they would be stupid?'⁸³ But in the end this article provoked a heated discussion that was characterised by apportionment of blame from one party to the other. Three weeks later, one respondent gave an account of her experience with her maid that although it confirmed the reality of sexual violence against the maids generally, she blamed husbands. And this is a very important step towards the right direction. She says:

All was well for the five years or so until somebody came to tell me that my husband has a child with some girl and I asked the person if they knew the name of the girl. You can imagine to my horror the name of that girl was the same as that of my former maid. At first I thought it was a mistake and it was just the similarity in names. I investigated further and to my horror, indeed, that young girl I was staying with happened to be the woman who has a child with my husband! You can imagine how I felt. Of course, I asked him about this, and he didn't deny it!⁸⁴

Sexual Abuse of Maids and Risk of HIV and AIDS

In Zimbabwe sexual abuse of domestic maids is so rife that there are cases whereby all male members of the family including relatives sexually abuse the same maid not only exposing her to a great risk of HIV and AIDS but also equally exposing the rest of the family to the deadly virus. According to Mazara, 'there are several stories that do the rounds of father and son(s) sleeping with the same maid and at the end of the day the maid does not know who the father of her pregnancy is, father or son. Or the circle all tests HIV-positive, because they were dipping in the same tank'.⁸⁵ The most disheartening reality is; it is the maid who is

⁸³ Garikai Mazara, 'Wives, maids and men: who should we blame?' 'Steaming Off', *The Sunday Mail*. 24 October 2010.

⁸⁴ Mazara, 'End of wives and maids debate'. *The Sunday Mail*. 07 November, 2010.

⁸⁵ Mazara, 'Wives, maids and men: who should we blame?'; NewsdzeZimbabwe, 'Mutare Teen fathers child with maid, dragged to court', 22 May 2012.

blamed in the end because of her powerlessness in the socio-economic structure of the family of the employer. Because of her powerlessness, when it is discovered that she is HIV positive, usually she is fired from employment and without compensation for the damage inflicted on her.⁸⁶ The risk of HIV and AIDS is a real one among domestic workers. ZDAWU indicates that as of 2007 domestic workers were among the worst affected by HIV and Aids. According to ZDAWU the problem is that most of the domestic workers are so deprived of time and education on health issues that they do not always seek Anti Retroviral Drugs, which again were very expensive and unavailable in government hospitals due to mainly economic sanctions.⁸⁷

Contribution of Race, Class and Gender to Sexual Abuse of Domestic Maids

In a society such as Zimbabwe where political affiliation, race and socio-economic status are nearly considered sacrosanct, some employers use their political, socioeconomic and racial muscles to threaten maids into submitting to their sexual demands. For instance, a senior member of ZANU PF in Buhera and Manicaland provincial Immigration officer-Stanley Shamido (64) is alleged to have threatened to shoot a 19 year old maid before raping her. He boasted of his political connections as guarantee that he would not be arrested. The matter only came to light after the maid told her sister who then made a report to the police.⁸⁸ The case illustrates the powerlessness of domestic workers in relation to their employers. At 19 years, the maid was old enough to stand her ground and make a report, but because of fear she decided to keep quite on something that threatened her life.

With the ravaging poverty I have described above, even people we would never consider well off under normal circumstances could flex their economic muscles a bit to coerce maids to give in to their sexual manoeuvres. A school teacher at Murewa Mission, Shepherd Maenzanise

<http://www.newsdezimbabwe.co.uk/2012/05/mutare-teen-fathers-child-with-maid.html>; The Herald, 'Maids, Employers in undeclared war', 12 May 2012.

⁸⁶ Cf. Elizabeth Ndhlovu-Dumbreni and Indiana Chirara, 'The agony of HIV+ domestic workers'. *The Standard*, 28 November 2011.

⁸⁷ The Reporter, 'Few Domestic Workers access ARVs'. *The Chronicle*. 06.01.07

⁸⁸ Post Reporter, 'Senior official up for rape'. *Manica Post*. 20.10.06.

(40) was arrested for raping his maid whom he threatened with dismissal, death or other unspecified actions if she dared to divulge what had transpired. Because of fear of losing job and more harm on her by the employer, she kept quiet and closely guarded it as a secret for some time. She later confided in her sister, who then made a report to the police.⁸⁹ Maids are thus socially and economically powerless in the face of the employer because the employer has money and also is male. The few examples I have given above express a concrete reality that domestic maids are sexually abused and sometimes without any option but to endure.

The same is also true when the male employer is of foreign origin. Domestic maids rarely make police reports due to the effects of colonialism. White people are still feared by a majority of black people. As a class of masters and conquerors, they have actually been immortalised. Also, because of colonialism which reduced black people to the bottom of the pile, for the ordinary people, especially maids everyone whose skin is light such as Chinese or even coloureds is feared as a white person. This may explain the few reported cases of sexual abuse involving other races and black maids in post colonial Zimbabwe. Maids also usually keep silent about the abuse for fear of loss of employment.⁹⁰ In one reported case, police in Harare arrested a businessman of Asian origin on allegations that he forced his two maids to engage in oral sex with him at his friend's house in Avondale,⁹¹ one of Harare's medium density suburbs. The issue only saw the light of day after relatives of the victims reported to the police. Another case involves a Chinese national who allegedly forced his maid to read a pornographic magazine before indecently fondling her and making sexual advances.⁹² All these cases ring bells of the colonial era. Domestic service has not been decolonised. It is still operating on Rhodesian terms.

⁸⁹ Cf. Herald Reporter, 'Teacher accused of rape'. *The Herald*. 21.10.08.

⁹⁰ Cf. Blessing Masakadza, 'Old man (66) forces maid to do hand job?', *Harare Metro*, 01 September 2011.

⁹¹ Herald Reporter, 'Businessman Arrested'. *The Herald*. 09.04.07

⁹² Court Reporter, 'Chinese accused of abusing maid'. *The Herald*. 28.09.2004.

Other Forms of Physical Abuse

Apart from being exposed to sexual abuse, domestic workers, similar to the colonial and slavery scenarios as I have shown in the previous chapters, are beaten up, scalded, pinched, and suffer many other forms of bodily harm; some minor but others permanent. It must be mentioned here that corporal punishment usually happens to young maids and sometimes grown up women. In typical slavery and colonial setting, this normally happens when a domestic worker unintentionally does something wrong, sometimes as minor as burning clothes when ironing or tearing some clothes when washing. Paradzai Kutyauro, for instance, was brought to court for assaulting his 13 year old maid, Yeukai Zvoya before scalding her with hot water for “carelessness”. The maid had accidentally spilled water from the stove (on the tiles). This was considered a serious crime for Kutyauro that he assaulted her first with a belt, and proceeded to scalding her with hot water.⁹³ But had it been his daughter who spilled the water, would he have reacted in the way he treated the maid? I doubt. Domestic workers are not considered as part of the family by their employers who are worth of respect.

Another case involves a house maid who was assaulted for delaying meal. The housemaid was severely assaulted by the employer’s son over a delay in preparing food resulting in her sustaining a fracture on her hand. It was reported and read in court that Nqgabuzita Fortune Munyoro of Montgomery Road (Bulawayo) snatched his father’s walking stick and used it to assault the maid Ms Rostina Hwingwiri, following the misunderstanding. She as a result of the assault sustained a deep cut and a fractured hand.⁹⁴ Interpreted in the context of colonial history and slavery I have related above, one realises that there is hardly a shift in the relationship between the master class and the servant class. The dominant class treats the poor with utter contempt and disrespect.

Because of her state of poverty, a maid is generally looked down upon and the society takes it for granted that her rights could be violated with impunity. Typical of the spirit of the colonial and slavery era, domestic workers, their parents, relatives and friends are suspected by the dominant class to be thieves or some other misbehaviours. This is one reason domestic workers are first suspects if anything went missing or if there

⁹³ Cf. Court Reporter, ‘Man charged with assaulting, scalding maid’. *The Herald*. 25.08.06.

⁹⁴ Cf. Court Reporter, ‘Maid in hot soup for delaying meal’. *The Chronicle*. 08.07.05.

was a robbery. In one incident, Mrs Juliet Chiketa, wife of a Zimbabwean ambassador to Iran, was brought to the court for assaulting her maid whom she accused of stealing some money. Although the maid did not have access to the keys to Mrs Chiketa's bedroom but her grandchild and daughter, Mrs Chiketa suspected the maid.⁹⁵ She even in full view of the public assaulted the maid right at the magistrate court immediately after the maid was acquitted, contrary to what she wanted. Assaulting the maid at the magistrates court is quite telling of the prevalence of physical abuse of maids. If she could do it at the court, how much more would she do it away from the courts, in the confines of her household?

Other Forms of Cruelty and Inhuman Treatment

Domestic workers today are exposed to an array of inhuman treatment by the employers, almost reminiscent of colonial era scenarios and slave status. While most of the domestic workers eat in the (black) employers' houses that is, in the high density and in some medium density suburbs, recently, harsh economic environment made it very difficult for employers to continue providing for their domestic workers even the poor quality food they used to receive. In some extreme cases domestic workers are served leftovers.⁹⁶ If he/she gets a proper meal as is common it is with a different relish from that of rest of the employer's family. Mostly the domestic workers are served *kapenta* (small dry-salted fish) or vegetables while the employer's family eats meat. If they happen to get the same relish with the employer, they normally eat after the rest of the family. Maids particularly have to make sure all other members of the family have eaten before they could eat. Most domestic workers complain that they are not allowed to sit at the same table with the rest of the family as they must eat in the kitchen and normally in cheap quality plates specifically reserved for them. Generally, the rest of the employer's family use ceramic plates and cups but domestic workers use metal or plastic plates and cups.

Many domestic workers are not afforded lunch; they only eat supper. While this could have been triggered by scarcity of basic food stuffs, there are some employers who could afford all the basics but still deny

⁹⁵ Cf. Court Reporter, 'Ambassador's wife arrested'. *The Herald*. 12.06.06.

⁹⁶ Cf. Teverai Nhapi, (interview in Harare on 04 April 2011); Ruyi, interview in Harare on 05 April 2011.

their domestic workers, lunch. Such employers, whose domestic workers live-in complain that they eat too much like dogs; hence they have to be regulated on quantity to eat and times. Bourdillon refers to the case of Jackie whose employer always treated her with suspicion and kept all food in the house locked away. She would thus starve the whole day until evening when the employer came.⁹⁷ In response to such treatment some maids ill-treat children of the employer by starving them, as some go to the extent of eating all the food meant for children or even sexually abusing the children.⁹⁸ Idah Mhlanga looks at some of these conditions as causes of abuse that involve maids towards the employer's children,⁹⁹ which has become a big topic these days in Zimbabwe. Domestic workers; gardeners and maids are commonly accused of being abusive, wasteful, husband-snatchers, they steal etc. Although she does not deny the truthfulness of such opinions, she looks at such behaviour as response to his/her treatment by the employer.

Mhlanga's observations are quite accurate. Many domestic workers including children do not have specified times of work, particularly live-in maids and 'garden boys'. Their services are greedily demanded by the employer, day and night such that there is hardly any time for other activities. They work as long as there is work to be done. The provisions of the law are not taken into consideration at all. Domestic workers, particularly maids begin their work at 5 am and finish their day at 11 PM or twelve midnight. They are usually the first to wake up and the last to sleep. Even at night, they can be woken up when there is need, either to escort children of the employer to the toilet or for some duties. A lot of maids do not have off days and they work even on public holidays such as Sundays and Christmas and New Year. Employers always argue that since a lot of domestic workers come from rural areas, they cannot travel to the rural area in one day as justification for not affording them off days. Thus, for these domestic workers; everyday is the same; they are completely cut off from their communities. Yet, their salaries are always

⁹⁷ Bourdillon, *Child Domestic Workers*, p. 38.

⁹⁸ Cf. Zimbabwe Online Press, 'House maid sexually abuses 6 year-old boy'. 10 July 2011; Cf. Newsdzezimbabwe.wordpress.com, 'Teen maid sexually abuses four-year old boy in Chitungwiza'. 10 November 2011; Cf. Newsdzezimbabwe.wordpress.com, 'Teen maid sexually abuses three year old boy'. 12 December 2011.

⁹⁹ Idah Mhlanga, 'Treat domestic workers humanely'. *The Herald*. 01.05.04.

very low. They are not paid for over time or working during special holidays.

Typical of people living in total institutions I have described in the previous chapter, quite a lot of the domestic workers in Zimbabwe are not allowed to relate with outsiders even the neighbours. This is exactly how they were treated in the colonial era. Today, both white and black employers do not allow their domestic workers to have any contact with outsiders without their knowledge. They are always suspicious of outsiders. Tsitsi's story illustrates the circumstances of many domestic workers in Zimbabwe. She says, 'apart from long working hours, poor working conditions, low salary, am detached from my neighbours, am not allowed to speak to them for reasons that they would mislead me and above all was not allowed to watch TV or listen to radio'.¹⁰⁰ In a majority of cases, even relatives of the domestic workers are not allowed to visit. If they visit, it has to be short and not often. Usually the employer must be around to monitor the activities of the visitor.

Vongai from Zvishavane reported to ZDAWU, that, 'my relatives were not allowed to visit as they said they were disturbing me to do my work. If they did come I would be taken to task explaining what they wanted. They would even ask what they had taken. They thought all relatives of maids came to steal'.¹⁰¹ In some cases, even the children and relatives of the employer are discouraged to talk to the domestic workers. Even in cases where domestic workers live with their families; the children of employers are not allowed to play with children of domestic workers. This attitude is particularly pronounced in white households. In fact, it is almost a rule. In the black household on the other hand, the employer's children and relatives can bring their friends but not the domestic worker. The rights that are extended to the employer's children and relatives are not allowed for the domestic worker, let alone to be in love with a relative of the employer. One maid was fired for falling in love with a brother of her female employer who was a university graduate.¹⁰² Being a domestic worker is being cut off not only from the broader society, but even from the rest of the employer's household.

¹⁰⁰ Yvonne Jila, 'Give maids a better deal'. *The Herald*. 03.01.07

¹⁰¹ Bourdillon, *Child Domestic Workers*, p. 88.

¹⁰² Cf. Joyce Jenje-Makwenda, 'This game has no formula, but . . .' *The Herald*, 27 October 2010.

Dressing is also another way of making the distinction between the employer class and the domestic workers visible. It is not possible to fail to identify domestic workers from the rest of the family, in Zimbabwe. Domestic workers are clearly marked from the rest of the people by uniforms and the kind of clothes they put on. In the low and medium density suburbs, some domestic workers are afforded uniforms by their employers. And the uniforms are easily recognisable by everybody. A set of a maid's uniform comprise an apron, head cover, dress and flat shoes.¹⁰³ For male domestic workers it is usually an overall and gumshoes or short trouser and short sleeved khaki shirt. While uniforms are afforded other workers in different professions for domestic workers it normally works as a pointer that they do not belong to the family, particularly those who work for black employers. Everyone in the street can easily identify one as a domestic worker, something that is lowly rated in Zimbabwe owing to the history and nature of the job. Visitors can easily identify domestic workers from the rest of the family.

In the high density suburbs and in rural areas where uniforms are rarely provided, the main difference between the domestic worker and the children or other members of the employer's family is in the quality of the clothes. Domestic workers are usually in tattered clothes revealing their socio-economic background. Domestic work as we have indicated above is an economic engagement for the vulnerable members of the society. As such, they spend all their salaries in trying to get food and other essentials for the family. Given the poor remunerations for domestic workers, buying quality clothes is unthinkable luxury. Because of their state of vulnerability, some employers pay them in cast off clothes and food.

The situation is even worse for the domestic workers who are employed in the high density suburbs. Most of the maids in such households have a very low salary such that they cannot afford even blankets. Apart from that they sleep on the floor in the kitchen or sitting room. If they sleep in the same bedroom with the employer's children they sleep on the floor and not on the bed. In some cases, although the employer may have a big house with several rooms, the domestic maid sleeps in the kitchen or sitting room, alone. It is also very common in the high density suburbs that domestic workers are not allowed to sit on the sofas, or on the

¹⁰³ Roselyne Sachiti, 'Profession of mixed fortune', *The Sunday Mail*, 17-23 June 2007.

kitchen chairs but right on the floor. Thus, while they may be under the same roof with the employer, they are separated. It is in regard of this that some domestic workers have intimated that whites are better than black employers. For them, as Fungai Munyama argues, 'white people can call you Kaffir or anything but they will always give you your money in time and provide you with your own separate room. They do not let you sleep on the floor, eat while sitting on the floor'.¹⁰⁴

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that the relationship between the domestic workers and their employers in Zimbabwe is by and large that of exploitation, resembling the colonial era scenarios. The absence of radical economic redistribution policies between races, classes and sexes is one main cause of the state of affairs, where the conditions of service are heavily tilted against the domestic workers. The grinding poverty in Zimbabwe's rural and urban areas has been at the forefront in pushing people into domestic work and to endure whatever abuse and cruelty they meet. Female domestic workers; poor widows and orphans, have been the most exploited; on the basis of gender and socio-economic class and age. This is also because they constitute the majority of domestic work force as most of them are employed in the high density suburbs. While the evidence of exploitation of domestic workers provided in this chapter may not be peculiarly confined to domestic service, it however, provides us with a platform from which we can view the whole racial, cultural, socio-economic and gender landscape of Zimbabwe. In other words, the status of domestic workers as that of slaves in ancient Israel is a reflection of the broader political, social, economic and even religious dynamics of the society. Thus, through the struggles of domestic workers, we can follow closely the racial, socio-economic and political and religious journey Zimbabwe has travelled and is to walk in the quest for a transformed society where race, gender and class stop to matter. As the next chapter shows, Christianity particularly the Pentecostal brand of

¹⁰⁴ Fungai Munyama, works in Mbare as a domestic maid, taking care of three children all going to primary school and she lives in. Her main grievances involve having to sleep in the kitchen, getting salary way after pay date and lack of privacy. Chipso Gurure, a University of Zimbabwe student had an interview with Fungai, whom she knows from church (12 April 2011).

biblical hermeneutics of 'liberation' has had a stake in the current state of affairs of exploitation.

CHAPTER EIGHT

PENTECOSTAL BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS: AN AFFRONT TO THE STRUGGLE OF THE UNDER- CLASSES

Introduction

While, the previous chapter has dwelt on the political, social and economic factors that hindered the 'Exodus' of the domestic workers (and the general populace of Zimbabwe) from 'Egypt to Canaan', this chapter focuses on the contribution of Pentecostal biblical exegesis to the preservation of the colonial status quo. The special attention given to these churches is based on the suspicious coincidence between their emergence and the struggle for independence. These 'fundamentalist', or 'evangelical' and/or Pentecostal churches, swarmed Zimbabwe during and shortly after the struggle for national independence. An investigation into the origins and content of these movements reveals that their massive deployment into Zimbabwe was not a mere coincidence. It was a well calculated move to pre-empt the gains of the liberation war, so as to maintain the colonial status quo. Like colonial missionary Christianity, Pentecostalism is a 'Weapon of Mass Destruction'. This is clearly attested in the biblical interpretations prevalent in these churches that are inherently capitalist, and anti Marxist doctrine of egalitarianism which ideology was the anchor of the liberation struggle. This kind of Christianity was therefore introduced to neatly fill the void created by the shift in Christian theological trends toward a Marxist analysis of the socio-economic struggles worldwide especially in the Third World. Characteristically, Pentecostalism is a kind of Christianity that asks wrong questions and prescribes wrong solutions to the prevailing socio-economic and political struggles, for it does not seek to interrogate, for instance, racial, gender and class structures of the society. Prominence in the chapter shall be given to the impact of such biblical interpretation on the poor especially domestic workers who contribute a significant following, so as to lay the background for a materialist interpretation of Luke 4:18 and Gal 3:28, in the following two chapters respectively, which interpretation contradicts the Pentecostal interpretations.

USA Background to Zimbabwean Pentecostalism

To properly understand the nature, operations and biblical exegesis of Pentecostal churches in Zimbabwe, (variously called Charismatics, fundamentalists or Evangelicals), Paul Gifford suggests that one needs to start in the United States, around 1964 with a study of the rise of the political New Right. Around this time, there was a general consensus in the USA that America had become weak and deviated from the founding principles; broadly from God, value for family and capitalism; private property rights and free market. It is from this background that the New Rightists mobilised to make 'America Great Again'. As, they canvassed for support, they became less concerned with respectability, and were prepared to incorporate fringe elements like White supremacists, rabid anti-communists and TV preachers. In other words, the New Right comprises variegated interest groups only tied together by their opposition to social services, advocating for capitalism and military spending. The guiding ideology of the New Right has been from this time characterised as 'economic libertarianism, social traditionalism, and militant anti-communism'.¹

Stemming from this ideology, notable characteristics feature of the religious elements in the New Right include the unwavering and fundamentalist reading and interpretation of the Bible. This is why most of the religious component of the New Right call themselves 'evangelicals'. They all insist that the Bible is their one and only spiritual guide and authority, and that salvation comes through belief in Jesus Christ and personal adult conversion.² Accepting Jesus as personal saviour is usually accompanied by the experience of speaking in tongues as a sign of the presence of the Holy Spirit. Jesus in these movements is presented as the 'all that one needs', hence some scholars regard such type of Christianity as Jeseocentric faith in that sermons and teachings make Jesus their hermeneutical focus.³ Be that as it may, important to note is that this American Religious Right, with its entire political agenda

¹ Cf. Gifford, *The Religious Right in Southern Africa*, pp. 1-3.

² Cf. Gifford, *The Religious Right in Southern Africa*, pp. 1-6.

³ Cf. Madipoane Masenya, 'The Bible and Poverty in African Pentecostal Christianity: The BOSADI (Womanhood) Approach', in Peter Paris (ed.), *Religion and Poverty: Pan-African Perspectives*. London: Duke University Press, 2009, pp. 152-165.

spread far beyond the United States; to Latin America and to Southern Africa.

Their movement from USA to Latin America, to Southern Africa and everywhere else is quite suspicious. They targeted places where traditional missionary Christianity that supported capitalism was waning as a result of the adoption of Marxist tools of social analysis by the Church and nationalist movements. Their intention was to pre-empt the gains of the liberation struggles, to entrench capitalism. Gifford strongly suspects this possibility with the presence of these movements in Zimbabwe, which coincided with the height of the liberation struggle and shortly after independence. Among these churches we have: Campus Crusade, 1979; Youth With a Mission (YWAM), 1970s-1977; Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship International (FGBMFI)-1983; Jimmy Swaggart Ministries 1985; World Vision International (which claims to be 'politically neutral' 1979; Rhema Bible Church 1982; The Unification Church (Moonies) 1976 and Shekinah Ministries which came to Zimbabwe in 1985. Interestingly Shekinah Ministries directly funded RENAMO rebels to destabilise the socialist government of Mozambique from 1985-1987 making it clear that their main mission was not evangelism but to destabilise political developments.

Some of these churches also clearly declared and manifested the Western governments' political agenda. For instance, Ralph Mahoney of Christ for All Nations on his return to the States from Zimbabwe published in his magazine a blistering attack on the black leadership of independent Zimbabwe (together with their socialist political, socio-and economic agenda), describing it as a communist tyranny, in contrast to South African apartheid which he described as an embattled democracy.⁴ The same stance was adopted by many of the Television preachers, evidencing clearly that all were in the service of the Western governments. Instead of speaking for oppressed Africans, like their governments, they vigorously opposed and scathingly attacked anyone who advocated for egalitarianism and liberation theology in particular. As if he was reading the official position of Western governments, Jerry Falwell, for example, called Bishop Desmond Tutu, a 'phony',⁵ lambasted

⁴ Cf. Ralph Mahoney, *World MAP Digest*, 1987, p. 12-15; Cf. Gifford, *The Religious Right in Southern Africa*, pp. 46-82; Verstraelen, *Zimbabwean Realities and Christian Responses*, pp. 8-9.

⁵ Cf. Gifford, *The Religious Right in Southern Africa*, p. 37.

Mandela and ANC, and all who struggled for liberation in South Africa and the rest of Southern Africa. For them, colonisation of Africans was better than their independence. This is why Mandela has remained a terrorist in the eyes of the West until today. Sixteen years after the fall of apartheid, Mandela still needs a special waiver to visit Britain and America as he is branded a terrorist, at least in their statutes.

Zimbabwean Pentecostal churches are classified under this brand of Christianity, although they are also indigenous in that they were founded in Zimbabwe by black Africans, however not unconnected to American, New Right religious influence. They have therefore borrowed a number of their characteristic features from the New Religious Right movements. Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM), Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa Forward in Faith (ZAOGA FIF) and Family of God (FOG) are the largest Pentecostal churches that evidence the fundamentalist characteristics.⁶ Although AFM, owing to its long journey, from its founding by white missionaries from America, to South Africa, then to Zimbabwe is not as 'indigenous',⁷ nevertheless, it shares a lot in common, with ZAOGA and FOG. After all, the founder of ZAOGA, Prophet Ezekiel Guti and some top leadership were active members in AFM before.⁸ There are several thousands of splinter groups and newly found similar Pentecostal movements, whose numbers continue to grow each day in Zimbabwe.

Since 2009, Zimbabwe was hit by an unprecedented wave of Pentecostal Christianity with the rise of Prophet E Makandiwa of United Family Interdenominational Ministries (UFIM), which pulls up to 35 000 attendants every Sunday service. Together with his colleagues who independently command significant numbers of followers such as Rev Wutawashe and Rev Chipunza, Makandiwa split from AFM. There is however, no theological shift at all from that of AFM, which has raised suspicion that most of the splits are caused by greedy for economic

⁶ Cf. Vengeyi, 'Gona and the Bible', pp. 95-129.

⁷ Cf. Lovemore Togarasei and Fidelis Nkomazana, 'Pentecostal Churches and HIV and AIDS in Botswana,' in L. Togarasei, et al, (eds.), *The Faith Sector and HIV/AIDS in Botswana: Responses and Challenges*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011, classified churches such as AFM under classical Pentecostal churches in that, like main line churches, were introduced by missionary Pentecostals from the West, through South Africa.

⁸ Cf. David Maxwell, *African Gifts of the Spirit: Pentecostalism & the Rise of a Zimbabwean Transnational Religious Movement*. Harare: Weaver Press, 2006.

prosperity.⁹ Nevertheless, in Zimbabwe, Pentecostalism is perverse; it is common to come across Pentecostal preachers in the streets, on the bus and at train stations. Most of them preach through various media including Television, radio, pamphlets and newspapers. In fact, this has been an ongoing trend since the establishment of the Religious Right in Zimbabwe. According to Gifford, there has always been a strong emphasis on all means of mass communication; books, pamphlets, tapes, videos etc. For instance, Global Literature Lifeline ran a thoroughly fundamentalist correspondence course which at any time catered for 10 000 people in Zimbabwe. In other words, fundamentalist literature has been deliberately produced en masse to flood the streets and the religious space with nothing but the fundamentalist politico-religious propaganda.¹⁰ The situation is even worse today with the rise of Makandiwa and his colleagues. Every street corner has individuals selling their literature and CDs and DVDs.

Biblical Interpretations in Pentecostal Movements in Zimbabwe

Divine Retribution as the premise of Biblical Interpretation

Despite historical, political, social and economic differences between America and Zimbabwe or other Third World countries, Pentecostal preachers regurgitate the fundamentalist New Religious Right model of biblical interpretation that is inherently capitalist. This model of biblical interpretation condemns poverty as a result of sin while riches are interpreted as signs of blessings due to righteousness. Biblical texts such as Deuteronomy 28-30 are central chapters in Pentecostal churches and they are normally cited as the believers pray and preach. In these chapters, God is presented as offering Israel a choice: 'If you obey the voice of the Lord your God...all these blessings shall come upon you' (Deuteronomy 28:1f). The blessings are then spelt out: material prosperity, success, abundance of every kind (Deuteronomy 28:3-13). On the other hand, 'if you will not obey the voice of the Lord your God...all these curses shall come upon you' (Deuteronomy 28:15). These curses comprise every kind

⁹ Rejoice Ngwenya, 'Religious Entrepreneurship', *Newsday*. Wednesday 30 March 2011, p. 15, has labelled Makandiwa's Biblical interpretation as 'Makandinomics' while the movement he leads is called 'gosprenneurship'.

¹⁰ Cf. Gifford, *The Religious Right in Southern Africa*, p.107.

of sickness, loss, poverty and deprivation (Deut 28:16-68). For the Pentecostal believers, God gives his people a choice, and he wants them to choose to follow him so that they may prosper (Deut 29.9).¹¹

This principle is the cornerstone of the gospel of prosperity. For Pentecostals, material prosperity for an individual is a necessary accompaniment of faith in Jesus. In other words, to be rich, either as a country or an individual is sign of being blessed by God due to righteousness while to be poor is a sign of being cursed by God for sinfulness. This is why these Pentecostals have been accused of not only lacking sociological awareness, but also historical awareness. They use the Bible simplistically; taking texts to be immediately relevant, paying little attention to the original context of the verses they cite. They just quote biblical verses for each and every claim they make, arguing that the Bible is inspired therefore has answers for every situation.

An Example of the Pentecostal Doctrine of Divine Retribution

The Herald of 11 August 2009, in Zimbabwe, for example, carried an article giving directions to the poor (and may be poor nations) to attain prosperity through Biblical teaching. The author, Sarah Tikiwa says:

Did you know that your life is the expression of what you have been confessing over the years? In other words, you are what you are today because of the confessions you made yesterday. Where your mouth goes is where your life goes.1 Peter 3: 10 says: "For let him who wants to enjoy life and see good days (good whether apparent or not), keep his tongue free from evil, and his lips from guile (treachery, deceit)." Do you love life and desire to see good days? Do you want to see things go on well in your life, irrespective of the dwindling financial situation in the world? If your answer is Yes, God says: The first thing you must do is refrain your tongue from evil! In this scripture lies the key to living a happy, successful and prosperous life. Those who tell lies cannot experience everlasting prosperity. The Bible says: "The lying tongue is for a moment." (Proverbs 12:19). Lying is not only when someone testifies falsely: it is more than that. It connotes when you say something different from what God has said. Anything you say that is contrary to God's Word is a lie, according to the Bible. So, if your desire is to enjoy life and see good days, God is saying to you: Tame your

¹¹ Gifford, 'The Bible as a Political Document in Africa', in Niels Kastfelt (ed.), *Scriptural Politics: The Bible and the Koran as Political Models in the Middle East and Africa*. London: Hurst & Company, 2003, pp. 16-28, (19).

tongue. Refrain from speaking evil. Do not say things that are not consistent with God's Word. You can achieve this by making a conscious and deliberate effort to speak the Word of God always and on all occasions. You will definitely prosper and see good days.¹²

Put in the broader context, the perspective of the author is that Zimbabwe and other third world countries are poor because the countries comprise liars (sinners) but rich countries such as USA and European countries are so because they are truthful and worship God (righteous)! This is gospel truth among many churches in Zimbabwe, particularly Pentecostal establishments. Although the author did not identify herself with any particular church, the views imply a strong connection with Pentecostalism. I have come across countless number of Pentecostal preachers in Zimbabwe claiming that America is rich and a blessed country because it was founded upon God's principles. One preacher said, 'America was founded upon principles of God. America acknowledges God first in everything she does! Such belief in God is evidenced everywhere, even on their currency. It is written, 'In God we trust'. One can easily tell the influence of the American Religious Right, which believes that America 'was founded on more biblical principles than any nation in history-the secret to America's greatness.'¹³ Further, there is a belief in the New Religious Right that America is a 'miracle nation', because signs of God's special care are evident all through its history. The purpose of this miracle nation is to be God's instrument in world history, so that God could have 'one nation that would do more to fulfil his basic objectives for this age, to preach the gospel to the ends of the earth, than any other nation in history.'¹⁴

Poor nations to tap into the plan of God, it is claimed in Pentecostal churches, must as a matter of fact not only obey America, the agent of God but must also trust in God in everything. The nations can only come out of poverty through trust in God and leaving behind any other but especially their indigenous religious or political philosophies. In

¹² Sarah Tikiwa, 'Refrain your tongue from evil'. *The Herald*, 01.August 09.

¹³ T. LaHaye, *Faith of Our Founding Fathers*. Brentwood TN: Wolgemuth and Hyatt, 1987, p. 34, cited in Gifford, *The Religious Right in Southern Africa*, p. 16.

¹⁴ LaHaye, *Faith of Our Founding Fathers*, p. 65; J. Falwell, *Listen, America!* New York: Doubleday, 1980, p.43, cited in D. Maguire, *The New Subversives: The Anti-Americanism of the Religious Right*. New York: Continuum, 1982, p. 33, believed that God established America.

ZAOGA, these views are well represented in the doctrine of 'Third World Mentality'. Apostle and Prophet Ezekiel Guti, is cited as having said, 'go to any nation where they worship idols or cows...these countries have problems and are poor. I say let's start with God. A nation that puts its trust in witchcraft, must know that witchcraft leads to laziness, hatred and killing one another...This is the problem with the Third World'.¹⁵ For him and other Pentecostal preachers in Zimbabwe and across Africa, economic prosperity in any nation is a reflection of the blessings of God, because the particular nations would be righteous. The Bible is always interpreted in these churches without due interrogation of the structures underlying economic advancement or absence thereof in any society. Everything is attributed to the individual as being responsible either for blessings (prosperity) or curse (poverty).

Poverty as a Consequence of Evil Spirits/Demons

For Pentecostals, individual poverty is also caused by evil spirits; either ancestral or demonic. Prosperity is thus closely linked to deliverance from these evil spirits. There is as such an elaborate discourse about the Devil and demons, evil spirits; some family spirits such as ancestral or some being works of the enemies (witches), in virtually all Pentecostal movements in Africa. It is believed in these churches that to avert the power and influence of these forces of darkness in the believer's life, rituals of exorcism are necessary. It is during such rituals that these powers of darkness manifest themselves and are cast out. The exorcisms are normally conducted at the end of every church service; be it a Bible study session, youth meeting, women gathering or any other. Leaders lay their hands usually on the head of those who would have come to the front for deliverance, as they cast out demons by commanding them to leave the host. Deliverance is in these churches conceptualized as a spiritual fight between God and Satan and there is always a belief that God will eventually be victorious.¹⁶

The motif of demonic possession as the cause of poverty is built upon such texts as Ephesians 6:12 and 2 Corinthians 4:4. Basically this motif entails a preoccupation with demons, and the tendency to experience

¹⁵ Cf. Maxwell, 'Delivered from the Spirit of Poverty?': Pentecostalism, Prosperity and Modernity in Zimbabwe. *JRA* 28 No. 3 (1998), pp.350-373 (359).

¹⁶ Meyer, 'Make a Complete Break with the past,' p. 321.

and interpret all aspects of life in terms of spiritual forces of every kind. According to this teaching, nothing happens in someone's life without a spiritual cause. Divorce, marriage, separation, promotion, demotion, poverty and success are all attributed to the spiritual causes. According to Gifford, this motif is fairly widespread in Africa and is particularly evident in Western Africa where institutions like the prayer camps and deliverance ministries have grown up to cater for it. Just like the faith gospel, Africa's deliverance thinking is expressed in the classic exposition given to it by western gurus, (The Television Evangelists).¹⁷

Prayer Solves All Problems!

While it is an obvious fact that colonial structures are largely responsible for the low economic status of the black people across Africa, there is virtually no attempt in Pentecostal churches at examining the social and economic structures of the country to judge how inhibitive they are to individual or community advancement. Also, it is common knowledge in Zimbabwe that corruption within government and private sectors together with Western economic sanctions have greatly stood against the economic development of the underclasses. Surprisingly, there is no interest in Pentecostal churches to challenge the perpetrators. For them, the solution to one's or national problems is prayer.¹⁸

Pentecostal believers argue that the solution to one's problems is the distance between one's knees and the ground! In other words, one needs to kneel and pray so that all problems will be solved. In line with that, one Pastor claimed: 'I do not have a degree in finance, or in medicine or a degree in theology but I have a degree in kneeology! With this degree all doors will be open for me!'¹⁹ Another popular motto showing the centrality of prayer in the Pentecostal believers' lives is the acronym 'PUSH'. According to believers, it stands for 'Pray Until Something Happens', suggesting that a believer works out his salvation through

¹⁷ Cf. Gifford, 'The Bible as a Political Document', p. 21.

¹⁸ Cf. Vengeyi, "Zimbabwean poverty is man-made! Demystifying Poverty by Appealing to the Prophetic Book of Amos". *Scriptura: International Journal of Bible, Religion and Theology in Southern Africa*, Vol. 107 No. 2 (2011), pp. 223-237.

¹⁹ Pastor Chigwedu, of The Resurrection of the Lord Church, at a crusade in Nyajena Masvingo, (October 1996).

prayer and nothing else. In other words, education does not help nations develop. It is only prayer to God.

As we have seen above, Ephesians 6:12: 'for we are not fighting against flesh and blood but principalities and powers of darkness,' is usually deployed either in prayers or during exorcisms. The saying, 'the battle is not ours but the Lord's', is very pronounced among Pentecostals. As such individual actions are interpreted as spirit-driven; either Holy Spirit or evil spirit. To fight the spirit of poverty, faith in Jesus is a necessary ingredient to unlock prosperity and closed doors of opportunities. And in times of national economic crises in Zimbabwe, the whole country was supposed to hold National Days of Prayer as the solution. For instance, during the many years of acute economic difficulties as from 1998-2008 many Pentecostal preachers sought the solution to the country's economic problems in righteousness and prayer.

According to Ezra Chitando, the Zimbabwean social and economic malaise was attributed to negative spiritual forces hence, exorcism and prayer became key concepts in the search for solutions.²⁰ The common position was that the nation was plunged into scarcity of basic commodities because of sin, hence the need for repentance and seeking the face of the lord. Only after this was done, it was believed, there would be abundance of everything; food, foreign currency, employment among others. The organised National Days of Prayer rallies were as such attended by politicians, economists and all sectors of the broader society.

Although political leadership took such platforms to remind the nation that sabotage and economic sanctions from the West were responsible for the crises, all of them were supposed to acknowledge that the solution to the country's problems were beyond human control. Only God could deal with the crises. As such, the most cited biblical text during these prayer rallies is 2 Chro. 7:14-15, which says: 'If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land. Now my eyes will be open

²⁰ Cf. Ezra Chitando, "Down with the Devil, Forward with Christ! A Study of the Interface between religious and political discourses in Zimbabwe". *African Sociological Review* 6, (1), 2002.

and my ears attentive to the prayers offered in this place'.²¹ It should be noted that although this Pentecostal gospel was introduced in Africa to serve Western interests, in the long run, and in the case of Zimbabwe, unintentionally the gospel has been counter-productive. Because of this emphasis on individual sins, demons, evil spirits, as causes of Zimbabwe's economic meltdown, instead of blaming the government, Pentecostal preachers exonerated the government. The West wanted all the churches to condemn the government of Zimbabwe's land reform, as did colonial/mainline churches.

From the above described scenario, there is no attempt in these churches to question the distribution of the national economy, land and other means of production. They only put emphasis on the poverty of an individual who comes to church independent of the historical, political, social and economic structures, which structures are responsible for the poverty of the individual. In Zimbabwe, for example, there is no attempt to establish land distribution pattern between the races which is the number one cause of poverty among the blacks. Blacks, while they are wallowing in poverty mainly because of the colonial policies that were enacted solely to disadvantage them, they are condemned for the poverty in their midst. Usually the explanation is either one is not giving enough to God or one has not really 'converted' or given her/himself wholly to God. The other common explanation is that the ancestral spirits of an individual are responsible for backwardness and poverty. Preachers in these churches do not question the validity of their gospel with reality on the ground. Reality on the ground is that most white people do not go to church yet they prosper, they are owners of farms, companies and key economic sectors. It is also very clear in Zimbabwe that the richest black people are not religious at all. Mostly the poor members of the society frequent churches especially the Pentecostal ones in hope that their miserable plight would be miraculously washed away.

Luke 4:18 is also one of the most cited biblical texts as evidence of Jesus' interest in delivering people from poverty which is intrinsically related to evil spirits. Those with physical challenges such as the deaf, dumb or lame are equally interpreted as needing deliverance from God, for their

²¹ Cf. Chitando, "If My People..." A Critical Analysis of the Deployment of 2 Chronicles 7:14 During the Zimbabwean Crisis', in Gunda and Kügler, (eds.), *Bible and Politics in Africa*. Bamberg Press, 2012, pp. 275-289.

condition is caused by the Devil. Several testimonies usually follow the drama.²² Some tell stories of how they prospered soon after they had been prayed for by the man of God or woman of God. One prominent Pentecostal prophet E. Angel made headlines towards the end of 2012 and beginning of 2013 for miraculously filling believers' wallets with money. Testimonies to the effect that money had multiplied in the wallets were many. For instance, some claim that they had \$200.00 in their wallets but soon after the prayer by the Angel, they discovered that they had something like \$2000.00 in the wallets.

Such testimonies have seen people flock to such churches in desperate need for this miraculous cash. These churches promise miraculous solutions to everything. Every individual problem is conceived of as spiritual battles. Even if one is underpaid at work, one is urged to pray rather than taking recourse to law or confrontation. For example, Prophet E. Makandiwa called upon his followers to pray for the employer who underpays. He says: "A company must not continue to use you, and dump you! Another one picks you, uses you and dumps you! The church takes you; uses you and dumps you! Another organisation takes you, uses you and dumps you! Now the Lord has looked down and said 'I am going to intervene!'"²³ The emphasis on God's intervention thwarts every attempt by the individual to take any practical action. It in fact leads believers to pacifism. And this promotes exploitation.

Only Faith yields Prosperity!

According to Pentecostal Christianity, only faith in Jesus is sufficient for one's prosperity. Every teaching basically is centred on faith. Faith is the only ingredient that connects one to his predestined future. Jesus, for the Pentecostals has already (by his death) won for Christians all the blessings of health and wealth. A Christian has only to 'claim' what is his or hers by right. Believers are called upon in nearly every church service to exercise their faith in Jesus by claiming their material wealth, health and spiritual blessings from God. If one needs a house, one just needs to shout in prayer that: 'God I claim my house right now in the name of Jesus!' There are several testimonies or reports of believers who

²² Cf. Maxwell, 'Delivered from the Spirit of Poverty?' p. 359.

²³ Emmanuel Makandiwa, founder of United Family Interdenominational Ministries in a sermon entitled, 'Ndinowanei'. Part 1 & 2, 2010.

claim to have just called and they miraculously were granted whatever they had asked for. And as I have indicated above, such testimonies are responsible for pulling masses to these churches.

Since for Pentecostals, the Bible is a manual to be consulted on anything in life, as it was authored by God himself,²⁴ they sometimes take it literally whereby they position themselves in the shoes of the Israelites.²⁵ The believers are the new Israel hence the Bible speaks directly to them. Confirming John Lonsdale's conclusion regarding biblical interpretation among the Kikuyu of Kenya, who 'read the Bible as an allegory of their own history'²⁶ Togarasei argues that 'this is exactly how Andrew Wutawunashe and his FOG have read the Bible',²⁷ and the same conclusions can be made regarding the 'hermeneutics' of all Pentecostal churches in Zimbabwe.

Because this is the common hermeneutical approach to scripture, the message preached to the converts, is that the poor members of the church are in self inflicted poverty. In other words, it is their choice to remain poor. They could however change their circumstances only by claiming what is theirs-prosperity as is written in the Bible. There is no attempt towards understanding exploitative systems of human relations that cause poverty. The poor members of the society among them domestic workers,²⁸ who they constitute significant numbers in these churches are made to believe that their plight is caused by the devil, hence must claim their happiness and prosperity from God. Instead of them to challenge their employers about the poor conditions of service

²⁴ Cf. Vengeyi, 'Gona and the Bible'; Togarasei and Nkomazana, 'Pentecostal Churches and HIV and AIDS in Botswana'.

²⁵ Togarasei, 'The Birth of a Prophet: Andrew Wutawunashe's Break from the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe (Formerly Dutch Reformed Church)'. *Exchange*, 35 No.2 (2006), pp. 215-225, (222)

²⁶ John Lonsdale, 'Kikuyu Christianities,' as cited by Togarasei from D. Maxwell and I. Lawrie (eds.), *Christianity and the African Imagination: Essays in Honour of Adrian Hastings*. Leiden: Brill, 2002, 150-162.

²⁷ Togarasei, 'The Birth of a Prophet', p. 218.

²⁸ Maxwell, 'Delivered from the Spirit of Poverty?'; Ruth Marshall, 'Power in the Name of Jesus': Social Transformation and Pentecostalism in Western Nigeria, in T. Ranger and O. Vaughan (eds.), *Legitimacy and the State in Twentieth Century Africa*. Basingstoke: Macmillan. 1993, pp. 213-46 (p.216); Togarasei, 'Modern Pentecostalism as an Urban Phenomenon: The Case of Family of God Church in Zimbabwe'. *Exchange*, 34, No. 4 (2005), pp. 349-375.

and remuneration domestic workers among other poor members of the church are made to divert attention to the devil.

Gifford gives a not uncharacteristic illustration of the faith gospel in Liberia in 1989. It is very close to the excerpt we have given as we began this section on Pentecostalism especially that what one says has effect on life. A preacher, using Daniel 3.1-7, proclaimed:

If you are going to worry and fret that there is a gas shortage, if you are going to concern yourself and fret that there is a rice shortage, and worry how you are going to feed your children, you have bowed to Satan....doesn't God say in Philippians 4.19 that God will supply all your needs according to his riches in glory?...My hope is not in the president, not in this world. The world system will change, economic structures will change, the political system will change, but thy word never changes. If you believe in gas shortages, a gas shortage is what you will get. If you believe in rice shortages, a rice shortage is what you will get.... Believe in what you say when you say it. Liberia will be what you say. If you say, 'I am poor, sick, stupid', that is what you will be. That is what you are saying....Unemployment in the country, a Christian should get it. A Christian should not be unemployed...God wants no unemployed Christians. God says: 'I have never seen a righteous man forsaken or his children begging for bread' (Ps 37.25). Is God a liar?²⁹

Such a theology as above is awash in all Pentecostal movements in Zimbabwe. As evident in this interpretation, the original context of the Biblical text is given very little attention. Emphasis is on the context of the preacher. Even so, Pentecostal preachers see reality of suffering and struggle for survival among the majority but instead of investigating into the real cause of poverty and try to offer practical solutions, they are busy condemning the suffering for the situation they are not in control of. Everyday reality is that those who are honest, righteous and those who fervently frequent churches are very miserable. It is the dishonest, the corrupt and the irreligious that amass wealth day after day, without even a single prayer to God. In fact, the Pentecostal churches themselves sometimes contribute to the suffering of the poor by demanding money in form of freewill offerings, tithes and other unending contributions from the same members struggling to face tomorrow.

²⁹ Gifford, 'The Bible as a Political Document', p. 21.

Give! It shall be Given Back in the Same Measure!

The concept that faith automatically brings God's blessings is most often linked with 'spiritual laws' of increase or based upon the parable of sowing (Mtt 13), according to which God repays to the extent that we give. God's blessings are as much or less as we give monetarily to him through giving to the church or to the pastor of the church. Thus the faith gospel is almost invariably linked with the duty of freewill giving and tithing. Indeed Mal 3:8-10 seems to be one of the most cited biblical texts in Pentecostal movements on tithing and freewill offerings. It says:

⁸ "Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me. "But you ask, 'How are we robbing you?' "In tithes and offerings. ⁹ You are under a curse—your whole nation—because you are robbing me. ¹⁰ Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it. (NIV)

Thus poverty in the Pentecostal interpretation of the Bible is construed as effects of robbing God! To escape this web of poverty, preachers recommend that everyone must give! With the same measure one gives, the Lord will give back. In other words, those who are rich have been so because they gave a lot. As a consequence, the poor are suffering either because they did not give or they gave little money. Various situations of poverty are narrated as results of not testing God by giving even the last money one has. Emphasis is put on testing God by faith by giving beyond one's means. In fact, testing God is equal to unquestionable trusting in God that he would pay back.

It is important to note that giving to God normally means to God's immediate representative, most often the preacher himself.³⁰ Tithes in particular, strictly go to the pastor who is generally regarded or who regards him/(herself) as the Levite/priest of God to whom tithes are due (Num 18:20-21). Material fortunes of a believer are dependent on how much one gives, spiritually and materially to God's Levite/priest.³¹ In some ways, there is an interconnected link between God and the preachers. Annoying the man of God is interpreted as annoying God himself. In the same way, the happiness of the man of God, the Levite is inter-

³⁰ Gifford, 'The Bible as a Political Document', p.20.

³¹ Ruth Marshall, 'Power in the Name of Jesus', p. 216.

preted as God's happiness also. As such, Pentecostal preachers acquire a semi-God status to the effect that followers normally think they have the ability either to curse or bless an individual. Whatever they say is therefore taken as God's word, although it may be an expression of their personal feelings. Their claim to having the ability to prosper followers is usually that which pulls the very poor including domestic workers who wish to miraculously escape the web of poverty. The poor and under privileged are made to believe that their circumstances will be changed mysteriously if they work without raising questions on their treatment and if they surrender their financial affairs to God's Levite.

Another favourite text for pastors in Pentecostal churches to induce giving is Luke 6:38 where Jesus says: 'Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the same measure you use, it will be measured to you' (NIV). When this verse is interpreted, emphasis in Pentecostal churches is placed on quantity rather than quality or motive of giving: If one gives less, one will get less, but if one gives more one will get more, and if one gives often one will also receive from the Lord often. This is a matter of principle according to Pentecostals. As such, some preachers downplay the role of faith in Jesus since everybody who gives will be given back with the same measure, 'saint or sinner'.³²

Pentecostal Preachers: Levitical-Priests or Pretenders?

Rather than ameliorating the underclasses, the Pentecostal gospel rips them off even more. With this prevalent gospel of prosperity, most of the Pentecostal preachers have become filthy rich while their members who subsidise their luxury living are wallowing in stinking poverty. The preachers dress elegantly, send their children to first grade, expensive schools and eat sumptuously while the children of their followers are naked, malnourished and uneducated. The tithes and offerings they compel members to give to God are in reality their personal wealth. As a general characteristic of Pentecostal preachers, they have become very rich from the gifts, tithes and free will offerings given by the poor members. They drive expensive cars and reside in low density suburbs, far away from the masses that sponsor their luxurious lives. They socially

³² Gifford, *The Religious Right in Southern Africa*, pp. 24; D. Hunt, *Beyond Seduction: Return to Biblical Christianity*. Eugene OR: Harvest House, 1987, p. 65.

distance themselves from the poor people they shepherd while associating with the rich and famous. They only appear in the high density-filthy suburbs on Sundays in the midst of the service to preach and make monetary collections. In other words, being a Pentecostal preacher is now as lucrative business as diamond mining. This has driven so many uneducated youth and unemployed into being preachers, so as to generate wealth. But for the poor, God has become too expensive as he demands more than he gives.

This commercialisation of the gospel by Pentecostal preachers is very contrary to the attitude of early Israelite priesthood, prior to the establishment of the monarchy which was a modest affair. The Levitical priesthood which they so often want to be identified with was primarily a teaching order with responsibility for shaping the centralised cultic celebrations and very little to show as personal wealth. As I have argued in the first chapter, the Levitical priesthood identified with the poor masses as they being revolutionaries also had paramilitary functions to perform for the egalitarian order. They, in fact were part of the poor populace. This is what made them different from their peers in the ancient Near East, who identified with the ruling class and the elite of the society hence tended to have a considerable share of the economic surplus. Thus, as messengers or foot soldiers of Yahweh who although he owns everything, demands little from the people, the Levitical priests also demanded less from the people, the oppressed and exploited poor. As Gottwald rightly emphasises,

in Israel the priesthood was landless in the sense that the Levites, dispersed throughout the tribes, were granted use-holdings but could not sell these holdings or amass additional holdings. Sacrifice was a limited part of the cultic celebrations; in fact, it appears that the male family head could preside at sacrifice without the presence of a priest. In short, the Levitical priesthood of early Israel was granted such powers as the covenanting tribes chose to give it, and those powers were so hedged about as to preserve the autonomy of the several tribes and to prevent the priesthood from gaining authoritarian control over the intertribal order....Yahweh owned all but demanded less economic investment and expenditure from worshippers than was customary in the monarchic-imperial cults of the ancient Near East....Yahweh's massive symbolic power was marshalled to

prevent the old familiar game plan of political manipulation of religion in order to extract surplus wealth from the general populace.³³

A closer look at the doctrine of giving in Zimbabwean Pentecostal churches leaves one with the impression that it was borrowed wholesale from the Religious Right of America, without adjustment to fit the socio-economic and even historical and political context of developing countries. One American preacher, Gloria Copeland paraphrases Mark 10:29-10 that present Jesus as having set the principle when she said, 'There is no one who has left house...or lands for my sake and for the Gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time'. 'You give \$1. For the Gospel's sake and \$100 belongs to you. You give \$10 and receive \$1, 000. Give \$1, 000 and receive \$100, 000. I know that you can multiply, but I want you to see (it) in black and white...Give one airplane and receive one hundred times the value of the airplane. Give one car and the return would furnish you with a lifetime of cars. In short, Mark 10: 30 is a very good deal'.³⁴ This is how Pentecostal preachers have gathered their wealth.

This teaching is presented as the concept of 'seeding' or 'talents' that is prevalent in Zimbabwean Pentecostal churches, of course in different names depending on the name of the church. For every seed one sows, one gets more than one seed in return, may be, thirty-fold, sixty-fold or hundred-fold. In that way, nobody has an excuse not to give. As the believers claim, one's wealth is a reflection of his/her spiritual health! But in reality the more one continues to pay, the more one's financial situation deteriorates. It is not out of place to suggest that the Pentecostal churches have tended to impoverish people more than they have prospered them. It is only a few who 'miraculously' escape poverty and some well connected to the politically or economically influential that rise. While there are many who will claim to have received 'blessings from the Lord' after giving, most of them would have been involved in shady deals which they will never expose to the other believers. In Zimbabwe, most of them were involved in illegal exchange of foreign currency, money laundering, illegal fuel dealing, illegal gold and diamond trade.

³³ Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh*, pp. 696.

³⁴ Gloria Copeland, *God's Will is Prosperity*. Fort Worth, Kenneth Copeland Ministries, 1978, p.48. Cf. Gifford, 'The Bible as a Political Document', p. 20; Cf. Gifford, *The Religious Right in Southern Africa*. pp. 23-24; Hunt, *Beyond Seduction*, p. 65.

In his study on FOG, Togarasei observed that from the beginning FOG emphasized the idea of giving large sums of money to 'God' and Wutawunashe has earned a reputation of being able to turn any sermon (or any passage of scripture) into one for giving. This position is evident from the letter that Wutawunashe wrote to the leaders and pastors of all assemblies of his church. The letter's main objective was to give directions as to the vision of the church so that all the leaders in different places would have uniform programmes and do the same things at the same time. But towards the conclusion it was turned into a sermon for giving; giving to the man of God. It is clear in the letter that no one member of the church is exempted. Everyone who needs anointing from the Holy Spirit and security, prosperity has no excuse based upon social and economic status but to give. Because of this teaching, Togarasei claims that Wutawunashe has managed to amass various movable and immovable properties and has become one of the very rich Pentecostal preachers in Zimbabwe.³⁵ This doctrine is pervasive in all Pentecostal movements, although they may differ in aggressiveness or methodology of enforcing compliance. In ZAOGA for example, love offerings, freewill offerings and tithes are topical issues as demonstrated by Maxwell.³⁶ Nearly every church meeting has a sermon or encouragement to that effect and a collection is made. It is believed that if you give consistently to the man of God, the Levitical priest, you will be blessed consistently, since according to Malachi 3:10, God will open not only a window but windows of heaven to pour out blessings!

Pentecostal Christianity and Domestic Workers

As I have noted above, giving to God in Pentecostal establishments does not exclude some individuals on the basis of their financial status. All must prioritise giving to God. Thus, one may not have enough food at home, may not have enough money for school fees, monthly bills; rentals, electricity, water bills among others, still one has to test God. It is believed in the Pentecostal churches that giving under such circumstances has great potential for miracles. One woman at the University of Zimbabwe in a service organized by ZAOGA on Campus (ZOC) told the congregation how giving makes one rich. She says, by her first salary she

³⁵ Cf. Togarasei, 'The Birth of a Prophet', p. 221.

³⁶ Cf. Maxwell, 'Delivered from the Spirit of Poverty?' p. 355ff.

bought a car for the man of God (founder Guti) and she was blessed immensely in her life. Several doors were opened. She claims that she was promoted from being just a mere nurse to sister in Charge.³⁷

On the same occasion, a woman who claims to have been a domestic maid said even her domestic worker must pay tithes and freewill offering to the Lord. She said, 'before I give her the salary I must take off her tithe put it in a tithe envelop and tell her not to eat her 'seed' (blessings) before they are released but to put them into the soil so as to produce more'. She claims that she has done it before and it actually worked wonders for her. Her special interest in domestic workers results from her own history. She told the congregation that she had been a domestic worker for many years in her life and had problems in finding a man to marry, but, as soon as she began to practice giving and tithing; she got 'Mr. Right'.³⁸ The husband she says is not only very rich, but also a Christian hence is blessed by God. Such testimonies normally pull so many poor and disadvantaged to Pentecostals.

One such testimony is that of Joyce Simeti a renowned Gospel singer in Zimbabwe and a happily married woman, already studying for a Master degree in Theology. She is a source of inspiration to many domestic workers in Pentecostals churches. She says,

as I grew up, life for me was a pain as I had to make do with a lot of disadvantages. My father was very abusive and I grew up watching my mother struggling for our sake. We stayed in Epworth (in Harare) where I learnt up to Grade 3 before moving to our rural home in Mutoko where I completed my primary school. We were in deep poverty with no food and no soap. We had to use 'muto wematamba' as oil for our bodies instead of Vaseline. (Simeti then opted to look for a job as a maid and luckily got employed by Mrs Chizaza in Chitungwiza's Unit K, who was sympathetic to her situation). "Mrs Chizaza became the source of my breakthrough. She sympathised with me and promised she would do anything to help me. To this day I respect that woman for the initiative. "She later introduced me to

³⁷ I attended ZAOGA On Campus (ZOC) on the day in question. It was a Sunday service towards the end of October 2002. University students were encouraged to give to the Lord irrespective of their circumstances; that they were students and that they came from poor families. Also, it was time when basic commodities were erratic in shops and students literally were starving at the University of Zimbabwe.

³⁸ This testimony of individuals who have been looked down upon as domestic workers and having risen to become a married woman with a noble profession and stable family are great testimonies that attract a majority of people presently in such circumstances.

Zaoga where she also fellowshipped. We attended a crusade one day and the evangelist pointed at me and said, 'your life is going to change if you remain focused upon the Lord'. At first I thought he meant someone else, but he reiterated 'yes you', (Simeti then met her husband who was studying towards a degree but he insisted on marrying her despite her poor education. Even though she felt inferior, the gentleman whom she eventually wedded in 1997, proved to her that education was not going to be a hindrance). I started off with a cutting and designing course. I then decided to write my Ordinary Levels. "My husband persuaded me to record seeing that I had a passion for music. I recorded my first album in 2002 which marked the beginning of my career,". "I broke records in my family in everything. I was the first to wed, the first to have Ordinary Levels and the first to have a bachelor's degree. Right now my mother is the happiest person, I salute her for what she went through for us,". "I would like to urge people out there that they should never despair in life no matter how bleak the future seems. God always changes things for the better if one waits upon him, a miracle will always happen."³⁹

David Maxwell observes that such testimonies are very motivating (to the domestic workers) given that numerous Pentecostals recount in their testimonies how they began their careers as 'garden-boys' and 'house-girls', and eventually became white collar workers and consumers. Being born again for Pentecostals creates with it 'redemptive uplift'.⁴⁰ Ruth Marshall concurs with this observation as she notes that since their founding, Pentecostal churches (in Nigeria) drew their membership largely from the literate and semi-literate poor, such as labourers, domestic servants and clerks, and continue to do so today, although not as exclusively.⁴¹ In the same vein, Birgit Meyer observed that in Ghana, 'these churches are most attractive to people who attempt to move upward economically, mainly by business and trade,'⁴² hence can hire domestic workers. Togarasei also has confirmed the validity of this observation in his detailed study of the FOG Church, which he characterized as modern Pentecostalism and urbanite in nature.⁴³ As such, most of the

³⁹ Cf. Gwendoline Mugauri and Shamiso Yikoniko, 'Simeti's calling from the midst of poverty'. *Zimpapers*. 19 February 2011.

⁴⁰ Maxwell, 'Delivered from the Spirit of Poverty?', p. 354.

⁴¹ Marshall, 'Power in the Name of Jesus', p. 216.

⁴² Birgit Meyer, "Make a Complete Break with the past': Memory and Post-Colonial Modernity in Ghanaian Pentecostalist Discourse'. *JRA* 28, No. 3 (1998), pp. 316-349, (320).

⁴³ Togarasei, 'Modern Pentecostalism as an Urban Phenomenon'.

converts especially those in towns afford to employ one domestic worker or two. Today in Zimbabwe, this is especially true. Domestic workers constitute a significant percentage of converts in Pentecostal movements owing to some of these factors. Also, based on the framework of biblical interpretation in these churches, these domestic workers almost always must attend church with their employer.

The claims of Joshua 24:15 are usually interpreted as prescribing how a Pentecostal believer's household should always be conducted: It says; 'But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord' (NIV). This verse is critical on two levels. First, it makes a clear demarcation between the past and the present. The conception of salvation in Pentecostal churches is such that, every believer is to do away with the past as he/she moves on to the future with Jesus.⁴⁴ Second, it marks boundaries between those inside and those outside the household. A believer's household involves fellow believers and everybody under his/her care and that includes domestic workers.

In line with this interpretation, believers are encouraged to love and worship the Lord with all that they have or own. This includes wealthy, family and therefore domestic workers. Pastor Zingwe for instance, interpreting Deut 5:14 that reads: 'but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant and maidservant may rest, as you do,' says, 'Do not leave...your maids and *sekurus* at home when you come to Church..... They must worship with you...Do not let them follow other gods (traditions). They bring the Devil home...You cannot experience breakthrough when you live with the devil at home'.⁴⁵ Giving the example of Job who was wealthy with many servants, he went further to argue that Christians need to pray for such blessings from the Lord to the extent of having '*servants*' as the scripture says, not just one.

Interestingly, Zingwe does not find it abnormal that he is equating domestic workers to slaves. For him the relationship between the master and servants in the Old Testament times must apply even now between

⁴⁴ Meyer, "Make a Complete Break with the past", p. 317.

⁴⁵ Pastor Gerald Zingwe, Faith in Christ International Church. Harare Gardens, 2006.

employer and domestic workers. Rather than taking us forward, this fundamentalist model of biblical interpretation that lacks critical socio-logical analysis, actually takes us backward. Pastor Zingwe's hermeneutical position fits the colonial and even pre-colonial western setting, where servants were almost owned by masters, as slaves. His interpretation has no fundamental difference in perspective from an eighteenth century British Rev. Patrick Delany who when addressing the servant in one of his sermon puts the matter succinctly: '....your time and strength are no longer your own, when you are hired; they are your master's...and consequently you cannot employ them as you please, but as he directs ...(submission) necessarily arises from the nature of servitude; for the very condition of that compact is that one man shall submit his will and actions to the discretion and direction of another: and therefore a servant is supposed to have no will of his own, where his master is concerned; but to submit himself entirely to the will of his master.'⁴⁶ Instead of scrutinising this unequal relationship between the employers and domestic workers, Pentecostal preachers even require their congregations to exploit workers by forcing them to come to church.

Domestic Workers and Pentecostal Employers: Bitter-Sweet Relationship

As a result of the biblical interpretation method in Pentecostal churches, domestic workers who previously before getting employed belonged to another church denomination are also supposed to follow the employer to his/her church upon getting a job. While this may have advantages, as we have observed above with Simeti, and Rutendo Mavizhu who says, 'since I started working here and going to church with them, I have been treated as their daughter. Nobody at church knows that I am a domestic worker',⁴⁷ some like Mary Zviyo complain bitterly that 'even at church everybody recognises my low social standing and that I am a maid because my attire is cheap quality and I do not have enough money to buy

⁴⁶ Cf. Coser, *Greedy Institutions*, p. 69.

⁴⁷ Rutendo Mavizhu, works in Mt Pleasant, Harare for Pentecostal family for the past 3 years. She is comfortable that since she left the Catholic Church upon getting employed, her life has really improved. (interview with Rutendo, on 16 April 2011 at her workplace)

better ones.⁴⁸ She was also very uncomfortable with going to church with her employers arguing that she has no time to rest, since even at church she could be taking care of the children of the employer while others are praying. It then translates to work instead of it to be a day of rest.

Domestic workers constitute a large percentage in Pentecostal churches as I have observed above owing to the prosperity ideology which emanates from the interpretation of scripture. By the simple fact that these churches preach miraculous upward social mobility, they attract those people who are somehow underprivileged. And domestic work being an occupation of the poor widows, and orphans among other social and economic outcasts, the presence of domestic workers in these churches is not a surprise. However, the financial demands of the church leave them even worse off. Chidochashe Shereke argues that she has never seen the much talked about breakthrough: 'What I see is that I cannot afford to send money to help my mother who is sick in the village. They collect money for everything; during Sunday service, they collect two times; during mid week services they collect; even when the youth meet, they collect money. But my salary is very little. I get only \$30 per month'.⁴⁹ This is typically true of Pentecostal churches. They collect large sums of money at every gathering. At one service in Kambuzuma, Harare, in FOG assembly, Togarasei counted about five different offerings that were called for.⁵⁰ The promises of prosperity to the many poor individuals remain a pie in the sky. What is real is their further impoverishment.

Although some may claim to have benefited miraculously in response to the faith gospel, hence confirm the truthfulness of the testimonies, in many cases, this has profound effect on the economic welfare of those with low incomes especially domestic workers. Some of them cannot experience the mostly claimed breakthrough or deliverance from the spirit of poverty as they are commonly exploited by fellow members including their employers. They are targets of cheap quality clothes and goods sold by their employers and some members of the church to con-

⁴⁸ Mary Zviyo, is a domestic worker in Mabvuku. She had an interview with one of my informants between 14-16 April 2011.

⁴⁹ Chidochashe Shereke, interview in Marlborough East, Harare (23. April 2011).

⁵⁰ Cf. Togarasei, 'Modern Pentecostalism as an Urban Phenomenon', p. 369.

tribute to the financial needs of the congregation. The trend is to give wares like clothes on credit to domestic workers which they would pay month-ends in instalments. But in most cases there will be an exorbitant percent of interest charged or the product would have been overcharged already. A woman said, '*mazuvano ndeekungokwidza kwidza kwezvinhu. Iwe semudzimai wechurch usashaya chekupa Mwari, unongotenga wokwidza kwidzawo. Kune ma maids kudzimba uko, unongoti tora wozondipa mari later*', (these days are days when things go up anytime, you as a woman of the church, you must not complain that you have nothing to give to God. You buy some products and add some profit. Domestic maids could take and pay you later).⁵¹

There is no shame in doing the above, because it is backed by a doctrine that has a long tradition. For instance, the doctrine of talents that is popular in ZAOGA fosters what can be called 'penny capitalism', the vending of cheap food stuffs and clothes initially within the religious community but later outside it, to finance the expansion of that community. Many women cook peanuts, chips, fat-cooks and cakes, sell sweets, and sew cushion covers in keeping with the initial conception of the teaching, but others, aided by chip fryers, pop-corn makers, sewing and knitting machines and paid labour have launched themselves as successful 'indigenous business women.' Other women cross the borders to South Africa, Botswana, and Namibia among others to buy and sell goods.⁵²

While this could be noble, the main problem is that some of such women tend to over-use their maids to do what they are not paid for. Tinashe Hata, of Marlborough complained that she does a lot of work that she thinks is not related to the terms of contract of a domestic worker. She does knitting and sewing for her employer who sales the wares to neighbouring countries, but she is paid just \$35.00 per month. She said, 'I think Christians are even more oppressive and exploitative than non-believers. I do all the work during the day, but at night, instead of sleeping, I am supposed to be sewing, helping her. She recently

⁵¹ Mrs Mucheno (not her real name) at a Power of Jesus Church crusade in Harare advising women to be enterprising, which itself is a virtue in all Pentecostal movements, 15 April 2006.

⁵² Cf. Maxwell, 'Delivered from the Spirit of Poverty?', p. 355.

bought a new car and her children are going to expensive schools, but I get very little'.⁵³

Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe: A Ploy Against the Struggle of the Oppressed

Emphasis on faith has been criticized by scholars as an attempt to run away from the reality that causes poverty. This teaching in itself is aimed at obscuring the political and economic reasons that may be responsible for so much poverty in Africa. Christians do not question the government or ask contemporary questions such as the role of colonisation to their plight, corruption, unequal distribution of land and economy between races and classes. It diverts the attention from the effort and planning necessary for 'development'. Everything is reduced to faith. Faith can achieve everything, even year-round harvests. The most pronounced slogan of faith is: With God nothing is impossible! What is by the human standards impossible with God it is possible. There are so many testimonies given in Pentecostal churches some very bizarre that are attributed to the work of God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit only to reinforce the idea that what is not possible with human beings is possible with God. But as Gottwald argues,

the weakness of the religious symbolism, when left unreduced to social struggle in actual material conditions, is that it can seem to overstate sheer wilfulness, to enunciate no more than a pious truism that 'all things are possible', to resolve the contingencies of every moment of struggle in history to the abstraction of 'an all-powerful God'. The power of the religious symbolism in early Israel was precisely its integration within and penetration of a total struggle situation, so that it articulated a wilfulness informed by the situation, illuminating a route for those divided Canaanite under-classes to follow as, step by step, they realised 'the impossible possibility' of free communal life in hierarchic Canaan.⁵⁴

Contrary to early Israelite conception of the role of Yahwist religion in rallying the community towards the same goal of egalitarianism, one of the most notable characteristic features of Pentecostal Christianity is the absence of wider social responsibility. According to this gospel, only

⁵³ Tinashe Hata, is 19 years old and works in Marlborough for a ZAOGA member, who has done so well in terms of business. (interview with Tinashe on 12 April 2011).

⁵⁴ Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh*, p. 701.

Christians matter as only they will get jobs, food, education and success. Non-Christians for the Pentecostals do not matter, since they are outcasts. They will naturally lack all these goods, because the fruits of Jesus' sacrifice belong only to believers. So the plight of the nation, or the state of the society, or the situation of the general population are of no importance to the Pentecostal Christians. The Christian's duty to deprived unbelievers is merely to convert them so that they can prosper miraculously as well.⁵⁵ That is the rationale behind forcing domestic workers to come to church with employers. The belief is that as one brings many people to church, into the kingdom of God from the kingdom of the devil; God releases blessings to the individual who is so industrious about religious duties.

Despite their numerous claims to liberate people and deliver them from poverty, Pentecostalism, entrenches the status quo, hence it is against the struggle of the underclasses. This kind of Christianity was deployed to divert the attention of the poor from the real matters, from sociological analysis, so as to sustain vested interests of the oppressors. Thus, according to Gifford, if liberation theology is Christian reflection done with some sociological awareness, it must be said that it is the complete lack of any sociological awareness that characterize fundamentalists. And it is plausible that some fundamentalists especially the financiers are fully aware of the role their Christianity plays, and propagate it precisely for its social, political and economic effects. And it is precisely because of this deliberate lack of sociological awareness that explains their emphasis on exclusively personal motivation, personal sin, private morality; it explains their exclusive reliance on prayer and the miraculous, and the example of one's personal life to effect change; it explains their emphasis on the next world, and the prominence given to obedience. It also explains the claim of many (though not all, by any means) that religion and politics do not mix.⁵⁶

But, it must be noted that people's liberation if it is liberation at all is not purely moral or spiritual; it must be material also. Liberation for the blacks who have been exploited for many centuries should entail making calls and concerted efforts to transfer and make available the means of production to the people for example, land, cattle, machinery, raw mate-

⁵⁵ Cf. Gifford, 'The Bible as a Political Document', p. 20.

⁵⁶ Cf. Gifford, *The Religious Right in Southern Africa*, pp. 89-90.

rials, including human labour. It is the liberation of these elements of social and material life that makes freedom-spiritual and material. As Amilcar Cabral says,

Liberation of the people means the liberation of the productive forces of our country, the liquidation of all kinds of imperialist or colonial domination of our country, and the taking of every measure to avoid any new exploitation of our people...We want equality, social justice and freedom....Liberation for us is to take back our destiny and our history.⁵⁷

Any gospel that does not address these issues is not liberative enough for it plays into the hands of the oppressors. The lack of sociological analysis in Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe and elsewhere must be understood in the context of threat posed by sociological analysis of the Bible from around 1960s, whereby this sociological awareness had revolutionized the main-line Christian denominations especially in Latin America with the rise of Liberation theology. And the advance of this kind of Christianity with sociological awareness was considered a real threat to certain vested interests which in response mobilized to discredit it. It is not by mere coincidence that this fundamentalist Christianity has spread, and sometimes dramatically, particularly in places like Latin America and Africa. Such movements seem to thrive in places where social change is perceived as especially threatening.⁵⁸ In the same vein, the growth and expansion of this brand of Christianity from about 2000 to date in Zimbabwe could be linked to the peasant struggle, land revolution and indigenisation laws that threaten the status quo. From this particular dimension, this kind of Christianity has definite political and social effects. According to D. Huntington, 'The kind of evangelical Protestantism which is sweeping Central America removes its adherents from social struggle and reform, places the onus on God rather than humans to act, and results in submissive resignation while waiting for Jesus' return to bring about change'.⁵⁹ This is what this Christianity sought to achieve in Zimbabwe.

⁵⁷ A. Cabral, *Revolution in Guinea: An African People's Struggle*. England: Stage 1, 1979, p. 83.

⁵⁸ Cf. Gifford, *The Religious Right in Southern Africa*, p. 101; Cf. Mary de Haas, 'Is Millenarianism alive and well in White South Africa?', pp. 40-41.

⁵⁹ D. Huntington, 'The Prophet Motive', *Nacla Report on the Americas*. Jan-Feb. 1984, XVIII, 2-11, (4); Cf. Gifford, *The Religious Right in Southern Africa*, p. 105.

Effects of the Pentecostal Christianity on the Masses

Characteristically, this kind of Christianity makes one uncommitted to the struggle for liberation and in some cases it leads to collaboration with the oppressors, as one fears to confront social injustice. Pertinent historical, socio-economic and political questions are never asked. Life in general is surrendered to God to manage. In Zimbabwe, this has been so true. A number of people, academics, churches, journalists, among others have been made to accept their subjugation and to tolerate the status quo. Black people are at the forefront of resisting government initiative or any individual who seeks to redistribute the economy to the poor blacks. Patricia Munhumunwe, for example wrote an article in one of the daily newspapers vigorously opposing the Indigenisation Act of Zimbabwe that is meant to see foreign companies dispose 51% shares to local black people, so as to correct the colonially imposed racial imbalances. Interesting about the article is her appeal to the Bible to support her spirited dislike of black empowerment. She says,

they (the government of Zimbabwe led by President Mugabe) started with farms, now they are onto mines. Next they will move on to the transport sector. It will end up with people's properties in the cities. To gain without service is a crime before God. People should work hard in order to be rich, a quick fix is the wrong model for national development.....The so called indigenisation programme is insulting to all who have worked to build their own companies. What kind of person can accept such a hand-out? Have they no pride? To take someone's company and industries for political gain?.....A forced transfer of shares as foreign-owned firms are being asked to do is very much a property rights issue because the owners of the mines are having to relinquish not only 51% of their shares, but also control over enterprises they have built.....God gave us the minds to advance agriculture just as we have advanced medicine. The Bible says that God cares about even the hairs on our head (Mat.10:29-30) so it's obvious that he cares about how we live and how we farm. But what does Solomon say? What does the man, who knew more about economic success than any ten men living today, say? What does God say? They say that the farmer will have plenty to eat -- he will be successful and the greedy fellow looking for Easy Street is an empty-headed fool and a loser. He's going down to poverty (Proverbs 28:19)! This rule of economic wisdom applies to every hon-

est and useful profession; there are no secrets to success. It is only by hard work, self-denial, patience, time, and God's mercy.⁶⁰

The article generated several interesting responses. Quite a lot agreed with her views, but a few disagreed completely asking very pertinent questions about the role of 'God' in the history of Zimbabwe. Mayor Urimbo for example asks, 'Where was God between 1890 and 1979 when Zimbabweans were being massacred in their thousands by the very same people whose ill acquired land you want to protect. As was the case then (1890-1979), God will have to sit this one out whilst we correct past injustices'. And almost the same views are raised by Mboko who says: '...to gain without service is a crime before God!!!! I wonder. Where was this God when our land was taken away from us. And when our people were driven onto barren land? I suppose God must have been asleep when this was happening. To make matters worse, the imperialist had the nerve to use his name in our colonization... After all. God is just a myth. Our land and minerals are real'. Another one by the name Rae Chielo argues in the same direction: 'God this, God that and a string of Bible quotes. Give me a break. The very same God you are calling on is the very same God the colonialists were singing 'Onward Christian soldiers' to when they marched in and took over the country and subjugated us for years'.⁶¹

I regard these responses, as pertinent because, any theology of liberation today must of necessity ask these fundamental questions. For Mosala, 'a biblical hermeneutician of liberation cannot but ask, which God; Baal, or El, or Yahweh? The white God or the black God?, the male God or the female God? No theology of struggle can any longer afford not to recognize (that) the biblical texts' witness to the fact that there are many Gods'.⁶² Failure to ask these questions is detrimental to one's endeavour for liberation. As evident in the article cited above, the author buys the Pentecostal theology of blessings and curses that is extremely elitist. Similar to all the elites everywhere across the globe, she even does not care about colonial history and context of poverty among the blacks in Zimbabwe. For a black Zimbabwean to claim that white owners of farms, companies and mines have worked hard for them and that they have

⁶⁰ Patricia Munhumumwe, 'Zanu PF destroying the industries'. New Zimbabwe. Com, 26 September 2011.

⁶¹ See, responses to Munhumumwe's article, 'Zanu PF destroying the industries'.

⁶² Cf. Mosala, *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology*, p. 28.

been blessed by God is clear evidence that she is intoxicated with elitist propaganda meant to legitimise ill gotten wealth. And to blame the victims of oppression as they try to correct the injustice also betrays a close link with Pentecostal propaganda doctrine of the rich.

Despite these shortcomings, we have to acknowledge that some of these Pentecostal churches have immense contributions to the masses of Zimbabwe, especially those led by black founders. For instance, contrary to the colonial missionaries who sought to down play the leadership role of Africans, they have put confidence in the masses that blacks are equally capable of church leadership. It is also true that some of these churches are contributing greatly to the infrastructural developments of the country through building schools, hospitals, universities and orphanages. This is quite commendable. Further, because of their teaching on prosperity or encouraging members to be materially prosperous, the churches do not accept poverty as a virtue for entering the Kingdom of heaven, as did the colonial missionaries. They are right to see poverty as an anomaly. However, their emphasis on spiritual causes of this poverty and emphasis on spiritual solutions works against their noble efforts to empower the people. As Madipoane Masenya argues, 'the unwavering Jeseocentric faith of poor Pentecostal African believers enables them to survive the harsh conditions of poverty by focusing mainly on spiritual condition of the individual persons, but it also deprives believers of a holistic salvation because sexism, classism, and racist structures of domination are allowed to remain intact without any significant social critique'.⁶³ At the end of the day, the Pentecostal teaching of prosperity, far from being a liberation theology, it enslaves even more.⁶⁴ The teaching fails to ask fundamental questions in society.

Pentecostal teaching makes the oppressors feel comfortable with corruptly and exploitatively accumulated riches, while the exploited and oppressed are condemned for the predicament they are not in control of. While claiming to be on the side of the oppressed and exploited in the struggle against the oppressors, Pentecostalism by the questions and solutions it provides collaborates with the exploiters. No wonder, even the leaders of these churches and believers are not ashamed or disturbed in their hearts when they eat lavishly while the neighbours are starving

⁶³ Masenya, 'The Bible and Poverty in African Pentecostal Christianity', pp. 152-165.

⁶⁴ Cf. Gifford, *Christianity: To Save or Enslave?*. Harare: EDICESA, 1990.

to death. Instead of asking why the same community brings forth filthy rich people and filthy poor people, they claim blessings of the Lord on the rich. In a context like Zimbabwe where poverty has been manufactured for over a century to claim the blessings and curses of God on individuals is not only misplaced but also absurd. Adopting this gospel in Africa, Zimbabwe in particular is improper because it is American context specific. Gottwald's harsh criticism of such theologies as Pentecostal teaching is quite appropriate here. According to him,

symbol systems claiming to be based on 'biblical faith' will be judged by whether they actually clarify the range and contours of exercisable freedom within the context of the unfolding social process. Symbol systems that blur the intersection of social process and human freedom-by talking fuzzy nonsense, by isolating us in our private souls, by positing 'unseen' worlds to compensate for the actual world we fear to see, by conditioning us to compete for many small favours instead of cooperating for a few big gains, by cultivating mood and sentiment in place of vision and passion, by instilling resignation in the name of sweetness and sacrifice, by persuading us to accept the humanly unacceptable and to desist from changing what is manifestly changeable, by confirming our fixations to the past and our venturelessness toward the future, by decrying power while feasting on its benefits-all such symbol systems, however venerable and psychically convenient, are bad dreams to be awakened from, cloying relics to be cast away, cruel fetters to be struck off. They are, in a word, the Canaanite idols that Israel smashed when it smashed the Canaanite kings.⁶⁵

Indeed such a gospel is the teaching of the oppressor and not applicable to the oppressed. According to Gifford, the gospel of prosperity is a means of assuaging the consciences of Americans who are becoming aware of the poverty of so much of the world, hence, any brand of Christianity that insists on that wealth is not something to be guilty about but, on the contrary, is to be enjoyed as God-given, has considerable appeal. In as much as it diverts attention from the present economic system and merely fosters the determination to be among those who benefit from it, this gospel of prosperity is the polar opposite of liberation theology.⁶⁶ For that reason, it is inapplicable in Africa, since it is not able to serve African interests but those of the Americans.

⁶⁵ Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh*, p. 708.

⁶⁶ Cf. Gifford, *The Religious Right in Southern Africa*, p. 24.

Pentecostalism Versus African Tools of the Struggle

That this brand of Christianity was introduced in Africa for sinister reasons other than emancipating Africans is especially true when one considers its position regarding African cultures; languages, history and worldviews. Instead of embracing it, Pentecostalism scathingly attacks every element of African culture thereby disarming people of their vital weapons of the struggle for full humanity. In a majority of Pentecostal churches, pastors, preach, pray and cast out demons in English, not in local languages.⁶⁷ Most Pentecostals are 'spirit-filled' or 'inspired' only when they sing in English. It is then that even their pastors begin to speak in tongues and 'prophesy'. As such, Pentecostal gospel is, in a sense, what colonial missionaries taught about African culture and religion. In the case of ZAOGA, this could have partly been an inheritance from its Apostolic Faith Mission forebearers'.⁶⁸

Some Pentecostals have gone as far as changing vernacular first names and family names to 'Christian or biblical' names at conversion, although most of the names could be only English or German or any other foreign language, they are accepted as Christian hence holy. One popular Pentecostal preacher is now called Angel and has changed even the family name. Talking about the philosophy behind changing the names, he said:

"I got to Angel because God told me. There is a revelation we got. It might not go down well with people, but we follow God. We have the family name Tsindikidzo. You know what it means? An uncle of ours married his own father's second wife. They had a son whom they called Tsindika, meaning don't talk about it; keep this a secret. "But what happens is that every time you 'meet' God, He 'changes' your name: Abram to Abraham; Sarai to Sarah; Jacob to Israel; Saul to Paul, etc. Every time God sees that the name is not congruent to His plan, He changes it. In the Bible, when God does something, he gives it a name. Why, because a good name is hard to find? Another (family) name is Gonzo (rat). Who wants to be a rat? Then the third one is Mudzaniri. Our grandfather used to dance a lot when he got drunk. And, that's the name you would have to carry with you? "I'll not tell you how many things changed because of that name — Angel — the spiritual things that people do not want to think about. Angel means beautiful messenger and Uebert is a German name that means in-

⁶⁷ Cf. Togarasei, 'Modern Pentecostalism as an Urban Phenomenon', p. 372.

⁶⁸ Cf. Maxwell, 'Delivered from the Spirit of Poverty?' p. 358.

telligent. My eldest son is Uebert; the second born is Levi Hanoch: Levi (the priestly tribe) and Hanoch (Enoch), the man who walked with God all his life. The last born is Jude Eloï. Jude means from the tribe of Judah and Eloï means God my Father. So it is, 'praise God who is my Father.'⁶⁹

Rural areas, as bearers, custodians and conveyors of African culture have been targets of insults in Pentecostal sermons. It is almost as if rural equates with evil, stupidity and backwardness. The communal lands, according to Pentecostals are the places where demonic ancestral spirits originate, polluted substances are manufactured, witchcraft is rife and non-believing kin pressure or entice born-again into traditional practices.⁷⁰ This worldview may explain why Rumbi Dzikama's relatives from the rural areas are not allowed or anyone who do not belong to the same church (Pentecostal). She says; 'only sisters in Christ, those that are known by them should visit me, not my relatives from rural areas. They also discourage me from visiting my village and the food or anything I bring from my village, they throw away.'⁷¹ This may explain why domestic workers who come from the rural areas have to be converted immediately as they come to work in a Pentecostal family. They are suspected of being possessed by dangerous spirits from rural areas.

In other words, rural areas are synonymous with the Kingdom of the Devil, hence stands in antagonism with God. It has to be destroyed by the kingdom of God. Scriptures such as 1 Corinthians 4: 20: 'The kingdom of God is not in word only but in the demonstration of power', give validity to the endeavor and casts the preacher and believers as residents in the kingdom of God therefore must not mix with those of the kingdom of Satan. Because of this belief, there are Pentecostal churches that encourage their members not to shake hands with relatives or anyone who would have visited from rural areas, especially if they are not members of the same faith. The practice is still going on in the cities. There are even special prayers for protection against evil spirits in the rural areas if one has to travel. Usually members are encouraged to communicate their intentions to travel to the rural areas so that those who remain in town may always 'keep them in prayer'.

⁶⁹ Prophet Eubert Angel, founder of Spirit Embassy Church: 'The Holy Spirit is a friend', *The Herald*. Thursday, 22 April 2010.

⁷⁰ Maxwell, 'Delivered from the Spirit of Poverty?' p. 359.

⁷¹ Rumbi Dzikama, is a maid in Mufakose, Harare, for an AFM family. (interview with my informant on 14 April 2011).

It is common among some Pentecostal churches that one gets 'cleansed' soon after returning from a visit to the rural areas. Common scenarios after festive holidays are when a pastor asks the congregation if some had visited relatives in the rural areas because 'kune mweya yenzvimbo'⁷² (every place has its own spirits), suggesting that rural areas are outside the spiritually clean zone. The pastor would then ask them to come forward for prayer. The believers are thus cleansed of the supposedly evil spirits that they would have attracted from their visit. This suggests that the Pentecostal preachers' hermeneutical standpoint is located outside the realms of the struggles of the rural people, the poor peasants and the exploited. They thus take sides with the elites. At the end of the day, this gospel cannot bring about liberation from gender, class and racial oppression.

The Bible and Emancipation of Domestic Servants: A historical Perspective

I have demonstrated above how the Pentecostal reading of the Bible legitimises oppression and exploitation of the weak, especially domestic workers by its lack of sociological analysis to question and interrogate the existing inequalities between races, classes and genders which lead to collaborating with the oppressors in the struggle. By so doing, Pentecostalism makes the Bible and the Church part and parcel of the oppressive system used by the powerful race, class and gender to exploit the weak. Thus, the methodological viewpoint of the interpreter is particularly important in shaping the outcome of the process of biblical interpretation. Because the meaning of the Bible is dependent on the ideological and methodological standpoint of the interpreter, the same Bible is therefore capable of bringing about revolutionary changes and emancipation of the domestic workers in Zimbabwe when read from the side of the poor, domestic workers. History has proven that among other developments, the shift in method of biblical interpretation or theologi-

⁷² 'Mweya yenzvimbo' philosophy is so common in the Pentecostal establishments such that prayers are usually offered to cleanse some spaces. A friend tells me of an incident in 1994, when he and fellow Pentecostal brothers and sisters travelled from Gweru to Shurugwi for church crusade. Upon disembarking, one of them, a sister fell unconscious. He said, 'we prayed for her and our safety, casting out the spirits of Shurugwi that were opposing our mission'.

cal standpoints from literalist or fundamentalist approaches toward critical biblical analysis that takes on board sociological analysis has contributed greatly to the emancipation of domestic servants in Europe especially in Britain.

This shift saw the ideological legitimation of the servant role that was largely by traditional religious authorities who enshrined the master-servant relationship as primordial and sanctified, almost divinely ordained began to wear thin ever since roughly the middle of the nineteenth century. This happened when religious views about the world were increasingly challenged by secular world views and when religious interpretations themselves shifted in more equalitarian direction. And this includes interpretation of the Bible. Exhortations to the duty of obedience and to the necessity of staying within one's calling declined in effectiveness when philosophical radicalism, liberal Protestantism, and equalitarianism began to seep into the lower strata, who began to question the previously held as foundational doctrines and institutions that authored their oppression such as the Bible and the Church. The lower strata (poor and women) realised that the Bible among other traditional religious institutions such as Church were used by the rich and powerful males to oppress them. They began to appropriate the same to fight for their humanity. This sort of rebellion started in urban areas, with the lower classes refusing to be shackled in servant hood preferring more dignified occupations. Masters in their bid to hang on to the old exploitative system continued to get servants from the country side for a while. However, later with the growth of secularization or more equalitarian religious doctrines that characterized both rural and urban areas undermined the ideological justifications of the servant-master relationship. From then on, the relationship between the master and servant was now only contractual and specialised.⁷³

The problem in Zimbabwe from the days of the colonial era has always been lack of Christian religious leaders who honestly take sides with the oppressed in the struggle. The interpretation of history and even Biblical interpretation is still controlled by the elite hence carries the perspectives of the elite. In a few cases where some Christian leaders have voiced their presence, there is total confusion as to who the oppressor and the oppressed is. They, unlike Amos even condemn the wronged, the dis-

⁷³ Cf. Coser, *Greedy Institutions*, pp. 81-84.

possessed, while exonerating the oppressors. This provides an opportunity for biblical scholars to stand up and take the position of Amos in Zimbabwe.

In the same vein, the reading and interpretation of the Bible that has the capacity to liberate domestic workers from their plight of servant hood is certainly not to be sought in fundamentalist methodology. It has to be critical, historical and sociologically grounded. Far from being immune to criticism, it is high time in Zimbabwe and Africa at large that biblical scholars engage in relentless criticism of the Church's theological standpoint. This is especially important as its operations and biblical interpretational frameworks have a long history of taking sides with the oppressors thereby legitimising oppression of the weak. The Church has over the years provided half-backed solutions by misrepresenting itself as standing in the middle as a neutral arbiter between the oppressors and the oppressed. Biblical scholars have therefore no option but to stand on the side of the weak and those oppressed by the Church and the structures that be. It is with this belief that I engage Luke 4:18 and Gal 3:28 to fight on the side of the oppressed domestic workers, whose fight despite its centrality to all the struggles has remained unnoticed by scholars.

Conclusion

This chapter has exposed the clandestine role of Pentecostalism in standing against revolutionary change in Zimbabwe. Its emphasis on spiritual causes and spiritual solutions to the intolerably extreme disequilibrium either as blessings or curses from God, sought and still seeks to discourage Zimbabweans from serious and critical engagement with historical political, social and economic structures that are wholly responsible for the state of affairs. Thus, despite claims of bringing liberation and deliverance to the vulnerable classes, by failing to ask relevant existential questions, Pentecostalism stands against the very oppressed classes it claims to stand for. Pentecostalism therefore takes sides with the oppressive structures, which it exonerates from guilty conscience. By presenting an image of Jesus who is uninterested with political, social and economic struggles of the poor, but only in spiritual matters, makes him take sides with the status quo rather than an advocate and active participant of revolutionary change agenda, on the side of

the oppressed classes. A study of Luke 4:18 in the next chapter shows that contrary to Pentecostal interpretation, Jesus was equally concerned with political, social, economic and even religious structures that caused poverty and took sides with the oppressed and not the oppressors. This should serve as the model for the Church and Biblical scholars of liberation today. Contrary to fundamentalist exegesis displayed by Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe that stood up to defend the colonial exploitative status quo, liberation hermeneuticians must like Jesus take sides with the exploited by critically interrogating the causes of poverty. And this is what the next chapter seeks to do.

CHAPTER NINE

LUKE 4:18 AND THE LIBERATION OF THE OPPRESSED: DOMESTIC WORKERS

Introduction

So far, this study has shown that the miserable slave-status of the Zimbabwean domestic workers has barely moved beyond the colonial era scenarios. Race, class and gender struggles are far from being issues of the past in the domestic service sector. By failure to address socio-economic conditions that destined others to be a class of eternal masters while making others a class of perpetual slaves, the legal regime overhaul that political independence of Zimbabwe brought addressed symptoms and not the causes of the illness of the society. This is exactly what we have seen with the manumission laws in eighth century Israel (Exo 21:2-6, 20-21, 26-27 and Deut15:12-18). There was need for the Zimbabwean society to address the socio-economic inequalities as well by calling for total liberation as did the Israelite society in Lev 25. It is upon this background that this chapter takes the Zimbabwean society back to the dawn of Independence, as the platform to advocate for a revolutionary transformation of the domestic service sector (hence the society at large), by interpreting Luke 4:18, in the light of the liberation motif in Lev 25. Jesus' declaration of liberation for the oppressed classes in Luke 4:18 reflects a society that had barely moved beyond Old Testament scenarios of exploitation of the underclasses by the few elite. In other words, the call suggests that the struggle of the underclasses; peasants, labourers and slaves among others in Roman colonised Palestine is a continuation of the struggle that began with the peasants and the Habiru/slaves of Canaanite city-states, from well before the emergence of Israel. Gottwald is right when he observed that 'it appears that even under Roman rule, Jewish Palestine continued to follow the traditional pattern of customary use holdings that could be lost over time through indebtedness'.¹ Thus, the importance and relevance of Luke 4:18 in Southern Africa, Zimbabwe in particular is not necessarily because of the many times it is cited in the quest for 'liberation' both in political and Church circles, but

¹ Gottwald, 'Social Class as an Analytic and Hermeneutical Category in Biblical Studies', p. 6.

it is also because of its context that I find strikingly similar to that of Zimbabwe. The material conditions that inform Jesus' message of liberation in Luke 4:18 are similar to conditions that push peasants into domestic service in Zimbabwe. We can thus enlist it as a text for liberation of the oppressed and exploited underclasses of Zimbabwe.

The Engagement of Luke 4:18 in Southern African Struggles

While Luke 4:18 has been variously interpreted and appropriated in different parts of Africa and other developing world countries, its history in Southern Africa has a firmer bearing on Zimbabwe. Therefore, it is necessary to briefly discuss how Luke 4:18 has been interpreted particularly in South Africa and in Zimbabwe. In South Africa, at the height of apartheid, Allan Boesak² among other African Theologians of black liberation enlisted Luke 4:18 as a liberating weapon to fight the oppressive white regime. And this revered position of Luke 4:18-19 in apartheid South Africa has seen it feature in Chapter Four of the *Kairos Document* that is entitled "Towards a Prophetic Theology".³ In Zimbabwe, since the rise of Pentecostalism in the 1960s, Luke 4:18 as I have mentioned in the previous chapter is a central text summoned usually in exorcism or deliverance sessions meant to bring forth liberation from spiritual powers that cause poverty.

Thus, Sebastian Bakare had already observed in 1997 that popular as the text may be, however, it seems that very few preachers use it in its proper context, the context of jubilee (Lev 25). He says, 'nine out of ten preachers whom I recently interviewed in Harare who had preached on this text (Luke 4:18) said that they had not done so in the context of its biblical antecedents in the jubilee. This suggests a very limited understanding of jubilee in our churches'.⁴ In recent years, Luke 4:18 has been widely accepted in Zimbabwe as a liberating text. This time, it has been interpreted in the light of its original context of the Jubilee of Lev 25. In

² A.A. Boesak, *Farewell to Innocence: a socio-ethical study on black theology and black power*. New York: Orbis, 1977, pp.20-26.

³ *The Kairos Document. Challenge to the Church: A Theological Comment on the Political Crisis in South Africa*. South Africa: 1985; On the contrary, Itumeleng Mosala, *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology*, criticises Boesak and all other black theologians for using Luke 4.18-19 as a liberating text. For him, it is ideologically packed with pacifism, hence it is inadequate as a weapon to liberate the oppressed blacks.

⁴ Bakare, 'African Perspective on the Jubilee celebration', p. 417.

this case it has been appropriated TO offer justification for land acquisition and redistribution exercise. Hence in 2006, in *The Zimbabwe We Want*, a document produced by the churches of Zimbabwe, which document corresponds closely to the *Kairos Document* of South Africa, Luke 4:16-19 is highly placed. Part of section 3.2.16 dealing with God's 'Preferential Option for the Impoverished and Marginalised' reads:

Both Old and New Testaments exhort God's people to pay special attention to vulnerable members of the society like widows, orphans, aliens and the poor....The impoverished, marginalised and forgotten, need special care and attention. The Church and all the people of good will must choose to be on their side. The option for the impoverished is an option that is inspired by the Jubilee vision laid out in the book of Leviticus (chapter 25, my insertion) through the proclamation of the Hebrew prophets and Jesus' identification of his vocation as 'bringing good news to the poor....and proclaiming the year of God's Jubilee' (Luke 4:16-19).⁵

Although the premise that the whole Bible testifies God who takes sides with the oppressed is built on shaky grounds, given the history of the Church in Zimbabwe as a partner in exploitation of the weak, the premise is a positive turn towards crafting a liberating hermeneutics, grounded in the experiences of the oppressed. However, the churches in Zimbabwe have failed over the years as evident in the same document to clearly spell out what constitutes oppression and who the oppressor is. Reading *The Zimbabwe We Want*, leaves one with the impression that the people who invaded lands and anyone committed to redistribution of the economy is the oppressor. While they acknowledge the necessity of the land reform, they go on to condemn the same land reform as retributive, chaotic and racial and the cause of poverty instead of blaming economic sanctions, economic sabotage and resistance of the former farm owners. That alone leaves them speak exactly the language of the oppressors.

In a way, while they appreciate the land reform, their condemnation of the same peasant revolution, (land reform) amounts to a big and resounding contradiction. How could they claim to speak for the vulnerable, marginalised and impoverished; peasants, widows, orphans and aliens when they condemn the same impoverished masses that spear-

⁵ *The Zimbabwe we want: Towards a national vision for Zimbabwe*, prepared by The Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops Conference, The Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe and The Zimbabwe Council of Churches. 15 September 2006, p. 23.

headed and benefitted from the same land reform they appreciate? How could the Church claim to stand with the poor in their struggles while at the same time accusing them of violating 'private property rights' by taking land, which for more than a century had been forcibly taken from them? Thus, although the Church claims that God takes sides with the oppressed, they do not take sides with them; while God's intention is to please the oppressed, the Church seeks to please both sides the oppressors and the oppressed. In sum, their argument is; God loves both the oppressors and the oppressed and he wants them to live in peace, as horse and rider or as master and slave! This position is contrary to the spirit behind the text of Luke 4:16-19.

Jesus of Luke 4:18 is Against the Churches of Zimbabwe!

Understood in the light of its immediate or contemporary religious, socio-economic and political environment of the time of Jesus, which context I argue here that is strikingly similar to that of Zimbabwe and Southern Africa in general, Luke 4:18 overturns not only the prevalent Pentecostal-spiritual interpretation but also the Zimbabwean Churches understanding of the oppressors and the oppressed. Luke 4:18 is a revolutionary call to dismantle every form of oppression and Jesus is depicted as one who clearly takes sides with the oppressed. Jesus in Luke 4:18 does not try to be diplomatic or to be neutral. He is concerned about the oppressed poor majority who are crushed by a few on the basis of political, socio-economic and religious muscles. I argue here that Jesus' preaching in Luke 4:18 is holistic. It touches on historical and contemporary economic, political, social and religious wellbeing of the ordinary people. Jesus is concerned about the political, economic, social and religious liberation.

It is mandatory therefore that we discuss the historical and contemporary background of Luke 4:18, which context obviously influenced the ministry of Jesus. The intention is to bring to the fore the many ways in which the poor were impoverished by both the political and religious establishment of Roman Palestine, condemning them to slavery. Among the most notable strategies were land dispossessions, debts, taxes and tithes. This context is comparable to the Zimbabwean context where the poor have not only been dispossessed of their ancestral lands, but also subjected to heavy and unending taxes by both the government and the

Church as we have observed in the previous chapters. Although colonisation has 'gone' this tradition has continued with very few changes. The Churches especially the Pentecostal establishments contrary to their claim of prospering poor people, with their constant demands for money from the same poor alongside colonially structured economy that is tilted against the black poor, they have become key impoverishing institutions. Therefore in order to come up with biblical hermeneutics for liberation we need to situate and interpret the struggle of the poor Zimbabweans in the light of a context of a real struggle between the rich and the poor in the Bible. And I believe that Luke 4:18 is situated right in the midst of such a struggle, hence its chances as a liberating text for Zimbabwe's underclasses (domestic workers as the most prominent) are high.

The Colonial Roman-Palestinian Context of Luke 4:18

To understand Jesus' message in Luke 4:18 as a commitment to liberation, it is important to analyse first the political, social, economic and religious set up of Roman-Palestine before and during his ministry. This context, is similar to Zimbabwean peasant struggles during and after colonisation. According to Walter E. Pilgrim, Josephus provides the most revealing accounts of the struggles between the poor and the rich in Palestine of the time of Jesus, particularly in his (Josephus) description of an event that occurred in Jerusalem at the outbreak of the Jewish War in A.D. 66. Although it took place quite some time after the ministry and death of Jesus, at least it sheds light on how the life had always been even during the days of Jesus. According to Josephus, at the beginning of the A.D. 66, Zealot revolution, the first thing the Zealot leaders did to recruit and gain the support of the masses and to conquer opposition of the upper classes was to raid the city archives, where all the records of debts were kept, and to burn the ledgers.⁶ This act may seem unconnected to the goal of the revolution until one understands its social significance. It was a clear and an unequivocal message to the ordinary oppressed poor people. To them, it was an announcement or declaration of a kind of Jubilee year, the cancellation of debts. To a people

⁶ Cf. Walter E. Pilgrim, *Good News to the Poor: Wealth and Poverty in Luke-Acts*. Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1981, p. 41; Cf. Josephus, *Jewish Wars* (II, 17.6), Leob Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956.

oppressed in various ways including slavery, not only by the Romans but also by their own vested hierarchy, both religious and political, the announcement of Jubilee was good news indeed.

It was in this kind of social and political scene that Jesus lived and died. As a Galilean, Jesus must have witnessed the simmering tension between the poor masses and the rich few. In other words, Jesus must have seen with his own eyes the grinding poverty of the many and their exploitation by the few. Equally true is the fact that he must have heard with his own ears the various Zealot calls. He even might have seen their attempts to freedom which culminated in the 66 A.D. revolt, when the time was ripe for social upheaval and revolution. Therefore Jesus' own words in the Gospels and in this case in Luke 4:18 must have been heard and understood by his hearers as a call for revolution. This is exactly how we have to interpret Luke 4:18. We need to understand it as much as possible within this social setting. It is important now that we clearly show the whole picture of the context of Jesus, particularly evidencing the disparity between the socio-economic classes of the society.

Socio-Economic Classes of Roman-Palestine

Almost as a replica of Canaanite city-states before the settlement of early Israel, political, social, economic and religious factors mattered most in the stratification of the society in Roman-Palestine of the times of Jesus. As I have alluded to in the previous chapters, this was and remains the case in Zimbabwe. In other words, race, class and gender opened doors for one's political, social, economic and religious influence. At the top of the hierarchy were the very few political and religious figures who controlled the economy, mostly Roman and Jewish males. In descending order these were followed by the middle class traders that were mostly males. At the bottom of the pile were the very poor, peasants and majority of them being women, who controlled close to nothing. However, it was the majority poor who financed the luxurious lives of the middle and upper classes.

The High Class and their Luxurious Lifestyles

At the top of the political and economic ladder were Herod and his household. As the Roman imposed ruler over Roman Palestine, Herod's sources of income for the extravagant rule and life were many. His

riches came from taxes, from personal property, from confiscated goods of leading men convicted of wrong doing, from bribes and gifts among others. It should be noted that Herod and his household's high level of living contrasted vividly with the rest of the populace. In the same wealthy class with Herod, but of course a bit lower than him, were merchants and large landowners, tax-farmers, bankers and families of inherited means. Among the colonised Jews, the Sanhedrin also had some rich members, although not all of them were rich. The Jewish priestly hierarchy and their associates composed chiefly of the High Priestly families belonged to this class of the elite. Their association with the upper classes shows that with time they had departed from the tradition set by the Levitical priests, who were enemies of the elite. The office of priesthood had been corrupted by greedy.

Echoing the scenarios in the previous chapter, whereby Pentecostal preachers have become rich in Zimbabwe as a result of money they collect from the believers, in Roman-Palestine, the wealth among High Priestly families came largely from the Temple tax required of every Jew throughout the world, and from the sale of sacrificial animals and the profits of money changers. As it is in Zimbabwe today, it is clear that in Roman colonial Palestine, religion paid. There is even evidence to the effect that because religion paid, expensive bribes were necessary to stay in office. High Priests were known for their love of flashy lifestyles; expensive feasts and banquets, which consumed much of their income.⁷ Thus the various taxes (tithes and offerings) demanded from the poor in the name God were all used to sponsor the luxurious lives of the few rich, fellow human beings, while the poor, from whom the wealth came were starving to death. Almost depicting the Zimbabwean scenarios I have described in the previous chapters, richer people in Roman Palestine had better diets, characterised by ceremonious meals, frequently inviting friends, companions, disciples and clients—a lifestyle that distinguished them from the rest of the population.⁸ Unfortunately, High Priests had become part of the oppressive syndicate. Instead of being advocates for the poor, they participated in the exploitation of the poor.

⁷ Cf. Pilgrim, *Good News to the Poor*, p. 42.

⁸ Cf. Gildas Hamel, *Poverty and Charity in Roman Palestine, First Three Centuries C.E.* Near Eastern Studies, Vol. 23. California: University of California Press, 1990, p.31.

The Middle Class and their Lifestyle

In Roman Palestine, the middle class consisted of very few individuals. It was not as big as we would find today in many societies. Their middle class consisted of retail traders who manned the crowded shops in the bazaars, and the small tradesmen and craftsmen who owned and worked in their own shops. They were so common that each village, great and small, had some of these. However, due to the large influx of customers, pilgrims for the feasts, the middle class in Jerusalem fared better than the rest.⁹ In fact, it is them that could be properly called middle class. Because of the strategic position of Jerusalem for business, the middle classes in the villages always were salivating to do business in Jerusalem. Since Jerusalem was the centre of the Jewish world, it was the responsibility of the middle class to serve the pilgrims who so frequented Jerusalem. The specialisations of the Jerusalem middle men had to do mainly with selling food, drink, clothing and animals for sacrifices.

The High Priests of Jerusalem had also by their decrees aided to the attractiveness of Jerusalem for business. Maybe to boost their economic welfare, they stipulated percentages of money that was to be spent in Jerusalem for different ceremonies. For the Passover, as a general 'divine' rule, it was commanded that the second tithe be spent only in Jerusalem, and that it be used on meat and strong drink or anything else the pilgrims desired. Josephus says, 'they feasted the seven whole days and spared no expense'.¹⁰ Most of the pilgrims were especially fond of wine and meats and the wives were often favoured by gifts of fine white linen. And this attracted middle men from the villages to come to do business in Jerusalem.

Although, due to their love of feasts and extravagant spending on wine, food and linen during ceremonies in Jerusalem, Priests can be classified in this middle class as well, it should be noted that most of them belonged to the lower class. While it is true that some of the priests and Levites were well educated and well off hence belonged to the upper class, by and large the priests were only honoured, but some were mis-

⁹ Cf. Pilgrim, *Good News to the Poor*, p. 42.

¹⁰ Cf. Pilgrim, *Good News to the Poor*, 43; Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*. XI, 4.8. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1956; Cf. Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the time of Jesus*. 3rd rev. ed. Trans by F. H. and C. H. Cave. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967, p-102-103.

erably poor. Their economic status was conditioned by the attitude of the people. While the law prescribed that their needs be sufficiently catered for out of the income from sacrificial animals and from the various tithes, there was clearly a considerable gap between what was required by law and what was actually received. Josephus admits that the priests were often reduced to poverty because some of the people were indifferent. At times priests were even forced by their poverty to go into the fields and try to demand of the people to pay their tithes. In general, their lives were often lived on the thin edge of poverty, contrary to the status and wealth of the High priestly families.¹¹

The Lower Class and their Precarious Lifestyle

At the bottom of the socio-economic pyramid were the pitifully poor citizens. Essentially the poor belonged to two groups: those who sought to earn their own livelihood, and those who lived off subsidy. In the former category, we have slaves and day labourers. While the rural areas had few slaves, many lived as domestic servants in the larger cities. Jerusalem even had its own auction block for slaves.¹² There is debate among scholars as to whether Jews became slaves or not but evidence suggest their presence. As in the Old Testament times, Jews enslaved one another. Day labourers however, were undoubtedly far more numerous than slaves. They depended on each day's work for board and keep, scenarios that strikingly reflect Zimbabwean colonial and post colonial daily scenarios among the poor. They earned an average of one denarius per day, with keep (cf. Mtt 20:2, 9). That means in order to survive, each day one needed to work. If one was unlucky not to get a piece job, consequently one would not eat. This is particularly true also in Zimbabwe. As I have shown in the previous chapters, the poor are so desperate that they leave the rural areas to cities where they would roam the streets, looking for domestic work only to guarantee a meal.

Facing the same circumstances with the other poor living on the poverty line such as slaves and day labourers as we have mentioned above were the *Am Haaretz*, the people of the land or peasants. Either as small land-owners or as tenants for large land owners, they did their best to get by with the minimum required for life and health. But similar to Zimbab-

¹¹ Cf. Pilgrim, *Good News to the Poor*, p. 43.

¹² Cf. Pilgrim, *Good News to the Poor*, p. 43.

wean peasants especially during the colonial era, they were overburdened with taxes, tithes and rent and so often fell hopeless into debt.¹³ It was basically these people who would become day labourers and slaves in the cities working in the domestic service for a living.

The second group of the poor was even worse off than the slaves, day labourers and *Am Haaretz*. This group involves individuals who lived either partially or fully on relief. Lowest on the scale were beggars who gathered at the gates of the old city or near the Temple precinct. They included the sick, blind, lame, lepers and the destitute. It was common scenario to see a scrawny mother with her hungry baby in arms pleading for help from passer-bys. Although they often got something from well wishers especially in form of alms, their survival was precarious. Even the ones that were mentally stable, because of their poverty and the conditions they were forced to live under; without food, accommodation and any other form of possession, it is not surprising that most of them ended up appearing as mentally challenged. According to Pilgrim, pathetic, without hope, socially and religiously ostracised, the beggars were constant reminders of one's inhumanity toward others. Unfortunately the society especially religious gurus of the day did not accept them. They came up with various explanations to quarantine them as unfit. It was only the radical, Jesus who associated with them. Thus, we meet them often in Jesus' parables, in his healings, or at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple (Acts 3:2-3,10).¹⁴

Apart from the above groups I have mentioned, another category of the poor were the fatherless and widows, the victims of ill-fortune. While the society had some institutions in place for social care of these groups, it is not clear if they all were satisfied with the services available. In normal situations abuse of the same groups of vulnerable classes by the rich is common. It is not improbable that some of these orphans and widows found themselves on the streets as beggars either after family inheritance was all taken away by some greedy members of the family, society or when they fell into debt, considering that during droughts especially, the conditions of the poor worsened.¹⁵ Similar people as I have pointed

¹³ Cf. Pilgrim, *Good News to the Poor*, p. 43.

¹⁴ Cf. Pilgrim, *Good News to the Poor*, p. 44.

¹⁵ Hamel, *Poverty and Charity in Roman Palestine*, pp. 47, 48, 49.

out are the ones involved in domestic service in Zimbabwe; orphans, widows and the destitute.

Notable Disparities Between the Rich and the Poor

Although the society could be split into three neat groups: the high class, middle class and the lower class, in reality there were two basic units that correspond to the reality on the ground in Zimbabwe; the haves and the have-nots. In this section I wish to compare and contrast the quantitative and qualitative material differences between the haves and the have-nots. The Gospel narratives provide invaluable insights into the different life styles between the poor, the have-nots and the rich or the haves in Roman Palestine during the days of Jesus, which insights clearly reflect Zimbabwean scenarios today.

Clothing

One of the most notable indicators of status between the rich elite and the poor majority pertained to clothing. While the rich afforded many elegant, expensive, and long clothes, the poor afforded only short, poor quality and most of them went almost naked. This allows us some space to discuss in detail the types of clothes available in Roman-Palestine and how they were perceived by their communities. In Roman-Palestine, the basic clothes were the cloak and tunic. The ancient sources often present cloak and tunic together, suggesting that under normal circumstances they were inseparable. They were meant to be worn together. Tunic was made from light material and thus was sort of undergarment while cloak was a large sleeveless garment made of square pieces of thick material usually wool.¹⁶ Usually the tunic was supposed to function as today's vest or muscle-top to be worn under the cloak, and not to be worn alone.

However, the tunic was sometimes worn alone especially at work or in the intimacy of home when it was hot and away from public view. It was also common in Roman Palestine to put on two or several tunics, one on top of the other, either because there was no room to store them, or to show one's wealth, or simply to fight off the cold.¹⁷ Under normal circumstances however, to be dressed in only a tunic was regarded as being

¹⁶ Cf. Hamel, *Poverty and Charity in Roman Palestine*, p. 60.

¹⁷ Cf. Hamel, *Poverty and Charity in Roman Palestine*, p.61.

‘naked’. So was Peter when he met Jesus (John 21:7); to be properly dressed, he had to put on a cloak that he had removed.¹⁸

Clothing and Diet as Socio-Economic Status Indicators

What should be appreciated by today’s scholars of the Bible is that clothing was a very rare commodity in the ancient world, particularly in those (rural) areas without the more sophisticated looms already in use. This is obvious from the care with which one treated clothes. Worn out garments were mended, kept, sold, treasured especially by the poor. In Zimbabwe’s rural areas especially this is still the case. New and especially more luxurious clothes are kept in treasures waiting for special occasions. It is easy to classify one’s socio-economic status by virtue of dressing as it was during the days of Jesus. The gospel of Luke, for example introduces the two extremes of wealth and poverty in the story of the Lazarus and the Rich Man by contrasting their dress and food (Lk 16:19-21). At one end stands a certain man dressed with the greatest of refinements for his time, in clothes which were so costly that normally only kings could afford them.¹⁹ And this man was said to have every day the kind of feast that is given for a special occasion (cf. Lk 15:23-24-the story of the prodigal son).

At the other extreme, Lazarus has no clothes on worth mentioning, and is afflicted with sores. Furthermore, he is so hungry that he longs to be satisfied by scraps from the table of the rich man.²⁰ While this story of Lazarus is built partly upon traditional folk materials, it however reads as an indictment of a terribly contrasted social situation during the days of Jesus. In fact, Jesus’ parables, and other stories he used were all grounded on social realities in Palestine.²¹ Reading this story, Zimbabwean scenarios immediately come to mind. There is an unavoidable

¹⁸ Cf. Hamel, *Poverty and Charity in Roman Palestine*, p. 62.

¹⁹ Cf. Hamel, *Poverty and Charity in Roman Palestine*, p. 64; cf. J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1985.

²⁰ Cf. Hamel, *Poverty and Charity in Roman Palestine*, p. 65; K.E Bailey, *Poet and Peasant*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1976, p. 171; Cf. J. Jeremias, *Rediscovering the Parables*. New York: Scribner’s Sons, 1966, p. 145.

²¹ Cf. Gottwald, ‘Social Class as an Analytic and Hermeneutical Category in Biblical Studies’, pp. 17-21; John Dominic Crossan. *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Peasant*. San Francisco: Harper, 1991, pp. 227-416) and Ediberto Lopez ‘The Earliest Traditions About Jesus and Social Stratification’ Ph.D. diss., Drew University, 1992.

contrasting image between the peasants represented by domestic servants of Zimbabwe and the employers especially during the colonial times. In some cases, as I have shown this has continued to date. As the story implies, these were also common scenarios in Roman-Palestine. The poor went without food, clothes and any other necessities, while the rich had everything.

One of the most convenient ways to clearly deduce the contrasting situations of the very poor from the other groups and the rich in the Roman Palestine of Jesus' era is to study the testimonies emanating from groups that had chosen to live in poverty. Although these testimonies vary greatly, they at least provide us with some valuable clues to reconstruct a rough picture of what was understood to be a life of poverty. For example, in Matthew 10:9-10, Jesus is reported as having said to his disciples: 'Take no gold, nor silver, nor copper in your belts, no bag for your journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor a staff; for the laborer deserves his food' (RSV) (cf. Mk 6:8-9; Lk 9:3; 10:4). What Jesus recommended was not uncommon. It was an everyday scenario in those days that itinerant preachers had to be provided for by the communities they visited.²² More importantly, such was the everyday life of the poor. John the Baptist also wore only a tunic, with a leather belt, and a cloak made with camel's hair (Mtt 3:4), suggesting that it must have been very rough. And the same thing was demanded of Jesus' disciples. Closely looked at, this was a reflection of the everyday situation of the very poor. They had to survive on charity in terms of food supplies, home, money and all the essentials of life.

According to these recommendations, therefore, the disciples of Jesus were expected to wear one tunic only, a belt, and no shoes or sandals. That itself may suggest that probably they had a cloak, unless it was provided under the laws of hospitality, because it was certainly essential, if only to spend the night in relative comfort. However, the fact that it was not mentioned may also suggest that they had to do without it, which was not unknown during those days among the most vulnerable. To ask the disciples not to carry a second tunic or shoes was physically demanding as well as it was also a demand of a social nature. A second

²² Cf. Hamel, *Poverty and Charity in Roman Palestine*, p.68; Cf. Gerd Theissen, *Sociology of Early Palestinian Christianity*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978, p. 13; M. Hengel, *Property and Riches in the Early Church*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974, pp. 51-52.

tunic allowed one to change, while the first one was being washed, in order to have ritually pure garments. To have only one tunic, on the contrary, was to risk impurity through spots of various origins, and the impossibility to wash it without being put to shame. Similarly, lack of shoes primarily meant a lack of status in the community.²³ Only the very poor were in the same situation, and Jesus according to Matthew 10:9-10 was asking his disciples to identify with these.

It was to such people that Jesus of Luke 4:18 brought liberation. In a way, through these recommendations of Jesus, we glean the image of the everyday life of the very poor in Roman Palestine who went along the roads and the lanes of the country or who sat at the entrances of cities, temples, villages, synagogues, and rich people's courts. The picture may not be that conclusive but at least we gather glimpses of a widespread lack of clothing (and food) in an indirect way. This is typically what the Zimbabwean poor experience everyday; the ones that will fall at any type of employment including domestic service.

Of all the clothes available in the days of Jesus, the cloak was the most prized possession of many a man. As such it could be taken away from him in payment of debt, or as a guarantee. It was the only sort of object that bandits would steal (Luke 10:30-the Samaritan story). Thus, naturally to be without a cloak for one reason or another meant to be cold at night, since the day cloak was also a night blanket particularly for the poor. It is also possible that the rich had several cloaks; some for the day and others for the night. For the poor, this cloak became a common blanket for two or more people, especially for parents with little children (cf. Lk 11:5-8). Among the poor families in Zimbabwe, it is common to find as many as eight children sharing one blanket.

Further, poor people in Roman-Palestine covered up their lack by sharing their clothing especially the cloak. In typical Zimbabwean rural scenarios among the poor, it was common in Roman-Palestine for a man to share the same cloak with his wife. Poor people also often borrowed clothes from each other's neighbour. In Zimbabwe, the poor can even borrow undergarments from neighbours or could share among family members. In Roman-Palestine (as it is in Zimbabwe) this was common for certain occasions, such as before journeys and festivals, when one was to look one's best. Or when the borrower's tunic or coat was proba-

²³ Cf. Hamel, *Poverty and Charity in Roman Palestine*, p.68.

bly too dirty or patched up, or of too rough a material, or even more impure, and it would have been shameful to wear. It must be appreciated that since poor members of the society kept mending and patching cloaks and tunics, it added to the risk of becoming impure.²⁴ The Gospels also drew upon this common occurrence-‘old must be mended by old not new on old’ (cf. Mtt 9:16; Mk 2:21; Lk 5:36).

Religious Consequences for Nakedness and Bare-Footedness

In Roman-Palestine during the days of Jesus, the poor had been deprived by the elite that most of them went without clothes and bare-footed. In the Jewish eyes, being naked literally or relative nakedness (having only tunic) indicated a very low status: it was utterly unacceptable, especially among women (cf. Deut 32:21).²⁵ In some cases, nakedness, either relative or stark nakedness implied madness (Luke 8:27). Both literal and relative nudity caused one to be disqualified from performing certain religious functions, and hence lose one’s status in the community.²⁶ For example, a relatively nude man could not be allowed to read the Torah or to give a blessing. In other words most of the poor in Jesus’ time did not read the Torah and participate in religious festivals because of lack of clothing. Literally such people were considered outsiders in the Jewish society, for they were socially dead. Interestingly, such people became the targets and audiences of Jesus.

In the same vein, to be without footwear was also to lack social standing. Luke’s gospel gives the same impression (Luke 15-the prodigal son). In the story, shoes appear together with the father’s festive cloak and signet ring. It was only on religious grounds especially during worship in the synagogue or in the Temple that one could remove shoes and be bare-footed. To be without shoes in everyday life, however, was to be something less than honourable. It implied immediate contact with impure things; it meant dire poverty or slavery (Isa 20:3).²⁷ Indeed everyone, even a poor man’s wife, was expected to wear a pair of good shoes or sandals, at least for the main festivals. For the ordinary people, it is

²⁴ Cf. Hamel, *Poverty and Charity in Roman Palestine*, p. 72.

²⁵ Cf. S. Lieberman, *Texts and Studies*. New York: KTAV: 1974, p. 138.

²⁶ Cf. Hamel, *Poverty and Charity in Roman Palestine*, pp. 74-75.

²⁷ Cf. Jeremias, *Parable of Jesus*. London: SCM Press, 1972, p. 130; Cf. Hamel, *Poverty and Charity in Roman Palestine*, p. 76.

probable that shoes were put on only when necessary so that they might last as long as possible. This however implies that a lot more went on without shoes at all for the rest of their lives, a scenario that is common and not an exception in Zimbabwe. A sizeable number of rural people have never owned a pair of shoes or even sandals.

Quantity and Length of Clothing

During the days of Jesus, an abundance of clothes, shown specifically by the length and size of the cloak and tunic, was a sign of wealth. Roman citizens usually wore long tunics and very long mantles. It is plausible that this style influenced not only the Greek but also Palestinian habits among the rich classes. Ordinary people wore shorter clothing, which was cheaper to make or buy and more convenient to use at work, since it was only the poor who were associated with manual labour. Slaves too had shorter clothing, for the similar reason that their function was to serve. A long tunic would have impeded their movements as they laboured for their masters. Beyond this practical motive, however, there was also an institutional one. In the Roman Empire, it was forbidden by law for slaves to wear a coat. When they needed one, perhaps during cold weather, they wore a short cape such as the *paenula*, which was so practical that it became widely used in Europe. During meals, the mark of a slave was to wear his short tunic belted, in contrast to the seated guests, who perhaps did not wear a belt but kept their mantles wrapped around them (see Mtt 11:29; Lk 12:37; Jn 13:4f; Gen 21:14-‘he bound her loins to make it known that she was a servant’).²⁸ Thus, there were probably differences between the clothing of free poor people and slaves, perhaps in the quality of the fabric or in the absence of proper cloak for slaves. One clear difference was the absence of decorations on the tunics of slaves and of people having occupations considered to be very low, such as those carrying burdens.

Quality, Colours and Pattern of Clothing

Other important ways of marking difference of socio-economic status between individuals in Roman Palestine of Jesus’ time were the quality, colours and patterns of the fabric they wore. Not everyone could afford,

²⁸ Cf. Hamel, *Poverty and Charity in Roman Palestine*, p. 77.

or was entitled to fabrics of high quality. Only rich people in certain professions were allowed high quality and certain colours of fabrics. For the ordinary people, the colour of the tunic was supposed to show that they were made from rough and undyed material. For all sorts of fabrics, but particularly for wool, the care taken during the operations of spinning, weaving, fulling, and dyeing provided an opportunity to assert one's standing in society. The more time spend on the production of the fabric the more expensive it became. The most obvious results of such care showed in the colour of the garments and their decorations. White was for priests and the very rich who could be able to maintain it and who could be identified as pure. Hence it did not only symbolise religious state but also social status of an individual. And in judicial circles, white was used, for instance, if one who was accused of a crime and was found innocent; he would be send away in a white garment. On the other hand, black clothes signified guilty and impurity. Poor people or slaves, in contrast, to the rich were always thought to be sinful hence wore clothing that was less than white: they had to be content with nuances of grey and brown.²⁹ It was therefore easy to identify the status of a person by merely looking at the colour and quality of the clothes.

In Roman-Palestine, status difference was quite noticeable in slaves' attire. Ordinary slaves seem to have been wearing simple and ragged clothes characteristic of members of the lower strata of the society. This phenomenon is also revealed in ancient Jewish literary sources. The Testament of Job 39:1-5 shows that Sitis, Job's wife when she had become a slave her status fell and that was noticeable in attire: 'my wife Sitis arrived in tattered garments, fleeing from the servitude of the official she served, since he had forbidden her to leave lest the fellow kings see her and seize her. When she came, she threw herself at their feet and said weeping: 'Do you remember me, Eliphaz, you and your two friends-what sort of a person I used to be among you and how I used to dress? But now look at my appearance and my attire'. In reality, that slaves would wear the better quality garments of free persons of the middle or upper strata of society was exceptional. The Testament of Joseph also reveals the same notion. The Ishmaelites allegedly said to Joseph: 'You are not a slave; even your appearance discloses that' But I told them that I was a slave' (Test. Jos 39:1-5). When Joseph became a

²⁹ Cf. Hamel, *Poverty and Charity in Roman Palestine*, pp.78-86.

high official at Pharaoh's court his attire was like the free men's.³⁰ It was easy to identify one's socio-economic standing by clothing. The same is true in Zimbabwe today.

Back to Eighth Century BCE Israel in Roman-Palestine!

While the above described scenarios echoed in many respects the Eighth century BCE struggles of the poor, the main causes of poverty in Roman-Palestine are even more identical to the chief causes of poverty in eighth century Israel. The poor of Jesus' era were exploited not only by merchants, greed landlords, and creditors; they were also exposed to unending financial demands, in form of taxes by both the political and the religious institutions. In typical eighth century scenarios, the religious gurus justified the economic system through a theology that legitimised the exploitation of the weak. As I have repeatedly said, the ancient Israelite and colonial Roman-Palestinian backgrounds to poverty and the exploitation of the weak are also identical to colonial Zimbabwe. In other words, similar to eighth century BCE Israel and Roman-Palestinian poverty, Zimbabwean poverty was manufactured in abundance by the rich so as to manipulate the weak. As such, the Roman-Palestinian society represents a society that has returned to eighth century Israel, itself a replica of Canaanite city-state scenario. In short, in Roman-Palestine, the poor had 'returned to Egypt', the house of slavery.

The Burden of Roman and Jewish Taxes

Poverty in Roman Palestine was largely manufactured by the ruling elite and the rich landowners. Villages and families were subjected to constant pressure, occasionally violent, aiming at removing maximal quantities through tithes, taxes, compulsory labour services, rents and interest on debts. As a rule, the basic needs of working families and within families, the needs of weaker members were left unfulfilled. Social obligations came first, chief among them taxes, debts to be paid, duties to the community and family. Not only did the master's share come before the needs of the tenants' and labourers' families, but religious justifications were sought for this state of affairs. Over the centuries, the priesthood and monarchy in Israel had developed a complex system of tithes and

³⁰ Cf. Hezser, *Jewish Slavery in Antiquity*, p. 88.

dues centering on the Temple and the sacrificial system. Furthermore, the means of payment were very difficult, at least for those people living in small towns and villages where silver was rare (Mtt 17:24-27; 22:17-21; Mk 12:41-44). Cities and rich landowners who lived therein were the holders of good money and thus in control of the terms of exchange.³¹

Indirect taxes were even more abusive as a general rule. Everyone in Roman Palestine was to pay poll tax (*tributum capiti*). This tax was paid by all men aged fourteen to sixty-five. Landowners, except those exempted, also paid a land tax (*tributum soli*). In addition to these major taxes, there were several special requisitions, often for military or administrative purposes. There were also imports and tolls levied by the Roman administration, the Jewish administration, or the cities on various products or trades. For instance, taxes were levied on the sale of many products brought to town or city markets. Goods in transit were subject to tolls on highways and bridges.³² All these scenarios are not unknown in Zimbabwe especially during the colonial era. Since no major changes were registered, the ordinary people have barely recovered, although it is now more than 30 years after independence.

The major religious tax that all people were expected to pay was the tithe, and everything cultivated was tithed. Procedurally, tithe went to the Levites, who in turn would give one-tenth of it to the priests (Num 18:21-32). The owner of produce was also required to separate a second tithe to be used for sacrificial meals for himself in Jerusalem, which as I have mentioned above was supposed to be spent all in Jerusalem. Other minor offerings were the firstfruits, the *terumah* (from wheat, wine, and oil) and the offering of dough. Important offerings from the livestock were the firstborn males (redeemed in money: the first from unclean animals; the firstborn son), portions of everything slaughtered, and from the shearing. Many other offerings, especially the votive offerings, went to the priests. In addition to these, a Tyrian Didrachma was paid by every male Israelite of twenty years and over, whether rich or poor, for the maintenance of public worship (Mtt 17:24). These taxes were paid as long as the Temple was standing. While the Temple was still standing, certain families also provided for an annual offering of wood.³³ All these

³¹ Cf. Hamel, *Poverty and Charity in Roman Palestine*, pp. 142-144.

³² Cf. Hamel, *Poverty and Charity in Roman Palestine*, pp. 142-144.

³³ Cf. Hamel, *Poverty and Charity in Roman Palestine*, pp. 148-149.

taxes and tithes weighed heavily on the poor, whose harvests were not always that favourable.

Even though it was not the Temple's primary purpose to collect tithes, one of its functions was to concentrate wealth in a highly visible manner. For a long time, the Temple provided within Judaism the only answer to the problem of any state: where to find the 'fluxes' of wealth for taxation purposes. With the arrival of the Romans to Judaea, two systems of taxation were therefore in operation. Although not certain, it is possible that 'each pressed its full demands without taking any account of the exigencies of the other'.³⁴ Nevertheless, the demands made by both the Roman and the Jewish authorities were burdensome to the ordinary people whose lives were always at the margin of poverty, especially those who worked on rented land. These were subjected to heavy taxes from the owners of the land.

Hard Labour, Paltry Salaries and Ground Rents

While smaller domains were owned by officials, dignitaries, or military personnel, a multitude of modest or even very small properties were in the hands of local families.³⁵ The stories of the Gospels present very rich and powerful lords, more modest landowners (owner of 100 sheep in the Parable of the Lost Sheep, Mtt 18:12-14; Lk 15:3-7), and people of very small means (the woman with ten drachmas in Luke 15:8-10). One characteristic feature of labour in Roman Palestine was that those who owned most of the land did not work on it. In fact, cultivating the land implied absence of significant ownership. Thus, landowners acquired status in part by not operating their farms themselves. In fact, most of the important landowners lived in cities distant socially and geographically from their lands. This distance however did not necessarily imply lack of interest on their part in management of their land. They usually tasked certain individuals to run the daily affairs of their estates. Both rich and absentee landlords and more modest householders used similar solutions: direct exploitation through sons or other overseers (slaves or

³⁴ Cf. S. Freyne, *Galilee from Alexander the Great to Hadrian, 323 BCE. to 135 CE.* Wilmington, Del.: M. Glazier, 1980, p.183; F.C. Grant, *The Economic Background of the Gospels*, London: Oxford University Press, 1926, p. 89; C. McCown, *The Genesis of the Social Gospel*. New York: A Knopf, 1929, p. 305.

³⁵ M. Gil, 'Land Ownership in Palestine Under Roman Rule,' *RIDA* 17 (1970), pp. 11-53.

hired contractors) and leasing. In a majority of cases, they had slaves, hired labourers for the short or long term, or could let their land to sharecroppers and tenants on fixed leases, or mixed the solutions at their disposal, according to the quality of land, its remoteness from their house, and the customs of the place (cf. Lk 15:11-32), the Parable of the Lost Son, in which the older son is supervising hired labourers.³⁶ The Parable of the Vineyard and the Tenants (Mk 12:1-9; Mtt 21:28-31-parable of the two sons; Mtt 21:33-41; Lk 20:9-16) seem to be sharecroppers.

In such an economy based on land ownership, as we have observed with ancient Near Eastern societies, monarchic Israel and the Zimbabwean colonial scenarios, landowners designate the management and responsibility of manual agricultural labour to hired labourers, who were obviously unrelated to the owner, that is, they were not family members of the owner. In Zimbabwe, even way after the colonial period, owners of the prime lands continued to reside in South Africa, Britain, Canada, America, Australia and other Western countries. Most of the whites in farms were managers and not owners. Therefore owners designated white managers and black labourers to run their farms. For such wretched labourers, salaries were not commensurate with the labour. It was mainly exploitation at best. For, in agricultural work, as was common in Roman-Palestine, food seemed to have constituted most of the salary (cf. Mtt 10:10 'for the labourer deserves his food'. This is also the impression given by Luke 15:17, in which the younger son remembers how his father's hired servants 'have bread enough and to spare'. It was common that the salary of harvesters consisted of the food they could eat while working and nothing more. Certain workers, who presumably came afar, depended on the landowners for their board and food and that constituted salary. An important concern of landowners was that hired workers and their animals might eat too much and do less work if they came to work hungry or exhausted.

Day labourers not attached to the estate of a landowner were subject to periods of unemployment and want. They were hired when large undertakings make their help necessary, at harvest time, for ploughing, transportation, and construction projects. Unemployment seems to have been high, even at harvest time, when workers would be waiting around town

³⁶ Cf. Hamel, *Poverty and Charity in Roman Palestine*, pp. 151-152.

squares at different hours of the day (cf. Mtt 20:2, 9).³⁷ And that means without work one was unable to eat as food constituted salary and also in cases where salary was paid monetarily, it was too little that it could not sustain one beyond the next day.

Debt and Land Alienation

One of the notable mechanism through which the poor were exploited by the rich in Roman-Palestine was debt. From the standpoint of the landowner, the existence of debt was a sign that the correct degree of extraction was being applied to his tenants. It was an easy way to force families to pledge their labour for the next season, especially if the debt was large. The threat of physical violence; prison and torture, was a useful tool to extract loyalty. But the biggest threat was that of diminution in social status. This was more immediate and with it was the loss of security in food income. It was easy for a family to split and disintegrate with members becoming beggars and other lower classes, which would in turn render one religiously unclean. Thus, to maximise social pressure, the weight of the religiously organised community could be brought to bear. Landowners, who often were also religious authorities or closely tied to them, could use the common religious language of debt either in a harsh way, hoping to be paid a bigger proportion of the outstanding debts, or in a more subtle fashion, by showing compassion and expecting more work and faithfulness in return (Luke 16:1-8a).³⁸ Since landowners deliberately made sure that poor people were always in debt so as to extract more labour from them, debt had become an impoverishing strategy.

From all the discussions above, land has proven to be one of the major elements defining life in Roman-Palestine. This makes a striking similarity with Zimbabwe and the rest of Africa. As I have shown in various ways in this study, land in Africa, and for Africans is not only a geographical space, it is political, social, economic and religious. To live

³⁷ Cf. Hamel, *Poverty and Charity in Roman Palestine*, p. 153; Cf. L. Schottroff, 'Human Solidarity and the Goodness of God: The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard,' in W. Schottroff and W. Stegemann, (eds.), *God of the Lowly: Socio-Historical Interpretations of the Bible*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1984, pp. 129-47, (130).

³⁸ Cf. Hamel, *Poverty and Charity in Roman Palestine*, p. 157; For a detailed discussion on Luke 16:1-8a, see, Bailey, *Poet and Peasant*, pp. 98-102.

without land is impossible and that is why land has been at the centre of all the struggles in Africa. Peasants in Zimbabwe in particular are still locked in the fight to repossess land that was stolen from their ancestors at the onset of colonisation. Land defines the whole of African livelihood. Africans are intrinsically related to land in the same way the inhabitants of Palestine during the days of Jesus were almost defined by access to land or otherwise. In Roman-Palestine, the hope of acquiring land was strong, because it was the main path to a religiously defined life of honour. Access to land made it possible to lead a life of purity, offer sacrifices, pay tithes, be charitable, hire others, make better suited marriages, and be properly buried.³⁹ To live without land therefore was to be socially dead. To deny anyone an opportunity to own land was equivalent to killing such an individual. And this was the biggest crime the rich landowners committed to fellow citizens, by continuously extending large farms at the expense of the poor.

We have witnessed the same scenario from the eighth century B.C.E where prophets such as Amos and Micah have always spoken in defence of the poor, the deprived and the socially dead. In the Roman Empire at large, the government and landowners were subsidised by a population, the overwhelming majority of which lived from agricultural activities and paid land taxes and ground rents.⁴⁰ It is suggested that the general trend in the Empire was the 'ever increasing concentration of land in the hands of its governing aristocracy at the expense of the population at large'.⁴¹ This is what characterised eighth century Israel.

In a nutshell, it was only a privileged few who could be defined as living, everybody else was dead. It was these rich few individual who corruptly acquired their wealth that would pretend as if their riches were a blessing from God as a reward for their purity, pointing fingers at the poor as the corrupt and sinful, while the reverse is true. This is the general trend all over the world. The real evil culprits blame victims of their evil policies and structures as lazy, sinful, and evil among others. In Zimbabwe and Southern Africa at large this is especially true. While the majority black people are poor because of not only colonial structures, but also

³⁹ Cf. Hamel, *Poverty and Charity in Roman Palestine*, p. 159.

⁴⁰ Cf. A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1964, p. 464-65.

⁴¹ Cf. A. H. M. Jones, 'Rome,' in *Third International Conference of Economic History*. Paris: Mouton, 1969, p.100.

mismanagement, corruption, nepotism, economic sanctions among others, they are blamed as naturally cursed because they worship ancestors, lazy and primitive. Anyone trying to raise issues of structural injustices is either labelled a racist, divisive or trouble-causer while real racists who refuse to equally share the economy with others are praised as progressive, champions of rule of law, human rights and democracy.

Theological Justification of Socio-Economic Hierarchy: Massaging the Evil-Doers!

Because God was believed to be the supreme authority, any proper dominion needed some form of religious sanction. I have often noted that within the Jewish society, rights of ownership were secured in the last resort by a life of religious purity, with sacrifices in the Temple as long as it operated, or later a certain closeness to the Torah, the synagogue cult, and support of Torah learning. Tenant farmers, especially sharecroppers, had limited access to religious life so defined, mainly because they could not easily pay taxes or tithes going with it. The Temple itself, where claims to debts were kept, had been at the centre of a social hierarchy in which everyone was indebted to the person above, in a ladder-like structure parallel to the concentric circles formed by purity rules.⁴² The larger landowners could make large favours to each other, and provided the outlay that allowed the Temple to function. But the Temple in turn could be used to maintain exploitation by insisting on the sacred character of debts, which were inseparable from sins (cf. Mtt 18:23-35, the parable of the Unforgiving Servant). This parable does not only criticise the social structure involved, but also the harshness of the human character, at once debtor and lender.

In Judaism, work, as it is a painful thing, it was considered unwelcome since it is construed to have come into being after the loss of paradisaical state in Genesis 3, with the fall of the first man and woman. There were therefore strategies to rationalise work as it bore more on some than on others. The operating concept was that of the presence or absence of sin; sin led to painful work and to sufferings, as it led to poverty. As such, since rich large landowners did not work, they were sinless; slaves and other poor people are sinful as they did nothing but all of the donkey

⁴² Cf. Hamel, *Poverty and Charity in Roman Palestine*, p. 161.

work. The priests believed and taught that the poor were thus cursed and frowned at by God. It was by extension impossible in the minds of the people that God could speak through the poor and to the poor.⁴³

From this description of the situation during the days of Jesus, we can note a glaring disparity between the poor and the rich, with the poor by far more than the rich. Extreme wealth jogged alongside extreme poverty. The concrete needs and hopes of the poor would obviously be on the mind of anyone who came to announce relief, 'good news to the poor'. We also learn that there were many unemployed poor and drifters, people who were prone to follow any leader who promised them board and a sword, and sometimes even a messianic revolution.⁴⁴ For people under these circumstances, the only good news for their ears is that which promises them a reversal of the status quo. And such good news must be more of present than it is futuristic. It was in this context that Jesus preached good news to the poor, (Lk 4:18).

Theology of Luke 4:18: Jesus Versus Official Theology

Luke 4:18 is sandwiched by two important texts for understanding its meaning; 4:16-17, 20-21. These verses that introduce and conclude the reading from Isaiah 61:1-2 and 58:6 are generally regarded as Luke's own composition. Scholars are almost in agreement that here we find the programmatic text for the Lukan writings.⁴⁵ In other words these are words put in Jesus' mouth by Luke to put across a theology intended for his community. They are intended to provide the setting for Jesus' dramatic announcement of the arrival of the final salvation time, and fix the eyes of the readers on the words: σήμερον πεπλήρωται ἡ γραφή αὕτη ἐν τοῖς ὠσίν ὑμῶν 'Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing' (vs.21). The word σήμερον (Today) is distinctively Lukan. It conveys for

⁴³ Cf. Hamel, *Poverty and Charity in Roman Palestine*, p. 161.

⁴⁴ Cf. Pilgrim, *Good News to the Poor*, p. 44.

⁴⁵ Cf. Pilgrim, *Good News to the Poor*, p. 64; Cf. U. Busse, *Das Nazareth-Manifest Jesu: eine Einführung in das lukanische Jesusbild nach Lk 4:16-30*. Stuttgart: Katholisches Biblewerk, 1978; Jonathan Knight, *Luke's Gospel*. London and New York: Routledge, 1998, p. 82-84; Cf. Patrick E Spencer, *Rhetorical Texture and Narrative Trajectories of the Lukan Galilean Ministry Speeches: Hermeneutical Appropriation by Authorial Readers of Luke-Acts*. London: T & T Clark, 2007, p. 6; Cf. Peter Mallen, *The Reading and Transformation of Isaiah in Luke-Acts*. London: T&T Clark, 2008, p. 157.

Luke the presence of salvation in the time of Jesus and in the life of the church (his context).⁴⁶

With *σήμερον* Luke expresses his 'realised eschatology', the belief that salvation is primarily a present reality and not some futuristic hope. The drama of the entire scene is thus focused on the word 'Today'. According to Pilgrim, in Luke, this word announces the final advent of what the Old Testament prophets and people had long awaited, God's coming in grace and mercy to begin his sovereign rule. And Jesus is regarded as the proclaimer and the fulfiller of this 'today'.⁴⁷ In the same vein, Judith Lieu, argues that at times it will seem that even in the preaching of Jesus the promise it contains can only belong to the future: *κηρύξαι ἐνιαυτὸν κυρίου δεκτόν* (to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour) is yet to dawn and the promise that the hungry 'will be satisfied' (6:21) belongs to the coming kingdom. Yet it is central to Luke's Gospel, and to all the traditions of Jesus' preaching that Jesus did not just point to something yet to happen; alongside the 'not yet' there was also a 'now' an 'already' or a *Today*, thus, in Jesus' ministry and preaching God's kingdom was already experienced.⁴⁸

Good News to the Poor: Jesus Against Spiritualisation of Poverty!

Καὶ ἦλθεν εἰς τὴν Ναζαρέτ, οὗ ἦν
τεθραμμένος· καὶ εἰσῆλθεν, κατὰ
τὸ εἰωθὸς αὐτοῦ, ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῶν
σαββάτων εἰς τὴν συναγωγὴν, καὶ
ἀνέστη ἀναγνῶναι.

Καὶ ἐπεδόθη αὐτῷ βιβλίον
Ἡσαΐου τοῦ προφήτου. Καὶ ἄ
ναπτύξας τὸ βιβλίον, εὗρεν τὸν
τόπον οὗ ἦν γεγραμμένον,

Πνεῦμα κυρίου ἐπ' ἐμέ, οὗ εἵνεκεν
ἔχρισέν με εὐαγγελίσασθαι
πτωχοῖς· ἀπέσταλκέν με ἰάσασθαι

^{RSV} 16. And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and he went to the synagogue, as his custom was, on the sabbath day. And he stood up to read;

17. and there was given to him the book of the prophet Isaiah. He opened the book and found the place where it was written,

18. The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to

⁴⁶ Pilgrim, *Good News to the Poor*, p. 66; Cf. H. Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke*. New York: Harper 1961, p. 103.

⁴⁷ Pilgrim, *Good News to the Poor*, p. 66; Knight, *Luke's Gospel*, p. 84.

⁴⁸ Judith Lieu, *The Gospel of Luke*. Peterborough: Epworth Press, 1997, p. 33.

τοὺς συντετριμμένους τὴν
καρδίαν· κηρύξαι αἰχμαλώτους
ἄφεσιν, καὶ τυφλοῖς ἀνάβλεψιν,
ἀποστεῖλαι τεθραυσμένους ἐν
ἀφέσει,
κηρύξαι ἐνιαυτὸν κυρίου δεκτόν.

Καὶ πύξας τὸ βιβλίον, ἀποδοὺς
τῷ ὑπηρέτῃ, ἐκάθισεν· καὶ πάντων
ἐν τῇ συναγωγῇ οἱ ὀφθαλμοὶ ἦσαν
ἀτενίζοντες αὐτῷ.
Ἦρξάτο δὲ λέγειν πρὸς αὐτοὺς
ὅτι Σήμερον πεπλήρωται ἡ γραφὴ
αὕτη ἐν τοῖς ὠσὶν ὑμῶν.

the captives and recovering of sight
to the blind, to set at liberty those
who are oppressed,

19. to proclaim the acceptable year
of the Lord.

20. And he closed the book, and
gave it back to the attendant, and
sat down; and the eyes of all in the
synagogue were fixed on him.

21. And he began to say to them,
‘Today this scripture has been
fulfilled in your hearing.’

Jesus, according to Luke 4:18, makes a bold statement that is not only quite central in understanding Luke’s conception of Jesus’ ministry but also helpful for us to evaluate how the same text has been and can be appropriated in the daily struggles. Luke portrays Jesus as inaugurating his ministry by declaring the manifesto of his mission at Nazareth, his (Jesus) hometown. Jesus did not waste time hiding behind the finger but declared ἔχρισέν με εὐαγγελίσασθαι πτωχοῖς, (He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor). In this passage, the good news is directed specifically to the poor. It is this mission of Jesus that must guide the operations of the Church today everywhere especially in places where poverty is the character of the society. However, the most important task is to identify the nature, character and identity of the people regarded as the ‘poor’-the targets of Jesus’ ministry, so as to appropriate Luke 4:18 in similar situations globally. Scholars have been preoccupied in trying to reveal the nature of these ‘poor’, the targets of Jesus’ ministry but with very little consensus. Be that as it may, their insights are very important in shaping the arguments in this study.

Matthias Wenk groups scholars into four categories.⁴⁹ First, there are scholars who understand πτωχοῖς (the poor) in metaphorical sense-a

⁴⁹ Matthias Wenk, *Community Forming Power: The Socio-Ethical Role of the Spirit in Luke-Acts*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000, pp. 211-214.

collective term for captives, oppressed and the blind,⁵⁰ however τυφλοῖς (the blind) is sometimes interpreted literally.⁵¹ The second group places weight on social dimension, the economically oppressed and the underprivileged.⁵² The third group suggests that the poor are people in all aspects of their neediness, irrespective of their social and economic or political standing.⁵³ Therefore the materially rich could be poor in other senses! The fourth category is represented by J.B. Green whose arguments are in essence a development of the third group. According to Green, 'preaching good news to the poor', entails a focus for Jesus' ministry on overturning previous measures of ascribed status. In contrast to the Roman system, the priestly, Qumran communities and the wider Jewish world of Luke's Gospel, Jesus is saying that people are not to be predetermined as insiders or outsiders by their sex, family heritage, financial position, location in the city or in rural environs, religious purity and so on.⁵⁴ The poor therefore included all levels of society, includ-

⁵⁰ Jeremias, *New Testament Theology 1: The Proclamation of Jesus*. Trans by Bowden. London: SCM, 1971, p.113; W. Schmithals, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas*. Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1980, p. 62, for example says that, Luke 4:18c is a heading encompassing the other groups of sufferers mentioned in v.18.

⁵¹ Turner, 'Jesus and the Spirit in Lukan Perspective', *TynBul* 32 (1981), pp. 3-42, (22); Turner, *Power from One High: The Spirit in Israel's Restoration and Witness in Luke-Acts*. Sheffield: Sheffield Press, 1996, p. 231; M.M.B. Turner, 'Mission and Meaning in Terms of Unity in Ephesians', in A Billington *et al*, (eds), *Mission and Meaning: Essays Presented to Peter Cotterell*. Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1995, pp. 138-66; E. E. Ellis, *The Gospel of Luke*. London: Thomas Nelson, 2nd edn, 1975, p. 97; J. Ernst, 'Das Evangelium nach Lukas: Kein soziales Evangelium', *TGl* 67, (1977), pp. 415-21; E. P. Sanders and M. Davies, *Studying the Synoptic Gospels*. London: SCM Press, 1989, p. 291; R.H. Stein, *Luke*. Nashville: Broadman, 1992, pp. 153-54.

⁵² Gerhard Kehnscherper, 'Von Jeremia zu Jesus von Nazareth: Die Ausrufung des Halljahres und das Kommen des Reiches Gottes. Eine sozialetische Untersuchung zu Lk 4:16-30' PhD dissertation, Ernst-Moritz-Arndt Universität, 1973; R. Albertz, 'Die 'Antrittspredigt' Jesu im Lukasevangelium auf ihrem alttestamentlichen Hintergrund' *Zeitschrift für Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 74 (1983), pp.182-206; Sharon H. Ringe, *Jesus, Liberation, and the Biblical Jubilee*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985.

⁵³ U. Busse, *Das Nazareth-Manifest Jesu: eine Einführung in das lukanische Jesusbild nach Lk 4:16-30*. Stuttgart: Katholisches Biblewerk, 1978, p. 32-33; Pilgrim, *Good News to the Poor*, p.65-84.

⁵⁴ J. B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*. Michigan: Grand Rapids, 1997, pp. 211; Green, 'Good News to Whom? Jesus and the 'Poor' in the Gospel of Luke' in Green and Turner (eds.) *Jesus of Nazareth: Lord and Christ: Essays on the Historical Jesus and New Testament Christology*. Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1994, pp. 59-74; Green, *The Theology of the Gospel of*

ing the economically poor, the sick, the dishonoured, those excluded from God's people by their fellow Jews, those held by satanic bondage and those in need of forgiveness of their sins.⁵⁵

I strongly argue against this relativisation or spiritualisation of poverty here. While indeed there are various categories of poverty that could be discerned in this pericope, Luke's reference to the term *πτωχοῖς* in the rest of the Gospel, could be indicative of the fact that the *πτωχοῖς* of verse 18c is best interpreted as a literal reference to the poor, those deprived of material necessities. This is more compelling as it links nicely with the mentioning of the Old Testament examples of persons who suffered economically or materially, the needy such as the widow of Zarephath (v.25-27). Given the context we have described above, it seems likely that Luke's, *πτωχοῖς* refers to economic suffering, not merely in the sense of relative poverty, but extending further to include hunger and beggary (6:20-21; 16:19-31),⁵⁶ something that was common among the blind and others. Luke therefore does not use the term *πτωχοῖς* metaphorically or relatively here.

Luke purposely avoids the word *πεινης* which denotes relative poverty. This term could have included almost everybody in the society in-

Luke. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, pp. 76-83; see also, R.A Guelich, *The Sermon on the Mount: A Foundation for Understanding*. Waco: Word Books, 1982, pp. 69-72; Mary Ann Beavis, 'Expecting Nothing in Return': Luke's Picture of the Marginalised' *Int* 48 1994, pp. 357-68; E. LaVerdiere, *Dining in the Kingdom of God*. Chicago: Liturgical Training Publications, 1994, pp.16-20, 192-94.

⁵⁵ Matthias Wenk, *Community Forming Power*, p. 214; Luke T. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*. Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1991, p.79, agrees that in Luke 4.18, the phrase 'to the poor', as in Mary's canticle (1:52), the 'poor' represent not only the economically impoverished but all those who are marginal or excluded from human fellowship, the out-cast (Cf. 6:20; 7:22,14:13, 21; 16.20, 22).

⁵⁶ Pilgrim, *Good News to the Poor*, p. 57, observes that this text belongs to the Q source common to Matthew and Luke. Thus it is older than the Gospels. While there is debate regarding which version is earliest, whether the direct address of Luke (6:20 'Blessed are you poor') or the indirect of Matthew 5:3 (Blessed are the poor') the majority favour the Lukan version. Mathew is usually accused of having expansion of the beatitudes and spiritualisation (Mtt 5: 3, 'in spirit', 5.6 'for righteousness' sake'. Therefore, Lukan version seems original. Therefore, these words must have been addressed to the hungry, powerless, and socially disposed people around Jesus. His announcement of the kingdom, with its concrete promise of a better future, must have stirred up long latent hopes for a time when justice would prevail and their present hardships would be the past.

cluding the very rich. Instead, Luke uses *πτωχοῖς* which implies the begging poor, in its literal sense.⁵⁷ Therefore, contrary to other observations above which interpret *πτωχοῖς* as inclusive of all classes of people, the poor referred to here by Luke are; the politically, socially and economically powerless, those who must look to God for help. It is these poor, who observe God's precepts unlike the rich, those at ease in Zion. Yet, they are despised by the bluebloods of Israel as we have observed from as far back as the eighth century Israel with the official theology regarding the poor as the sinners and the rich as the righteous. Luke therefore takes his audience back to the eighth century, the history that must have been known among them. For Luke it was the prophet's obligation to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. In other words, according to Luke, Jesus' message in verse 18 is a symbolic reference to the year of Jubilee (Lev 25:10), the year when debts were cancelled and slaves set free. This is very clear from the way Luke contrasts Jesus' ministry from that of John the Baptist. Jesus' ministry is practical; it is a ministry of liberation to the poor and the oppressed.⁵⁸ His ministry does not spiritualise poverty. He perceives it as a creation of the rich. In that way, Jesus' message is revolutionary and stands opposed to the behaviour of the Zimbabwean churches, especially Pentecostal movements which spiritualise poverty.

This observation holds water especially considering the ongoing sermon of Jesus, whereby he announces 'release of captives', *αἰχμαλώτοις ἄφεισιν*. If one compares Jesus' words with Isaiah 61:1, it will quickly be noticed that Jesus' version omits the line that reads: *ἀπέσταλκέν με ἰάσασθαι τοὺς συντετριμμένους τῇ καρδίᾳ* 'He sent me to heal (bind up) the broken in heart or broken-hearted'. This fact, as well as the insertion by Jesus of a line from Isaiah 58:6; *λῦε πάντα σύνδεσμον ἀδικίας διάλυε στραγγαλιὰς βιαίων συναλλαγμάτων ἀπόστειλε τεθραυσμένους ἐν ἀφέσει καὶ πᾶσαν συγγραφὴν ἄδικον διάσπα* 'to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke' points to Jesus' deliberate change of the text to avoid spiritualisation of poverty. With this background, to suggest that the poor and captives

⁵⁷ Eben Scheffler, *Suffering in Luke's Gospel*. AthANT 81. Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 1993, p. 45; Cf. Schottroff & Stegemann *Jesus von Nazareth. Hoffnung der Armen*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1978, p. 26.

⁵⁸ Cf. Frederick W. Danker, *Jesus and the New Age: A Commentary on St Luke's Gospel*. 1988, p. 106-7.

whom Jesus was concerned about are those possessed by demons as some scholars have indicated above,⁵⁹ which theory is quite popular among Evangelicals and Pentecostals is totally misplaced.

Again Jesus' use of ἀφέσει (release) which word is strongly connected with connotations of Jubilee (Lev 25:27) or the Sabbath year (Deut 15:1; Exo 23:11) broadens the idea of release beyond spiritual sense. Jesus understands this 'release' to have social and economic meaning of release from debts, if not also political sense. Of course there is no doubt that during the days of Luke ἀφέσει also suggests 'forgiveness' of sins,⁶⁰ however in this context, it is meant to signify 'release' from socio-economic bondage that had virtually reduced all the poor masses to slaves. Of course there is a possibility that even among Jesus' hearers, some may have interpreted his 'release' as release from demonic powers. This is because of the predominant view in ancient world that every sickness had a spiritual cause. But, on the whole, the majority of his followers, it should be emphasised that they understood his release to be mainly related to freedom from a crushing economic system.

I agree with scholars who connect sickness and spirit possessions to poverty among the followers of Jesus. According to Pilgrim, the crowds that followed Jesus, no doubt, often composed the sick and possessed.

⁵⁹ Cf. Arthur A. Just Jr. *Luke 1:1-9:50: A Theological Exposition of Sacred Scripture*. Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1996, pp. 190-93, says Jesus freely combines two verses of Isaiah (61:1 and 58.6) separated by three chapters. He joins them for the theological purpose of emphasising the release of creation from its bondage to sin. This release comes through the forgiveness of sins that Jesus himself brings....'to send the broken ones away in release' refers to absolution in the fullest sense, encompassing the resurrection of the body. The 'captives' and 'broken ones' include both those who are in physical bondage; e.g., to sickness, or demon possession, or in spiritual bondage to sin and death. Luke' gospel includes many examples of Jesus setting such people free. The Good News is that now in Jesus all of creation has been freed from bondage of its fallness. In the OT during the fiftieth year-the Jubilee slaves were liberated, debts were forgiven, people returned to their homes and stopped all sowing and reaping (Lev 25). It was a prophecy of the Messiah's eschatological salvation, which now breaks into the world through Jesus' ministry in 'the year of the Lord's favour/acceptance' (Luke 4.19). This is the same understanding evident in Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Luke: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Third Gospel*. New York: Crossroad, 1984, pp. 55-56, who says, 'It seems correct to understand Luke's view of Jesus' mission as set forth in 4:18-19, to include preaching, physical healing, and exorcism (56).

⁶⁰ Pilgrim, *Good News to the Poor*, p. 68; Green, *The Theology of the Gospel of Luke*, pp. 76-83; Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, pp. 212-213.

While sickness strikes everyone, it seems as though the most unfortunate, the economically desperate persons are the ones that were brought to Jesus for healing. This alone implies that their sickness and poverty went hand in hand. The well-to-do always have so many other means and they do not normally rely on spiritual solutions. The few rich could afford to pay for specialist or expert examinations and treatments. Therefore, the exceptions were duly noted by evangelists, such as a centurion's servant or daughter of a ruler of the synagogue (Lk 7:1-10; Mtt 9:18-26). Most of the sick that came to Jesus are known to be the suffering poor, those who have no other option except to trust in God; the blind, lame, crippled, paralyzed and the lepers who along with beggars cried out for mercy from well-wishers and from passersby along the streets and at public places. In a society where the sick largely stood under the shadow of guilt, these suffering poor appeared to constitute the single largest group responding to Jesus ministry.⁶¹ It is also known that Jesus' ministry did not attract a lot the upper classes, the religious and political elites. Those in positions of authority interpreted his ministry as a political and religious threat for apart from attracting the masses, Jesus often openly challenged the status quo.

From the sociological analyses of the Jesus movement, it is evident that the 'captives' referred to by Jesus are the economically poor masses. The simple fact that Palestine was so poor that the poor constituted the majority of the people points to the poor masses as the chief human resources of Jesus' appeal. In fact, the foot-loose nature of the crowds who followed Jesus, sometimes quite unprepared for food and shelter, seems to presuppose people familiar with little or nothing and people who are able and prepared to survive on meagre resources (cf. Lk 9:10-17; Mtt 14:13-21; Mk 6: 30-44; 8:1-15). In sum, there is converging evidence that the main body of support for Jesus during his public ministry came from the multitudes, who constituted the lowest social and economic class in Palestine.⁶² Furthermore, the specific groups most closely associated with Jesus in the earliest gospel traditions demonstrate clearly that they belonged to the poor and marginal people of the society. Socially and religiously, fishermen, the tax collectors, sinners, prostitutes, beggars and various kinds of sick constituted the classes of the poor, those

⁶¹ Cf. Pilgrim, *Good News to the Poor*, p.49.

⁶² Cf. Pilgrim, *Good News to the Poor*, p.51.

who did not have any option for other honourable economic activities hence became outcasts, and these were specific objects of Jesus' ministry. That the Jesus movement found its following among such people was both its shame to outsiders and critics, and its glory to insiders and followers (cf. 1 Cor 1:18).⁶³ Jesus, as clearly recorded by Luke, came to set these peoples free.

Further attempts at understanding 'the poor' in Luke 4:18 have been sought in exegesis of the meaning of 'oppressed', for the mission of Jesus is presented as 'to set at liberty those who are oppressed'. As I have noted above, this is not coming from Isaiah 61:1-2, instead it comes from Isaiah 58:6. But who are the oppressed? The literal meaning of the word for oppressed, *τεθραυσμένοι* means 'broken in pieces' or the down-trodden which would suggest those suffering social injustices, and the context of Isaiah 58:6 even the wording used support this conclusion. Isaiah 58:6 uses *ἀδικία* which is also translated as injustice. Also, Isaiah 58 speaks about the oppression of the poor in the fashion of Amos and Micah and other prophets especially of the eighth century BCE who protested against the oppression of the poor by the few, the ruling elite. Considering that Isaiah, especially 40-66 was written in Exile, 'release of slaves' theme reigns high and according to Luke, it served as a typology for the mission of Jesus. This has seen of late a growing number of scholars advocating for the interpretation of Luke-Acts in the light of the New Exodus Motif expressed in Isaiah 40-55.⁶⁴

According to M. Turner, the unifying concept lying behind Luke 1-4 is the announcement of Israel's New Exodus liberation. The key passage describing this New Exodus is Luke 4:16-30, which outlines both Spirit empowered mission of Jesus to free captive Israel and the rejection of Jesus as a (Mosaic) prophet.⁶⁵ Therefore, Luke's programmatic presentation of Jesus' ministry in 4:16-30 represents the Old Testament motif of the anointed messianic figure who would restore faithfulness and obedi-

⁶³ Cf. Pilgrim, *Good News to the Poor*, p.55.

⁶⁴ Cf. Mallen, *The Reading and Transformation*, p. 14.

⁶⁵ Cf. M. Turner, *Power from on High*, pp. 244-50, 266; Peter Mallen, *The Reading and Transformation*, pp. 15-16; David W. Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus*. WUNT 2, 130. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000, p. 249-50; Michael E. Fuller, *The Restoration of Israel: Israel's Re-gathering and the Fate of the Nations in Early Jewish Literature and Luke-Acts*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006, 236-39, sees in Luke 4.16-30 Jesus' announcement of the end of Exile.

ence among God's people. Thus Jesus in Luke 4:16-30 is presented as interested in introducing a 'New Exodus' motifs in deuterio Isaiah (40-55).⁶⁶ This was not in spiritual but in real physical sense. The main theological thrust of Luke 4:16-30, understood in the light of this New Exodus motif is that it is against God's desire that some human beings (especially those who worship him), exploit others as was happening in Palestine (and as is happening in Zimbabwe between domestic workers and their employers), on the basis of any socially constructed structure; be it gender, race or social and economic status. Jesus therefore presents himself as a new Moses; one who came to deliver the slaves 'from Egypt' (oppression), the house of slavery.

Relationship Between Luke 4:18 and Old Testament Manumission Texts

As I have demonstrated in chapter two when dealing with the slavery laws in the Old Testament, the interrelatedness between Old Testament soteriology and ethics is evidenced in the Decalogue where the 'Egyptian' experiences of exploitation were to serve as reminders to the community of faith of their duty to care for the vulnerable; Exo 20:1-3 'I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall....'. The same is true in Deuteronomy, as many of the laws, especially the social ones, are warranted with the statement 'Remember that you were slaves in Egypt' Deut 15:15; 16:12; 24:18, 22; Lev 25:35-38). In Lev 11:44 God's self-designation of holiness serves as a paradigm for Israel's holiness. Thus God's redemption in the Exodus event, is the normative for Israel's behaviour towards aliens, widows and orphans (Exo 22:20-26).⁶⁷

It is also possible that the Exodus event as a paradigm for Israel's social ethics is the one that is echoed in Pro 21:13 which says, 'If a man shuts his ears to the cry of the poor, he too will cry out and not be answered.' This could be an allusion to Exo 3:7,9. Further, Psalm 146:7-10 with its description of God relating to the oppressed, the poor, the blind, the prisoners and the hungry echoes both Isaiah 61:1-2 and the Exodus event. More importantly, these texts connect Yahweh of the Exodus to the masses. He is the God of the weak, the lowly and not of the rich, as

⁶⁶ Cf. Wenk, *Community Forming Power*, pp.201-3.

⁶⁷ Cf. Wenk, *Community Forming Power*, p. 204.

had become the case. Some of the prophets also testify to the reverse process: their call to repentance was linked to a call to re-establish the egalitarian social order originated with the Exodus event (cf. the 'Exodus society' in Lev 25:35-42, contrary to the 'monarchic society' in I Kings 5:13-18) where ordinary citizens were conscripted for the purposes of building the palace and the Temple, both of which saved the elite. We have also shown that in the following years, Elijah opposed King Ahab for two things: idolatry (I Kings 18:16-42) and his indifference for Naboth's inherited property which expressed a disregard towards a fundamental 'human right' based on the Exodus event.⁶⁸

From this line of argument, Isaiah 58:6 and 61:1-2 are as such prophetic calls to re-establish the 'Exodus community' and their fusion in Luke 4:17-19 may be explained along these lines. The similarity in motif between Isaiah 58:6; 61:1-2 and Luke 4:17-19 is not only given by the same lexical reference⁶⁹ but also with the jubilee connotation present in both passages. The fact that in Jer 34:8-22, a passage preoccupied with a jubilar motif both חפּשׁ and דרור are used interchangeably further supports the cohesion between Isaiah 58:6 and 61:1-2. That is, the closeness of Isa 58:6 to Exo 21:2-11; Lev 25:8-55 and Deut 15:1-18 is quite clear. The oppressed ones represented the economically oppressed and ruined/crushed people of Israel,⁷⁰ the 'Hebrew slaves' in particular. In that sense, Jesus in Luke 4:18-19 is addressing the economically oppressed citizens of Roman Palestine, who are the new Israel-Hebrew slaves. The New Exodus/jubilean soteriology of Isaiah 58:6 and 61:1-2 (and by exten-

⁶⁸ Cf. Wenk, *Community Forming Power*, p. 204.

⁶⁹ Cf. Wenk, *Community Forming Power*, p.208 notes that in the LXX, ἀφεσις (forgiveness) is used while the Masoretic Text uses different lexical terms: Isaiah 58:6: חפּשׁ which means freedom from slavery while 61.1 (Lev 25.10) use דרור which means liberty in relation to the Sabbath/jubilee year but they are semantically related.

⁷⁰ Cf. Wenk, *Community Forming Power*, p.208; Cf. R. Albertz, 'Die 'Antrittspredigt' Jesu im Lukasevangelium auf ihrem alttestamentlichen Hintergrund' *Zeitschrift für Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 74 (1983), pp.182-206; Gerhard Kehnscherper, 'Von Jeremia zu Jesus von Nazareth: Die Ausrufung des Halljahres und das Kommen des Reiches Gottes. Eine sozioethische Untersuchung zu Lk 4:16-30'. PhD dissertation, Ernst-Moritz-Arndt Universität, 1973; W. Dietrich, 'den Armen das Evangelium zu verkünden': Vom befreienden Sinn biblischer Gesetze', *Theologische Zeitschrift* 41 (1985), pp. 31-43; G.K. Shin, *Die Ausrufung des endgültigen Jubeljahres durch Jesus in Nazareth: Eine historisch-kritische Studie zu Lk 4:16-30*. Bern. Peter Lang, 1989, pp. 117-29; Ringe, *Jesus, Liberation, and the Biblical Jubilee*.

sion Luke 4:18) reflects itself in the ethics of the renewed, liberated community. The emphasis is almost exclusively on a renewal of interpersonal relationships and correlates Exodus/jubilean soteriology with its ethics. This can be summarised as ‘the year of the Lord’s favour’.⁷¹ From the perspective of social revolution as argued by Gottwald which I have mentioned, this is the kind of society willed by the Habiru/Hebrew forces when they dismantled the pre-settlement oppressive structure controlled by the few ruling elite to create an egalitarian society based upon the covenant with Yahweh.

One way to guarantee the egalitarian community as introduced in ‘the Exodus’ was the sabbatical year and the year of Jubilee (Lev 25:1-54). It is therefore not surprising that the writings of the prophets and Jewish protest groups reflect the merging of the New Exodus motif with Jubilean themes and describe the renewal of the covenant as a renewed social order. The same scheme was closely followed by Jesus in Luke 4:16-30.⁷² Unfortunately in Israel, the egalitarian society could not be established for a number of reasons, which are strikingly familiar in Zimbabwe’s history. The ‘converts’ to the new egalitarian dispensation, (former oppressors) never really converted to embrace it wholeheartedly and the new elite adopted the ideology of the former oppressors. In the same light, a nation such as Zimbabwe which came into being through protracted battles similar to those of the settlement of Israel, from the house of slavery (Rhodesia), the struggles believed to have been led by God hence described in Israelite Exodus typology, cannot be expected to have some of its citizens continue to exist in slavery (Rhodesia). Unfortunately this is the reality, hence the regarding of Luke 4:18 as a pronouncement of the second Exodus in Zimbabwe is very pertinent. The much talked about Exodus from Egypt (Rhodesia) to Canaan (Zimbabwe) is yet to be realised by the poor, domestic workers especially. The ‘Pharaohs’ of Rhodesia crossed over into Canaan and continued to exploit the ‘Israelites’. In other words, the philosophy and structures of exploitation of Rhodesia have continued, spread and polluted the brains of even the black employers-the new elite.

⁷¹ Wenk, *Community Forming Power*, p. 209.

⁷² Cf. Wenk, *Community Forming Power*, p. 204.

Implications for the Struggle of the Underclasses in Zimbabwe

It is important that we conclude this chapter by emphasising the relevance of the message of Jesus in Luke 4:18 in today's struggles of the poor, with special focus on Zimbabwe. The contribution of Luke 4:18 in the daily struggles of the poor and exploited peoples is not to be underestimated. When properly read from a hermeneutical perspective that does enough homework on the causes of poverty in the society, especially in Southern Africa, Jesus' message in Luke 4:18 is not only a word of hope and encouragement, it is also a message that expressly shows Jesus' solidarity and taking sides with the oppressed and the suffering, groups such as domestic workers. The only problem with the message of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke is that it is ambiguous.⁷³ It does not specifically outline a plan of action to rid oneself of oppression. As a result of this ideological stance whereby it seems as if it suppresses militancy or radical action in getting rid of oppression, Mosala as I have mentioned before interprets Luke 4:18 as a high-class ideological package meant to serve the interests of rich and oppressors against the struggles of the poor. Hence he sees it as incapable of liberating the poor.

It is because of this imbedded ideological stance, that it is normally interpreted in ways that spiritualise concrete economic and political matters of life and death. This stance we have observed with the Pentecostals, who do not ask pertinent questions to interrogate racial, class and gender dynamics of poverty particularly in Zimbabwe. However, as I have impress upon in the foregoing discussion, when we take the message of Jesus from the material context of his audience, it aids the struggle of the poor, for it seems true that total liberation is a cardinal aspect of Jesus' thought. Contrary to Pentecostal and evangelical conceptions of deliverance and release, which emphasise the redemption from sin and physical challenges such as disabilities, Jesus in Luke 4:18 calls for re-

⁷³ For further discussion on the ambiguity of the word 'poor' in Isaiah 61 and Lukan studies, see Robert J. Karris, 'Poor and Rich: The Lukan Sitz im leben', in C.H. Talbert (ed.), *Perspectives on Luke-Acts*. Edingburgh: T & T Clark, 1978, pp. 112-125; G. R. Osborne, 'Luke: Theologian of Social Concern', *TrinJ* 7, 1978, pp. 135-48; Scheffler, *Suffering in Luke's Gospel*, p.166, argues that Luke's view of liberation also imposes certain constraints as far as the accomplishment of liberation is concerned. In his view, it would seem, liberation from suffering should be achieved by criticising the oppressors verbally, by humble service and by willingness to suffer, rather than by inflicting any form of suffering such as violence on others.

lease from structures of sin-those socially constructed mechanisms to manufacture and nurture poverty which leads to slavery of the poor. Jesus in this Gospel speaks out forcefully against a theology which spiritualises concepts like the 'poor' and the 'rich', and which underplays the political and economic dimensions of suffering by lining salvation to strictly the religious sphere.⁷⁴

Eben Sheffler observed that Jesus in Luke, because of his context 'views liberation as salvation across the full spectrum of human suffering'.⁷⁵ This position has been very central to this study. After a full and complete diagnosis of the political, socio-economic and religious context of Luke 4:18 and the similar context of Zimbabwe, I have come to the conclusion that the Luke 4:18 is handy as a tool or weapon to liberate the oppressed black people toiling in rural areas, farms, mines and in domestic service. This is especially because exploitation of the poor in Zimbabwe is so selective that it respects race, class and gender lines.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that Jesus in Luke 4:18 takes sides with the oppressed; the wretched, the despised, the malnourished, the naked, the dispossessed and soldiers with them in their battles against their oppressors; the land grabbers, the well nourished who celebrate unending feasts, the well dressed and the corrupt who manipulate religion to their benefit, so as to authenticate their corrupt ways. This conclusion is quite an encouragement and offers hope to the domestic workers as representatives of the very vulnerable and despised peasants of Zimbabwe, who bear all the characteristic features of Jesus' audiences in Luke. Domestic workers as other oppressed groups in Zimbabwe are caught in between two oppressive systems hence are doubly oppressed by both the Church and the colonial social and economic structures that have continued to date. Luke 4:18 clearly shows that despite many centuries of struggles between the poor and the rich, the struggle was far from

⁷⁴ Scheffler, 'Reading Luke from the perspective of Liberation theology', in P. J. Hartin, & J. H. Petzer (eds.), *Text and interpretation: New Approaches in the criticism of the New Testament*. Leiden: Brill, 1991; Cf. Scheffler, *Suffering in Luke's Gospel*, p. 166.

⁷⁵ Sheffler, 'Reading Luke', p. 166; cf. C. West, 'Black Theology of Liberation as critique of capitalist civilization'. *JITC* 10 (1983), pp. 67-83 (p.74).

being over. The same is true in Zimbabwe; the struggle is far from being over, hence the slogan: Aluta continua! As I have noted above, oppression of the poor has by and large maintained its colonial characteristics; race, class and gender lines. It is because of this unique but enduring characteristic feature of oppression in Zimbabwe that our next chapter focuses on Galatians 3:28 in an endeavour to struggle towards a society in which racial, class and gender lines are rendered irrelevant. Only when such a society is created will the struggle stop! As for now; Aluta Continua!

CHAPTER TEN

INTERPRETING GALATIANS 3:28 TOWARDS LIBERATION OF THE UNDERCLASSES OF ZIMBABWE

Introduction

This chapter being the last seeks to argue as did the previous one that some texts of the Bible can be weapons of the struggle against exploitation of the weak. In this case, Gal 3:28 like Luke 4:18 stands ideologically against the ideology that promotes exploitation of the weak either on the basis of race, class or gender hence can be a weapon against the oppressors of the underclasses (domestic workers included) in Zimbabwe. Having observed that it is difficult if not impossible to abolish the institution of domestic service in Zimbabwe at present, before radical overhaul of the whole political, religious and socioeconomic system, the only possibility of struggle towards liberation at the moment is discrediting the ideology that sustains exploitation in domestic service in its various manifestations. To enlist Gal 3:28 for this endeavour, I assume that Gal 3:28 is addressing the problems of race, class and gender. Therefore, Gal 3:28 has the potential to bring hope and liberation to domestic workers of Zimbabwe who are facing the tripartite problem of race, class and gender oppression. Domestic workers of Zimbabwe as I have always argued are some of the worst exploited people whose exploitation considers race, class and gender lines. In fact, the conditions of domestic workers are a mirror of what is wrong in the whole Zimbabwean society. Since the colonial era, their struggles reflect national socio-economic, political and religious struggles of the weak. Addressing the problematic issues of race, class and gender at household level will inevitably be reflected at national level and vice versa. Thus, I have always insisted that issues dealing with domestic workers cannot be adequately addressed independent of national political, religious, social and economic spheres. This chapter therefore, begins with a discussion on the revered status of Gal 3:28 in historical and contemporary political, social and economic struggles in Southern Africa, so as to premise the Zimbabwean struggles in context, before moving on to the exegesis of Gal 3:28 in its context and finally highlighting lessons for Zimbabwe today.

The Status of Gal 3:28 at the Dawn of Independence

The struggle for liberation in Zimbabwe was aimed at creating a 'Gal 3:28 kind of community' where race, class and gender do not matter. Such attempt was a radical or revolutionary reordering of the society from the colonial system that thrived on primarily racism, but anchored also on a rigid socio-economic and gender hierarchy. Thus, announcing black majority rule and reconciliation after ZANU-PF resoundingly romped to electoral victory trouncing the colonial minority white racist outfit, the Rhodesian Front, the black leader, Prime Minister elect Robert Mugabe gave a wonderful speech which was purposely and deliberately decorated and couched in biblical language. Although he did not directly cite any biblical verse, the speech is worth of being a sermon, as it is easy to identify the biblical passages that it was based upon. Mugabe committing his government to unity and pledging responsibility to safeguard peace after the protracted war, said:

...surely this is time to *beat our swords into ploughshares* so we can attend to the problems of developing our economy and our society....I urge you, whether you are black or white to join me in a new pledge to forget our grim past, forgive others and forget, join hands in new amity, and together, as Zimbabwe, trample upon racialism, tribalism and regionalism, and work hard to reconstruct and rehabilitate our society as we reinvigorate our economic machinery.¹

Without doubt Mugabe's reconciliation message is based upon Isaiah 2:4 which promises eternal peace (at Zion/Jerusalem) at the appointed time of the Lord. And this time of the Lord was closely associated with the messianic hope. In that regard, Zimbabwean independence was considered to mark a new era characterized by blissful existence. As evidenced by his speech, the Zimbabwean government wished to establish an egalitarian society, (the one that Israelite Levites, prophets, Jesus and Paul strove to achieve) where race, tribe, regionalism among other dividing lines are not important as people stand as one, under one flag and one nation. On 17 April 1980 at midnight, some few hours before Zimbabwe's independence celebrations on 18 April, in his address to the nation he reiterated his commitment to establishing 'a Gal 3:28 society'.

¹ Prime Minister Robert Mugabe, *Address to the Nation By the Prime Minister Elect*. Ministry of Information, Immigration and Tourism. Harare, 04 March 1980, 3.

He narrated the struggles leading to independence and the society he wished to see in future:

The march to our national independence has been a long, arduous and hazardous one. On this march, countless lives have been lost and many sacrifices made. Death and suffering have been the prize we have been called upon to pay for the final priceless reward of freedom and national independence....Tomorrow we shall be celebrating the historic event, which our people have striven for nearly a century to achieve. Our people, young and old, men and women, black and white, living and dead, are, on this occasion, being brought together in a new form of national unity that makes them all Zimbabweans.....This to me is the human essence that must form the core of our political change and national independence. Henceforth, you and I must strive to adapt ourselves, intellectually and spiritually to the reality of our political change and relate to each other as brothers bound one to another by a bond of national comradeship.... I shall be one in spirit and love, in loyalty and commitment with you all. Forward with the Year of the People's Power!²

As the first speech above, Mugabe again somewhat refers to the Bible, this time, Gal 3:28. In his address, he encouraged all the sections of the government and society to preach this message of reconciliation and to adapt themselves accordingly to this new reality. Contrary to the colonial setup, this new dispensation was characterised by absence of race or class or gender considerations. The churches especially were challenged to create a biblically based theology of reconciliation and equality of races, classes and gender. The first ceremonial President of Zimbabwe, Rev. Canaan Sodindo Banana's socialist Biblical hermeneutics evident in all his works provides us with the best example of this theology. According to Banana, starting from independence;

The Church should begin to evolve a theology that encompasses a socialist outlook. It is within the socialist context that one can talk about growth with equity. The concept of a classless, socialist society is essentially theological. The early Church knew a great deal about community; their word, *koinonia*, describes the highest form of community known to us. It was a fellowship of equality and brotherhood which expressed itself in the sharing of goods and the common life. The practice clearly exhibits classless collectivism, as opposed to capitalistic divisionism. This does not negate but confirms the Christian ethic. As the Acts of the Apostles clearly state:

² Prime Minister Robert Mugabe's address to the nation on independence Eve, 1980. 17 April 1980.

‘All whose faith had drawn them together held everything in common: they would sell their property and possessions and make a general distribution as the need of each required (Acts 4:44-45).³

This position remained a guiding force behind Banana’s biblical interpretation over the years. For him, the classless society is not only Christian but also indeed biblical. Although Banana did not concretely cite Gal 3:28, it is clear that he echoed Paul’s recommendations in Galatians 3:28 in which racial, tribal, gender and socio-economic barriers are considered immaterial in defining relationships between humans. In similar vocabulary to his call soon after independence but now added a statement that paraphrased Gal 3:28, Banana insists that:

The Church has the opportunity to evolve a theology that en-compasses a socialist transformation, instead of being frightened into a state of paralysis at the mention of the word socialism. Indeed, the concept of a classless society is essentially theological: a society where *there is neither Gentile nor Jew; neither rich nor poor; neither the downtrodden nor the privileged*. In our view, socialism is human ideology that seeks to lift up the living standards of our people and to promote the betterment of society. This, in my view does not negate, but actually confirms the Christian ethic.⁴

From this position, one could not be wrong to conclude that Zimbabwean independence was pitched on the Bible especially on Gal 3:28. The presence of Rev Banana, as the President of the newly established Republic of Zimbabwe is clear testimony to the government’s commitment to the kind of Christianity that focussed on social transformation, which was quite good news for the poor. And the same could be said about South Africa. Nelson Mandela in his inaugural speech which strikingly shares a lot in common with Mugabe’s as cited above, tries to follow the Zimbabwean road to reconciliation and the establishment of a classless society.⁵ The setting up of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

³ Cf. Banana, speaking to Heads of Denominations: ZPS 153, 3 March 1981; Cf. Randolph, *Dawn in Zimbabwe*, p.76.

⁴ Verstraelen, *Zimbabwean Realities and Christian Responses*, p. 56; Cf. Banana, address to the sixth Conference of the International Association for Mission Studies (IAMS) in Harare, 8-14 January 1985.

⁵ Cf. Nelson Mandela in his Address to the people of Cape Town on the occasion of his inauguration as the State President. 09 May 1994, said: Today we are entering a new era for our country and its people. Today we celebrate not the victory of a party, but a victory for all the people of South Africa..... The South Africa we have struggled for, in which all our people, be they African, Coloured, Indian or White, regard themselves as

was however one detour South Africa made from Zimbabwe's model of unconditional reconciliation. However, by and large, it was as hollow as the Zimbabwean model, in that it was an attempt to appease the oppressors. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission suffers the same problem as the Zimbabwean church endeavours as I pointed out in the previous chapter; it does not categorically spell out the causes of the problems; it does not explicitly condemn the oppressors. The report tries to strike a balance; to please both oppressors and oppressed, victims and perpetrators and to annoy both.

Gal 3:28: The Desperately needed Model for Zimbabwe

However beautiful the society willed by the political and church leaders of Zimbabwe and South Africa at independence was, without concrete steps towards breaking the colonial structures that promoted differences, the issues of race, class and gender remained unscathed. Such concrete steps should have been primarily to decisively deal with the historical racial imbalances on land and the economy. Land was supposed to be taken from the former colonisers to distribute to the former colonised. But because this was not done, the poor black domestic workers, urban working class and peasants journeyed with their poverty into independence. In all respects, the calls for unconditional reconciliation disempowered the masses that had won the war through blood and sweat. This has seen anger and tensions between races and economic classes rise in Zimbabwe which resulted in a peasant revolution-land invasions, from 1999-2003. And because of precisely this failure to redistribute land at independence, since 2009, there have been simmering racial tensions in South Africa as the black youth are getting frustrated at the tortuously slow white to black economic transfer pace. Anytime the anger could burst into something similar to the Zimbabwean scenario if not bloodier version of the land invasions.

citizens of one nation is at hand.... The struggle for democracy has never been a matter pursued by one race, class, religious community or gender among South Africans..... These milestones give concrete expression to what South Africa can become. They speak of a constitutional, democratic, political order in which, regardless of colour, gender, religion, political opinion or sexual orientation, the law will provide for the equal protection of all citizens.

The land revolution in Zimbabwe as I have noted, was both advantageous and disadvantageous to domestic workers and all the underclasses. It has, in some cases heightened racial tensions but in other cases it has lowered tensions and has caused white employers to fear and respect black workers. And this makes the appeal to Gal 3:28 timely and indispensable. This time however, there is need to concretise the talk by implementing policies that see tough actions being taken to address the economic inequalities, seriously investigating racial tensions and heavily prosecuting perpetrators and addressing gender imbalance that has become also an overpowering element.

Gal 3:28 Context Mirrors Zimbabwe at Independence

Οὐκ ἔστι Ἰουδαῖος οὐδὲ Ἕλληνας,
οὐκ ἔστι δοῦλος οὐδὲ ἐλεύθερος,
οὐκ ἔστι ἄρσεν καὶ θήλυς·
πάντες γὰρ ὑμεῖς εἰς ἓστε ἐν
Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ.

^{RSV} 28 There is neither Jew nor
Greek, there is neither slave nor free,
there is neither male nor female;
for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

As pointed above, independence of Zimbabwe marked a turning point between previous life of colonization, oppression and exploitation characterised by hierarchy on the basis of racial, class and gender divisions and the present life of freedom and equality where in theory, all the previous artificially created dividing walls were broken down. These dividing walls had made others to become eternal masters while turning others into eternal slaves. In other words, independence of Zimbabwe theoretically saw the relationship of colonizer and colonized, master and slave, horse and rider being demolished. It is in a similar context that Gal 3:28 was written, recommending the pulling down of all the racial, class and gender dividing walls among Christians. Therefore, Gal 3:28 should be understood in the context of the foregoing argument; the contrast between the previous life and the present life, where the concept of sonship or heir to the kingdom is emphasized as contrasted to the previous status of slave.

As James D G. Dunn rightly argues, Gal 3:26-4:11, 4:21-31 is dominated by the contrast between the status of son and slave. The terms 'son', 'heir' etc., appear in this section, 11 times, while 'slave' etc., appears 9 times. From this dimension, Paul's point is that the faith which first received the covenant promise should now be directed to the one in

whom that promise is fulfilled. In other words, faith in Christ is now sufficient to ensure the relationship of all to God as sons (3:26), irrespective of race, class or gender. This is quite a revolutionary teaching considering that the prerogative of 'sonship' had been the particular claim of Israel (Deut 14:1; Isaiah 43:6; Hos 1:10) particularly of the elite within Israel who thought of themselves as righteous.⁶ In a society like Zimbabwe where claims to superiority are based on race, class and gender such a teaching is revolutionary and liberational.

For Paul, in order for one to become part and parcel of this new community which came into being through the blood of Jesus one had to forego the previous status. To be identified with Christ (3:27) meant that traditional distinctions of race, social status and gender (3:28), automatically become relativised or rendered irrelevant, impotent. Faith in Christ, according to Paul should be understood as commitment to Christ and belonging to Christ, so as to ensure full participation in the heirs and heritage of Abraham (3:29).⁷ In Zimbabwe, this message of Paul is quite relevant even today. Despite the efforts made by political and church leaders and public claims of being one people, one nation under one flag with one allegiance and destiny, there are still as it was in the colonial era, two nations jogging parallel to each other. In other words, despite the fact that war veterans sacrificed their lives and thousands of rural masses (like Jesus Christ) shed their blood for a society without classes, we still have a nation for the rich minority; predominantly whites and few black elites, majority of them being males and another for the poor majority; all being blacks and the majority being women.

Baptism into Christ (Gal 3:27-28) as Baptism into Zimbabwe

This characterisation of the Zimbabwean society today is strikingly similar to the Galatian society during the days of Paul. There is unanimous agreement among scholars that to fully appreciate Paul's declaration in Gal 3:28 we need to place it in the social and political context which was highly ordered according to race, class and gender lines. Paul in a revolutionary way reverses the order by abolishing the hierarchy, demanding that all the separating walls be demolished. He does so by raising the

⁶ Cf. James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul's Letter to the Galatians*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, p. 93.

⁷ Cf. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul's Letter to the Galatians*, p. 93.

underdogs to occupy the same space as the highly placed. According to Paul in Galatians 3:27-28, through the rite of baptism, community members act out the newly constructed world with the motif of dissolution of (previous) social distinction to affirm a new significance and coherence for themselves, who are categorized as secondary and marginalized by their significant others. In this sense, the baptismal rite is a positive identity-marking event for the marginalised community members. Paul lays special and specific emphasis on the transformatory rite of baptism.⁸ He explicitly refers to the rite of baptism (ἐβαπτίσθητε) in v. 27, making the connection between vv. 27 and 28 very strong. Elsewhere in the Pauline letters, as it is here, the reference to baptism or at least its motif is often connected with the idea of dissolution of distinctions (1 Cor. 12.13; Col. 3:10-11). Therefore, vv. 27 and 28 together seem to form a baptismal liturgical saying which Paul quotes here because it is familiar to the community members.⁹ In that regard, Paul is just reminding the people of Galatia to practice what they already know.¹⁰ It is not a new teaching.

⁸ Atsuhiko Asano, *Community-Identity Construction in Galatians: Exegetical, Social-Anthropological and Socio-Historical Studies*. Journal for the Study of the New Testament. Supplement Series 285. London: T & T Clark International, 2005, p. 180, observes that 'the rite of baptism 3:27-28, with the peculiar formulaic saying consolidates and justifies life in permanent liminality as antithetical to life in the previous structure, in order to maintain the cohesion of the community members and to offer a means of resisting pressure from the wider social context; see also, Alexander Wedderburn, J. M. *Baptism and Resurrection: Studies in Pauline Theology against its Greco-Roman Background*. WUNT 44. Tübingen: Mohr, 1987, pp. 386-87; H. Moxnes, 'Social Integration and the Problem of Gender in St Paul's Letters', *ST* 43 (1989), pp.99-113, (113).

⁸ Cf. H. D. Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979, pp. 185-6.

⁹ Cf. Asano, *Community-Identity Construction in Galatians*, pp. 180-81; According to Betz, *Galatians*, p. 186, 'in the formal composition of 3:26-28, v.27 stands out as an explanatory insertion of great significance, for this is the only explicit reference to baptism in Galatians. It serves to connect 3:26-28, and thereby the letter as a whole, with the Christian ritual of baptism'.

¹⁰ D. Francois Tolmie, *Persuading the Galatians: A Text-Centred Rhetorical Analysis of a Pauline Letter*. WUNT 190: Mohr Siebeck, 2005. p. 143, is of the opinion that, 'by echoing the baptismal tradition/liturgy, he may in fact attempt to re-enact that profound moment in their lives, making them listen to more or less identical words they heard when they were baptized: sons of God...have been baptized into Christ...have put on Christ'.

In the same way, Paul appealed to the baptismal liturgy in Gal 3:26-29, to knock sense into the heads of those who considered the dividing lines so sacred that they could not be demolished, Zimbabwean society needs to go back to the dawn of independence where the various groups were urged to commit themselves to transformation of mind as the nation was being born, or baptised into oneness. In Mugabe's words on the eve of 18 April 1980:

Independence will bestow on us a new personality, a new sovereignty, a new future and perspective, and indeed a new history and a new past....we are being born again; born again not as individuals but collectively as a people, nay, as a viable nation of Zimbabweans. Tomorrow is thus our birthday, the birth of a great Zimbabwe, and the birth of its nation....Our new nation requires of every one of us to be a new man, with a new mind, a new heart and a new spirit. Our new mind must have a new vision and our new hearts a new love that spurns hate and a new spirit that must unite and not divide.¹¹

That moment of independence should always remain engraved in the minds of Zimbabweans as the cornerstone of our society. This must be followed by a marked transformation of the whole society characterised by new loyalty. There is no way the society could continue to exist as if there was no such historic occasion as independence. Unfortunately, as I have demonstrated in the previous chapters, by and large the former colonisers have never changed and some formerly colonised have also become mini colonisers themselves, especially in the domestic service, where they are exploiting their fellow black workers. Domestic workers are still treated as aliens and as slaves in their own country, Zimbabwe. Their overall situation has slightly changed. They are still exploited on the basis of race, class and gender.

There are strong suggestions that Paul's clear and specific calling to establish the Gentile mission (Gal. 1:15-16) may have been the occasion for which the initiatory sense of 'new allegiance' was developed in the rite of baptism. Thus, Atsuhiko Asano, convincingly argues that the emphasis on new allegiance may be seen in Paul's reference to the symbolic action of 'disrobing/robing' rather than 'washing with water' (cf. Gal.3:27) which may have to do with the rite of purification. The term βαπτισμῶ is used in Paul ten times and in none of them has it to do with

¹¹ Cf. Prime Minister Robert Mugabe, Address to the Nation by the Prime Minister Elect.

the idea of purification. Instead, it has connotations of allegiance (cf. Rom. 6:3; 1 Cor. 13, 14, 15, 16, 17; 10:2; 12:13; 15:29; Gal. 3:27).¹² It is not very difficult to understand why Paul avoided the idea of purification. After the experience of marginalization of Gentile members on account of the core Jewish ethnic sentiment in Antioch, which manifested itself in the issue of Gentile impurity (Gal 2:11), Paul must have deliberately avoided the motif of ablution of impurity for the rite of baptism in order to maintain its suitability for the initiatory rite of a Gentile community (a form of cultural adaptation). It is plausible also that Paul developed and attached this distinct significance of new allegiance to the rite of baptism in order for members to gain and maintain cohesion in their newly emerging community,¹³ something that is desperately needed especially when a young and small community is threatened by powerful outside forces.

While it is clear here that Paul, from Gal 3:26 is addressing Gentile-Christian Galatians, those who formerly on the basis of their race, (that is they were not Jewish, hence religiously insignificant and unworthy) what he is saying to them is the consequence of the preceding discussion of the situation of Jewish Christianity. Therefore Paul's message is for both former oppressed and former oppressors. He does not seek to bring down the Jewish Christians, but to raise the Gentile Christians to the level where the Jews are. For him, Gentile Christians are before God 'sons of God' together with Jews in the present and not in the future.¹⁴ The rite of baptism into Christ (3:27) makes this present status possible. With the idea of 'putting on' Christ at baptism, Paul implies the 'putting off' of 'the old man' and the 'putting on' of 'the new man'. This would explain why Paul can refer to the act also as 'new creation' (Gal 6:15).¹⁵

¹² Asano, *Community-Identity Construction in Galatians*, p. 184.

¹³ Asano, *Community-Identity Construction in Galatians*, p. 184.

¹⁴ Cf. Betz, *Galatians*, pp.185-6.

¹⁵ Cf. Betz, *Galatians*, pp.189; Andrew Cain, *The Fathers of the Church: St Jerome's Commentary on Galatians*. New Translation Volume 121. Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2010, p. 152, St Jerome argued in the same direction that, 'when someone definitely clothes himself with Christ and is cast into the flame and glimmers with the intense brightness of the Holy Spirit, it is impossible to tell whether he is gold or silver. As long as the lump of material is surrounded by heat, it has a uniform fiery colour, and all diversity of its nature, condition and physical properties is taken away by this cloak (of fire). 'For there is neither Jew nor Greek'. The Jew is not superior because he is circumcised, nor is the Gentile (Greek) inferior because he is uncircumcised. Rather,

Paul believes that both the formerly despised and their former despisers by virtue of baptism must change their attitudes towards each other. They must both remove their old selves and put on the new selves. This is the only way to move forward in a new dispensation, characterised by radical contrast to the former. There cannot be any other message relevant to Zimbabwe at this moment than this.

Because of his emphasis on the reversal of the status-quo, Paul pushes the Galatian community towards the permanently liminal, anti-structural state,¹⁶ where the values and indeed the worldview of this state are often reversed over against the structural state from which it has emerged. Victor Turner suggests a picture of social process, in which 'structure' and 'anti-structure' pervade one another. That is, a process of preliminal (a well-defined life situation) to liminal (very ritual experience, often anti-structural and unconventional) to post-liminal (another well-defined life situation). Some of the notable characteristic features of both states can be summarized as: Structure, is characterized by inequality, stability, complexity, sagacity and purity, while anti-structure is the opposite. It is characterised by equality, transience, simplicity, folly and dirt.¹⁷ In other words, anti-structure becomes structure. This is the kind of society that we have seen being attempted by the Levitical priests at the establishment of early Israel. And the same egalitarian society is still longed for in Zimbabwe.

In Galatians 3:26-29, therefore, Paul in his argument reminded the Galatians of their baptism which should have been followed by radical action. In order to appreciate the power of Paul's choice of baptism, one must bear in mind that rites and rituals such as baptism were very central and crucial in the ancient times. Baptism was the central initiation rite in

the Jew or Gentile is superior or inferior depending on the quality of his faith. Also slaves and free men are distinguished by faith and not by social standing, for the slave is able to be superior to the free man, and the latter is able to surpass the former in the quality of his faith. Like wise men and women are distinguished by their bodily strength and weakness, but faith is measured by devotion of the mind, and it often happens that a woman becomes the reason a man is saved and that a man precedes a woman in matters of religion'.

¹⁶ Cf. Asano, *Community-Identity Construction in Galatians*, p. 187; Cf. Christian Strecker, *Die Liminale Theologie des Paulus: Zugänge zu paulinischen Theologie aus kulturanthropologischen Perspektive*. FRLANT 185. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999, pp. 96-112.

¹⁷ Cf. Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. New York: Cornell University Press, 1969. pp. 96-97; 106-107; 127-129.

Christianity.¹⁸ Thus, as all other rituals, baptism marked a new page in a believer's life. Baptism marked a radical turn from the previous life to new life characterized by totally different demands and allegiances. With this paradigm, therefore, there could be no doubt that Paul's statements have political and social implications of even a revolutionary dimension as some scholars have argued.¹⁹ This is what should have followed Zimbabwean independence. Unfortunately, it did not.

Political and Social Exegesis of Gal 3:28: Reflecting Realities in Zimbabwe

While some scholars are of the assumption that Paul never meant his message to the Galatians (3:28) to carry any political and social implications,²⁰ this chapter argues that Paul's message had strong revolutionary political and social implications. The question therefore is what political and social lessons can we deduce from the message of Paul in Gal 3:28

¹⁸ Tolmie, *Persuading the Galatians*, p.142; J.E Stambaugh & D. L. Balch, *The New Testament in its Social Environment*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986, pp.59-60.

¹⁹ Cf. Betz, *Galatians*, p.190; cf. Geo Widengren, *Religions Phänomenologie*; Anold Ehrhardt, *Politische Metaphysik von Solon bis Augustin*, Vol. 2: *Die Christliche Revolution*. Tübingen: Mohr, Siebeck, 1959; Francis Dvornik, *Early Christian and Byzantine Political Philosophy*. Washington: Dumbarton Oaks Center, 1966.

²⁰ Betz, *Galatians*, p.189, reveals that from as long back as 1920s there have been scholars who denied any political and social role to the message of Gal 3:28. For example, E. de Witt Burton, *A Critical Exegetical Commentary of the Epistle to the Galatians*. New York: Scribner, 1920, p.206-7, argued that; 'the passage has nothing to do directly with the merging nationalities or the abolition of slavery...'; A. Oepke, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Galater*. Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1957, pp. 90-91, also said; 'it is impossible for Paul to have in mind an emancipation of slaves and women, and 'a pale internationalism', and the same position he maintained in the 1973, 3rd edition, p. 126, where he argued that Paul addressed this issue never envisaged political and social connotations but 'purely religiously'. This, for Betz, amounts to the opposite of what Paul actually said, because, as a result of this there is room in the congregation for ethnic differences, as well as for the social distinctions between slaves and freemen, man and women. The same criticism holds true also for H. Schlier, *Der Brief an die Galater*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971, p. 174-5, who emphasises the religious dimension over the political and social by 'arguing that for the Christians 'all metaphysical, historical and natural distinctions stemming from the old eon are abolished sacramentally, i.e., in a hidden way but real way'. This position is vague, since with this position, according to Betz, 'Schlier can do both: emphasise strongly 'the reality of equality' and deny that any conclusions can be drawn from this in regard to the ecclesiastical offices and the political order'.

that could aid reorder our societies today? To adequately respond to this question, there is need for an exegesis of Gal 3:28 in the light of Paul's theology gleaned not merely from the preceding argument but also evident in other Pauline letters. Also there is need to situate Gal 3:28 in its social and political context.

According to H. D. Betz, immediately after a discussion on baptism in 3:27, Gal 3:28, surprisingly, leads to the field of political and social ideals and practices. Betz forcefully argues that there is no doubt that for Paul, the rite of baptism is intended to influence these political and social practices. It has been observed that Gal 3:28 composes two parts of which the first part (v.28a-c) contains three statements in the present tense, which define the religious, cultural and social consequences of the Christian baptismal initiation. The three statements, extremely concise as they are, name the old status of the baptised and declare this old status abolished. By implication, a new status is claimed (6:15).²¹

Gal 3:28a: 'There is Neither Jew Nor Greek'

The first sentence (3:28a) reads: οὐκ ἔνι Ἰουδαῖος οὐδὲ Ἕλληγν, 'there is neither Jew nor Greek'. This teaching of Paul is not coming from the vacuum. In the first century racial tensions were the order of the day. While the Jews despised the Gentiles (even proselytes were not fully accepted); the Greeks on the other hand looked down upon people outside their race as 'uncultured'. On the other hand, the Romans felt themselves superior to those they conquered, and so on. To highlight this racial, socio-economic and gender tension in the first century, many commentators have drawn attention to an ancient prayer in which the Jewish man gives thanks that God has not made him a Gentile, a slave

²¹ Cf. Betz, *Galatians*, p.189; Miroslav Kocur, *National and Religious Identity: A Study in Galatians 3:23-29 and Romans 10:12-21*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2003. p. 77, is in agreement with Betz in by saying 'what should be underscored at this point is the fact that Paul sees that the difference is between circumcision and faith, not between circumcision and baptism. Baptism is not something more effective than circumcision; baptism, rather, should be seen as the expression of faith and of the already present spiritual union with Christ. This has above all, ethical consequences, as the following verse 28 describes; the expression of the experience of the different ethical standards of the baptized Galatian communities in comparison to the surrounding world. The new identity discloses everything which caught the members of differently defined groups in their status quo'.

or a woman. This attitude was so pervasive in the whole ancient society beyond the Jews that there was even 'a saying current in different forms among the Persians, Greeks and Jews in which man gives thanks that he is not an unbeliever or uncivilized, that he is not a woman and that he is not a slave'.²²

From this perspective, it seems logical to claim that the formula 'neither Jew nor Greek' points to Hellenistic Judaism as its origin, as it programmatically proclaims both a universalising and a hellenising of Judaism. This program seems to have been taken over by early Christianity, where in its mission the formerly exclusively Jewish prerogatives were extended to Gentile believers by simultaneously removing the Jewish external religious and social distinctions.²³ There, the formula is most likely a variation of the well known Hellenistic political slogan that talked of 'Greeks and Barbarians'. Paul seems to know it quite well (Rom 1:14). And the same formula is extended in Col 3:11 'there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, freeman...'. The slogan had been circulating for a while before Paul. It promises or proclaims the unity of mankind through the abolition of the cultural barriers separating Greeks and no-Greeks. Thus, the Jews seem to have appropriated this slogan correctly assuming that they themselves belong to the barbarians. By turning the order of the terms around, they claimed that they were realising the old political ideal.²⁴

This position gives credence to Asano's observation that generally speaking, the Galatian community stands in the social process of liminal emergence from the structural state of the Jewish collectivity (cf. Gal 1:13). In other words, the Jewish founder (Paul) departed from the structural foundation on the basis of a core ethnic sentiment in an attempt to incorporate Gentiles into his religious community, free from pre-set structural confinements. This process is quite peculiar in that it commences a new social process of structure to anti-structure and again to structure, yet not returning to the previous structure of Judaism. The new structure created is in essence anti-structure that has been accepted as the structure, similar to turning 'outlawry into inlawry'. According to

²² Leon Morris, *Galatians: Paul's Charter of Christian Freedom*. Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1996, p.121.

²³ Betz, *Galatians*, p. 191.

²⁴ Betz, *Galatians*, p. 192.

Asano, this unique direction of the social process is often a trend in religious communities in the emergence of sects. True to his assessment, protest movements such as African Initiated Churches and Pentecostal movements in Zimbabwe often follow this developmental line. The leader rebels against what he calls 'tradition', founds a new movement characterized by absence of previous tradition. In other words, the tradition of this new movement is the 'absence' of tradition. And that tradition is maintained for a while, until another leader feels uncomfortable with that tradition. So they rebel and create another tradition. And it goes on and on. This process is called 'permanent liminality', in which the state of liminality is extended indefinitely by forever reversing or denying the old structural values of the mother religion or denomination.²⁵

The above scenario is what Paul advocated for among the Galatians. For Paul, Christ has saved all such that being Jew or Greek is irrelevant,²⁶ since the very old and decisive ideals and hopes of the ancient world had come true in the Christian community. These ideals include the abolition of the religious and social distinctions between Jews and Greeks, slaves and freemen, men and women. Being changed to a 'new creation' implies these radical social and political changes. The Christian's relationship to the social and political structures of 'this world' follows the rule set forth in 6:14 'through whom (Christ) the world is crucified to me and I to the world'. The Christian is now 'dead' to the social, religious and cultural distinctions characteristic of the old world order (Gal 2:19).²⁷ This philosophy of 'social death' to the previous life was the clearest voice in the inaugural and reconciliation pronouncements by both Mugabe and Mandela. For the two leaders, the occasion of independence bestowed on the citizens, a spirit of oneness regardless of the disparity political, socio-economic and religious backgrounds that previously stood against cohesion of the various races, classes and genders.

²⁵ Asano, *Community-Identity Construction in Galatians*, p. 189.

²⁶ Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians*. London: A & C Black, 1993, p. 205, says, 'Paul reminds his Gentile readers that the conversion initiation into Christ breaks down the socially created boundaries which divided Gentiles from Jews among others. For Paul, this 'us/you' 'Jew/Greek' attitude which marked the epoch of the law has been rendered redundant by the fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise 'in Christ'.

²⁷ Cf. Betz, *Galatians*, p. 190.

Given the contexts of entrenched racism and apartheid these ideals were highly revolutionary, as was the teaching of Paul in Gal 3:28.

To understand the revolutionary nature of Paul's theology, it is important at this moment to acknowledge Arnold A. T. Ehrhardt, who once spelled out clearly what must also be applied to Paul's statements in Gal 3:28 and by extension to the statements by Mugabe and Mandela and the religious leaders at the onset of Zimbabwean independence, as we cited above. According to him,

it is a fact all too often overlooked by political theory that revolutions should not be judged according to the terror they spread around, but according to the question, whether or not they are capable of presenting a political alternative to the system which they fight. If the new political ideas cannot be integrated into the existing order which they fight, if at best they may be balanced out over a period of time, if every single and even the most prudential measure of the ruling principle is thoroughly criticised by the representatives of the new order,...then the movement which proclaims these revolutionary principles is truly revolutionary. In this sense Christianity in the first centuries was a radical revolution...²⁸

Gal 3.28b: 'There is Neither Slave Nor Freeman'

The second statement (3:28b) οὐκ ἔστι δούλος οὐδὲ ἐλεύθερος, 'there is neither slave nor freeman' is another revolutionary declaration. There is an overwhelming view that, in this declaration the institution of slavery was abolished. However, it seems more complicated than this quick conclusion. Taken alone the statement can be understood in two ways: First, as indeed a declaration of the abolishment of the social institution of slavery. Second, as declaration of the irrelevancy of that institution, which would include the possibility of its retainment.²⁹ Scholars who advocate for the first position suggest that that Gal 3:28 is to be interpreted in the light of 1 Cor 12:13 which is its parallel. In this light, slavery is abolished by turning to Christ for the Spirit received by both slaves and freeman, Greeks and Jews is the same. However, scholars who are favourable to the second position interpret Gal 3:28 in the light of I Cor 7:21-24, where Paul encourages the slaves who received Christ while in slavery to remain and those who were freemen when they received

²⁸ Arnold A T. Ehrhardt, *Politische Metaphysik 2*, p.19; cf. Betz, *Galatians*, p.190.

²⁹ Cf. Betz, *Galatians*, p. 193.

Christ to become slaves of Christ. According to them, the same view is expressed even in Col 3:11, where the form of Gal 3:28 is reflected. There is in this text an exhortation to the slaves to remain obedient to their masters (Col 3:22-25).³⁰ Which is which? Did Paul in Gal 3:28b call for the abolition of slavery or its retainment? What contextual considerations did Paul have at his disposal to influence his theological position?

In response to this deadlock, Betz suggests that the best way to understand Paul's declaration in Gal 3:28b is to situate his theology in a long tradition of social criticism against the institution of slavery in the Hellenistic world. This social criticism of the institution of slavery seems to have begun with the Sophists-the philosophers. As Aristotle reports, 'others however maintain that for one man to be another man's master is contrary to nature, because it is only convention that makes one a slave and the other a freeman and there is no difference between them by nature and that therefore it is unjust, for it is based on force'. This philosophy was quite prevalent in the ancient world. It then became part of the Cynic and Stoic philosophy. Zeno's *Politeia* for instance included equality between slaves and freemen.³¹

Compelling as it is, there is however doubt whether this social criticism by philosophers had any political and social implications in real life, such as to cause the abolition of slavery. It is generally believed that this criticism did not carry much weight, because philosophers lacked the political power to implement their ideas. Be that as it may, the ideas of freedom and slavery became 'internalised' or theoretical rather than practical. The result of this 'internalising' was the development of the concept that only the 'wise man' is really free, while the 'fool' becomes the real slave. This view implies that for the philosophers, the social class distinctions were indeed irrelevant since a slave who is a philosopher may be called 'free' whereas a freeman who is a slave to his passions cannot be called free. In the same vein, Philo said; 'for nobody is by nature a slave'. He points out that 'among the Jewish sects of the Therapeutae and the Essenes there were no slaves' that means they were all free since they were philosophers and not slaves of the flesh. From this position, one may not be wrong to conclude that by the time of the New Testament the old utopian dream of abolishing slavery was still

³⁰ Cf. Betz, *Galatians*, p. 193.

³¹ Betz, *Galatians*, p. 193.

alive, although the possibilities for implementation were extremely limited.³² However, such criticism was necessary for undermining the ideology of exploitation thus building a platform upon which such exploitation could be demolished by those with political power. Paul therefore may have adopted criticism of the institution of slavery like philosophers, however without the necessary political influence to see his ideas realised. The question now is; to what extent can we assume such a tendency for Paul's own time and even for Paul himself?

Gal 3.28b: 'There is Neither Slave Nor Freeman' and Paul's Letter to Philemon

Usually it is assumed that Paul's real attitude is expressed in his retention of the social institution in 1 Cor 7:21-24 and in Philemon, and that the literal understanding of Gal 3:28 is a later misunderstanding. It is from this consideration that some scholars have argued that Paul is conservative and is not prepared to see slavery go.³³ It is more likely, however that Gal 3:28 was the cause of the confusion, rather than a confusion of the cause. Taken at face value when first heard by Christian slaves at the ceremony of baptism, the message could hardly be misunderstood. The running away of Christian slaves from their masters may have been one result of such preaching, and the case of Onesimus in Paul's letter to Philemon may be typical instance of this.³⁴ It is unfortunate that we do not have a lot of records regarding the attitudes of slaves after baptism, but it is possible that they interpreted it as their freedom from the institution of slavery.

Paul's reaction in Philemon, sending the slave Onesimus back to his master, shows that the baptismal message created social problems with unforeseeable consequences. Paul's elaborate recommendations to protect Onesimus show how painful it must have been for him to take such

³² Betz, *Galatians*, p. 194.

³³ Cf. Horsley, 'Paul and Slavery: A Critical Alternative to Recent Readings', in David Jobling et al (eds.), *Slavery in Texts and Interpretation*. SBL. Semeia 83/84, 1998, pp. 153-200. See also, Stanley K. Stowers's response to Horsley, 'Paul and Slavery: A Response', in David Jobling et al (eds.), *Slavery in Texts and Interpretation*. SBL. Semeia 83/84, 1998, pp. 295-311.

³⁴ Betz, *Galatians*, p. 195; Cf. H. Bellen, *Studien zur Sklavenflucht im römischen Kaiserreich*. Forschungen zur antiken Sklaverei 4. Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1971, p.78.

action of returning him. On the other hand, Paul shied away from the alternative of social rebellion which no doubt would have been suppressed violently. According to Orlando Patterson, Paul neither defended nor condemned the system of slavery. This is because in his first century Roman Imperial world, the abolition of slavery was intellectually inconceivable and socially, politically and economically impossible, as the whole system functioned on slavery. However, in his individual capacity he was quite humane in his consideration of slaves and even would have wanted them manumitted. This is what Paul tries to reach home in the letter to Philemon. He was strongly hinting to Philemon to manumit Onesmus.³⁵

However, other scholars think that Paul realised the impossibility of manumission, therefore taking the Stoic option of ‘internalizing’ or relativising slavery, was the most logical way to solve the problem. His recommendations in 1 Cor 7:21-24 and Philemon therefore appear to take this way out.³⁶ This was quite a revolutionary stance given that throughout the Roman world the division between slaves and freemen was of the greatest importance. Given the status of slaves in the ancient world where even the lowest free person was infinitely more important than any slave, however gifted, to recognize that a believing slave was just as important in God’s sight as the highest among the nobility was to point to a radical abolition of a distinction that was taken for granted throughout Paul’s world.³⁷

Considering his context therefore, this was the only position Paul could take. All things being equal, he may have wanted slavery to be totally abolished however it must be appreciated that he did not have the necessary backup mechanism for the implementation of his ideas. Further, slavery however abhorrent, as an institution it was intricately intertwined with salvation for the slaves³⁸ (as is domestic work today in Zimbabwe), in that their whole lives depended solely on the master such that abolish-

³⁵ Cf. Patterson, ‘Paul, Slavery and Freedom’, pp. 266-271.

³⁶ Betz, *Galatians*, p. 195; cf. Bellen, *Sklavenflucht*, p. 79; In agreement, Dunn *The Epistle to the Galatians*, p. 207, suggests that Paul did not imply that all distinctions had been practically removed: Jews in Christ were still Jews (Gal 2:15; Christian slaves did not cease to be slaves (1 Cor 7:21; Col 3:22); rather, these distinctions had been relativised (cf. Gal. 5:6; 1 Cor 7:22; Phm 16).

³⁷ Morris, *Galatians*, p. 122.

³⁸ Cf. Martin, *Slavery and Salvation*.

ing slavery would, apart from instigating political chaos, also may have meant serious economic burdens to the former slaves and to Christianity. The only viable option for Paul to address the issue was to make the distinction between slaves and freemen irrelevant.

Gal 3:28c: ‘There is Neither Male Nor Female’

The third statement (3:28c): οὐκ ἔστι ἄρσεν καὶ θήλυ· ‘there is neither male nor female’, has been described as the strangest of the three statements comprising Gal 3:28. Several interpretations have been put forward to get to the bottom of the matter. However, all the various perspectives usually come to the same conclusion that according to Paul, in the Christian church, the sex distinctions between man and woman have lost their significance. In contrast to the two previous statements (Gal 3:28a and 28b), this one names the sexes in neuter (ἄρσεν καὶ θήλυς) (male nor female) which suggests that not only the roles, that is, social differences between man and woman are involved but the biological distinctions also. There are no parallels to this statement elsewhere in the New Testament (even 1 Cor 12:13; Col 3:11 above do not have this line). It was only in Gnosticism that this statement was well represented and apocryphal gospels among others.³⁹ This raises serious questions: So, where did Paul get the philosophy from? Did he invent the theory/perspective?

In response to these fundamental questions, scholars have the luxury to choose between several options. First, Paul’s statement can be interpreted in parallelism to the others above regarding Greek and Jew, slave and freeman, in which case, 3:28c would be interpreted as reference to the social emancipation of women. Second, if we interpret Paul in the context of the apocryphal and gnostic parallels, ‘neither male nor female’ would claim the metaphysical removal of the biological sex distinctions as a result of the salvation in Christ. In that case we must then speak not merely of social emancipation but of androgyny.⁴⁰ Third, but less prob-

³⁹ Betz, *Galatians*, p. 195.

⁴⁰ Betz, *Galatians*, p. 196; Wayne A. Meeks, ‘The Image of the Androgyne: Some Uses of a Symbol in Earliest Christianity’, *HR* 13 (1974), pp. 165-208; Dennis Ronald MacDonald, *There is No Male and Female: The Fate of Dominical Saying in Paul and Gnosticism*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987, pp. 2-3); Asano, *Community-Identity Construction in Galatians*, p.184.

able interpretation would suggest that Paul has adopted Stoic anthropology, in which according to the Stoics, women, like all human beings, have the same 'nature' as men.⁴¹ Since it is commonly held that Paul did not directly use the Stoic philosophy, we shall not belabour ourselves with this third position.

From the first possible interpretation, Galatians 3:28c seems unprecedented in the Greco-Roman world, as it is also in Judaism. It is the first occurrence of a doctrine openly propagating the abolition of sex distinctions. However, it is important to take into consideration that the abolition of sex distinctions is in line with the demolition of differences in the other two above. In that way, all three statements of Gal 3:28 are tied to the 'unity in Christ'. Consequently, while it seems very unlikely that the New Testament has this full-blown androgyny background as speculated by Wayne Meeks above, the possibility that a closely related gnostic myth of the Christ-Anthropos lies behind Gal 3:28 cannot be totally excluded.⁴² If the assumption is made that behind Gal 3:28c lies a doctrine of an androgynous Christ-redeemer, the implication would be that the dissolution of the sexual distinctions is coupled with a Christology in which Christ appears as the androgynous Anthropos. Therefore, being 'one in Christ Jesus' (Gal 3:28d) would imply a form of 'imitation of Christ', following the inclusion of the Christian into the 'body of Christ' (1 Cor 4:8). The logical conclusion from this process would be: since Christ is androgynous, his 'body' would be also, and so would the Christians who are the members of that 'body'.⁴³

From this reconstruction, a hypothesis could be forwarded that this doctrine lies behind Gal 3:28, particularly because this doctrine of an androgynous nature of the redeemed Christian seems to be pre-Pauline. However, definite proof is impossible due to lack of sources. To that effect, I agree with Joachim Kügler that overall, Paul's argument is that being male or female, slave or free, Jew or Greek is not important. Being 'in Christ' is the most important state because that transcends above all barriers, as it transforms all into new creation, 'sons of God', equally entitled to receiving the inheritance of the father-God. That is why in this new order, we have those who previously were disqualified: Gentiles,

⁴¹ Cf. Betz, *Galatians*, p. 195.

⁴² Betz, *Galatians*, p. 197.

⁴³ Betz, *Galatians*, p. 199.

females and slaves now participating as prophets and apostles and also church leaders.⁴⁴

Contribution of Gal 3:28 to Modern Struggles

As I have shown above, Gal 3:28 encapsulates and addresses the three most divisive themes since the origin of humanity; race, class and gender. In many societies especially in the Third World, poverty hence exploitation continues to follow these same old lines. In most cases 'culture' and especially biblical interpretation (and translation) offer the ideological tools to authentic cruelty and exploitation of fellow beings on the bases of racial, class and gender differences as we have seen in the history of domestic work in Zimbabwe. However, as the history of Africa shows, the Bible among other weapons has been central to dethrone this 'biblically inspired' inhuman mass exploitation. As such, Gal 3:28 is quite central in our struggle to reorder a divided society; the most unwelcome reality that manifests most notably in domestic work in Zimbabwe and in the rest of Southern Africa. Its call for the demolition of all the dividing walls is therefore not only a weapon but also a model of how the society ought to be.

Particular situations have sometimes led some liberation hermeneuticians to prioritise racial over class and gender while others have especially focussed on gender over against race and class in the interpretation of Gal 3:28. This selective approach leaves other areas of oppression unattended hence as less important, which creates hermeneutical problems. In this study I have tried to encompass all the three dimensions of oppression, particularly because they are all equally a reality in domestic work throughout Zimbabwe and Southern Africa. This holistic approach for me is more faithful to the original context of Gal 3:28, which context should be respected and understood by any serious liberation exegete before engaging this or that particular text from the Bible to one's context.

Therefore, one should note that the dissolution motif in the baptismal triple-couplets formula of Gal 3:28 is threefold (Jew/Greek; free/slave;

⁴⁴ Cf. Kügler, 'Gal 3:26-28 und die vielen Geschlechter der Glaubenden. Impuls für eine christliche Geschlechtsrollenpastoral jenseits von Sex and Gender', in: M. E. Aigner/J. Pock (Hg.), *Geschlecht quer gedacht. Widerstandspotenziale und Gestaltungsmöglichkeiten in kirchlicher Praxis.* (Werkstatt Theologie 13), Münster: Lit 2009, pp. 53-70.

male/female), and not merely focusing on the ethnic boundary alone.⁴⁵ It has been identified in the wider social convention that the overall social differentiation (hierarchical structure) was often summarized in the three categories of ethnicity, class and gender. Therefore, the correlation between the three couplets in v.28 and this general categorization of hierarchy is strong. At the time of constructing the liturgical saying, Paul's concern may have been extended to class and gender differentiations as well as ethnic ones.⁴⁶ For Paul, then, distinctions marking racial, social and gender differentiation, which were previously thought to indicate or imply relative worth or value or privileged status before God and in society, no longer have any significance, as they have been relativised.⁴⁷ This is the kind of society Zimbabwe ought to be. However, not much has been achieved since independence in as far as addressing the three troublesome issues is concerned. And that makes this study not only timely but also relevant.

Asano raised very pertinent observations that may help us understand Paul, Mugabe and Mandela's calls for egalitarianism. According to him, Paul's experience with the Jerusalem apostles and the Jewish mission made a significant impression on him in that the core ethnic sentiment would imply danger of marginalization and subjugation of his mission and community members (Gal 2:1-14). In the same way, both Mugabe and Mandela as I have shown above used their personal experience of being marginalised and exploited under the previous white minority regimes to seek to create an alternative society characterized by egalitarianism in which, as Asano argues 'community members would be protected and gain security against such a threat of marginalization and subjugation on the point of ethnicity'. Then the inclusion of class and gender differentiations (comprehensive egalitarianism) in Gal 3:28 may reflect the general anti-structural egalitarian response of the commu-

⁴⁵ Asano, *Community-Identity Construction in Galatians*, p. 197.

⁴⁶ Asano, *Community-Identity Construction in Galatians*, p. 198.

⁴⁷ Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, p. 207, says that Paul's choice of contrasts covers the full range of the most profound distinctions within human society-racial/cultural, social/economic, sexual/gender. The language implies a radically reshaped social world as viewed from a Christian perspective equivalent to the 'kingdom perspective' which informed Jesus' ministry (as seen in Luke 4:18, my insertion)-a powerful integrating force for the different social groups in the earliest diaspora churches.

nity's founder.⁴⁸ This is particularly true in Zimbabwe where racism was the known common enemy.

Further, Asano's views are very important insights considering that his model fits well in the Zimbabwean and South African cases. For Asano, the anti-structural or liminal response to the pressure of the wider structural context is typically the construction of a new worldview different from that of the previous structure. Deliberately, in this recreated worldview, the marginalized community members are offered the sense of significance, the reason and justification for entering and remaining within the community. From this perspective, the dissolution motif of the Galatian triple-couplets formula (3:28) is such a recreated worldview, acted out symbolically in the rite to affirm a new norm, the new community life in which they find themselves. While a reversal (liminal) ritual of a community in a structural state affirms the status quo of the conventional hierarchical system, the rite of baptism in the permanent liminal state of the community affirms the new norm antithetical to the structural world outside.⁴⁹ The quest for this society is still an ongoing pursuit in Zimbabwe. The struggle continues unabated!

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated the centrality of Gal 3:28 in the contexts of racial, class and gender struggles as a model for liberation. Zimbabwe and South Africa in particular have tried to create Gal 3:28 communities following the end of colonialism. In the same way Paul wanted the Galatians to embrace new life characterised by 'death' to previous divisions as dictated by race, class and gender, Mugabe and Mandela, together with respective Christian leaders have laboured to make the Pauline doctrine realised in Southern Africa. This endeavour offers this study a strong foundation or a platform upon which to stand as we continue to call and work for the establishment of the Gal 3:28 societies. Thus, this chapter has shown that Galatians 3:28 remains relevant in Zimbabwe as long as the dividing triplets; race, class and gender are not completely dethroned. In the same way, Gal 3:28 should be appealed to as long as domestic service is still characterised by one race being the race of 'divinely' ordained employers while the other is for the wretched employ-

⁴⁸ Cf. Asano, *Community-Identity Construction in Galatians*, p. 198.

⁴⁹ Cf. Asano, *Community-Identity Construction in Galatians*, p. 200.

ees. Until domestic workers are treated with dignity as other workers there is need to continue with the struggle. The struggle for a Gal 3:28 community must continue until there is neither appeal to race, class nor gender. In other words, the struggle must continue as long as some are still judged by the colour of skin, economic class and gender.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

OVERAL CONCLUSION

This book has demonstrated that it is impossible to understand the nature of exploitation of the underclasses (as represented by domestic workers) in Zimbabwe independent of historical and current political, socio-economic and religious factors. Zimbabwean domestic service as was slavery in the biblical times is a microcosm of the macro political, socio-economic and religious systems. It is an engagement of the politically, socially, economically and religiously vanquished people, desperate to survive by whatever means necessary, however humiliating. Through the study of slavery and domestic work, one gets to understand the underlying racial, class and gender tensions/struggles in the community in which these institutions survive. The choice of domestic workers as a mirror of the rest of the underclasses in Zimbabwe is not accidental. Apart from being one area of study that is largely ignored and neglected by academics, churches, media and activists on human rights, gender, or domestic violence, domestic service is one sector in which domination and exploitation manifests itself in all its facets; racial, class and gender. The book has argued that biblical scholars in Zimbabwe who are committed to full liberation and emancipation of the weak, must feel duty-bound to defend the poor by carefully choosing biblical texts that do not only describe situations similar to the ones underclasses (domestic workers) of Zimbabwe face, but biblical texts that also advocate for liberation of such exploited individuals.

It is from this background that this book did not only investigate and critique the influence of religion in early and monarchic Israel, Roman-Palestine, pre-colonial Zimbabwe and colonial Christian biblical interpretation on the exploitation of the underclasses, (paying particular focus on the household industry, domestic service which is the centre of these racial, class and gender struggles), but also provided an interpretation of selected biblical texts on slavery, namely: Exo 21:2-6, Deut 15:12-18, Lev 25:39-54, Luke 4:18 and Gal 3:28, emphasising the liberation motif therein. In a way, this hermeneutical position is an attempt not solely to take sides with the exploited underclasses (domestic workers) in the racial, class and gender struggle but to connect their struggle with kindred struggles that were being waged in very ancient communities as

well. The overarching assumption has been that: from the historical cultural materialist dimension of struggle, the exploitation of domestic workers, (and all the underclasses) of Zimbabwe is comparable to that of slaves of ancient Israel and Roman-Palestine of the New Testament era, in that both institutions are direct result of exploitative mass land dispossessions and skewed political and socio-economic policies anchored on a religious ideology meant to serve a few at the expense of the majority. Slaves of the biblical era and domestic workers of Zimbabwe are in other words, products of and a confirmation of the existence of an ongoing class struggle.

In this ongoing struggle, the role of religion is very pronounced. In fact, religion is the backbone of the struggle; the necessary ideology without which the status quo could not be sustained.. This state of affairs is quite similar to the role that religion played in the ancient Near East before and after the establishment of Israel. That is, from Canaanite city-states, to early Israel down to the eighth century BCE and beyond. Through some religious functionaries who themselves were beneficiaries of the status quo, the rich elite crafted ideologies/theologies explaining poverty and being underclass, (a slave) as a direct result of curses from God for sinfulness. On the other hand, material prosperity and being a master was conceived of as a direct reward or blessings from God for righteousness. Therefore, instead of serving the underclasses, religion was corrupted and co-opted by the rich to their side of the struggle. It was therefore used as a 'Weapon of Mass Destruction'

It is interesting however to note that even in such a corrupt ancient Israelite environment, there were a few religious individuals who refused to be corrupted. They chose to defend the underclasses. These include the Exodus-Levitical priests and some prophets such as Amos, who decided to redirect Yahweh religion towards protecting the righteous, that is, the exploited weak majority against the unrighteous, corrupt, greedy and rich few. In short, contrary to oppressors who appropriated religion as a 'Weapon of Mass Destruction', these revolutionaries sought to deploy religion, Yahwism as a 'Weapon of Mass Liberation'. It is upon this observation that this book argued that biblical hermeneuticians of liberation in Zimbabwe (or anywhere in the world) where oppression of the poor-underclasses is hinged even though not solely on religion, have no option but to take sides with the oppressed, if they have to be relevant.

The Exodus-Levitical priests and prophet Amos must serve as their inspiration.

I have also made it clear in this book that a biblical hermeneutician who has set total liberation as his/her agenda, like the examples cited above has to identify with the exploited in the struggle. This is why in the course of this book emphasis has been on turning religion, Christianity and biblical interpretation in particular into weapons of the struggle on the side of the oppressed underclasses (domestic workers) taking cue from the Levitical priesthood, prophets, Jesus and Paul who appropriated religion to liberate the oppressed. Such a process liberates, religion, Christianity and the Bible from the firm grip of the oppressors. In the same vein, the process even liberates God, who for a long time has been captured so to speak by the enemy (the oppressors) and has been serving their socio-economic, political and religious interests against those of God's own. The liberated God will begin to struggle with the oppressed, identifying with their culture, history and their misery. This is the authentic image of God and not any other. And the underclasses in Israel and those of the days of Jesus and Paul knew this God. In other words, this is the God who was witnessed by the Exodus-Levites, prophet Amos (among others), Jesus and Paul.

The Bible actually, according to Joachim Kügler, is witness to a God who 'violates' himself by manifesting himself in the profane. The holiness of this God does not allow itself to be confined to the Temple (or any other domain of the elite), but expresses itself in Israel's history, especially in the poor and oppressed. The outpouring of this God in the human Jesus is the radicalisation of this history.¹ This God does not choose a certain special race, class or gender. In fact, God identifies with the despised race, class and despised gender. But because God has been controlled by the elite for a long time, many people have come to accept the image of a flamboyant God as the real image of God. To them, no other alternative is possible.

This book has however shown that there is absolutely no permanent situation in that it cannot be changed. As long as it was established and sustained by human beings, any system of exploitation, no matter how strong, when the people, the oppressed masses tie together struggle and

¹ Cf. J. Kügler, 'The Historical-Critical Method: A violation of Scripture?' *TD* 54: 2, (2010), pp. 135-139 (138).

ideology, it can be demolished. For at least two millennia the monarchic-imperial, socially stratified mode of life had held dominance in the ancient Near East accompanied by socio-politically reinforcing theologies of individuated high gods. One would have thought that it was permanent, until the Israelite underclasses with determination to struggle for a better society 'cut back' on the socio-political mode by attempting to decentralise and destratify social relations, and did so in tandem with a 'stepped up' reinforced theology of a super-individualised sole deity who dramatically covenanted with a radically new, retribalised social order. From Israelite history, we realise that the uniqueness of their religious perception lay in its discovery through social struggle that the concrete conditions of human existence are modified rather than immutable conditions.² And to do this, religion and the concept of God have to be drastically revolutionised.

Finally, as Gottwald argues, unless Yahweh and his people Israel and of its Jewish and Christian derivatives are demystified, deromanticised, dedogmatised, deidolised and demythologised will those of us who have been formed and nurtured by those curiously ambiguous Jewish and Christian symbols be able to align heart and head, to combine theory and practice.³ The book thus demystified not only the image of God, Jesus and other religious functionaries, but also set these as examples for any religious man and woman committed to social transformation. This is especially important for biblical hermeneuticians of liberation in contexts such as that of Zimbabwe. Following the tradition of such religious and political gurus as Exodus-Levites, prophet Amos, Jesus, Paul, Mbuya Nehanda, and all the comrades of the First, Second and Third Chimurenga who have used religion as a 'Weapon of Mass Liberation' in the struggle, this book is a commitment to the same revolution through biblical interpretation. Until such an egalitarian society wished then is created and lived in concrete reality, the struggle continues! Aluta Continua!

² Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh*, p. 701.

³ Cf. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh*, p. 708.

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