

MIDLANDS STATE UNIVERSITY



FACULTY OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF THEOLOGY AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES

A CONTEXUAL ANALYSIS OF RULES GOVERNING MEMBERSHIP IN THE

METHODIST CHURCH IN ZIMBABWE

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**Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Bachelor of Arts (Honours)
Degree in Theology and Religious Studies at Midlands State University.**

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JUNE 2016

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this dissertation is my own original work and has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted at any University for a degree.

Signature: -----

Date: -----

APPROVAL FORM

The undersigned certify that they have read this dissertation and have approved its submission for marking after conforming that it conforms to the Department's requirements.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge Dr. C. Mwandayi in his capacity as my supervisor for playing the role of midwife to this project. I would like to extend my gratitude to lecturers in the Theology and Religious Studies department for their great role in my academic life. I would like to thank the chairperson of the Department Mr. Moyo for discussions that gave birth to insights in this project. I would also like to thank the Ministers and Lay leaders of the MCZ for their immense cooperation. I would like to thank my wife Hilda, without whom I could have toiled with much little progress.

ABSTRACT

The research focuses on making an evaluation of the rules that govern membership in the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe, in light of the changes in the current Zimbabwean context. The nature and identity of the MCZ is characterized by the rules that moderate the social and religious life of its membership. The crafting of the rules has been largely affected by the social, economic, political and religious challenges in the society the MCZ is ministering to. The social environment in Zimbabwe has seen a radical change as we turned into the 21st century calling on the church to reform its rules to ensure it adequately responds to the challenges being faced by the society. In an environment characterized by religious competition the MCZ is challenged to reform its rules so that it responds to the social and religious aspiration of the society to ensure that it remains relevant to the environment and position itself as a church of choice. The research is focusing on bringing proposals that could help transform the rules guiding and the conduct of the MCZ to ensure the church continue to attract new members in this time and age.

ACRONYMS

BSAC	British South African Company
ESAP	Economic Structural Adjustment Program
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
MCZ	Methodist Church in Zimbabwe
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
NCA	national Constitutional Assembly
ZANU (PF)	Zimbabwe African National Union (Patriotic Front)

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CHAPTER ONE

CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF RULES GOVERNING MEMBERSHIP IN THE MCZ

1.0 INTRODUCING THE STUDY

This research lies in the field of church history. The Methodist church came into existence during the 18th century English evangelical revival. The nature and character of the people called Methodist is shaped by the membership rules set by John Wesley at the inception of the Methodist Movement. The main focus of this research is to make an evaluation of rules that govern membership in order to see whether they are still relevant in this ever changing socio, economic, political and religious landscape that the MCZ finds itself.

1.1 BACKGROUND

The focus of this research is to make an evaluation of the membership rules that guide the ethical conduct that is expected on members of the MCZ. It is these rules that define the character of the Methodist community and at the same time defines the church as a distinct Christian organization within Christendom. The majority of these rules were designed by John Wesley soon after the formation of the first class or Bible Study group in 1739. Some of these rules were designed to respond to the social economic and religious challenges of the 18th century England. The MCZ has embraced these rules but we need to be aware of the fact that the Zimbabwean church is now ministering in an environment different to that of John Wesley.

The basic rules that govern membership in the MCZ can be traced back to rules that were set and designed by J. Wesley to guide those who wished to be part of his class meetings. These class meetings were designed to be a tool for Bible Study, Prayer and fellowship. Wesley came up

with rules that defined conditions for those who wished to be members of these classes and subsequently these classes became the basic structure of the Methodist organizational system. These rules are currently enshrined in the class book which is used as the register for the church and some have been incorporated in the Deed of Church Order and Standing Orders which is the constitution of the church.

These rules which Wesley set for his classes were influenced by his understanding of the Bible which Methodists perceive to be the supreme rule of faith and practice. The rules which J. Wesley set for church membership were also influenced by the economic, social and religious challenges as a result of the industrial revolution in 18th century England. The big challenge though is whether these rules continue to be relevant in a different context to that of Wesley.

We need to be aware of the fact that when the Methodist Church came to Africa and to Zimbabwe in particular, it confronted a community different to that of England. The change on the environment of the mission field forced the missionary church to add new rules that would make the church relevant in the new mission frontier, for example the rule that forbids polygamy was introduced to respond to the African cultural practice of polygamy. This in itself shows that rules were made to respond to a particular situation. When the church embarked on a missionary expedition in the Zambezi valley it encountered the Tonga people and observed that the majority of these people's family life was anchored on polygamy. The church was left in a quandary as to how they should deal with male converts who were living in a polygamous relationship. Responding to this crisis the church temporarily decided to accept these men into full membership but on condition that the church would revert to their position of monogamy

after its teaching has been entrenched in the society. This implies that the rules governing membership are not a cast in stone but instead the church is called upon to review its rules to check if they are still relevant in the ever changing socio economic and religious environment.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The study on the rules governing membership in the MCZ is now relevant given the dynamics of the religious landscape that the church is operating in. The MCZ is now ministering in an environment characterized by competition for members among various Christian denominations. The rise and growth of African Initiated Churches and that of African Pentecostal Churches has challenged domination of the missionary churches in the Zimbabwean religious landscape. There is need to assess and see whether these rules continue to attract new members and branding it as a church of choice.

One big challenge that the church has come to realize is that demographically, the church has fewer men compared to women and children. The church has a very low number of men offering themselves for church membership and this has prompted the church to embark on a deliberate effort to recruit men in what it termed “The men to church program” in 2010. According to 2014 statistical returns, men constituted 14765 of the total Methodist Community that stood at 117713. It is worth to note that the program is failing to yield significant results and the big question is why men are not comfortable in joining their wives and children as members of the church. There is need to assess and find out whether these rules are not scaring men from joining the church or commit themselves for the church membership.

Besides the problem of men, the other problem that the church is facing is that, the statistics of church membership have not been improving much for the past decade. According to the report of the strategic planning committee appointed by the MCZ in 2008 “Statistics extracted from the 2009 handbook reveal an unpleasant scenario, where there was a steady decline in the Methodist Community for the bigger part of the decade. Research has established that after confirmation most of our people join the sprouting Pentecostal churches”. An analysis of the statistical returns of the MCZ show that the total Methodist community stood at 99047 in 2004 and ten years down the line the community stood at 117713. This shows that in a period of ten years the church increased its membership by 18666. According to the strategic plan adopted by the church in 2010 the target was to increase the MCZ membership by 50 percent in 2015 and an analysis of these statistics shows that the church is failing to attract many people into its fold. The church has not made a critical evaluation of concept or rules that govern membership to see whether they are relevant and applicable to the Zimbabwean situation. The society is always changing and the church should constantly review its policies to ensure they are still responding to the religious needs of the society. But it is also important to note that the projector set by the strategic planning committee to increase the membership by 50% by the year 2015 was too ambitious but the major challenge is that the rate at which members leave the church is also very high especially the young.

There is need also to assess the impact of disciplinary action exerted on church membership. I have realized that quite a number of people who have been disciplined for flouting different rules governing church membership have decided to leave the church completely, and have instead found home in the new Pentecostal churches. In these churches the disciplined members have

found a home and a place to feel at home. On the side of the MCZ there is need for a critical evaluation of its membership rules to see their applicability in the social life of the community. Currently the MCZ is facing problems of members who now run bottle stores and night clubs where beer is sold despite the rule that members should not sell alcohol. This calls for a critical analysis of the relevance of rules governing membership.

1.3. THE AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1.3.1 AIM

The aim of this study is to make an evaluation of the rules that govern membership in the MCZ in order to see their relevance in the current socio economic and religious context the church is ministering.

1.3.2 OBJECTIVES

In this regard the objectives of this study are as follows:

- a) To give a survey on the nature and identity of the MCZ as a distinct Christian organization.
- b) To give an overview of the origin and nature of the rules that governs membership in the MCZ.
- c) To make an analysis of rules that governs membership in the MCZ in light of the current socio economic and religious context.
- d) To propose recommendations that will help the church cope with challenges in the current mission field.

1.4. JUSTIFICATION OF STUDY

The rules that govern membership have been used by the church as the basis to discipline members in various church courts leading to the removal of quite a number of people from the membership list. The majority of these rules have been inherited from John Wesley who set the

first rules while some were added by the missionaries as they planted Methodism in Africa and Zimbabwe in particular. These rules form part of the constitution of the MCZ but no serious attempts have been made by the church to review this part of its constitution to see whether it suits the ever changing environment of the society. The church has never had any serious interrogation or analysis of its membership rules to see their relevance to its mission. In this regard the study is significant in that it opens the opportunity to amend this important section of the church constitution.

The current membership rules have resulted in some members defying some principles enshrined in the rules of the church. The church is forcing its membership to live and practice a life of double standards. We have for example seen quite a number of Methodist business people running bottle stores and other beer outlets despite the church rule that forbids its members to consume, produce and sell beer. This has resulted in controversies as leaders attempted to instill discipline to the offenders and it is such controversies that have destroyed the fellowship of the church. This is evidence to the fact that another section of the church's community feel that it is not morally wrong to run beer outlets in the context of current Business environment. This then calls for a contextual analysis of these membership rules in the current context.

Recently Rev Tarisai Mavhuka has written a thesis on the marriage institution and some of the observations related membership in the MCZ, especially that of men. It is critical for us to realize that the decline in MCZ membership is not only confined to marriage rules but also to the whole package of rules as they relate to the current dynamics in the Zimbabwean society. Currently the total Methodist Community stood at 117713 as at end of 2014 against a projected focus of

141927 according to the church's 2010 strategic focus. This shows that the church is failing to attract new members into its community as expected. The analysis of rules will help the church to rebrand itself so that it remains relevant in the Zimbabwean religious landscape lest it condemn itself to the dustbin of history.

The MCZ is now ministering in an environment of religious competition where the community is exposed to different churches. It is the rules of membership as they relate to the needs of the society that will make each denomination to be a church of choice. Hence the need for a study to see the relevance of these rules in the current context. I am a minister in the MCZ and have had an opportunity to provide pastoral guidance to members in the church. One of my responsibilities is to ensure members adhere to rules of the church. I have also presided over the church's disciplinary courts whose sole objective is to pass disciplinary action on offenders.

1.5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research is going to use three main research angles namely sociological, Historical and theological in an attempt to evaluate the rules that govern membership in the MCZ as they relate to the social and religious dynamics in the Zimbabwean society.

1.5.1 THIRD WORLD APPROACH

History is important in that it helps us to understand the present as we reflect on the past. In this study I am going to use the "Third World Approach to Christian History" as a research method. According to Verstraelen (1992:3) "Mission history from the third world perspective gives an overview of new visions and initiatives in developing a new look at the History of Christianity in three different settings, Latin America, India and Africa." This approach tries to see and interpret

Christian history not from the European missionaries view point but that of the Indigenous converts. Closely related to this approach is the Post-Colonial theory where an understanding of African history was influenced by political movements towards independence in the 1950s and 1960s. This approach is going to be critical in chapter 3 of this research where focus is going to be on assessing rules introduced by missionaries, in addition to those initially set by Wesley as they introduced Methodism in Zimbabwe. The MCZ is part of the third World churches and the rules that govern membership should respond to the realities and experiences of the Zimbabwean community. The approach also shall be the overarching tool guiding the whole thesis

1.5.2. SOCIOLOGICAL – FUNCTIONALIST METHOD

Sociology refers to the study of human society and the Methodist church has had a profound influence in the way of life of given communities. Sociological method focuses on human behavior where focus is on collecting data on human behavior. In this study I am going to employ the functionalist approach. According to Haralambos (1980:10) “Functionalism begins with the observation that behavior in society is structured. This means that the relationship between members of society is organized in terms of rules.” The functionalist approach focuses on the study of social institutions as an avenue in meeting individual and society needs and these include the family, peer groups and religion to name but a few. These institutions contribute to stability and integration in communities. The functionalist approach helps us to evaluate the role of Methodism as a religion in society and how its code of ethics has helped to transform society. This method will be relevant in the second chapter as we explore the nature and characteristics of the Methodist church. Its rise and growth in the context of the socio economic and religious context of 18th century England. This approach is also going to be applied in chapter four where

focus will be on proposals on how the MCZ can continue to be relevant in the Zimbabwean society.

1.6. DATA COLLECTION

1.6.1. WRITTEN SOURCES

In employing the two approaches I have outlined above, there is need to use already existing literature that relates to the life and history of the Methodist church. This literature includes the class meeting rules set by John Wesley for his classes which have become the basis for rules governing membership in the church. It is paramount to make an analysis of records and minutes of the church's administrative courts such as conference, synods, circuit quarterly meetings and local society leaders' meeting which are considered as primary sources in this study. There is also need to make use secondary sources where focus will be on books that deal with the history the beginning and growth of the Methodist church, books focusing on History of Zimbabwe from the colonial period to the present period both secular and Christian. It is critical to also make an assessment of the standing orders in which the church has outlined rules that relate to pastoral care and guidelines for the conduct of members of the MCZ.

1.6.2. INTERVIEWS

This study is going to make use of interviews of various people in the Methodist administrative levels. It is important to note that Lay leaders constitute the bulk of leaders in the church and have had a big say in the disciplinary process of the church. Interviews are going to be done with society stewards in order to get their views in the process of instituting discipline and their role in the pastoral guidance of the Methodist Community. In this regard interviews willb done with a minimum of five stewards each from rural and urban societies respectively. There is need to

interview ministers who are administering circuits for they are the ones who preside over disciplinary church courts. In sampling interviews it is critical to interview a minimum of five ministers serving in urban circuits and those serving in rural circuits respectively in order to get view from these two different contexts.

There is also need to interview the general membership especially the disciplined members to get their feelings, views and perceptions. We have known Methodists who run bottle stores and cross border traders who are selling alcohol and unaccustomed goods respectively contrary to church regulations. There is need to engage this constituency in order to arrive at an informed judgment.

There is therefore a need to interview the MCZ members who are operating Bottle stores and supermarkets, in order to get their opinion on the selling and consumption of alcohol.

As I interview the ordinary members there is need to interview youth in order to get opinion from these main constituencies of the church.

1.6.3. QUESTIONNAIRES

I am cognizant of the fact that the writer is a Minister of Religion in the MCZ. Carrying out an interview of this nature with the general membership will not bring open and genuine truth from the membership. Questionnaires could be a mode that minimizes this weakness for every member would like to portray him/her as a faithful member of the church in the eyes of the minister.

The advantage of using questionnaires in the Zimbabwean context is that the literacy rate in the country is quite high. The opinion given in the questionnaire is not attached to a particular individual and as a result people are at liberty to openly give their opinion without fear of criticism. In this regard a minimum of eighty questionnaires will be distributed members of the Methodist church.

1.7. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Methodism mean different things to different people ranging from structure or systems of governance, Doctrines or theological views, History and ethical rules to name but a few. The scope of this study is limited to rules that govern the conduct of membership in a bid to assess the relevance of these rules in the context of changes that has taken place in the Zimbabwean society. It is important to note that after the death of Wesley, Methodist divided into different church groupings and that the people called Methodist spread from England and America into different parts of the world. This study is confined to the Methodist church in Zimbabwe whose history is linked to the Wesleyan Methodist church whose missionaries originated from England. This study is confined to the rules that govern the ethical conduct of the church's membership.

I acknowledge that there are authors who have written about membership rules in the Methodist church. These authors have focused on the impact of these membership rules firstly in 18th century England and the 19th and 20th century missionary era in Zimbabwe. The current Zimbabwean society has gone through different social, economic, political and religious changes. The focus of this study is attempting to assess the relevance of these rules in the context of the 21st Century Zimbabwean society. However my focus is in giving an evaluation of these rules in light of the Socio Economic Religious and Political changes that the Zimbabwean society is going through.

1.8. LITERATURE REVIEW

Many authors have written about John Wesley and the rise and growth of Methodism. The majority of these writers are European or Americans and their thrust is in portraying Methodism as a unique brand of Christianity that emerged in the 18th Century English revival. In this regard focus has been made on the theological beliefs of the people called Methodist and how the Methodist movement helped transform the social life of England during the period of the Industrial Revolution.

According to Beasley-Toplife (1999), *“A Longing For Holiness. –Selected Writings of John Wesley”*, when John Wesley was born in 1703, England was emerging from more than a century of religious unrest as a result of King Henry VIII as declaration of separation from Catholicism. In this period Deism was the religious philosophy and it was a belief that God had withdrawn and was uninvolved with creation. In his observation Beasley-Toplife (1999:8) noted “Others preached a sort of “justification by sincerity” and saw the essence of Christianity as an earnest effort to do well. This downplayed a relationship with Christ or an experience of God’s love. It was for such a sincere and methodical effort to do well and to live devout, disciplined lives that Wesley began the Holy Club”. This shows that principles adopted by Methodists to guide their conduct were influenced by their environment. This book is important in this study for it gives an overview of the historical context at the beginning of Methodism and analysis of ethical rules set by John Wesley for his followers.

During Wesley’s time England underwent a critical social change as a result of the effects of the Industrial Revolution. The Industrial Revolution resulted in the rural to urban migration creating overcrowding and poverty among people. According to an assessment of the Industrial

Revolution made by Robertson (2005:3) *Why Be A Methodist* , “Overcrowded cities and towns and the consequent poverty brought crime and also a terrible drinking problem. Prostitution, highway robbery, poor communication (roads, postal services and public transport) was among problems of the time.” In this book Robertson outlines the effects of the Industrial Revolution on English society and its effects on the emergency of Methodism. It is therefore important to note that rules that mould the nature and character of Methodist membership were influenced by the economic and social challenges of the time. The rules set by John Wesley to guide members in his society were a response to the social challenges of his time. According to his analysis of Methodist moral code Davies’s (1988: 64) noted, “Methodists are a people who take method and discipline too far in the eyes of their critics”. This observation could be a signal of problems that surround the rules that define Methodist conduct as they are related to the ordinary members of the society. The works by Beasley-Toplife and Robertson show that there is a strong link between Methodist rules of membership to the social setting of its membership.

According to Telford (1960:157) “*The Life Of John Wesley*”, “Anyone who studies Wesley’s relation to his societies will soon see how resolutely he set himself to grapple with the vices of his day. Wherever Methodism was planted it contributed in no small degree to a general reformation of manners. It made its members better citizens and raised the whole standard of morality.” The main focus of this book is to show how John Wesley’s teachings helped to mould the morality of the English society during the period of the Industrial revolution. Emphasis of Methodism is on the morality of its members as it strives to mould faithful and responsible citizens of their communities. This has been a salient characteristic of Methodism as a unique

brand of Christianity. However we need to explore and see whether these principles are universally relevant in each and every community that the Methodist church minister to.

Zimbabwean historians who have written on Methodism in Zimbabwe have traced the historical development of the church on the Zimbabwean religious landscape and have had time to focus on rules introduced by the church as condition for membership. We can safely note that the nature and character of the people called Methodist is anchored on the rules of the societies or class designed by John Wesley as standards of conduct or behavior. These rules have formed the basis of teaching by missionaries as they introduced the church in Zimbabwe. Zvobgo (1991) *An Overview Of The Methodist Church*, in a book to mark the Centenary celebrations of the MCZ made a Historical overview of the beginning of the Methodist church and giving a special attention to rules and regulations introduced by the missionaries in governing members of the Methodist church in Zimbabwe. These rules were a product of the Methodist Synod of 1902 which gave direction on the recruitment process of membership requirement that relate to marriage, beer drinking, financial obligations, consulting witch doctors and so on.

Madhibha (2000) in his book *Struggles And Strides* gave an outline of rules introduced by missionaries in the Zimbabwean church. His main thrust is focusing on the History of the localization Process of Methodism in Zimbabwe in period 1891-1996. Madhibha observed that until 1977 Zimbabwean Methodism operated as a District of the British Methodist Conference. According to Madhibha (2000:29) “The constitution used was the British one with its rules and regulations governing the welfare of local Methodist. The rules and regulations emanated from expatriate missionaries’ views of the Zimbabwean society and ATR.”

According to Madhibha localization is understood as an ongoing process, making Christianity relevant to people in changing times. Although Madhibha made a historical analysis of membership rules introduced by missionaries he focused on the localization of worship, church structure, training of laity and Theological training. Madhibha focuses on how the interacted with the Zimbabwean society in the areas of education, health politics and how the church has progressed after attaining independence from the British church. The book did not give a critical evaluation of rules that govern Methodist church members as designed by White missionaries in governing the conduct African Methodist members. Zvobgo and Madhibha's works focused mainly on the impact of membership rules introduced by missionaries on the African Converts during the early period of the introduction of Methodism in Zimbabwe. Their critique focuses on the impact of MCZ membership rules on the culture of the Africans during that period. The culture of the Zimbabwean people has changed drastically due to several factors and events in the life of the people. Zvobgo(1991) and Madhibha(2000)'s views are going to be useful in the third chapter of my research where my focus will be in evaluating the relevance of MCZ's rules of membership in light of socio economic and religious challenges of the present age.

Hallencreutz(1998)in a book entitled, *Religion and Politics in Harare 1890-1980*, focus is give on the coming and introduction of various Christian churches in the city of Harare and their involvement political issues. In his analysis of the growth of MCZ after the first Chimurenga, Hallencreutz took time to assess the rules set by the MCZ in response to the culture in the growing City of Harare. According to Hallencreutz (1998:45) "There was the need to develop a Christian culture which was relevant in the new local situation with its puritan legacy, the

Methodist mission had to critically address sexual immorality, the brewing and use of traditional beer and inter-ethnic jealous and strife”. This observation is critical in this study for it brings us to the realization that as society changes the church also faces new challenges that relates to morality of the community it is ministering to.

The above analyses reveal that the rules that were set by the Methodist were in response to a particular social challenge in a given situation. This perspective is going to be relevant in chapter three of my research where focus will be on giving an analysis of the rules in the context of the current 21st century Zimbabwean social context. This is clear testimony to the fact that the membership rules need a continuous review in response to the changes taking place in the society. Hence my call for a contextual analysis of rules governing membership in the MCZ.

Another written work on the work of the Methodist church in the Zimbabwean religious landscape was done by Rodger Peaden(1975)*The Contribution of Epworth Mission in African Development*. The author who is one of the former Superintendent Ministers of first Methodist mission station known as Epworth gives an overview of how the church enforced its membership rules on those living in the mission farm in order to bring in what it termed as Christian civilization. Writing on the contribution Epworth mission made to the development Indigenous Africans Peaden (1975:135) observed “On the other hand it was considered that a climate favorable to the progress of Christianity could be produced on mission owned land by the imposition of church rules and regulations”. This view by Paeden show that the perception of Methodist missionaries branded African culture as evil to an extent that it could not live side by side with Christianity. The other critique of Paeden’s views is that according to the missionary,

the church rules were not to be negotiated with the local people but instead they were to be imposed to converts without being sensitive to their needs culture and aspirations.

According to Paeden (1975:140) “The Wesleyan rule for church membership for a polygamist was that he should marry one of his wives, not necessarily the first, in church and make provisions for the others. The way this was interpreted by the missionary was that the man should build separate houses for them and make sure that they had food and clothing but cease to have conjugality with them.” These observations will be relevant in the second chapter of my research where focus will be on the nature of rules introduced in the Zimbabwean context by the missionaries without being sensitive to the culture of the target community.

Rev. Tarisai Mavhuka (2014) in a dissertation titled *An African Theological discourse on Marriage with special focus on the MCZ*. In his research Mavhuka focused on the development of the marriage institution in the MCZ and how the church is facing difficulties in enforcing its marriage rules. The call by Mavhuka is for the church to come with a new understanding of marriage that is sensitive to the cultural understanding of the local communities.

1.9 CONCLUSION.

We therefore should acknowledge that church rules designed and implemented by the MCZ helped in civilizing the Zimbabwean society and uplifting the living standards of our society. On the other hand some of the rules have conflicted much with African culture and have been

CHAPTER TWO

AN OVERVIEW OF THE NATURE AND IDENTITY OF THE METHODIST CHURCH IN ZIMBABWE.

2.0. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter attention will be given to the historical origins of the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe after which focus will give some of the major features that shape the nature and character of the denomination. The MCZ is originally an extension of the British Methodist church. The origins of the MCZ are anchored in the life and work of John Wesley who is generally regarded as the founder of Methodism. The Methodist Church is part of what is known in church history as the 18th century English revival also known as the Great Awakening.

2.1. HISTIROCAL CONTEXT LEADING TO THE RISE OF METHODISM.

The Methodist church is better understood in light of the historical context of 18th Century England. According to Beasley-Toplife's (1999:6) "When Wesley was born in 1703, England was emerging from more than a century and a half of religious conflict." This religious conflict had emerged as a result by King Henry the VIII's declaration of separation of the Church of England from the Catholic Church which resulted in a controversy characterized by Reforms and counter-reforms in the English religious landscape. These developments saw the monarch assuming the leadership of both state and church.

The period that saw the birth of Methodism in England is also known in history as the period of the Industrial Revolution. The period was characterized the discovery of Iron in England that influenced the creation of Industrial machinery and the growth of Industries. According to Beasley-Toplife (1999), "The Industrial Revolution resulted in the social change that resulted in the migration of the predominantly rural population to cities creating overcrowding and

poverty”. The Industrial revolution resulted in a social upheaval characterized by a culture that resulted in an immoral society. Overcrowded cities and towns and the resultant poverty brought crime and also a terrible drinking problem in the English society.

Giving an analysis of the English society during this period Carter and Mears (1957:654) noted “The immoral condition of such people was a deplorable as their physical state. Drunkenness was common in every village. Brutal sports such as Cock-fighting and bear-baiting were usual, and games of football played in the village streets were bloody encounters between half savaged men, who kicked and hacked at one another like wild beasts. This too was the heyday of smuggling and of the even more pernicious practice of wrecking which was especially prevalent on our Western shores”. The Anglican church was overwhelmed by these social challenges to an extent that it failed to provide moral guidance to the majority of the poor communities. It is important to note that these social conditions had an influence to rules that Wesley set for guiding the ethics of his followers. As a result of immoral state of the society Methodist believe that they were raised by God to transform the lives of people in their communities.

2.2. JOHN WESLEY

John Wesley was born on 17 June 1703 to Reverend Samuel Wesley of the Anglican Church and his wife Sussana. Wesley grew up in Epworth where his father served an Anglican Church Priest. His mother Sussana is described as a strict disciplinarian and is credited by many for building the character of her son John as a strict person in terms of discipline. John Wesley’s father was rector of Epworth in Lincolshire from 1697-1735. In 1714 Wesley left home for London where he was firstly educated at Charterhouse school and finally at Oxford college. According to Fitzgerald (1903:64) “The years 1925-1929 are among the most important years in Wesley’s life. They witnessed great changes of thought and character and seeds were sown, the fruit of which

is seen in after years. He became a mystic and for the time of a very somber hue.” It is during this period that J. Wesley was ordained into the Anglican Priesthood.

In this period Wesley’s religious views were also shaped by the writings of Jeremy Taylor, William Law and Thomas a Kempis who were Christian philosophical writers. While at Oxford, Wesley joined a group of students who organized themselves to meet for prayer, Bible study and conducting works of charity. This group began to be known as the Holy Club and John later became the leader of the group. According to Beasley-Toplife (1999:10), “Because of the group’s highly structured approach to prayer, spiritual reading, attendance at communion and charitable activity they were dubbed “Methodist” by other students”. The name Methodist defined the group’s highly structured approach to prayer, bible study worship and community service and was later adopted as the official name of the church. Central to the Holy Club was the quest by members to live a devout life that is free from sin. This approach to religion has influenced the life and character of people called Methodists throughout ages. This explains the attitude behind the membership rules that the church has set for its membership.

With influence coming from the Holy Club, Wesley embarked on a new approach to ministry different to that of the Church of England. This approach to ministry was characterized by open air preaching with an emphasis on personal and emotional religion. This approach led to Wesley being excommunicated from the Church of England. In 1735 Wesley embarked on a missionary journey to the new British American Colony of Georgia. On the journey Wesley came into contact with a group of Germany Christians known as the Moravians and their conduct and display of Christianity had a profound effect on Wesley’s perception of Christianity. According to (Telford 1960:78) “The good impression already made on his mind by the humility and

devotions of the Moravians was increased by their fearlessness in the tempest. He found that they were delivered from the spirit of fear as well as from pride, anger and revenge.”

However it is important to note that Wesley’s missionary enterprise in American colony of Georgia was not a success but instead was shrouded in by controversy emanating from his love life. His controversy with a lady he intended to marry but who later decided to get married to somebody else led to court cases after he refused her Holy Communion and Wesley was advised to return to England. According to Telford (1960) Wesley returned to England at the close of 1737, a dejected and disappointed man. In the beginning of 1738 Wesley sought religious advice from a Moravian by the name of Peter Bohler. While attending a Bible study conducted by the Moravians, Wesley underwent a religious experience which many interpret as his conversion experience.

According to Fitzgerald (1903) the year 1739 is significant in the history of Methodism in that it was the year which Wesley found the first class meeting which up today is the Methodist basic organizational structure. In the same year the first Methodist Chapel was built whose foundation was held on 12 May 1739. In 1742 Wesley accepted the order of Lay preachers whose role was to conduct services in Methodist societies and in 1744 Wesley conducted his first conference which became up to this day the highest decision making body in the Methodist churches. Although Wesley continued to claim that he was not starting a new church and claiming to be a loyal member of the Church of England, the above developments showed that he was starting a new religious organization. After Wesley left America the number of Methodist membership continued to grow leading to calls for pastoral oversight of these converts and this forced Wesley to ordain Dr. Coke and Francis Asbury as Ministers to the American colonies in 1784. Wesley died on 2nd March 1791 leaving the leadership of the movement in the hands of the Conference.

The conference that met in 1795 officially declared separation from the Church of England setting the Methodists as an autonomous Christian denomination.

2.3. THE COMING OF METHODISM TO AFRICA

After the death of Wesley, Methodism spread to different parts of the world but focus will be on the African continent and Zimbabwe in particular. According to Zvobgo (1991) on the African Continent Methodism was introduced in Sierra Leone by Negro Methodist converts from Nova Scotia Canada in 1792 but it was on 12 November 1811 that the first Methodist missionaries led by George Warren arrived in Sierra Leone, leading to expansion of Methodist in West and North Africa. After Sierra Leone, Methodists came to South Africa on 14 April 1816 pioneered by Reverend Barnabas Shaw. These missionary expeditions were spearheaded by the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society which was founded in 1813. According to Peaden (1984) Methodism in South Africa had its autonomy from the British Methodist church since 1882 with the exception of the Transvaal District which was a Boer territory. It was therefore decided to have the Transvaal district remain under the British Conference and it was from the Transvaal district from which missionaries came to establish Methodism in Zimbabwe under the auspices of the London base Wesley Methodist Missionary society.

Methodism in Zimbabwe was introduced in two forms namely the British and American forms. Methodism in America had originally emanated from British Methodism but had diverted from the British form in that structurally it had adopted an Episcopal form of governance. In this study my focus is on the MCZ which is an off shoot of the British strain of Methodism. The pioneer party that introduced Methodism in Zimbabwe was led by Reverends Owen Watkins and Isaac Shimmin accompanied by a black South African Evangelist named Michael Bowen and these reached Salisbury on 29 September 1891. After their arrival the Methodists were given a farm at

Epworth. According to Tanser (1965:77) “The Methodists were not satisfied with the one farm offered by Harris and decided to interview Rhodes. Watkins visited Rhodes at six o’clock in the morning, just as Rhodes was going to his bath”. According to Tanser’s narrative, Harris who was the BSAC’s secretary argued that Methodist could not get more than other denominations to which Rhodes reply was “Well Harris, you must remember that Wesleyans will do good to the country. All their people will be of the right sort. They will not bring loafers, who can do nothing but drink whisky at £4 a bottle.” So Methodists were given three more farms. According to Zvobgo (1991) these farms became church’s mission centers and in Mashonaland these included Hartleton, Nenguwo and Kwenda. Rhodes’s view of Methodist gives us an insight on the perception that people had pertaining to the character of the members of the Methodist Church in terms of their membership rules and code of ethics.

In 1892 Methodist work was strengthened by the arrival of Reverend G.H Eva accompanied by eight African teachers among whom was Modumedi Moleli, James Anta, Josiah Ramusha, Samuel Tutani and Wellington Belesi. It is important to note that in the History of Methodism in Zimbabwe, these black evangelists are usually forgotten with precedence being given to the white missionaries. It is also important to note that Moleli and Anta were killed during the Shona uprising/first Chimurenga making them the church’s first martyrs in the country. Without these evangelists Methodist white missionaries could have toiled with little progress among the Shona and Ndebele.

According to Madhibha (2000:15) “The work started to take root and in 1893 a report of the work was sent to Tansvaal giving the statistics of the developments. In 1894 Zimbabwean

Methodism was given District status and Reverend Isaac Shimmin was appointed as its first District Chairman.” These developments meant that from this period Zimbabwean Methodist became an extension of the British Methodist until 1977 when the church became an autonomous conference. This meant that the rules and policies that related to the life of Methodist in Zimbabwe were regulated by the British conference without the input of the local members. A contextual analysis of rules calls upon the local members to come up with a brand of Methodism relevant to their situation. After the Ndebele/first Chimurenga uprising Methodist established themselves in Bulawayo and a mission farm was acquired near Plumtree popularly known as Thekwane mission. After Thekwane more mission stations were opened at Chief Gambo’s kraal, Majila, Mpini and finally at Bembesi and Nyamadhlovu. These mission centers became the springboard for growth of Methodism in Matebeleland.

2.4. EVANGELISM STRATEGIES USED IN ZIMBABWE

2.4.1 EDUCATION

The first Evangelism strategy used by the Methodist church was that of opening of schools. The schools opened opportunities for the church to engage itself within the young generation as parents sent their children to acquire the Whiteman’s education. The church would not only provide reading and writing skills but also Christian religious instructions. Through this process the church seized an opportunity to impart its view on Christian morality and what it considered as the Christian way of life. According to Zvobgo(1996) the missionaries realized that it was difficult to change the old generation from their way of life.

2.4.2 CHRISTIAN VILLAGES

Another evangelism strategy used by the Methodist church was the establishment of Christian villages within its farms. These were communities of christian converts established in church

farms designed to sever ties of these people from their kith and kin. According to Zvobgo (1996:129) “The Wesleyans established a Christian village at Epworth in order to transform the lives of the converts completely”. In these Christian villages the converts were forced to build square houses, polygamy was abolished and beer parties were prohibited within the settlements. The rules that govern membership in the Methodist church were enforced without compromise. This is a clear testimony to the fact that these membership rules need to be critically assessed to see whether they are still relevant in the current Zimbabwean situation.

2.4.3 USE OF AFRICAN AGENTS

The other strategy that was used by the missionaries was the use of African evangelists to evangelize their fellow Africans. The Methodist church used African Evangelists recruited from South Africa to engage the local Zimbabwean population in order for the gospel to be acceptable. The role of these evangelists was to give formal education to children and adult converts. It is critical to note that it was the sole responsibility of the evangelists to ensure that Methodist doctrine and ethics was entrenched in the converts. According to Zvobgo (1996:130) “The missionaries also utilized African catechists, evangelists and ministers to witness to their own people” It is however unfortunate that the role played by these African evangelists is down played by those who wrote the history of the introduction of Methodism in Zimbabwe by giving prominence to the white missionaries.

2.5 ORGANISATION AND STRUCTURE OF MCZ

The Methodist system of church governance is called the connexional system and this form of governance is unique to the Methodists. In this system of administration the people called Methodist are conscious of the fact that none of them exist as solitary Christians but that they are

related to a Christian community. The connexional system is a constant reminder to the Methodist community that they are in fellowship with other Methodist Christians by being in class meetings, society, Circuit, District and Connexional or Conference. The spirit of the administrative system is that the Methodist put their resources and strength together and aim to become a unified church with the conference coordinating all the activities of the church.

The basic organizational structure in this system of governance is the class meetings whose sole role is that of fellowship, Bible study, prayer and maintenance of discipline. The class is under the leadership of the class leader whose sole duty is to offer pastoral care and guidance to members of the class. Classes are organized into a society that is under the leadership of the society stewards and in turn societies are organized into a circuit under the pastoral guidance of a Superintendent Minister. Several circuits are also organized into a District that is under the leadership of the District Bishop. Districts are combined to form a Connexion administered by the Presiding Bishop. Each level of the structure has got an administrative court or meeting led by the respective officer and it is important to note that the Methodist Church is a committee driven church where leaders are guided by administrative meetings in decision making. For the purpose of this study it is important to note that the conference is the highest decision making body that regulates the rules governing membership of the church and the class leader with the help of the society leaders' meeting ensure all members adhere to the rules as set forth by the church. The role of the leaders' meeting is to discipline members who will have flouted church policy and regulations.

2.6. DOCTRINE

The doctrinal teachings of the MCZ are best understood in the background context of 18th century religious views in England and Europe. Religious conflict of this period was

characterized by Deism as a religious philosophy. The religious views of Deism were anchored on the belief that God had withdrawn from creation and was no longer involved in what was happening in the created world. In this context Christianity was understood as a quest to do good in order to attain salvation. According to Beasley – Toplife (1999:9), “This view downplayed a relationship with Christ or an experience of God’s love. It was for such a sincere and methodical effort to do good and to live devout disciplined lives that the Wesleyans began the Holy Club”. The rules that guide MCZ membership have roots in this period and their sole objective is to ensure members live a devout and disciplined life but the biggest question is whether the same rules are still relevant in a religious context that is totally different to that of 18th century England.

Methodist doctrine was also influenced by a religious movement known as Pietism. This religious philosophy originated within German Lutheranism under the leadership of Philip Jacob Spener. Beasley-Toplife (1999) noted that some of the characteristics of Pietism are that it promoted personal and inward religion. It emphasized the heart over the mind and made use of small groups for Bible Study and prayer. Pietism was spread by the Moravians who in turn had a profound influence on John Wesley’s approach to Christianity. Today the class meeting is a replica of these small groups for Bible study and prayer. For Methodist it is at class meeting that discipline is enforced on all members to ensure compliance with the ethical code of the church.

The central theme in the Methodist teaching is on salvation. Methodist believe together with the rest of Protestantism that salvation is by faith alone and in reaction to Calvinism, Methodist have raised four principles on salvation.

- i. All men need to be saved.

- ii. All men may be saved.
- iii. All men may personally know that they are saved.
- iv. All men may be saved to the uttermost.

The other doctrinal view of Methodist is the belief that the Bible is the supreme rule of faith and practice and center of theological reflection. In relation to this study there is need to make an analysis of rules that govern membership in the MCZ to see whether they are based on scripture.

The other central doctrine of the Methodist is Scriptural Holiness. The central thought and view for Methodist is that Christianity is a way of life. A Methodist is a friend of all and an enemy of none and in that regard he/she is a person who has been reconciled to God and fellow human beings. Therefore the church is a place of fellowship of the members of the body of Christ and where the climax is reached as the members' fellowship with God.

2.7. CONCLUSION

Decision has been made to focus on these few doctrinal views because they are central in defining the identity of Methodist and their relationship to this study. However we need to be aware of the fact that the life and conduct of the people called Methodist is anchored on the rules set by John Wesley for his societies and later improved by Methodist missionaries as they came to Africa and Zimbabwe in particular. It is these rules that are central to the study of this research. I am going to dedicate the 3rd chapter on the analysis of the rules that govern membership in the MCZ today.

CHAPTER 3

AN ANALYSIS OF THE ORIGIN AND NATURE OF RULES GOVERNING MEMBERSHIP IN THE MCZ

3.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter of the research is dedicated in making an overview of the rules that govern the conduct of members in the MCZ. It is important to note that it is these set of rules that regulate the ethical code that distinguishes the people called Methodist from Christians of other traditions. There are different aspects that define the identity of Methodist but one of the most critical aspects is its membership rules. These rules are designed to regulate the morality of the Methodist community as a distinct Christian denomination

3.1 ORIGIN OF THE MCZ MEMBERSHIP RULES.

The majority of the rules that govern membership in the MCZ are enshrined in the class book which is also used as a membership register. The other rules are also found in the deed of church order and standing orders which is the constitution of the MCZ. The origin of these rules have their source in the rules that were originally designed by John Wesley to guide the conduct of his followers. In the year 1739 Wesley started his first class meeting which later became the basic organizational structure of his religious movement. Membership in the class showed the desire by any member to commit him/herself to be part of the new church.

According to Rudolph (1979:10) “Wesley directed his efforts at first to a movement within the established church but later he organized separate Methodist societies for these. Wesley appointed lay leaders with classes to nurture new Christians and remove unworthy members”. It is important to note that the above view shows that Methodists are an exclusivist Christian

organization where screening of membership is determined by its rules of membership. These rules were designed to mould the character and identity of members of the Methodists as a distinct group of people.

Writing on the rules that guided membership in Wesley's societies or classes, Beasley-Toplife (1999:45) noted: "The ideal portrait of a Methodist was worked out in practice through participation in the united societies. These rules created in 1739 and published after considerable refinement in 1743 set the standard for members in the societies." The rules that guide membership in the MCZ were designed by Wesley so that members of the Methodist societies would be able to respond to the socio- economic and religious challenges of 18th century England. The MCZ has adopted and still cherishes these rules as guiding principles of the church today. When missionaries introduced Methodism in Zimbabwe they added other rules as they tried to respond to the social and religious challenges of the Zimbabwean society.

According to the class book, the membership rules that were designed by Wesley for his societies were divided into three parts. According to Wesley's views, one attains salvation and spiritual experience, by:

- (a) doing no harm
- (b) doing good.
- (c) attending upon all the Ordinances of God.

My analysis shows that these rules can be classified into three categories.

- (i) Rules that relate to the conduct of business.
- (ii) Rules that relate to social relations.

(iii) Rules that relate to worship and religious duties.

3.2 RULES THAT GUIDE THE CONDUCT OF BUSINESS

3.2.1 BUYING OR SELLING UNCUSTOMED GOODS

One of the rules that govern membership in the MCZ is that members should abstain from the practice of buying or selling uncustomed goods. During Wesley's time smuggling was a common practice and as the case with most countries today, Zimbabwe included, custom duty had to be paid on most imported goods, failing to declare and pay customs duty results in making huge profits on the offender and in the process defrauds government of revenue to run the country's economy. It is important to note that in the current Zimbabwean context most of the goods on the formal and informal market are imported and no duty has been paid for some of the products. Quite a big chunk of the church's members are cross boarder traders who are importing goods without paying duty. On the other hand MCZ members are knowingly buying clothes that have been imported illegally most of which are found in flea markets. One of the membership rules designed by Wesley prohibited members of his societies from smuggling goods into the country or from knowingly buying such products and this principle is to be observed by members of the MCZ today.

3.2.2 USURY

This is the practice of engaging in borrowing and lending money based on unlawful interest. In a business environment where the uncertainty of repayment of a loan is greater, the rate of interest is usually high. Money lenders who charge high rates of interest are taking an unfair and unchristian advantage over others. It is considered wrong for a Methodist to engage in the business of lending money at unlawful interest or for one to borrow money from this form of

business transaction. Currently this practice is usually high in high density areas and quite a number of MCZ members in these areas have borrowed money from these money lenders and have lost property after failing to service these loans. The fact that most people are unemployed means that they cannot access legal loans from formal banking institutions and in the end resort to borrowing from illegal cash barons. According to MCZ membership rules, it is a disciplinary issue for a member to engage in this form of business transaction.

3.2.3 BORROWING WITHOUT PROBABILITY OF PAYING

The Methodist principle that is closely related to the prohibition of Usury is that it is not acceptable for a member of the MCZ to obtain goods on credit when you do not have the capacity to pay back. A Christian should be able to live within his/her means and it is important to note that a strong desire for possessions tempt people to borrow money or goods when they do not have the capacity to pay back. The ideal arrangement for a Christian is to save money and then buy whatever you desire. It is wrong for a member of the MCZ to buy anything on credit and later fail to pay.

3.2.4 GAMBLING

According to the MCZ Deed of Church Order and Standing Orders (2011:215) “Gambling is forbidden on all Methodist premises. It is not permissible in any circumstances to raise funds for church purposes by any method which involves gambling.” We need to be aware that gambling was one of the evil practices during Wesley’s time. Writing about the social condition of Wesley’s time, Carter and Mears (1957:648) noted “gambling was a universal passion; thousands of pounds changed hands every night and estates were thrown away at the card table.”

The rule for membership prohibits any MCZ member from gambling of all forms that include today's practices like Horse racing, lotto etc.

These rules that guide MCZ members in how they should conduct their business are shaped mainly by Wesley's views. Analyzing Max Weber's views on religion Haralambos (1984:466) noted "Wesley, a leader of the great Methodist revival which preceded the expansion of English Industry at the close of the eighteenth century writes, for religion must necessarily produce industry and frugality and these cannot but produce riches. We must exhort all Christians to gain what they can and to save all they can" These rules are designed to ensure that MCZ members acquire wealth through just and faithful means. The question however, is on the practicality of these principles in the context of the current socio economic environment in Zimbabwe. This rule is designed to ensure that people should work in order to earn a living and as a result MCZ members are encouraged to work for their income.

3.2.5 PUTTING ON EXPENSIVE CLOTHES

According to rules that guide MCZ membership that are enshrined in the church's official class book, a member should desist from putting on expensive clothes. Commenting in support of this rule, Beetham (1968:19) said "Rich and extravagant clothing draws attention to ourselves and to our bodies not to the spirit of life. Moreover a display of finery is not worth of Jesus who Himself was poor." This rule determines the class of people that the church recruits but on the other hand, the doctrine is failing to appeal to majority of people. In the current context of a cash economy the gospel of prosperity is the anthem being sung by the new Christian religious movements and no one can resist the doctrine that leads to one acquiring riches. Pentecostal churches have encouraged their members to dress elegantly as they come for church services.

3.3 RULES RELATING TO INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIAL RELATIONS

3.3.1 DRUNKENESS, BUYING OR SELLING OF ALCOHOL

One of the most outstanding rules that govern membership in the MCZ is the prohibition of members from the consumption of alcohol. Furthermore according to the provision of the MCZ constitution (S 0 1108), “The supply, sale or use of alcoholic liquor on Methodist premises is not permissible in any circumstances.” This view is a true reflection of how Methodists are rigorously against the use of alcohol in the society in general and the church in particular. We should realize that part of the social problem in the English society during Wesley’s time was that of alcohol abuse that had reduced the country into a society of drunkards.

When the Methodist entered the Zimbabwean mission field the missionaries reinforced and improved the rule that related to alcohol by making it one of the trademarks of the MCZ. The missionaries improved the rule on alcohol by making it illegal for a member to brew alcohol or beer as they became aware that most if not all African women were skilled in the brewing of traditional beer. Unlike the English society that the missionaries were coming from, beer was central in the social life and religious ceremonies for Africans. According to Hallencrentz (1998), the Methodist missionaries in the new colonial city of Salisbury ruled out the use of traditional beer as well as the type of beer supplied by the government due to their commitment to abstain from drinking alcohol. This rule has resulted in the disciplining of many members from the MCZ but despite the militant stance against alcohol, some Methodist members today continue to run night clubs, Bottle Stores and supermarkets where alcohol is sold.

3.3.2 QUARRELLING, FIGHTING, RETURNING EVIL FOR EVIL

According to Wesley's teaching, a Christian shows that he/she is on the way to salvation by causing no harm to other people. In this rule the church realizes that open fighting and quarrelling on the part of Christians is not a right way of living. In fact this kind of behavior is contrary to the basic Christian teachings. Members are also prohibited from taking their litigation cases to secular courts but instead to solve their differences using internal church courts. Christian life according to Methodist is hinged on having good relationship with others. In an attempt to reassert the role of Methodists in the 21st century, the World Methodist Council that met in Oslo from September 16-23, 2002, described a Methodist as "A friend of all and an enemy of none". Christianity is understood in terms of having the right relationship with other people and this principle is based on the biblical teachings of Jesus.

3.3.4 DIVERSIONS THAT CANNOT BE JOINED TO THE NAME OF JESUS

According to the Methodist understanding a diversion is a recreation that one does. In this regard a member of the MCZ is advised not to sing songs that are considered to be unchristian. Any song whose message is considered unchristian should not be used for entertainment by a Christian. This rule also relates to the type of books that one should read for pleasure and recreation, and according to this rule it is important that our reading should be of those books that make us have deeper knowledge of God and his creation. With the advent of electronic media recreation is at one's finger tips. The implications of this rule is that MCZ members are prohibited from attending social functions such as musical gala that have been organized by non-Christians. On 24th October 2015 there was a fund raising for the church's Mathew Rusike Children's home where Jah Prayzah who has become an icon in the music industry came to

perform but the event was criticized by a section of the church's community for inviting a secular artist to perform at a church function.

3.3.4 MARRIAGE

According to the MCZ membership rules, no married member can be accepted into membership without getting into a civil marriage. It is important to note that provisions of this rule were not designed for the English church but for the Africans. According to the Synod of 1902, the church adopted what it termed as the Christian view of marriage that condemned polygamy which was the pillar of African family life. According to Zvobgo (1991:35) "A polygamist could be accepted as a member on trial, but if within five years he did not fulfill his Christian obligation in respect of a monogamous marriage with the first wife taken and in making satisfactory provisions for his other wives and children, his name would after due warning, be removed from church membership role". The position that is obtaining in the church today is that a recognized marriage that qualifies one for church membership is where one is in a monogamous relationship and has been legally married according to the provisions of the Marriage Act 5.11 or has received a church marriage blessing ceremony. It is important to note that the church's view of marriage is contrary to the African view of marriage but modeled according to the views of the English society.

The MCZ Conference of 1998 refined the rule on marriage by agreeing that every Local Preacher and anybody elected into leadership should have a legal marriage. In a bid to solve the challenges related to marriage, the 2014 MCZ Conference that met at Gweru Polytechnic College agreed that the church should conduct a simple marriage blessing that is only recognized by the church as binding and in the process making it easy for men to be accepted into full

membership of the church. The majority of the Zimbabwean population do not have a legal marriage contract and subsequently do not qualify for MCZ membership despite being culturally being recognized as married.

3.4 RULES RELATING TO CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS DUTIES

3.4.1 PROFANING THE DAY OF THE LORD

MCZ share with the majority of Christians in observing Sunday as the day of worship. Methodist prefers to designate the Sunday as the Lord's Day as it reminds the Christian community of the resurrection day. Central to the rules that govern membership is on what a Christian should and should not do in observing the Sunday as the day of worship. According to the church's rules enshrined in the class book, members should not profane the day of the Lord, either by doing ordinary work or by buying or selling. However Methodists who are employed in essential services of the community such as police and hospitals can go for duty on a Sunday.

On the other hand this rule prohibits a member of the MCZ from doing ordinary work within one's household or field. This means that those who run business should close on a Sunday including those who operate vegetable markets and flea markets. This has proved to be a challenge to most members as quiet a number of people now prefer to do their shopping on Sundays. The competition in the current market environment is now forcing Methodist to open and do business on Sundays.

3.4.2 ATTENDANCE OF CHURCH SERVICES AND CLASSES.

One of the most important rule governing memberships is the prerequisite to attend the church's weekly class meeting session. According to the rules adopted by the 1902 Synod of the MCZ,

attendance at class meetings is compulsory and members who are constantly absent from the class meeting without sufficient reason would have cut themselves from church membership. The problem that the MCZ is having is that class meetings have collapsed and the church is struggling to revive these classes.

3.4.3 ATTENDANCE AT HOLY COMMUNION

According to the MCZ Standing Orders 902, “Participation in this Sacrament should be regarded as both a privilege and an obligation by all full members of the Methodist church.” This view means that it is almost compulsory for all full members to avail themselves for this sacrament and secondly to note it is only full members who have been confirmed by the church who have the exclusive right to participate in the sacrament. Disciplined members, members on trial and children are prohibited from participation.

Currently there are two schools of thought in the MCZ in respect of who qualifies to receive Communion in the church. The proposal to use the invitation system that would open communion to everybody including on trial members and children was rejected by the MCZ 2014 Conference at its sitting at the Gweru Polytechnic College. The majority of members of this conference felt that adopting such a proposal would compromise the control and discipline of the church over its membership. The MCZ resolved to maintain the position that those who participate in the sacrament of Holy Communion should be full members of the church.

3.4.5 RULES RELATING TO WORSHIP AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES.

Some of the rules that have been constituted in the Class book and the Standing Order to guide and govern the conduct of MCZ membership are not unique to Methodist, but instead are

common to the majority of churches. These rules have their source in the Bible and these include avoiding taking the name of God in vain, performing Christian works of charity such as giving food to the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting and helping the sick and those in prison.

The rules that govern membership in the MCZ challenges members to avail themselves for public worship services, the individual members to read and share the scripture with others. Members of the MCZ are encouraged to engage in private prayer and fasting in order to cultivate spiritual growth.

3.4.6 PARTICIPATION IN HEATHEN CEREMONIES

One of the rules that were introduced by the missionaries as they entered the Zimbabwean mission field is that no member was allowed to attend traditional religious ceremonies. It is important to note that one of the objectives of introducing Christian villages in the church's mission centers was to ensure that the new converts are weaned off from the mainstream African society where every member was required to participate in these ceremonies. A member of the MCZ is discouraged or prohibited from singing songs associated with heathen ceremonies and also from participating in these kinds of ceremonies. The big question however is whether members have felt obliged by desisting from participating in these rites. A close analysis shows that members have continued to participate in these ceremonies behind the church's back especially the Kurova guva ceremony.

3.5 SUMMARY OF RULES GOVERNING MEMBERSHIP

In summary we can see that the majority of the rules that govern the conduct of MCZ members were initially designed by John Wesley in the 18th century. These rules were designed to mould the character of those who joined his classes or society. Wesley and his Methodist movement

was part of the group of churches described as “ascetic Protestantism”. Making a summary of Wesley’s code of conduct relating to the use of money, Haralambos (1984) noted: “These riches must not be spent on luxuries, fine clothes, lavish houses, frivolous entertainment, but in the glory of God”. The rules that were designed by Wesley for his followers were to fulfill these objectives. It is also important for us to note that another section of the rules set for guiding MCZ members are not unique to Methodism alone but are shared with the majority of Christians from other traditions. It is because these rules were drawn from the Bible which is considered by the Methodists community as the primary rule of faith and practice and center of theological reflection.

3.6 CONCLUSION

It is also important for us to realize that when the Methodist missionaries entered the Zimbabwean mission field they maintained the rules designed by Wesley for his societies. As a way of responding to the challenges in the new mission field the missionaries added new rules or improved those already existing. What is critical though is that these rules were designed to respond to the challenges of a particular time and context. The biggest challenge is whether these rules are still relevant in an African church and the dynamics being experienced in a 21st century society that the MCZ finds itself in.

CHAPTER 4

EVALUATION OF MCZ MEMBERSHIP RULES IN LIGHT OF THE CURRENT ZIMBABWEAN CONTEXT

4. 0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter seeks to make an analysis of the current Zimbabwean society and see whether the rules that govern membership are still relevant. It is of paramount importance to note and realize that society is not static but is always changing. Culture is generally understood as a way of life for a particular group of people but it is important for one to be conscious of the fact that several factors influence changes in society. In this regard, society and culture in particular are always changing hence the assertion is that culture is dynamic. These changes in society are affecting the way the MCZ operates as well as the life of its members.

The majority of rules that govern membership in the MCZ were designed by John Wesley as he sought to guide the conduct of his followers in the context of 18th Century England. These rules were designed to guide Christians of the Methodist tradition on how they could respond to the social, economic, political and religious challenges of Wesley's time. The same rules were transplanted by the missionaries for use by African Methodist and particularly those in the Zimbabwean mission field. In the process, Methodist missionaries added some rules as they also tried to respond to the Zimbabwean context. However at this point it is critical to note that from the period of Wesley, the society has changed dramatically. If we make an analysis of the Zimbabwean society from the year 1891 when the first Methodist missionaries entered Zimbabwe to the present period, we will realize that the society has undergone several changes. The majority of rules that govern membership in the MCZ have remained static while on the other hand the Zimbabwean society has continued to change, but above all English society is

totally different to the Zimbabwean society yet the church has used the same set of rules for both societies. Contemporary English society is very different to that of John Wesley's time and these circumstances have forced the Methodist church in the United Kingdom to realign its rules to ensure it responds accordingly.

4.1. 21st CENTURY ZIMBABWEAN SOCIETY

The MCZ is ministering in the 21st Century Zimbabwean society and as the church tries to drive its mission in this environment it needs to be conscious of the dynamics of the mission field. In a nutshell, I am going to highlight some of the developments that took place in the Zimbabwean society at the beginning of this century that have a bearing to this study.

4.2. ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

The period 2000-2008 saw Zimbabweans going through one of the worst economic crisis in living memory. This economic crisis was characterized by the highest inflation rate that any country has ever experienced culminating in the closure of the many industries in Zimbabwe. According to Raftopolous(2009), the crisis has its background in Zimbabwe's involvement in the DRC war, the government's decision to give gratuities from unbudgeted funds to war veterans who fought during the struggle for independence and the introduction of the economic structural adjustment programs (ESAP) as directed by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund as condition for the country to access loans. The economic crisis was finally spiced by a culture of corruption in both the private and public sector. Since 2000, elections in Zimbabwe have been characterized by violence leading to a polarized society characterized by hatred.

4.3. RELIGIOUS FACTORS

Since the year 2000 to date Zimbabwe has seen a rise in the formation of new churches. The country has seen a growth in African Initiated Churches in both urban and rural areas. We have also seen the rise in African Initiated Pentecostal churches that are strongly based in urban areas. Giving an evaluation of the period Zimunya and Gwara(2013:190) Noted”In this scenario of turbulent and uncertain events, Pentecostal churches have sprouted and offered a much needed solace.” These churches have brought in a strong religious competition among churches that is threatening the existence of traditional or mission churches including the MCZ. These new Pentecostal churches have anchored their message on the gospel of prosperity that has attracted many people especially the young generation.

4.4. POLITICAL FACTORS

According to Raftopolous (2009:203) “The cost of involvement in the DRC war added to the failures of the structural adjustment program the end of the 1990s.” Raftopolous further observed that in the same period civil society gave birth to the NCA and in the same period Zimbabwe saw the emergency of the most powerful opposition since independence in the name of the MDC. Since the formation of the MDC as a political party in 1999, Zimbabwe in June 2008 witnessed one of the bloodiest elections since independence. The society has become polarized along political party lines creating a culture of hatred, enmity within communities. In this same period the government introduced the controversial Land Reform Program dubbed the third Chimurenga. This program saw the invasion of white owned farms characterized by killing of some white farmers. The big question that continued to haunt the church is the morality that characterized the implementation of the program.

4.5 ENGAGING THE RULES WITH THE CURRENT ZIMBABWEAN CONTEXT.

4.5.1. CROSSBOARDER TRADING AND UNCUSTOMED GOODS

One of the results of the Zimbabwean economic crisis was the birth of cross border traders, majority of whom were women. Due to a culture of corruption in both sectors of the economy smuggling of goods in and out of the country has become a culture. Among those participating in smuggling are MCZ members despite the fact that one of the membership rules prohibits such practices. When I was conducting pastoral visits on 22 September 2015 I met a member who had returned from South Africa the previous day and openly shared with me how she had successfully evaded paying duty on products she had imported after which she asked for a thanksgiving for God's guidance on her trip. This is enough testimony to the fact that smuggling of goods is now an accepted practice to many people including MCZ members. Zimbabwe's manufacturing industry has collapsed leaving the country to rely on importing the bulk of its day to day needs.

The other challenge is that the government has legally allowed the operations of flea markets. The majority of clothes and other wares being sold in these markets have entered the country illegally. The majority of MCZ members now contend that the rule that forbids the practice of smuggling and the buying of smuggled goods can no longer remain a guiding principle for MCZ members. The majority of the poor members of our society are relying on flea markets for their clothing, food and other necessities of everyday life. As a result, enforcing this rule is tantamount to cutting off the life line of the ordinary members of the church. Closely related to the practice of smuggling is the practice of bribery. This practice although not rampant during Wesley's time this has become part and parcel of business transactions in the Zimbabwean context. In 2012 the MCZ applied for a church stand with Chitungwiza Municipality but MCZ members employed in

the city council advised the church leadership to bribe the officials in order for them to process the application. To date the church has not been given the stand but other churches who have accepted to bribe the officials have already been given stands. Currently there is a call by some leaders to secretly raise the money needed to bribe the officials. A close analysis of this rule shows that it is a good principle that is that is only applicable in a functioning economy.

4.5.2. BORROWING ON USURY

The practice of borrowing money on usury is common in high density urban areas. The current trends have revealed that among MCZ members, the practice is not common in people living in rural areas and low density areas but in high density urban areas. The current economic crisis has left the majority of people without a source of income and failing to cater for their basic needs such as paying school fees for children and payment of house rentals. This environment has given birth to cash barons who are lending money to desperate members of the society at very high interest rates. In the majority of cases, those who engage in this type of borrowing end up losing valuable property after failing to pay back the money.

On 12 December 2015, a member of the MCZ in Chitungwiza brought to the attention of the Minister a case of a fellow church member who was now refusing or failing to pay back the money she had borrowed on usury from her sister who runs this kind of business. Quite a number of MCZ members are engaged in the practice of borrowing on usury but the majority of the church's members agree that the practice is bad. A close analysis of the practice shows that it is tantamount to solving a problem by creating a far bigger problem.

4.5.3. BORROWING WITHOUT PAYING BACK

One of the rules guiding membership in the MCZ prohibits members from borrowing and then later fail to payback. This rule is closely related to the practice of borrowing on usury. While usury is considered as criminal this form of borrowing is regulated by law and therefore legal. The Zimbabwean economic crisis resulted in many people losing their jobs and in the process failed to service their loans. In urban areas many people had acquired property by borrowing from financial institutions while some, especially women, bought household furniture and clothes on credit.

In rural areas quite a number of MCZ members have borrowed agricultural inputs on condition that the loan would be serviced after selling the produce. Some have deliberately failed to pay back the loan while some have failed to pay after their farm produce was bought at a give-away price due to a fall in market prices. The tragedy is that debt collectors have seized assets from some MCZ members and according to church rules all those should face the church's discipline. The crisis that the church faces is what the church should do in dealing with these offenders. In MCZ circuits situated in Gokwe, these issues raised controversy in the church after farmers failed to service their debts due to the sudden fall on cotton price that resulted in debt collectors collecting property from defaulters.

4.5.4. BUYING, SELLING AND CONSUMPTION OF ALCOHOL

One of the salient rules that govern the conduct of MCZ membership is the prohibition of the consumption of alcohol. The strict Methodist stand against the consumption of alcohol has become one of the trademarks of the MCZ. According to responses I got from MCZ women members on assessing the church's "men to church program", their husbands could not join them

to church because the church does not accommodate the taking of alcohol. It is one of the rules that has contributed to the problem of few men joining the church. An assessment of disciplinary cases involving male members reveals that the majority of cases are due to consumption of alcohol followed by polygamy or extra marital affairs. It is of interest to note that since 2000 to date the church has defrocked four ministers for taking alcohol, while twelve cases involved runaway marriages (*kutizisa*) and extra marital relationships.

According to the MCZ 1998 conference minutes item 10.2.4, “Conference agreed that Methodist be reminded that they should not drink alcohol or use it at special ceremonies like weddings etc, because of its effects on health and moral behavior.” The caution by the conference 1998 is a clear testimony to the fact that the church is struggling to enforce its members to abstain from taking alcohol.

The other challenge on the rule that relate to alcohol is the fact that MCZ members are not allowed to buy alcohol. The implications are that a member of the MCZ cannot buy beer for a relative who drinks. Majority of members, ministers included have confessed to the fact that when they went to pay lobola they actually bought beer as required by custom. This fact is a clear testimony that this rule for MCZ membership is not being sensitive to the culture of its members. Beer is at the core of African rituals and social functions and most members are forced to buy the product one way or the other. In this regard is it fair for the church to punish members who operate beer selling outlets?

The other challenge that relates to alcohol is the fact that MCZ members are not allowed to sell alcohol. One of the current challenges of our time is whether it is proper for a member to be employed by a brewery. Some have even gone further to prohibit farmers from growing sorghum because of its use in the production of beer. The main challenge in the current context is that in the current business environment, quite a number of MCZ members are running bottle stores, nite clubs and supermarkets where alcohol is being sold. According Hallemerentz (1998), citing minutes of 1906 Epworth Circuit Quarterly meeting, the Methodist church had challenges in enforcing the abstinence from the use of alcohol as the church found its local teachers and preachers being accused of brewing traditional beer. This is testimony to the fact that this has been a perennial problem for the MCZ.

4.5.5. PARTICIPATION IN HEATHEN CEREMONIES

This rule was introduced and tailor made by the missionaries for the African members of the MCZ. This rule prohibits MCZ members from participating in African Traditional religious ceremonies such as *Bira* (ancestral religious ceremony) and *Kurova Guva* (to beat the grave) ceremony. MCZ members especially those living in rural areas have continued to participate in these ceremonies for they are also communal ceremonies. Even some MCZ members in urban areas visit their rural homes usually in August to attend to these ceremonies. The missionary concept of Christian villages was designed to provide a fence for the converts cutting them from attending these ceremonies that are at the core of the African identity and religious system. The fact that MCZ members continue to engage in these practices is testimony to the fact that the church failed to provide an alternative to these religious ceremonies especially the *Kurova Guva* ceremony.

4.5.6. DIVERSIONS THAT CANNOT BE JOINED TO CHRIST

This rule stipulates that a member of the MCZ should not participate in recreational activities that have no link with Christianity. The implication of this rule is that a Methodist is prohibited from attending musical galas where secular singers perform. The majority of MCZ both in the urban and rural areas agree to the fact that this rule is no longer relevant in this time and age. In this age of the electronic media these kinds of entertainment are open to everybody at the click of a button. The television is providing entertainment with films that are both secular and religious. The world of today is miles apart to that of Wesley and this principle is now a practice that has no bearing on the dynamics of the current society that is characterized by the use of the internet and other forms of electronic media due to globalization.

4.5.7. MARRIAGE

The marriage rules that govern membership in the MCZ were introduced by the missionaries. The 1902 Synod set guidelines that regulate the concept of marriage in the MCZ. The MCZ today have maintained that marriage is monogamous. Polygamy is legal and acceptable in most African countries. As a result of this membership rule, breaching of the marriage rule contribute to one of the highest number of disciplinary cases. According to the records of ministerial sessions of conference for the period 2000 to 2016, the MCZ defrocked twenty-four of its ministers and out of that number thirteen involved the breach of the church's marriage rules by being involved in extramarital affairs or getting married through elopement

The church condemns the practice of marriage through elopement known as *kutizisa*. In the current context, the church has a strong youth ministry but the majority of these young people are disciplined as they enter the married life without official weddings. According to the record

of disciplined members in Chitungwiza East Circuit in 2015, seven out of the ten disciplined members were youth who had runaway marriages (*kutizisa*). These trends are common in both urban and rural circuits. The problem is that the church perception of marriage is modeled along the English understanding of marriage which is a legal contract between the spouses. According to the English view, marriage is an event marked by exchange of vows and a legal document confirming the marriage but according to the African view marriage is a the coming together of two families characterized by different phases and rituals. Marriage from an African view point is communal while that of Europeans is individualistic.

The church has failed to accept the fact that *kutizisa* is another way of getting married in the African culture because in the majority of cases these young people end up living together permanently. On the other hand the disciplinary system of the church condemns and humiliates the offender resulting in the majority of them deciding to leave the church completely and join other churches. In this regard the MCZ should critically evaluate this rule in order to see if it is still relevant to the mission of the church in the Zimbabwean context. In the British church cohabitation is no longer an issue given the current trends in their society.

The marriage rule that requires any married person to have a legal marriage certificate or a church marriage blessing certificate has contributed to failure by quite a number of men to commit themselves to church membership despite the fact that society regards them as properly married. Rimuka society in Kadoma circuit had four men who came to church on Sunday regularly but could not be confirmed into full membership because they felt that they were not prepared to enter into a legal marriage contract for one reason or another. The irony of it all is

that the same men had stable and monogamous marriage relationships. It is also important to note that this is not an issue in the recruitment of membership in some of the new Pentecostal churches.

4.5.8. QUARRELING, FIGHTING, RETURNING EVIL FOR EVIL

On the political and social front, the MCZ rules that govern social relationship have become more relevant than before. The current Zimbabwean political and social landscape is characterized by a deep polarization. According to observations by Raftopolous (2009), In 1999 Zimbabwe saw the birth of the MDC that threatened the ruling ZANU PF party's grip on power since independence. In response, the ruling party embarked on a bloody land invasion of white owned farms dubbed the 'third Chimurenga'. Since the year 2000, all general elections have been marred by political violence that have left communities divided. Some MCZ members have been involved in these violent campaigns but the church has been hesitant to institute discipline for fear of political reprisals.

Although we have MCZ members who participated in the land invasions, the majority did not participate conscious of the fact that the manner in which these farms were taken contradicts the basic Christian principles as articulated by this rule. We note that the period from 2000 saw the country undergo social changes whose effects were more or less the same as those of the industrial revolution during Wesley's time. The social change has seen a rise in the culture of violence and hatred that has destroyed relationships in families, communities and the church itself. Elections to elect church leaders have at times divided the church and created enmity. The MCZ has become affected by secular tendencies and the majority of ministers agree that even elections at Synods and conference to elect Bishops have become so polarized. The rule which

prohibits quarrelling fighting and returning evil for evil is at the center of the church's mission to transform societies and building of relationships within communities. The functions of religion in any given society are to build the moral fabric of the society so that there is cohesion in the society.

4.5.9. PROFANING THE DAY OF THE LORD

Together with the majority of Christian churches, MCZ observes Sunday as the day set apart for rest and worship. The rule on keeping the Sunday as the day for worship requires that those in business should close their shops and market stalls. The business climate of the 21st century has been characterized by a stiff competition in the marketing business. MCZ members who run grocery shops and other business ventures confessed that they are opening for business on Sundays despite the church and Biblical requirement of observing the Sabbath. Those operating bottle stores and other beer outlets contend that business is high during the weekends. The main challenge that the MCZ now face is whether the church should remain rigid in its observation of Sunday as the day of worship. Three shop owners argued that there was nothing wrong in opening their business after attending the Sunday service.

4.5.10. QUALIFICATION FOR HOLY COMMUNION

The position of the church is that Holy Communion is exclusively reserved for only those who are confirmed as full members of the MCZ. The implication of this rule is that children, members in training, disciplined members and those in polygamous marriages do not qualify to receive communion. It is interesting to note that the tradition in former English congregations is that communion is through invitation system and not qualification. The implication of this is that the church used the invitation approach for its white societies and the qualification for the African

societies in relation to administration of Holy Communion. The major controversy in the MCZ today's sacramental debate centers on whether it is proper for the African church to continue refusing communion another section of its membership. However the majority of MCZ members are of the opinion that the church maintains the practice of restricting participation in the sacrament only to full members of the church. This they argue will ensure the church is able to maintain order and discipline of its membership.

4.6. OVERALL REMARKS ON THE OBSERVATIONS

The original rules of membership in the MCZ were originally designed by J. Wesley in response to challenges and changes in 18th century English community. The very same rules became the basic requirements for membership in the MCZ despite the fact that the church is operating in a totally different society. The condition and context of John Wesley's world is grossly different to the one being currently experienced in Zimbabwe. Since the coming of Methodism to Zimbabwe, our society has undergone social changes due to economic, political and religious factors but on the other hand rules of the church have remained static. The church has been slow to adopt to change resulting in the rules becoming irrelevant in the life of MCZ members. This has contributed to a high rate of discipline of members breaching the requirements guiding the conduct of membership and some members leaving to join other churches. The radical change that has taken place in the Zimbabwean society since the year 2000 challenges the church to evaluate its membership rules.

CHAPTER 5

PROPOSALS THAT COULD HELP REFORM RULES THAT GOVERN MEMBERSHIP IN THE MCZ

5.0. INTRODUCTION

The main thrust of this chapter is to bring out proposals or recommendations that could be considered by the MCZ in reforming the rules that govern its membership so that it could be able to respond to the challenges of this age. An analysis shows that the nature and character of the MCZ as a distinct Christian denomination is anchored on rules that govern its membership and it is these rules that determine people joining or leaving the church. Another observation is that the crafting of some of these rules was based on the Bible which is interpreted by the MCZ as the measuring rod in determining the practice and conduct of the individual Christian within the denomination. These categories of rules are not unique to the MCZ but are shared with other Christian denominations. The difference however, could be in emphasis on how these rules are observed or implemented.

The other observation is that MCZ membership rules were designed as a reaction to social challenges prevailing during Wesley's time. The majority of the rules were designed by Wesley to guide and mould the way of life of those who had joined his religious movement. We should realize that the MCZ is now ministering to people living in a different country to that of England and ministering to a people with a different culture and worldview to that of the 18th century England. The church needs to adjust its approach to ministry so that it responds adequately to the challenges of its community. We also should be aware of the fact that some of the rules governing membership in the MCZ were tailor made by the missionaries specifically for the

Zimbabwean church as the church tried to respond to challenges it faced in the new mission front. What we realize however is that the nature of the Zimbabwean society at the beginning of the 20th century to date has undergone a notable transformation. Since the year 2000 Zimbabwe has undergone radical changes in the social, economic, political and religious sphere within its society. These challenges call upon the MCZ to rebrand itself so that it can continue to adequately respond to the challenges of the society in order for it to remain relevant in this context. This will ensure the church continues to attract new members in this generation.

5.1. IDENTITY CRISIS IN THE MCZ

The major challenge that the MCZ is going through today is that of an identity crisis as an African church. The major rules that govern membership in the MCZ were designed by Wesley to guide Methodists of his time on how they should live. Missionaries who brought Methodism to Zimbabwe added other rules for the new mission field. These rules were designed by Europeans to guide members living in an African continent and Zimbabwe in particular. The main thrust of these rules as applied in an African church is to mould an African person who is to live and behave as a white man.

Currently there is a difference between former white societies and the majority of societies in the MCZ. Former white congregations are liberal in their application of rules of membership compared to the rest of the congregations within the Connexion. Members in these societies have continued to interact closely with the British church and have enjoyed the services of white ministers and as a result are influenced by trends in the English church. The challenge that the church has is that it should avoid applying its rules selectively. When I was serving as a minister in Chegutu in the year 2000, the society leaders' meeting dealt with a disciplinary case of one of

the senior preachers accused of smoking. In his defense the preacher argued that the missionary minister who had served in the circuit by the name of Rev. Brian Dann smoked openly. The leaders' meeting decided to pardon the preacher after considering his advanced age. This is testimony to the fact that the MCZ had two systems of rules governing membership, one designed for whites and the other for African societies. Proposals to reform membership rules in the MCZ should be sensitive to the culture of its people but should not contradict basic Christian principles.

5.2. RULES RELATING TO ALCOHOL

In my interview with Rev. Justin Masendeke on 8 March 2016, he pointed out that he joined the ministry in 1990 in Karoi circuit under the guidance of a missionary by the name of John Millins, who took beer in the comfort of the manse/parsonage. This showed that at one stage some missionaries became liberal on alcohol but at the same time continued to discipline African members for drinking beer. Currently both ministers and the laity agree to the fact that consumption of alcohol should continue to be discouraged by the church due to its effects on people's health and behavior. The church should therefore continue to teach and practice abstinence in the consumption of alcohol given the high rate of alcohol and drug abuse in our society.

In the Zimbabwean context, the church should relax its rules on the selling and buying of alcohol as it relates to business people within its membership. In the Zimbabwean cultural context beer is central in traditional religious rituals and social functions. The majority of MCZ members and ministers included, have confessed that they have bought beer as part of the grocery required by African custom when paying lobola. In this regard I propose that the church being sensitive to

the Zimbabwean culture should allow its members to operate bottle stores and supermarkets where alcohol is sold. The church should also allow its members to be employed in breweries and beer selling outlets.

The law of the country also governs the operation of beer selling outlets. These laws ensure that the outlets are properly registered according to the laws of the land and that selling and consumption of this commodity is in compliance with the laws of the land. MCZ rules should encourage that those of her membership who decide to do business in this category should be properly licensed with the authorities to ensure there is regulation from the authorities relating to the selling and consumption of alcohol. Commenting on changes relating to alcohol consumption patterns in Zimbabwean society, Bourdillon (1993:45) noted, “Drinking is influenced by culture, but also by biology and economics; and it can cause severe social problems when it is not properly controlled.”

5.3. BUYING AND SELLING UNCUSTOMED GOODS

The economic meltdown that Zimbabwe experienced since the year 2000 has seen the collapse of industry and the emergence of flea markets all over the country. The majority of products that have entered the Zimbabwean market have been imported without payment of duty. The church should continue to mould faithful citizens of their country and in that regard should encourage its members to comply with the statutes of the land when conducting business. However, the church’s rule that prohibits the buying of unaccustomed goods should be applied with caution given the current business climate in Zimbabwe.

The rule that relates to buying and selling unaccustomed goods should focus on the person selling and not the buyer. The problem today is that you cannot prove which product was or was not legally imported into the country. The second observation is that the majority of those who buy from the flea markets are the poor and the economically disadvantaged and the majority of the products enter the country illegally. The majority of people in our society have one way or the other bought products illegally imported into the country. The church should continue however to teach its members to be honest and faithful to the principles and regulations that govern trade in the country. The Zimbabwean society is experiencing problems of corruption but the church should continue to the role model in a bid to transform the society.

5.4. LAYING UP TREASURES

One of the membership rules discourages MCZ members from laying up wealth. This view has led to the church being accused of pacifying the African population in accepting colonialism that saw Africans being condemned to poverty. This rule which is part of the rules governing membership should be removed from the MCZ teaching if it is to remain relevant in the current context. We need to be aware of the fact that the MCZ and other traditional churches are in competition with the upcoming Pentecostal churches whose gospel is anchored on material prosperity. The church should come up with a theology of prosperity that should encourage people to work in order to develop their society and families by exploiting the resources at their disposal.

Wesley's view on laying up of wealth is contradictory to the African view of the functions of religion. In the African religious worldview prosperity and wellbeing is a sign that God is blessing his people and in this regard the MCZ rule that calls for one to shun riches is contrary to the African quest for prosperity. One of the challenges in the third world countries is the problem

of poverty and the MCZ as part of the third world church should rebrand its theology so that it responds to the aspiration of its community to get out of the cycle of poverty.

5.5. PUTTING ON EXPENSIVE CLOTHES

This rule teaches that a Christian should lead a modest life. In support of this rule Beetham (1968:19) observed that “A display of finery is not worthy of Jesus, who Himself was poor.” This philosophy is no longer relevant in the 21st century Zimbabwean social and religious landscape that is characterized by quest for elegance. This philosophy also does not accommodate the young generation which is eager to be associated with elegance. This rule should be removed completely from the principles that guide membership in the MCZ for it calls for members to accept poverty as a norm. This view is counterproductive to the church’s membership drive where the rich and well to do members of the society are not welcome and this in turn affects the financial strength of the church in terms of contributions it gets from its members. It is important to note that even in those poor communities a person puts on what he/she considers to be the best when going to church and other social gatherings.

5.6. MARRIAGE

The MCZ should revisit its rule on marriage in a bid to realign it with the cultural view of the Zimbabwean community. There is need for the MCZ to be sensitive to the culture and experiences of the Zimbabwean church. I concur with the view of Verstraelen (1992) who notes the need for a new church history which does justice to the reality and experiences of the Third World and the third church. The current MCZ perception of marriage is based on the European view of marriage which is alien to that of the African and a result the majority of disciplinary cases in the MCZ involve issues to do with marriage.

5.6.1. ELOPEMENT

The MCZ has lost a significant number of its youth from membership through elopement or runaway marriages popularly known as *Kutizisa*. A critical analysis of this practice shows that those who get married through this African cultural practice have got cultural ways of formalizing the marriage. In this regard the church should not remove youth from membership after going through this system of getting married but should join hands with the community in assisting the newly married couple adjust to their new status. In an African cultural system those who have married through this process are not condemned by their society but are instead welcomed and supported by their families and community. The tragedy with the MCZ is that those who get married through eloping are branded as sinners and thrown out of the believing community.

There is need for the MCZ to see and understand the marriage process from an African view point in order for the church to remain relevant in the current Zimbabwean context. It is important to note that quite a number of young people being disciplined in urban areas for breaking the church marriage code have joined the emerging Pentecostal churches. If the MCZ does not adjust it will continue to lose the young generation to the new churches. Comparing disciplinary issues relating to elopement between Catholics and Dutch Reformed Church, Daneel (1991) observed that within the Catholic Church members were not disciplined for elopement but were encouraged to have the marriage solemnized in the church as well. This implies that Catholics were more sensitive to the African culture compared to the Protestant churches including the MCZ. This adjustment in the marriage rules will ensure the MCZ assumes an African identity and is capacitated in ministering to an African community.

5.6.2. POLYGAMY

Although polygamy is culturally acceptable in the African society the church should maintain its views that monogamy is the ideal form of marriage. It is important to note that African social life has been affected by urbanization and a cash economy that is modeled along the Western culture. These changes are forcing Africans to adjust some of their values and practices. Perceptions about polygamy have been affected by health concerns surrounding the AIDS pandemic and as a result the majority of our communities no longer support the practice of polygamy. The current human rights culture that has given prominence to women's rights is challenging patriarchy in African societies. This culture is forcing many African communities to abandon the practice of polygamy and in this regard the MCZ should maintain its position on polygamy.

5.7 PARTICIPATION IN HEATHEN CEREMONIES

One of the rules governing membership in the MCZ prohibits members from attending heathen rituals and ceremonies. The current research I have conducted through interviews and questionnaires reveal that MCZ members still participate in these traditional rites especially the *Kurova Guva* ceremony. According to observations by Verstraelen (1998:29) "Yet while the official position of the mainline Protestant churches tends to either reject or ignore the challenge of ATR in their midst, their members continue to take part in traditional religious practices" The MCZ missionaries' position was that of discontinuity where converts were forced to abandon ATR for the new Christian faith

There is need for the church to entrench its gospel message in African thought forms and worldview. I have been very much impressed by the Catholic approach of inculturation where

there is an attempt to provide continuity between Christianity and ATR. Mwandayi (2011) came up with at least three proposals that the church in Zimbabwe can employ in accommodating the religious worldview of its converts namely the integration, independent and substitution approaches. The MCZ could adopt Mwandayi's integration approach where African rites are christianized so that the Christian message can be expressed in the cultural context and worldview of the people. Already the church has made the initial inroads in this regard in that its members are now being buried in their church uniforms and what is now needed is to come up with liturgies and services that follow after the burial of the deceased.

The MCZ should find ways of finding a new Christian meaning to rituals in ATR for the gospel message to be relevant in an African context. I would like to concur with Daneel (1991) that one of the strengths of African Initiated Churches is that they either accept the ancient traditional ways or they condemn them but provide christianised rites as substitute. The MCZ should provide alternative rites to African burial rites especially the Kurova Guva ceremony in the event that the church is not comfortable to integrate traditional rituals into its systems of worship. In the process the church will assume an African identity as it responds to the religious aspirations and other cultural challenges faced by its members.

5.8 CONCLUSION.

The tragedy with the MCZ is that the church has been slow in responding to the changes that are taking place in the society it is serving by taking a conservative approach. As a result, the MCZ has maintained all the rules that were designed by Wesley for his societies. Within these rules there are those that are shared with other churches due the fact that they are based on the basic Christian teaching as found in the Bible. However some of these rules came into being as the church tried to respond to the socio- economic and religious challenges of the society. The

tragedy with the MCZ in its history is that the direction and policy making of the church was done by missionaries and moderated in England by the British conference without the input of the Africans. Writing on challenges of Christianity in Africa, Northcott (1963:89) noted, “while missionaries were themselves divided into distinct theological and perhaps national groups, missionaries are Europeans offering a culture that is western as well as Christian”. There is need to reform the rules governing membership in the MCZ taking into consideration the culture and experiences of the Africans. These proposals are an attempt to understand Christianity from the viewpoint of the African as opposed to that of the missionaries.

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- i. Minutes of 1998 Annual Conference.
- ii. Minutes of 2014 Annual Conference
- iii. Minutes of Chitungwiza East Circuit Quarterly Meeting dated 30 October 2015.
- iv. Methodist Church In Zimbabwe, Handbooks for years 2009-2015.
- v. Report of the MCZ 2010 Strategic Planning Committee.
- vi. Report of the World Methodist Council that met in Oslo from 16-23 September 2002.

INTERVIEW

Rev. Justin Masendeke at Ruwadzano centre in Epworth on 8 March 2016.

Rev Dr Kennedy Gondongwe at Methodist Church In Zimbabwe Connexional office on 9 March 2016

Rev Acub Simba at Kwenda Mission, Sadza on 12 February 2016.

Rev Linhre-Link Mutendzwa at Kariba on 31 December 2015.

Mrs Elizabeth Goredema at Murombedzi on 16 January 2016.

Mr Samuel Mwanza at St Aidens Methodist church Kadoma on 25 March 2016.

Ms Dorcus Chataika at Rimuka Methodist Church Kadoma on 25 March 2016.

Mrs Patricia Mashoro at KwaMaiguru Business Complex Kwekwe on 2 April 2016.

QUESTIONNAIRE

My name is James Mtemasango and I am a student at Midlands State University studying for B.A Honours Degree in Theology and Religious Studies. I am currently conducting a research aimed at evaluating the rules that govern membership in the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe. Your response to these questions will help me gain objective insights into this study. Your participation in responding to this questionnaire will only be used for this academic study. Your appreciation is greatly appreciated.

How long have you been a member of the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe? _____

What is your position in the membership of the MCZ? Clergy Lay Leader Full member
OT

Have you been part of a leaders meeting that handled a disciplinary case? YES NO

What was the disciplinary charge leveled against the member? _____

In your opinion, is it still relevant for the MCZ to discipline youths who have runaway marriages (kutizisa). When Pentecostal Churches are embracing them into their membership without any conditions? YES NO

You can comment to justify your opinion.

Have you been a cross boarder trader? YES NO

If yes have you ever evaded paying duty on goods you have imported? YES NO

Have you been asked to pay a bribe in order to get certain services? YES NO

If yes what was the payment for _____

Is it bad for a Christian to gamble e.g. playing Lotto, horse batting, Cassino etc. YES NO

In this business environment is it wrong for a Christian to run a Night Club, Bottle Store or any alcohol selling outlet? YES NO

Is it wrong for a Christian to conduct any form of business on a Sunday? YES NO

Any comment in support of your opinion? _____

Is it bad to go for shopping after attending your church's Sunday service? YES NO