

# **MIDLANDS STATE UNIVERSITY**



## **FACULTY OF ARTS**

### **DERPARTMENT OF THEOLOGY AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES**

**THE PREFERENTIAL OPTION FOR THE POOR: A CONTEXTUAL READING OF  
JOHN WESLEY'S SOCIAL ETHICS IN CONTEMPORARY ZIMBABWE 2000-2014**

**BY**

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

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**Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to the late Elizabeth Dimingu, my mother a hardworking and industrious woman, may her soul rest in eternal peace and to my wife Caroline and my three daughters Tanya, Tamie and Talic who endured my absence during the time I was working on this dissertation.

## **Abstract**

Poverty has become one of the major challenges in Zimbabwe since the turn of the millennium. This period has been characterized by high levels of unemployment and economic contraction. This seeks revisit John Wesley's social ethic of preferential option for the poor in light of the economic challenges the Zimbabweans have been facing and the plight of the poor. This study looked at how John Wesley confronted the poverty situation in eighteenth century Britain. It further looked at the how John Wesley's social ethics can be used to address the problems that are being faced in contemporary Zimbabwe. Lastly this study took the position that although the specific economic order that confronted John Wesley were peculiar to the eighteenth century his thoughts can provide the Zimbabweans with an entry point in addressing their contemporary problems.

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# Chapter 1

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. AREA OF INVESTIGATION AND BACKGROUND

This dissertation is in the area of Church history and Development. It is a historical assessment of John Wesley's social ethic of "Preferential option for the poor" in light of the worsening conditions of poverty in Zimbabwe from the year 2000 to 2008.

The subject of poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa has continued to dominate international meetings that are held by the political leadership of the African continent. However no significant improvement has been achieved as many people in the Sub-Saharan Africa have continued to be trapped in a cycle of grinding poverty and despair. The World bank noted that despite its falling poverty rates, Sub-Saharan Africa is the only region in the world for which the number of poor individuals has risen steadily and dramatically between 1981 and 2010 (World Bank, 2013). It is also critical to note that despite all the efforts that are being done by the Africans themselves and the Developed World in trying to alleviate poverty in Africa in general and the Sub-Saharan Africa in particular poverty has remained a major challenge in this region. As a result while the extreme poor Sub-Saharan Africa represented only 11 percent of the World total in 1981 they now account for more than a third of the world extreme poor (World Bank ,2013).-These statistics clearly shows that despite the fact that remarkable progress has been made in reducing poverty levels, globally poverty has maintained its grip on the African continent.

Zimbabwe has in recent years dominated international headlines because of a variety of reasons ranging from a radical and controversial land reform, disputed and at times violent

elections, a general meltdown of the economy and deplorable poverty. Murisa (2010:3) holds that various analyses have discussed the nature of the crises from various backgrounds with different emphasis and ideological leanings. However despite all the analyses on the nature of the crises, from the year 2000 Zimbabwe has gone from a place of hope to being one of the grimmest places on earth in as far as the worsening conditions of poverty is concerned. Inflation soared through 2006 and by 2007 the country was officially experiencing hyperinflation, with prices rising by more than 50 percent every month (Scoones et al, 2010:26). This hyper inflationary environment continued to worsen in the year of our Lord 2008 when the majority of Zimbabweans both in the urban and rural areas endured high levels of poverty never experienced since the attainment of independence in 1980.

The Zimbabwean dollar continued to crush against the world's major currencies, with inflation rate rising to over 230 million percent towards the end of 2008 (Scoones et al, 2010:26). This economic meltdown left many Zimbabweans faced with starvation as the unemployment rate continued to rise. In November 2008 up to 80 percent of the population survived on less than 2USD per day(Scoones et al, 2010:26). This crises was characterised by high unemployment levels, mortality rates, a dysfunctional health system, low industry utilization, a number of disease outbreaks, including primitive diseases such as cholera and typhoid and general poverty (Mangena and Mhizha 2013:133).The country had become a world leader in creating poverty. By the time the political leaders of Zimbabwe came together to form an inclusive government the majority of Zimbabweans had become poorer than they had ever been. Hence this research seeks to reflect on John Wesley's theological perspective to the conditions of poverty in eighteenth century Britain and evaluate whether

some of his insights may provide of point of departure for contemporary theological reflection in Zimbabwe.

### **1.1. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Zimbabwe is one of the countries in Africa where the rate of poverty has continued to rise even after the introduction of the multiple currency regime in 2009 after the demise of the Zimbabwean dollar. In the analysis on the poverty situation in Zimbabwe in 2010 UNICEF noted that 78 percent of Zimbabweans were absolutely poor and 55 percent of the population (6.6 million) lived under the food poverty datum line (UNICEF,2010). The formation of an inclusive government in March 2009 brought in prospects of stabilization and ultimately poverty alleviation. However the post crises situation in Zimbabwe has failed to reign in on the escalating poverty levels that have continued to make the country a factory of poverty. The majority of Zimbabweans have continued to live in abject poverty with many Zimbabweans relocating to other countries in search of employment. The Acting Principal Director in the Ministry of Public Service and Social welfare Mr Sydney Mhishi in his presentation to Parliamentarians on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of December 2013 noted that “Poverty levels have remained high with population below food poverty datum line as high as 63 percent. What it means is, generally around 63 percent of the households in urban and rural areas have an income which cannot make them purchase sufficient food or they are not producing enough food to take them through the season. As a result, poverty and hunger levels continue to be high” (Herald, 2013).These statistics from a government official clearly shows that the increasing impoverishment of the majority of Zimbabwe is among the most urgent things which need a collective action. Therefore the question this research intends to

answeris: How can John Wesley's Social and economic ethic help the people in contemporary Zimbabwe to discover how best to serve the poor.

### **1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

- ❖ What was John Wesley's stance and understanding on the question of poverty and the poor?
- ❖ What was John Wesley's theological assessment of poverty and his response to it.
- ❖ How can these insights be relevant to our Zimbabwean response to "our poverty" and "our poor."?

### **1.4 HYPOTHESIS**

The hypothesis that this research makes is that John Wesley's stance towards poverty, the poor and his theological assessment of it and his understanding of it can provide an entry point for addressing the problem of poverty in contemporary Zimbabwe. This research will also argue that John Wesley's thinking has something to offer to the contemporary Zimbabwean situation. This research argues that the problem of poverty in Zimbabwe does not only need a political but a theological solution as well. Christianity has always been sensitive to the issues of poverty and the poor therefore cannot afford to neglect her role in the eradication of poverty and its root causes in Zimbabwe.

### **1.5. AIM**

The aim of this study is to revisit John Wesley's economic ethic of "Preferential option for the poor" in addressing the challenge of poverty in contemporary Zimbabwe.

## **1.6 OBJECTIVES**

- To explore the Socio-Political and economic environment of Britain in the eighteenth century.
- To delineate John Wesley's social ethic of preferential option for the poor.
- To give an overview Socio- Political Situation in Zimbabwe 2000-2014.
- To assess the relevance of John Wesley's social ethic in contemporary Zimbabwe

## **1.7. JUSTIFICATION.**

Poverty has become one of the greatest challenges facing the Zimbabwean nation in recent years due to the economic contraction that characterized the years 2000-2008. Although some stability came about after the introduction of the multicurrency system and the formation of the Inclusive government, the majority of Zimbabweans have become poorer than they have ever been since independence. The rate of poverty has continued to rise with about 55 percent of the Zimbabwean population living below the food poverty line despite the rhetorical commitments by the political leaders to address this issue. It is however noteworthy that Politicians and Development practitioners have politicized the concept of poverty in Zimbabwe as a social problem often out of touch with any religious or theological sensitivity. On the other hand it is also important to note that there is no significant representation from the theological perspective in dealing with the poverty situation in Zimbabwe.

Therefore as a Zimbabwean and a Minister of Religion in the Wesleyan Methodist Church the researcher has found it imperative to appeal to John Wesley's theological assessment of poverty and his insights that seem to be relevant to our Zimbabwean Christian response to "our poverty" and "our poor." The researcher appreciates the vast difference of the context

in which John Wesley lived and the Zimbabwean context in the twenty first century, therefore it is critical to note that this study is not a direct transcription from eighteenth century Britain to Twenty first century Zimbabwe. While the twenty first century challenges cannot be compared to those that influenced Wesley's thinking it is true that reflections on earlier thinkers on current economic and social issues are of relevance today since they tried to deal with the basic principles that pertain to human interaction in general. Therefore certain principles may be relevant to our own situation with some obvious inevitable alterations. It is however noteworthy that the Church in Zimbabwe has played the role of a spectator to a larger extent in this unfolding drama. This research therefore seeks to come up with some suggestions that can help the nation in combating worsening poverty situation.

## **1.8. METHODOLOGY**

### **1.8.1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This dissertation is going to employ three methods namely historical, comparative and Sociological analysis method. The Historical method is a systematic and objective location, evaluation and synthesis of evidence in order to establish facts and draw conclusions about past events (Clarke 2000:1). This method is important because it enables the researcher to understand the context of the Zimbabwean situation. This method is important in this research as it will be used in exploring the Socio-economic and political situation in eighteenth century Britain during John Wesley's time. It will also be used to furnish the historical background of the poverty situation in Zimbabwe. The research will also employ the comparative method. The comparative method is going to be used in this research in comparing two given scenarios in order to come up to common position. This method will

help us to compare the economic and social conditions of both Britain in the eighteenth century and contemporary Zimbabwe. The Sociological analysis is the other method to be used in this research. The Social interpretation is a phrase of the exegetical task which analyzes the social and cultural dimension of the text and its environmental context (Eliot 1981:7). This method therefore is going to be used to establish the socio-economic and political contexts, which impacted on the poverty situation in eighteenth century Britain as well as in contemporary Zimbabwe.

### **1.8.2 METHODOLOGY FOR DATA COLLECTION**

There are several methods that can be used in collecting data. However the researcher shall use published literature and other archival material.

Scholarly sources on John Wesley's social ethics as well as the socio economic situation in eighteenth century Britain and contemporary Zimbabwe are going to be used in this research. Scholarly sources and other published books on the subject of Poverty shall also be used in this research.

### **1.9. LITERATURE REVIEW**

The study of John Wesley's social ethics and the concept of poverty is not a virgin area in the academic circles. A lot of research has been done on this critical area, therefore it is important to acknowledge that there are several publications that deal with John Wesley's social ethics as well as the poverty situation in Zimbabwe. However the majority of these scholars who have researched on the poverty situation in Zimbabwe and other Third World countries in general are Development practitioners and economists hence they tend to concentrate more on development theories which do not appeal to any theological solutions. These includes researchers such as Tendai Murisa (2010), Busan Mpfu(2012)

and Diana Nyathi(2010) among many others. They tend to politicize the concept of poverty as a social problem out of touch with any theological sensitivity. On the other hand the majority of the Scholarship that have written about John Wesley's social ethics such as Ronald H. Stone(2001) and Manfred Marquardt(2002) have concentrated much on the historical study of John Wesley's ethics without critically analyzing how they can be a guiding light in finding solutions to our contemporary social issues. This research shall review some of these publications. However it is critical to note that most of the scholars who have written on this topic have done so from a different perspective, setting or situation altogether however, this does not render their ideas irrelevant in this research.

Jennings (1990) attempted an analysis of John Wesley's social ethic of "Preferential option for the poor". Jennings in this book identifies what he calls John Wesley's "evangelical economics." He therefore tries to look at how the gospel may inform the people's interaction with the sphere of economics, with making a living (Jennings, 1990:22). He noted that for Wesley the gospel remained relevant to the task of clarifying the nature of an appropriate participation in the economic reality of his own time. He also noted that Wesley was concerned to developing a positive ethic that will alter the given socio-economic reality using the economic model of the Pentecostal community of Acts 2-4(RSV)

It is noteworthy that Jennings brings out fascinating insights on John Wesley's evangelical economies, although his analysis was not directed to a specific pressing social problem his views resonate to a large extent to the scope of this research,hence it shall be discussed in detail in chapter two of this research which focuses on the meaning of John Wesley social ethic of preferential option for the poor.

Heitzenrater (2002) looks at the social, political and economic background of poverty in eighteenth century Britain up to the time John Wesley came into the picture. He also highlighted how the government came up with laws that sought to address the problem of poverty in eighteenth century Britain. He noted that these laws resulted in the conceptualization, classification, criminalization and perpetuation of poverty (Heitzenrater, 2000:25). He goes on to outline Wesley's attitude toward the programs of the poor. He then noted that John Wesley concluded that the problems of hunger and unemployment were caused by poor government policy, economic management and societal choices. Just like many other Scholarship on John Wesley's ethics, Heitzenrater concentrated much on the historical analysis of Wesley's attitude towards the poor but could not bring how his ethics could help in finding solutions to the contemporary existential problems a perspective this dissertation seeks to look at.

Marquardt(2002) begins by examining several areas of Wesley's social praxis. These include slavery, economics and ethics, his work on aid to the poor, prison reform, and education. He observed that in most cases, Wesley appealed to people, either individually or as members of groups, to act out of love for God and their neighbor. Marquardt argues that John Wesley's social ethics did not affect the Methodists' primary handling of goods, but England's economic and political development. He also noted that Wesley's, approach to the issue of poverty and the poor was twofold, that is the economic responsibility of the individual and the economic responsibility of the society. Wesley's social ethics was focused first on the individual then the entire nation of England, other nations and finally human society.

Although Marquardt falls in the same category with those scholars who have looked at Wesley's ethics and the principles that underlie them placing them in a larger context which becomes problematic because the social problems that are facing the contemporary world are not

homogeneous. However, Marquardt's view that Wesley remains a rich resource in solving the social problems that characterize the contemporary world falls in line with the hypothesis of this research.

Stone (2001) attempts a historical study of John Wesley's ethics. He argues that the morals that guided Wesley's long life came from his family, the Church, the culture and the university (2001:19). Stone noted that Wesley's thought did not determine major directions of the eighteenth century but did shape the minds of a significant number of people. Stone analysis John Wesley personal and social ethical thought biographically. He gives a picture of eighteenth century England and the ways how Wesley's responded to this context. As noted in the review of other Scholars in this research although Stone shows that although the contemporary world can draw some lessons from Wesley's social ethics his biggest weakness is being too historical without showing how Wesley's ethics can be of use in today's social ethics.

Madron (2008) analyses John Wesley's ethics and noted that of greatest importance were his ideas of God and of humanity. He also observed that he insisted on the inseparable relationship between the love of God and the love of others. Madron concluded that because John Wesley used the love ethic to influence his perspective on the economic system, the way in which he dealt with social issues should therefore be interpreted as a constant and continuing evaluation of the ethical consequences of an economic system. It is therefore critical to note that Madron brings in an interesting and important aspect of Wesley's economic ethic because of the humanitarian spirit they exemplify. This analysis by Madron is important in this research hence it shall be explored further.

In this publication Raftopoulos(2009) gives an analysis of the decade long crises in Zimbabwe which left the majority of Zimbabweans on the breadline. He gives the historical background of the Zimbabwean crises which resulted in the rapid decline of the economy, characterized among other things, by steep decline in industrial and Agricultural productivity historic levels of inflation and

critical erosion of livelihoods. He also noted that during this period the Church was so divided on how to deal the situation as some key players in major churches took sides with the major political parties. This view shall also be used in chapter two this research.

The researcher noted that although Raftopoulos gives a historical background of the Zimbabwean crises and how the Church was divided he however does not suggest what the church should have done and what it should do to address the poverty situation in Zimbabwe.

In this publication Mpofu(2012) focuses on urban poverty in Zimbabwe because of the economic meltdown that was experienced in the past decade which has left the majority of the urban populace in Zimbabwe facing declining urban living conditions and decreasing employment opportunities. He noted that poverty has become a major social problem in Zimbabwe because while the economy has stabilized since the dollarization of the economy job growth and creation has been disappointing with the rate of unemployment rising considerably. He also argues that the central government has refused responsibility for the factors behind the poverty in Zimbabwe shifting the blame to the targeted sanctions imposed by America and the Western countries. Mpofu therefore concludes that it is very difficult to minimize poverty when its causes are misunderstood. However Mpofu looked at the problem of poverty from a Secular perspective which relies much on theories that does not consider any theological influence. This view by Mpofu is very critical in this research hence it shall be looked at in detail.

### **1.10 LIMITATIONS**

The major limitation to this research is that John Wesley's social ethics were mainly addressing the poverty situation in urban areas of Britain, yet in the Zimbabwean context the problem is prevalent in both rural and urban areas.

### **1.11 SCOPE**

- The study utilized historical records from the eighteenth century up to the contemporary times.
- The study focused on John Wesley's ethics of preferential option for the poor.
- The study also focused on Zimbabwean economic crises from 2000-2014

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **2. JOHN WESLEY'S SOCIAL ETHIC OF PREFERENTIAL OPTION FOR THE POOR AND THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC SITUATION IN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY BRITAIN**

#### **2.1. INTRODUCTION**

Eighteenth Century Britain represents a period that experienced the dawning of a new age in which Enlightenment rationale provided tremendous possibilities for some, but it also witnessed the emergence of various dehumanizing trends, in particular, harmful class stratification and negative treatment of the working poor. There was social break up which caused a lot of poverty and suffering for ordinary citizenry. John Wesley was a product of this historical context therefore he wrote and preached against the dehumanizing trends of this period, therefore in order to adequately understand John Wesley's social ethic of preferential option for the poor there is a need to appreciate the context of social ethic of preferential option for the poor. Therefore this chapter will give an overview of social and economic situation in Britain in the eighteenth century with special reference to the social and economic impact of enclosures, the development of agriculture and the rise of an industrial society in Britain. In this chapter John Wesley's social ethic of preferential option for the poor shall be defined and the key principles of this social ethic shall also be discussed.

#### **2.2. THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC SITUATION IN BRITAIN IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY: AN OVERVIEW**

It is critical to note that before the advent of industrialization Britain was largely an agrarian society with the majority of the people living and working on small farms in rural areas. The farmers therefore would harvest some few crops from their small pieces of land as well as raising small herds of livestock. However despite the small scale nature of agricultural productivity in Britain during this period, agriculture was the main economic activity.

It is also noteworthy that manufacturing activities were also very low and localized. There were no sophisticated tools as people used basic tools powered by people and animals in the manufacturing of most goods. The towns just like the villages were also small and self-contained. The working day started in the morning and ended at sunset. Another critical aspect of this period was the diet, which was inadequate and average. Diseases were so common due to poor sanitation hence life expectancy was so short.

Yavuz holds that “After 1700’s the West underwent a series of transformations, in politics, intellectual development and industrialization. It is noteworthy that around 1700 Wealthy landowners, began buying up much of the land that village farmers had once worked. After buying up the land of village farmers, wealthy landowners enclosed their land with fences or hedges. This process of landholding moving from small fields to larger fields was known as enclosure. Baradley (2001:7) posits that the term enclosure is used to refer to the process by which the common-field system was broken down and replaced by a system of unrestricted private use. This agricultural revolution signaled the beginning of high levels of poverty for many people in Britain.

### **2.2.1 THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACT OF ENCLOSURES**

Enclosure was one of the most important formative processes in the evolution of the Landscape of England and Wales. Although enclosure has tended to become synonymous in common usage with physically shutting off a piece of land with a fence, hedge or wall, its historical, legal meaning was rather different. In this latter sense, enclosure involved the removal of communal rights, controls or ownership over a piece of land and its conversion into ‘severalty’, that is a state where the owner had sole control over its use, and of access to it (Kain et al :2014). This definition by Kain et al is so fascinating because it points

out the removal of communal rights, controls and ownership of land shifting towards the creation of poor landless people by the landlords. A development which had negative impact on the livelihood of the majority of formerly peasant farmers, as they were pushed out of their land by this new development.

When enclosures were introduced the large landowners dramatically improved farming methods. The increase in their landholdings enabled them to cultivate larger fields. Within these larger fields, landowners experimented with seeding and harvesting methods to boost crop yields. One of the important results enclosures was that it allowed landowners to introduce new scientific methods which resulted in increased productivity and consequently capitalism

It is however important to note that although enclosures increased the number of bigger, productive capitalist farms it also reduced the peasants to farm labourers. Some of the peasants migrated to towns and became cheap labour in factories. This great epoch of agricultural revolution ushered in a new era in Britain which condemned the majority of the peasants into deplorable conditions of poverty as they lost ownership and access to the means of production. In reference to this period Chesterton (1917) referred to the situation of creating of large farms for sheep breeding as "*Sheep eating man*". Despite the advantages that were brought about by the enclosure it is the reducing of landless commoners to mere wage earners which left an indelible mark on the history of the commoners in Britain during this era. While the landowners viewed enclosures as a way of maximizing profits and productivity the ordinary farmers saw them as a destruction of their source of livelihood that had supported their families for centuries. It is interesting to note that this revolution in agriculture became the seedbed of the industrial revolution in Britain.

## **2.2.2. THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION AN OVERVIEW**

According to the Oxford English Dictionary Industrial Revolution is the rapid development in industry which took place in England in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century, chiefly owing to the introduction of new or improved machinery and large scale production methods(Oxford English Dictionary). The industrial revolution ushered in a new era of greatly increased output of goods through machine made goods as compared to the manmade goods which was the norm prior to industrialization. There are various accounts of when exactly the industrial Revolution started in Britain because it was not an event but a process. However it is generally agreed that industrialization proper began in Britain in the mid seventeenth century before it spread to other countries. Thomas (2002:8) argues that “The industrial Revolution brought about unprecedented increases in productivity based on the development of factories and the widespread use of machinery. The industrial revolution also witnessed an increase in rural urban migration with many unskilled workers moving into towns in search of work, this led to a high supply of labour in the factories hence the latter half of the 1700s witnessed a boom trade which was accompanied by signs of growing distress of the poor.

### **2.2.2.1. THE SOCIAL IMPACT OF THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION IN BRITAIN**

The introduction of enclosures and the subsequent growth of factory production made the mass movement of people from rural areas into towns inevitable, since they had to migrate to the towns in search of employment. It is critical to note that the enclosures and the introduction of machines in the growing industries meant that that most the workers lost access to the means of production. Marquardt (1992:20)noted that

*“Most of them lacked schooling andor vocational training, they no longer lived in their home communities, but in newly developed industrial areas or slum districts at the cities’ edge. Hence they had lost their privileges of economic support and were no*

*longer accessible to the ecclesiastical arrangement that was oriented to traditional parochial structures."*

Therefore many people were left with no choice than offering themselves for employment as cheap labour in the factories. Thomas (2002:8) contends that specialized monotonous factory routine replaced traditional jobs, while to reap full economies of scale capitalists subjected workers to a structure of discipline which maximized the effort supplied. Indeed the lives of the workers went through high levels of dehumanization at the expense of the capitalists as they were forced to work for very low wages under very difficult conditions. They survived as crowded masses in living conditions that were catastrophic even for that time. Without any medical care, high mortality rate was offset only by the even higher birthrate(Trevelyan 1946:274).

It is also important to note that the working conditions under which workers were subjected to unregulated and dangerous. Stone (2001:166) holds that

*Occupational hazards were fundamentally unregulated, the sawyers of timber went blind,as did the tailors, and metal workers fell to lead poisoning. Workers alternated between fourteen hour work days and unemployment without support,children suffered long working hours with beatings for discipline and the medical profession testified that such conditions were acceptable to society and the children's wellbeing.*

Women and children were not spared by the exploitation that characterized Britain in the eighteenth century as they were often forced to work so that they could survive. It is also noteworthy that these women and children worked without any protective clothing a situation which exposed them to all sorts of occupational hazards. Those who owned the means of production enjoyed absolute power over the poor workers and they were not concerned with the needs or welfare of the workers as they could substitute a sick worker with a health one because of the abundant availability of cheap labour.

Another impact of industrialization was the changing of social welfare in comparison to the pre industrialization era. Clermont (2002:5) observed that “prior to 1770, there was a greater degree of social welfare prevalent in the agrarian communities. During harvests many people could depend on their neighbors and community to provide assistance during times of need.” It is noteworthy that due to industrialization families were now relying on wages and if the primary wage earner falls sick or dies his or her dependents would suffer as the other members of the community were now unable to assist as they used to do in the agrarian economy.

Drunkenness also became another common feature of this period. It is critical to note that due to the deplorable working and living conditions many people found comfort and solace in drinking alcohol. “With the arrival of the Dutch in the Glorious Revolution, gin made from corn and flavored with juniper berry became the opiate of the masses. It was cheap and available, “Drunk for a penny, and dead drunk for two pence” became the escape for many of the mob(Stone 2001:167). During this period crude gin was being sold from thousands of gin shops. Bready (1939:146)noted that Bishop Benson summed up the situation in Britain during this time when he said “the national drunkenness had made the English people what they never were before, cruel and inhuman.” The whole population seemed to have been taken over by the orgy of drunkenness.

The rate of crime also increased to unprecedented levels during this period and this led to the introduction and enforcement of barbaric laws. Stone (2001:167) posits that children could be hanged for stealing a handkerchief and public hangings were utilized as an effective means of deterrence and public spectacle. To pick a pocket for more than one shilling, to snare a rabbit on an estate, to snatch gathered fruit and make off with it are

typical offences for which a Briton could be hanged (Bready 1939:127). The level of poverty continued to rise and subsequently crime also continued to rise hence the brutal legal codes which were introduced to try and deal with this problem. It is however noteworthy that no effort was made to try and address the situation of poverty which was the primary cause of crime. The concentration of the aristocrats was on making more profits in the factories. Out of these conditions came hosts of problems centering on the psychological reconditioning of people in character and morale (MacArthur 1936:44). It was in these conditions that John Wesley came up with his social ethic of preferential option for the poor in an effort to address the problem of poverty in eighteenth century Britain.

### **2.3. THE WESLEYAN PREFERENTIAL OPTION FOR THE POOR**

Telford(1931:286) holds that from the beginning of the Evangelical Revival John Wesley saw himself in quasi-apostolic terms as a man with a national, almost a universal mission “ I look upon all the world as my parish” he declared in 1739 – but he also saw himself as having a particular mission to the poor. John Wesley’s Socio economic ethic of preferential option for the poor needs to be seen against the background of poverty , unemployment , exploitation of the masses and inhumane working conditions that characterized Britain in the eighteenth century as highlighted earlier in this chapter.Wesley’s social ethic of preferential option for the poor like all his social thoughts is based on his ethics and theology mainly his ideas of God and humanity. It is critical to note that John Wesley’s emphasize on personal transformation was also linked to the transformation of the society. For him the transformation of individuals will ultimately lead to the transformation of the society. This transformation was also linked to the economic issue that the enterprise of Scriptural Christianity could be said to succeed or fail depending on the way in which it did or did not transform the relation to wealth, property and the poor. (Jennings 1990:15). Therefore for

John Wesley there could be no holiness without social holiness. Therefore John Wesley did not subscribe to the English traditional and religiously exalted perspective of poverty as a self-incurred fate or a stigma of divine punishment. Marquardt (1992:30) posits that the social climate in England during Wesley's lifetime and immediately following his death facilitated urgently needed social reforms. Therefore John Wesley was a practical Theologian who responded and interpreted the Scriptures in light of concrete issues that were affecting the people. The plight of the poor took center stage in Wesley's theology and became the litmus test for earnest Christian belief. Thus the question of solidarity with the poor was ultimately a question of authenticity of the Christian confession of faith (Jennings 1990:130). In order to fully understand and elaborate John Wesley's social ethic of preferential option for the poor and see if it can have any relevance to the contemporary situation in Zimbabwe, this research will consider specific socio economic issues that were of concern to him during his own time.

### **2.3.1. THE CONCEPT OF WEALTH**

John Wesley's concept of wealth was one of the most important aspects of his preferential option for the poor. Unlike much of the ideas of the eighteenth century Wesley did not accept the theory of for the absolute protection of property rights, for him property was never a personal possession all persons holds property only as God's Stewards and He can at any time take the property away (Madron1981:110). Dayton (1991: 11) asserts that Wesley became intensely critical of the economics of private property and instead turned to the early church as an alternative economic mode favouring common property. From Wesley's point of view God the creator of the heavens and the earth is the owner of everything therefore economics should not be approached as if there is no God. It is important to note that John Wesley's Scriptural holiness was aimed at transforming

individuals, society and the whole universe. Therefore he was not a believer in the sort of separation of the religious and the Secular (Jennings 1990:98). In one of his sermons Wesley noted that

*“If a man pursues his business, that he may raise himself to the state of figures and riches in the world, he is no longer serving God in the world, he is no longer serving God in his employment ... For vain and earthly designs are no more allowable in our employments, than in our alms and devotions,”(Wesley 1773:361)*

For Wesley one cannot approach economics leaving God out of the picture. Wesley compares leaving economics to the free interchange of the market place as the same as turning over the care of souls to psychologists (Jennings 1990: 99). Therefore for John Wesley since God is the creator and owner of all things our relationship to those things is determined by one’s relationship with God the owner. In his journal John Wesley wrote that

*“ As to yourself you are not the proprietor of anything, no ,not of one shilling in the world , you are only a steward of what another entrusts you with , to be laid , not according to your will , but his” (Wesley 1996:336).*

In this journal he reiterates that God alone is the true owner of all created things, therefore for him there should be nothing that is referred to as private property, because God can repossess those things at any given time. The charge Wesley directed to the rich was “Be ye ready to distribute to everyone, according to necessity (Wesley 1996:308-9). In this charge Wesley is saying what the rich have in their possession is due to the poor therefore no one should be found without yet others are living in over abundance. John Wesley was advocating for a society in which all things are held in common as was the case in the early Church according to Acts chapters 2-4. The distribution according to need in Wesley’s thought was the highest concept of economic organization, primitive communism the kind of organization he thought existed among the earliest Christians (Madron 1981:108). Indeed

John Wesley's option for the poor shaped his understanding and response to the poor in his lifetime.

Wesley's concern for property led him to protest the monopolization of farms and on one occasion he advocated as a means of encouraging or compelling the redistribution of land , not allowing any farm to rent for more than one hundred pounds a year (Madron 1981:112)

### **2.3.2 ECONOMIC PROBLEMS**

It was noted in the introduction of this chapter that in Eighteenth century Britain poverty was viewed as the will of God and those who experienced it deserved it because they were idle or because they are not worthy. They never saw the social and economic conditions as the possible cause of poverty. "In this sense it maybe said that Wesley "discovered the poor" for he was able at least to see past these superficial analysis" (Edwards 1955:148). In his Journal John Wesley recorded that:

*"On Friday and Saturday, I visited as many more (of the poor) as I could. I found some in their garrets, half-starved both with cold and hunger added to weakness and pain .But I found not one of them unemployed, who was able to crawl about the room, So wickedly, devilishly false is that objection "They are poor only because they are idle "if you saw these things with your own eyes, could you lay out money in ornaments or superfluities" (Wesley 1753:279-80)*

John Wesley was dispelling the assertion that the poor were poor because they were lazy. For him it was an honest evaluation that people were in want through the scarcity of business (Wesley1996:269).

According to John Wesley, poverty's actual basis lies neither in amysteriousheavenlyjudgment nor in the unworthiness of those affected by it. Instead poverty can be traced to recognizable causes (Marquardt 1992:31). John Wesley took a critical stance toward the economic structures and identified the causes of poverty as he moved out of the ecclesial arena into public policy. He analyzed the causes of poverty in

Britain in his document Thoughts on the present scarcity of provisions in 1773 where he made use of his own observations and experience. In this document he started by revealing that there are thousands of people starving and perishing in every part of Britain. He therefore argued that

*“ I have known those who could only afford to eat a little coarse food once every other day . I have known one in London (and one that a few years ago had all the conveniences of life) picking up from a dunghill stinking sprats and carrying them home for herself and her children. I have known another gathering the bones which dogs had left in the streets, and making broth of them, to prolong a wretched life! I have heard a third artlessly declare, “indeed I was a very faint and so weak until my dog, finding nothing at home went out and brought a good sort of bone which I took out of his mouth, and made a pure inner!” Such is the case at this day of multitudes of people, in a land flowing as it were with milk and honey abounding with all with all the necessities, the conveniences, the superfluities of life!”( Wesley 1996:67).*

In this publication Wesley pointed out that people have nothing to eat because they have no work, the people who used employ them cannot afford to anymore because of the economic system now in place. He goes on to argue that food had become expensive and the rate of unemployment was also rising. He argued that immense quantities of corn were continually consumed by distilling (Wesley 1996:68). John Wesley in this document protested the emergence of big farm monopolies which was a result of enclosures. Stone (2001:225) noted that monopolies in agriculture and the consumption of grain by horses desired by the wealth as a sign of luxury drove food prices for the poor to formidable heights in Wesley’s analysis. In summary John Wesley in his “thoughts on the present scarcity of provisions” argues that the poverty situation in Britain was a result of a plethora of reasons chief among them taxes, luxury and distilling.

Wesley proposed a change of policy that may help to reduce the rate of unemployment and consequently relieving the poor from their distress. This included the laying tax on exported horses and the gentleman’s carriages, reduce the size of farms so that small farmers can be

accommodated, repressing luxury, paying off the national debt and terminate needless expenses which benefit only the gentry (Wesley 1996:72-73).

John Wesley's thoughts in this document are fascinating as they clearly show that he took his social and economic ethic of preferential option for the poor from the religious sphere to secular economics as he took a critical stance toward the economic structures of his time. It is noteworthy that he argued his issues from an informed position because of his interaction with the poor and the marginalized.

### **2.3.2.1 THE SLAVE TRADE**

Slavery was one of the major problems during the time of Wesley's. Britain started to deal in slave trade in 1713 but it was only in the eighteenth century that it became more involved in the trade. John Wesley wrote a tract condemning all acts of Slave trading in his thoughts on slave trade. John Wesley refuted the notion that taking the Africans out of Africa was actually doing them a favour Wesley then spoke about how the Africans were made to turn against each other by Christian traders, and each other to the slave traders

Wesley argues against the way the Africans were being treated which he said it was wrong. He labeled slave trade as a high level of injustice. Wesley also called on those whose jobs had some connection in one way or another to quit that job. Wesley also persuaded the Parliamentarians to abolish slave trade. He supported a committee for the Obliteration of slave Trade which was set up in 1787. John Wesley's stance in Slave trade was part of his social and economic ethic that advocated for making the situation of the poor the starting point of every policy, or government legislation.

### 2.3.3. HUMANITARIAN REFORM

Wesley's desire to help the poor manifested itself in a variety of ways. In responding to the prevailing poverty conditions, his response was to find work for the unemployed when that was not possible he established work projects and cottage industries. For example he employed several people in the processing of cotton and established others in small knitting industries (Sherwin 1961:132). John Wesley also established a lending stock from which people would borrow limited amounts of money without interest. Edwards(1955:154) observed that the old foundry in London for instance became veritable melting pot of projects " a house of mercy for widows, a school for boys, a dispensary for the sick, a workshop and employment bureau, a loan office and saving bank, a book room and a church." In pursuance of his ethic of preferential option for the poor John Wesley went a step further from identifying the root causes of poverty to empowering the poor. Wesley's thought about poverty are so fascinating because of their humanitarian spirit, hence they shall be looked into in Chapter four of this dissertation.

### 2.4. CONCLUSION

John Wesley did not hesitate to apply his ethics to concrete economic political issues as well as moving out of ecclesial praxis into public policy This chapter has looked at the background of the socio economic situation in eighteenth century Britain and established that the enclosure movement which witnessed the displacement of small farmers from the common land to give way to bigger capitalist productive farms left the majority of the ordinary people without any access to the means of production condemning them to serious conditions of poverty.The chapter also managed to highlight the impact of the industrial revolution on the lives of the British people in the eighteenth century. The workers which included women and children suffered greatly while the capitalists enjoyed

the benefits. This chapter also managed to establish that the concept of wealth, economic conditions and humanitarian reform were the major principles of John Wesley's socio economic ethic of preferential option for the poor and established that his social ethic advocated for viewing reality from the stand point of the poor and the marginalized, thereby placing the concerns of the poor at the center and not at the periphery. This chapter also managed to look at how John Wesley became an advocate of the poor as he moved the issue of poverty from ecclesial praxis to concrete proposal for public policy.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **3. THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONTEXT 2000-2014: AN OVERVIEW**

#### **3.1. INTRODUCTION**

The period 2000-2008 marked the onset of a social and economic crises never experienced in Zimbabwe since attaining independence in 1980. Mlambo and Raftopoulos (2010) assert that, Zimbabwe has been in the throes of a severe crisis in the past decade or so; one which has seen a once vibrant and dynamic society and economy virtually collapsing as political instability, lawlessness, mis-governance and a relentless economic meltdown transformed this erstwhile leading Southern African nation into an international pariah and the proverbial basket case. This situation strangely sounds similar of the social context in which John Wesley worked in. It is in light of this background that it is imperative for this research to give an overview of the economic crises that has caused a lot of suffering to the majority of Zimbabweans in order to compare the poverty situation in Zimbabwe and that of the eighteenth century Britain. The chapter shall look at the political and economic policies and decisions that has occasioned the economic decline in Zimbabwe which Bond and Manyanya(2003) refers to as “Zimbabwe’s plunge”.

#### **3.2. A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE ZIMBABWEAN CRISES**

##### **3.2.1 DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIALISM**

When Zimbabwe attained her independence in 1980, the new government in an endeavor to undo the evils of the colonial period that was characterized by the inequitable distribution of resources between the black majority and the white minority adopted a socialist economic ideology. Preston (1996:159) posits that “it should be noted that that Zimbabwe like many other newly independent African states had local pressures to adopt a strong developmental policy framework to actualize political freedom and rights growth and welfare for both the elites and the masses. However the government “...maintained the

macroeconomic controls inherited from the Rhodesian government and within the framework of a command economy, the government also introduced redistributive objectives that necessitated a large public sector and increased government spending on health, education, and other social welfare programs throughout the 1980s”(UNDP, 2008:).The adoption of the socialist economic ideology which was motivated towards the provision of social services to the majority made the gradual decline of the economy become inevitable because it was not growth oriented. As a result, high budget deficits in the context of a controlled economy spelt doom to the economy (UNDP, 2008:8).

It is noteworthy that besides this gradual shrinkage of the economy, the first decade after attaining independence,Zimbabwe’s economic situation was very promising because of the reconciliatory stance that was taken by the new Prime Minister Robert Gabriel Mugabetowards their erstwhile colonizers. Zimbabwe was therefore a success story and a beacon of hope in Southern Africa. However periodic droughts and the government’s preoccupation with a socialist economic ideology in an attempt to correct the historical colonial economic imbalances had a negative impact on the promising economy. The government therefore embarked on an economic policy shift from the socialist to liberal economic policy regime

### **3.2.2 ECONOMIC ADJUSTMENT PROGRAME (ESAP)**

Tshuma (1997) posits that the World Bank-fashioned Economic Structural Adjustment Program (ESAP) was therefore recommended by the year 1990 as the ideal prescription to Zimbabwe’s economic woes. Brett (2005:92) argues that this shift of policy led to the crises of the late 1990’s. Indeed ESAP did not achieve the intended results because the drought and lack of funding. Hammar and Raftopoulos (2003) holds that as a result ESAP had shattering effects on the economy that were characterized by unprecedented increases in

interest rates and inflation, a 65 per cent fall in the stock market, deindustrialization precipitating a 40 per cent decline in manufacturing causing company closures and massive job cuts, and a substantial decline in real wages and overall standards of living.

Workers unions such as the Zimbabwe congress of trade unions were against this structural adjustment program which had caused a lot of company closures and retrenchments hence they viewed it as an anti-poor programme. ESAP received widespread condemnation from the workers, this criticism was accompanied by demonstrations lead by Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZTCU) and the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) and this coincided with the formation of the a strong opposition the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) against the ruling ZANU P.F. party. A 1997 Poverty Assessment Study Survey (PASS) estimated that 86 percent of the rural population and 50 percent of the urban population were in poverty at the time (Bowyer-Bower and Stoneman, 2000:87).

Zimbabwe's economy went further on a free fall when government offered veterans of the war of liberation unbudgeted gratuities on a "black Friday" in November 1997 (Moore, 2005: 10). The decision by the government to involve itself in a war in Democratic Republic of Congo also contributed to the economic crises. These political and economic blundering by the Zimbabwean government shook the economy and set in motion the plummeting of the once stable Zimbabwean dollar against other major currencies, officially marking the beginning of the economic meltdown.

### **3.2.3. THE LAND REFORM**

The Zimbabwean land reform which was popularly known as the Third Chimurenga, started in 2000 led by former freedom fighters, ZANU PF youths and some peasant farmers. Masaka(2011:16) holds that Zimbabwe's land reform that gained momentum since the year

2000 with the politically motivated invasions of productive farms and the subsequent disturbance of farming activities and vandalism of expensive farm equipment worsened Zimbabwe's economic crises. It is critical to note that when Zimbabwe attained its independence in 1980, the land issue remained unsolved however, the way it was solved impacted negatively on the country's economic and political climate. Although the people of Zimbabwe's pursuit to reclaim their land was justified, the way in which this important exercise was done is still highly disputed by many observers and the international community. However, such a policy decision led to unprecedented economic decline.

The manner in which the land reform in Zimbabwe was undertaken received widespread disapproval within and outside Zimbabwe throwing the country in deep crises characterized with food shortages, unemployment and high rate of inflation. It is critical to note that although the land question in Zimbabwe was supposed to be addressed the violent and unplanned manner in which it was done worsened the economic situation condemning many Zimbabweans to unacceptable levels of poverty. According to Moyana (2002:179)

Lance Smith who was a member of the Natural resource Board argued that:

*"Making political capital out of the land issue...without ensuring that sustained agricultural production would be safeguarded could have disastrous consequences...Countries which were once at least self-sufficient in food are importers, even beggars with populations, either starving or facing starvation...The need for land will be compounded by anyone attempting to capitalise politically through rash promises of land redistribution. They must first face the realities of necessary development and sustained yield or they will condemn us all to a future of abject poverty."*

Cousins (2003) observed that as a result of the chaotic land reform production in the agriculture sector drastically declined leading to widespread hunger throughout the country and economic decline given that Zimbabwe's economy is largely agro-based. The country started to survive on importing food from other African countries in order to feed its

starving population. (Badza2009:171) noted that the situation was worsened by European Union and the United States of America imposed Sanctions. These sanctions which were targeted towards the ZANU P.F. leadership as well as some companies with links to the government was a reaction by the Western countries to the chaotic land reform which they felt was tantamount to human rights violation. These sanctions were also accompanied by the termination of funding from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Consequently, economic paralysis crept in since the land reform p tampered with the vortex of Zimbabwe's economy, that is, agriculture (Musaka2011:17). Indeed the violent nature of the land reform in Zimbabwe had far reaching effects on the country's economy.

The post-2000 economic situation was characterized by a severe decline in agricultural production, which badly compressed the availability of food to feed the nation. This decline in agricultural production also affected production in the industries. In 2007, the International Crisis Group (ICG) reported that since 2000, over 900 companies had closed and/or scaled down productivity resulting in an industrial output drop of over 30 percent (ICG, 2007:2). These company closures were necessitated by acute shortages in energy supplies, foreign and local cash shortages. As a result, by mid-2008, most supermarkets had empty shelves with all the basic commodities in short supply.

#### **3.2.4 THE POLITICAL SITUATION**

It is important to note that the formation of a formidable opposition party the Movement for Democratic Change in 1999 changed the political landscape in Zimbabwe as it posed a threat to ZANU PF's dominance. Allegations of political violence and rigging of elections by the ruling party also exacerbated the deterioration of the economic and social situation in the country. This period also marked the beginning of political polarization in Zimbabwe. The contested legitimacy of the ZANU (PF) party to lead the country after its controversial 2000

parliamentary elections victory and subsequent national elections and its open backing of an agrarian reform program that negated the rights to owner private property, could explain also the country's slide into political and economic anarchy (Masaka2011:16)In a bid to continue in power the ruling party resorted to the enactment of politically influenced policies at the expense of the suffering majority. The country has therefore continued to experience social and political crises impacting negatively on lives of the majority of the population.

### **3.3 AREAS OF CONCERN**

It is imperative to note that the crises in Zimbabwe just as the case was in John Wesley's era in Britain raises a number of critical areas that requires attention from all stakeholders. The general standard of living has deteriorated since 2000 to critical levels. According to the UNDP the Human Poverty Index, which measures multiple dimensions of poverty and deprivation stood at 33.1 percent in 2003, up from 23.9 percent in 1995. Rural poverty, which stood at 57 percent in 1995, had increased to 71 percent in 2003. Urban poverty, which stood at 44 percent in 1995 also increased to about 61 percent in 2003 (UNDP, 2005:5). In 2005, over 1.6 million Zimbabweans under the age of 50 were estimated to be living with HIV/AIDS, with over 761 000 children who had lost one or both parents to the epidemic (UNDP, 2005). The health infrastructure has also been affected, marked by shortage of drugs and the exodus of qualified medical personnel to other countries. Due to poor service delivery by the local authorities in the urban centers, the country experienced a cholera outbreak in 2009, which killed a number of people mainly from the high density suburbs where the provision of clean water is erratic.

The economic crisis which resulted in closure of industries has also raised the rate of unemployment in the country hence the increase in the number of Zimbabweans who have

migrated to other countries as economic refugees. Heath et al. (2004) argue, that the number of applications for asylum in the United Kingdom increased from 230 in 1999 to about 7,655 in 2002 (IOM 2005:11). As of 2004, the Associated Press estimated that 1.2 million Zimbabweans live in South Africa (IOM, 2005:10). It is however noteworthy that the exact number of Zimbabweans who have migrated to other countries cannot be ascertained because most of them are living in those countries without being documented. The high relocation level signifies a serious brain-drain that has deprived the country of trained and experienced professionals such as doctor, nurses, teachers and engineers. It is noteworthy that most of these people who have migrated to other countries are often used as cheap labour as most of them do not have proper documentation.

The Zimbabwe dollar continued to lose value at an alarming rate amid earth shaking inflation levels that made the pricing of commodities a daily routine. With the economy showing signs of severe stress as evidenced by, among others, ever contracting production capacities of the productive sector given a multiplicity of challenges, the few commodities that were manufactured locally were sold at speculatively high prices thereby leading to extreme poverty of the ordinary citizens of Zimbabwe. The failure of the formal economy to meet the needs and wants of people led to the vibrancy of the informal sector and a breed of black market traders who clandestinely sold the few locally produced commodities on the black market at exceptionally high prices. The few commodities that were manufactured locally were sold at speculatively high prices thereby leading to extreme poverty of the ordinary citizens of Zimbabwe.

In response to the unprecedented growth of the informal economic sector and rise in black market trading, the government of Zimbabwe carried out a cleanup campaign (Tibaijuka,

2005: 7) code named Operation Murambatsvina (Operation Restore order). This exercise was done in order to destroy all illegal structures in urban areas and growth points, as well as the informal and black market trading that had developed following the adoption and implementation of the Bretton Woods engineered economic structural reforms. Operation Murambatsvina pushed many poor people into the streets since they were left without the basic human need of shelter because the government had no alternative accommodation for the affected people. ESAP and its successor Zimbabwe Program for Economic Transformation (ZIMPREST), saw a large number of Zimbabwe's labour force being retrenched as a way through which the struggling parastatals and business organizations in the private sector could streamline their operations so that they could remain viable in the newly introduced market driven economic system(Bond 1998:383) For Masaka (2011: 17)

*The economic reform induced retrenchments that were meant to reduce labour-related expenditure in corporate organisations through retention of a small but very productive labour force condemned a large chunk of the formerly employed people to the streets where they had to, among others, start up their own informal small business ventures to sustain themselves and engage in various dealings most of which were simply survival strategies in a new but harsh economic environment where the law of supply and demand not only determined the worth of one's labour but also the quantity of labour required to run various economic institutions in the country.*

In the context of this economic crises the greater part of the Zimbabwean populace struggled to make ends meet and inflation rose to alarming levels perpetuating the suffering of the many people especially the ordinary citizens.

Price controls were implemented in response to worsening economic crisis and record breaking inflation by ordering price slash and freeze of most commodities (Maanda and Tsunga, 2007). This price control, code-named Operation Reduce Prices (Operation Dzikisai Mitengo), was implemented in order to address, among other things speculative

tendencies in the pricing of basic commodities that threatened the survival of the ordinary citizens of Zimbabwe. However, the outcome of this heavy these price controls in the operations of private business organisations exacerbated the country's economic woes as production levels of in the manufacturing industries decreased to unacceptable levels because the prices they were being required to charge were below market value hence not economically viable. Therefore, the implementation of price controls an endeavor to tame the inflation of prices and general lawlessness in the economic sector resulted to the drastic scarcity of goods

### **3.4 CONCLUSION**

This chapter has managed to give an overview of the social economic and political crises in Zimbabwe with special attention to development and socialism in the 1980's, ESAP in the 1990s, the land reform in 2000 to the height of the crises in 2008. The chapter also established that the country's economic woes were largely occasioned by political and economic miscalculations that included, but not only, the award of unbudgeted gratuities to veterans of Zimbabwe's liberation struggle in 1997 (Hammar and Raftopoulos, 2003: 7), financially costly military involvement in the DRC war (Bond, 2001:26), the economically suicidal land reforms (Moyana, 2002:196), Operation Murambatsvina (Restore Order), the price controls that were introduced in 2007 and the economic sanctions that were imposed by the United States of America and the European Union. The chapter also established that poverty, unemployment hyperinflation, scarcity of goods and the closure of industries were some of the major areas of concern that were brought about by this crises.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **4. JOHN WESLEY'S SOCIAL ETHIC IN CONTEMPORARY ZIMBABWE**

#### **4.1. INTRODUCTION**

The contemporary situation in Zimbabwe presents a different context and consequently a different poverty from the eighteenth century period in which John Wesley addressed. The poverty situation in contemporary Zimbabwe portrays a totally different picture and can be traced to totally different causative factors. It is interesting to note that a comparative analysis of the socio situation of eighteenth century Britain and contemporary Zimbabwe reveals that despite the different backgrounds and contexts the reality of poverty as a human condition cannot be underestimated. Therefore this chapter will analyze the relevance of John Wesley's social ethic to the Zimbabwean crises.

#### **4.2 THE RELEVANCE OF JOHN WESLEY'S SOCIAL ETHIC**

It is important to note that the situation that is obtaining in contemporary Zimbabwe is different from the one that characterized Britain in the eighteenth century. Wesley's picture belongs to a society that was moving into industrial capitalism, they were experiencing growth in production and an appropriation of resources (Bonini 2002:185). A critical analysis of these two contexts shows that the socio economic reality has drastically changed such that some may argue that it is impossible to find any relevance of an eighteenth century concept in the twenty first century. It is imperative to note that the reflections of earlier thinkers on contemporary issues can be of relevance to in addressing modern day issues since they provide some entry points in the endeavor to illuminate some essential values that relate to human relations in this world without necessarily making a direct transcription from eighteenth century Britain to twenty first century Zimbabwe.

Given the unprecedented levels of poverty and unemployment that has characterized the nation of Zimbabwe from the year 2000 which has left the majority of the Zimbabwean population impoverished, the welfare of the poor has become an urgent matter in contemporary discourses. The various stakeholders ranging from government and non-governmental organizations have tried to address the problem of poverty without any success. Can the nation of Zimbabwe find something of value from John Wesley's insights and thoughts in addressing the problem of poverty?

#### **4.2.1 IDENTIFYING THE CAUSES OF POVERTY**

One aspect that makes a dialogue with John Wesley in present-day Zimbabwe a fruitful exercise is in his critical standpoint towards the particular economic structures. In his approach John Wesley is not content with describing and condemning the condition of the poor or with simply practicing and commending works of mercy in their favour (Bonino: 2002:187) but rather he goes deeper into investigating the social, economic and political conditions that produce poverty.

It is critical to note that a solution cannot be found if its root causes are not known. John Wesley published a number of pamphlets bearing his thoughts on various issues, these thoughts besides "Thoughts on the present scarcity of provisions" which was discussed in chapter two of this research, referred to specific conditions on various issues affecting the people especially the poor ranging from freedom, power, slavery and state of the nation. It is however noteworthy that even though Wesley's conservative political stance makes him an unlikely candidate when it came to issues that affects the poor he was not hesitant to make reference to political and economic structures that had a bearing on the lives of the disadvantaged. He took a critical stance toward the economic structures and the causes of poverty. In his document "Thoughts on the present scarcity of provisions" in 1773 he started

by posing a question “Why are thousands of people starving and perishing for want, in every part of the nation? The fact I know; I have seen it with my eyes, in every corner of the land” (Wesley 1996:67).

This approach by John Wesley is very plausible and relevant in contemporary situation in Zimbabwe in addressing the perennial poverty condition. The question of what really led the country to be in the crises that it is experiencing today is therefore a critical question which requires an honest and unbiased analysis and critique. This is the same question that John Wesley attempted to answer in response to poverty in his own time. In Zimbabwe the genesis of the crises should be traced back to the effects of colonialism which was characterized by the disposition of land and resources from the black majority to the white minority. Productive land was taken over from the indigenous people who survived on subsistence farming to big commercial farms for the production of crops and other commodities which would be exported to the colonial motherlands. It therefore follows that when Zimbabwe got independent in 1980 their immediate task was to urgently address the social and economic disparities that characterized the colonial era. However despite the adoption of the socialist economic ideology which sought to undo the evils of inequitable distribution of resources were promoted by the colonialists. It is noteworthy that the struggle for land redistribution is one of the central factors upon which the liberation war was undertaken therefore the land question is so critical in analysing the post-2000 crises in Zimbabwe. The Zimbabwe government should have urgently addressed this area, however the Lancaster house constitution which brought the liberation war to an end surprisingly had a restrictive clause that restricted the purchase of land for redistribution by a willing buyer willing seller policy.

This restrictive clause in the Lancaster house agreement expired in 1990 nothing significant was done by the government to show its commitment to address the contentious land question instead that's when the Brenton woods crafted structural adjustment programme was adopted. The 1992 Land Acquisition Act (LAA) which was legislated to pave the way for the compulsory acquisition of white-owned commercial farms for redistribution had was characterized by its own challenges. Taylor (1999) argues for instance that the regime designed the LAA in such a way that the process would take up to ten years to complete buying a farm, with an instalment payment scheme of up to five years. In fact many white commercial farmers made successful litigations against the Land Acquisition Act of 1992. Landless majority including war veterans thus did not benefit from the 1990s land reform which was generally slanted in favour of the ruling elite.

The consequences of the slow pace of land reform in the early- to mid-1990s is that war veterans started demonstrations against the ruling elites' capitalist lifestyles, which contrasted sharply to the socialist rhetoric that the regime constantly preached to the people (Nyathi, 2004). The war veterans intensified their demonstrations demanding land and gratuities for their role in the liberation struggle. Following a series of demonstrations and denunciation of the government by the war veterans the government paid them the unbudgeted gratuities in November 1997 a development that saw the beginning of the end of the Zimbabwean dollar. It is therefore noteworthy that the failure by the government to address the land issue which hinders equitable distribution of resources even after the Lancaster house agreement restrictive clause is one of the major causative factors of the economic crises which has engulfed the nation. Therefore addressing the land issue in Zimbabwe without politicizing it can go a long way in addressing the question of poverty in

Zimbabwe. It is therefore noteworthy that the land issue should be finalized once and for all with equitable distribution of this resource, doing away with the issue of multiple farm ownership which has disadvantaged others benefiting a few individuals. When the land issue is properly dealt with the problem of poverty in Zimbabwe can also be reduced because the land issue is both a political and economic issue.

In light of John Wesley's approach of identifying the causes poverty in order to relieve the poor from their distress another causative factor to the Zimbabwean crises should be traced to the implementation of the Breton woods Economic Structural adjustment program (ESAP) in the 1990s. The implementation of ESAP which had a negative impact on economic growth and consequently an increase in unemployment, prices of basic commodities skyrocketing thereby sowing the seeds of the crises and poverty that has engulfed the nation in recent years. It is critical to note that the general discontent that characterized the nation towards the end of the 1990s, led the Zanu PF government which was now rapidly losing its popularity making a lot of political and economic miscalculations such the awarding of unbudgeted gratuities that were given to the war veterans in November 1997 (Moore 2005:10). Therefore the question that begs for an answer is did the government make a wise decision in embracing the neoliberal market policies and totally abandoning the Socialist economic policies? It is interesting to note that John Wesley was very much against the free market economy as far back as the eighteenth century as he argued that it will worsen the situation of the poor. He believed that at times government planning and control are necessary to alleviate conditions of distress (Madron 1981:114). It is the responsibility of the government to see how the marginalized and the poor are represented in all policies. It therefore to note that the Breton woods structural programme played a

role the creating in the crises that the country is experiencing today because people started to lose their jobs during this period. In view of the outcome of ESAP in Zimbabwe it was an economic suicide to adopt it in the first as it is indeed an anti-poor programme. However it is also noteworthy that Zimbabwe was not the only third world country that implemented this economic policy. Other third world countries also implement it however they not in the same crises as Zimbabwe is experiencing which shows that one cannot point at ESAP as the only causative factor in the Zimbabwean crises. However the role that ESAP played in sowing the seeds of poverty in Zimbabwe should not be under estimated.

#### **4.2.2. THE CONCEPT OF WEALTH**

It was observed in chapter two of this research that the concept of wealth is a significant aspect of John Wesley's social ethic, for him property was never an irrevocable right because everything belongs to God who is the creator. Therefore for him no one should have more while others go without.

The issue of equitable distribution of resources therefore comes into question in contemporary Zimbabwean situation. "Just as the case was in the eighteenth century in which John Wesley addressed the Zimbabwean society is now divided into two classes" "the haves and the have not." John Wesley tried to address this issue when he gave this charge to the rich "Be ye ready to distribute everyone according to his necessity" (Wesley 1996:376). Zimbabwe was in recent years blessed with the discovery of minerals such as diamonds and platinum however the nation in general and the poor in particular have continued to languish in poverty in a nation flowing with "milk and honey". The fact that the privileged few are getting richer while others are suffering resonates very well with John Wesley's social ethic that denounces regarding wealth as personal possessions rather it

belongs to God and should benefit everyone because those who are privileged to have more are holding those things as God's stewards.

In the Zimbabwean crises it is evident that the crises is perpetuated by the inequitable distribution of resources. The diamonds that were discovered in Marange/Manicaland Province, the ethanol project in Chipinge and the vast other mineral mines across the country should have changed the lives of the people of Zimbabwe if the concept of equitable distribution of resources advocated for by Wesley's ethic was followed. However it appears that what is on the ground is the preferential option for the rich and not the poor because the rich are getting richer while the poor are getting poorer.

#### **4.2.3 EMPOWERMENT**

Another important aspect of John Wesley's social ethic of preferential option for the poor that has much relevance in contemporary Zimbabwe is empowerment. Madron (1981: 113) posits that Wesley's characteristic response to poverty was to find work for the unemployed, establishing projects and cottage industries as well as establishing a lending stock. John Wesley's approach of empowerment is a critical aspect even in the contemporary Zimbabwean situation, industries are closing down and those that are still operating hardly generate enough income to enable them to pay their workers. Many able bodied people have been left without work hence worsening their poverty situation. Although the Zimbabwean government should be applauded for prioritizing education with the country's education system being regarded as one of the best in Africa, most of the college and university graduates are roaming the streets because there is no employment. Therefore the need to empower the people through skills training and financial support is an urgent matter. It is also interesting to note that the graduates that are coming out of the colleges and universities are equipped to be employees and not to create employment

themselves. Therefore Zimbabweans can find a lot of relevance on this aspect of John Wesley's social ethic.

#### **4.2.4 INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE**

It is noteworthy that the Third World countries have continued to be the receiving end of the developed countries. John Wesley in his own era addressed the issue of international justice in his condemnation of the slave trade where England and other Western countries boosted their economies through the trading of Africans as slaves. Zimbabwe is one of the African countries that is endowed with mineral resources and the Western countries continue to be in control of much of these minerals due to their ability to mine, process and even find the market. If these minerals were not being plundered by the powerful countries the problem of poverty in Zimbabwe could to some extent be addressed. By the time the mining of diamonds was regularized in Marange Western companies were reported to have already plundered a large portion of the diamond fields in the pretext that they were still surveying for the minerals. Such exploitation can be equated to the slave trade that robbed many African countries of their dignity as well as condemning them to poverty. John Wesley's approach in this aspect can also be used in condemning the exploitation and plundering of Zimbabwe's resources by the developed countries.

#### **4.3 CONCLUSION**

This chapter has managed to identify some thoughts from John Wesley's social ethic of preferential option for the poor that to a certain extent resonates with the contemporary situation in Zimbabwe. The chapter has established that addressing the causes of poverty, the concept of property and empowerment are the major areas of John Wesley's social ethic of preferential option for the poor that have some relevance to the situation in contemporary Zimbabwe.

## CHAPTER 5

### 5. SUMMARY CONCLUDING REMARKS AND RECCOMANDATIONS

#### 5.1 SUMMARY

The main purpose of this study was to revisit John Wesley's social ethic of preferential option for the poor in light of the harsh economic conditions that have characterized the nation of Zimbabwe in recent years. This research has looked at the social and economic context of Britain in the eighteenth century established that prior to the Industrial revolution in the mid eighteenth century the rural people were disposed off their land due to the enclosure of communal lands and consolidation of farms and fields. This development benefited the property owners whose modernized agricultural methods took away the land which was the only means of production the peasant farmers had. This development was then followed by the industrial revolution therefore many of the landless former peasant farmers had to migrate to the urban centers to search of employment. However the invention of labour saving machines such as the steam engines perpetuated the plight of the poor people as this lead to the rising number of unemployed people and depressed wages. The ordinary people suffered a lot of inhuman treatment at the hands of the capitalist. This lead to a number of social problems that were born out of the poverty that had become rampant. The authorities did not attempt to address the evils that of increasing unemployment, low wages and inhuman working conditions but rather viewed the demonstrations by the workers as an attack on their traditional privileges (Wearmouth 1945:78). It was in those conditions that John Wesley developed his social ethic of preferential option for the poor protesting against exploitation and injustice that had become the order of the day in Britain.

John Wesley's In his social ethics of preferential option for the poor is an ethic which sides with the poor and takes as its initial point of departure their plight and condition hence viewing reality from the point of view of those who suffer, who are helpless , who are victim (Jennings (1990:21). This research established that John Wesley was not hesitant to apply his social ethics to concrete social and economic issues such as labour relations, business ethics and unemployment. However the social and economic issues he addressed were conveniently summarized in the following categories of wealth, economic problems and humanitarian reform.

The research also established that while there is a vast difference in context and circumstances the situation that John Wesley sought to address in eighteenth century Britain sounds reminiscent of the social context in contemporary Zimbabwe to a large extent.

Zimbabwe has experienced unacceptable levels of poverty which was necessitated by the continued economic meltdown which started towards the end of the 1990,s. It was noted in this research that there are a plethora of issues that contributed to the current crises in Zimbabwe. Just like the problems that John Wesley dealt with in his own life time, the problems that the Zimbabweans are faced with are mainly caused by poverty represented by not limited to high levels of unemployment, scarcity of goods and inequitable distribution of resources.

## 5.2 CONCLUSION

While the exact economic order that provoked Wesley was peculiar to the eighteenth century context the way he dealt with them is so appealing and relevant in dealing with ethical consequences of an any social and economic system. It is therefore the view of the

researcher that while John Wesley was a man of his own time he argument here is not for Twenty first century Zimbabwe to simply repeat what John Wesley did in the eighteenth century but his thoughts may provide an entry point for endeavoring to do in our time and context what he attempted to do in his. It is the conviction of the researcher that Wesley provides the Church in contemporary Zimbabwe with some important insights that can be an entry point as it seeks to address the problem of poverty.

### 5.3 RECCOMANDATIONS

- The land question in Zimbabwe is both a social and political issue which to a larger extent the major cause of the crises that is facing the nation. Therefore the question of land must be dealt with by all stakeholders and not the politicians alone. A proper independent land audit should be done in order to deal with the issue of multiple land ownership so that this important resource is equitably distributed to everyone regardless gender, ethnicity or political affiliation.

The beneficiaries should also be empowered with proper skills that will enable them to use the land productively and they should also be given title deeds so that they have access to bank loans or the government could establish a farmers bank that will be looking at financing the resettled farmers so that they can provision. This use the land in a manner that would address the problem of food will also in a way reduce the level of unemployment.

- The government should see to it that the proceeds that are realized from the sale of the minerals that are in abundance in Zimbabwe are given to the treasury and be used to improve the lives all the people regardless where the minerals were extracted. The share ownership scheme that was introduced by the government

seem to suggest that only those in the areas where the minerals are mined should benefit. There should also be transparency on how much would have been realized from the sale of the minerals and how it was used.

- The exportation of unprocessed minerals should also be stopped. Processing of all the minerals should be done locally and only export finished products, because the country is losing a lot of foreign currency as it ends up importing the finished products that were made out of Zimbabwean minerals. Exporting of unprocessed minerals is tantamount to exporting employment since if the minerals are processed locally this will create employment for the local people.
- The United Nations and the international community should call upon United States of America and the European union to remove the sanctions that were imposed on Zimbabwe as it is the ordinary people who are affected by the sanctions and not those who are targeted by them.

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