

THE MESSIANIC FEEDING OF THE MASSES

An Analysis of John 6 in the Context of Messianic Leadership
in Post-Colonial Zimbabwe

Francis Machingura



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Abbreviations

AICs	African Independent Churches
AIPPA	Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act
ANE	Ancient Near East
ATR	African Traditional Religion
BACCOSI	Basic Commodity Supply Side Intervention
BCE	Before the Common Era
CCJP	Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace
CDE	Comrade
CFU	Commercial Farmers Union
EFZ	Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe
ESAP	Economic Structural Adjustment Programme
GLS	Grain Loan Scheme
GMB	Grain Marketing Board
HCM	Historical-Critical Method
LAA	Land Apportionment Act
LTA	Land Tenure Act
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
NCA	National Constitutional Assembly
NLHA	Native Land Husbandry Act
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
POSA	Public Order and Security Act
QRM	Qualitative Research Method
UDI	Unilateral Declaration of Independence
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
WCC	World Council of Churches
WFP	World Food Programme
ZBC	Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation
ZCA	Zimbabwe Christian Alliance
ZCC	Zimbabwe Council of Churches
ZCTU	Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions
ZANU-PF	Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front
ZAPU	Zimbabwe African People's Union

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PART I: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1: STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The reign of Mugabe as from 1980 when Zimbabwe¹ gained independence from Britain has been coated with religious symbols. Public events have clearly become religiously linked, making Zimbabwe as it were, a ‘forest of symbols’.² Many symbols have been used in the Zimbabwean religious and political discourses. The national political vision of the nation as it progressed became synthesized with religion. Of special interest is that, whereas in the past, the emphasis was on the role of spirit mediums in the First and Second Chimurenga³ War and later during the reign of Mugabe; Christian ideologies also became part of the synthesis. The royal ideology on Mugabe is not a replacement of religion but a synthesis of religious ideologies from ATR and Christianity. The royal ideology manifested through various messianic declarations done in the public sphere. The messianic declarations by certain ZANU-PF

¹ Zimbabwe was formerly a colony of Britain and was known as Southern Rhodesia. President Robert Mugabe became the first Prime Minister to win the 1980 general elections that gave independence to Zimbabwe. When independence came, a lot of people across religious and political divide were tired of the war. The independence of Zimbabwe was nothing short of a miracle. As from 1980 up to date, Zimbabweans have known only Mugabe as their ruler. As a result the Zimbabwean state has progressively become centralized under the *de facto* one-party regime. It is in such an environment that, religion especially Christianity and African Traditional Religion have been used to play a greater role in that consolidation of power, E Young, *Zimbabwe*, <http://www.raceandhistory.com/cgi-bin/forum/webbbsconfig.pl/noframes/read/497>, Accessed Online, 16 January 2010

² Cf. V Turner, *Forest of Symbols*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967, 53

³ Chimurenga is a Shona word for ‘revolutionary struggle’ and the term has been specifically used for the Zimbabwean struggle against the British colonial rule. The first struggle was ignited in 1896–1897 hence the First Chimurenga. Then another guerrilla war or peoples’ struggle against the white minority regime in 1966–1979 hence the Second Chimurenga. *Murenga* is believed to have been one of the fighting African spirits against settlers hence the aspect of Chimurenga. The concept is now used in reference to the land reform programme undertaken by the Government of Zimbabwe since 2000 (Third Chimurenga). The expression ‘Chimurenga’ is also used in reference to music that supported the liberation struggle hence Chimurenga music. In the postcolonial or independence era, Chimurenga music supports the respect of human rights and fight against corruption. The term ‘Chimurenga’ has acquired a new broader meaning to describe any Zimbabwean struggles for human rights, human freedoms, civil rights, dignity and social justice.

officials and religious leaders that appeared on electronic and print media declaring Mugabe as: the new Moses, messiah like Jesus, just leader, chosen king, selfless shepherd, messiah, the second son of God and of late the supreme leader. The messianic declarations are pronounced in some cases when people were receiving food handouts hence feeding of the 'masses'. This is part of the problem when political leaders like Mugabe are regarded as the 'other' second son of God.

It is important that we define how the term 'masses' is going to be used in this study. The term 'mass or masses' has various meanings, such that, the general definition of mass is a unified body of matter with no specific shape, for example, a mass of clay. Mass can also mean a grouping of individual parts or elements that compose a unified body of unspecified size or quantity.⁴ In the Zimbabwean context, 'mass' has colonial underpinnings to do with the displacement of people from their land and being dumped into infertile reserves. Before colonialism, there wasn't any talk of 'masses' but just people. The term 'masses' in Zimbabwe has a derogatory colonial background that has to do with 'the dispossessed poor and propertyless multitude' who depend on food handouts to survive as shall be shown in Part III, Chapter 1 of this study. The term 'masses' has continued to be used on the Zimbabwean public sphere and is mostly used in reference to the rural populace who usually lack the basics of life hence depending on food handouts for survival. Some people would like to argue that the use of the term 'masses' in Zimbabwe has an influence from the Eastern Block where the Zimbabwean liberation forces got military training and support against the colonial regime. So as a result, the term classifies people in terms of social stratification, with the poor at the bottom as the 'masses'. It is from the same context where the giving of food and land to people becomes an important aspect in interrogating the 'messiahship' accorded to Mugabe and the feeding of the masses. However, ascribing divine status to leaders as well as appreciating them through titular declarations on the duties they play like feeding the hungry subjects is not an activity that be-

⁴ Cf. *Mass*, <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/masses>, Accessed Online, 24 November 2010

gan with Mugabe. To help us do this, we looked at selected ancient traditions of kingship and the feeding topic.

A look at the selected ancient traditional contexts (ANE, Jewish, Hellenistic, Roman and the Shona) where the kingship featured sheds light on how divine kingship functioned and its relation to the spiritual plane.⁵ Therefore, the general concept of kingship and the feeding ideology raises important questions when applied to Mugabe hence Mugabology.⁶ We employ the term Mugabology to refer to the royal ideology on the person, identity, authority and duties of Mugabe as the president of Zimbabwe. We critically analyse the messiahship claims that have been put on Mugabe in relation to the feeding of the masses in Zimbabwe. In doing so, there are a lot of challenges as part of the problems that we must expect in relation to Mugabology. Christians have generally found such religious attributes blasphemous and unacceptable. They feel such messianic claims on Mugabe put the Bible into disrepute thereby compromising the status of Jesus as the only selfless messiah to sacrifice his life for the sins of people. For most of the Christians, even though they vividly use the Bible, it must neither be used as a political document nor a prophetic document to serve those in authority.⁷ Besides the suspicion and the problems that religious attributes make, it is clear that Mugabe appears not as an ordinary leader who was elected through a vote. This is when his office and personality are coloured with some divinity hence the 'dear leader' mentality in ZANU-PF.⁸ The trend is common with political leaders usually associated with divine electiveness. They problematically become invincible and infallibly venerated above all the people and the laws of the country. When political leaders are considered to have acquired divine or religious attributes upon their

⁵ Cf. D Launderville, *Piety and Politics: The Dynamics of Royal Authority in Homeric Greece, Biblical Israel, and Babylonian Mesopotamia*, Grand Rapids: Wm. B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003, 7

⁶ Some scholars like S Gatsheni talk of Mugabeism as shall be shown in Part II, Chapter 2 of this study.

⁷ Cf. H B Hansen, *The Bible, Quran and the African Polity: Towards a Secular State*, in N Kastfelt, *Scriptural Politics: The Bible and the Koran as Political Models in the Middle East and Africa*, London: Hurst and Company, 2003, 44

⁸ Cf. L Makombe, *Mugabe Calls the Tune, Delegates Sing Along*, The Independent, 23 December 2010

assumption of office, the concept is referred to as 'divine kingship'.⁹ The divine kingship is linked to the divine electiveness. It usually establishes the political rulers' prerogative mandate and authority on peoples' lives. It is upon this background that, the messianic symbolisms attached to Mugabe in relation to feeding of the masses have created problems and raised our suspicion. Why would Mugabe be taken for a 'messiah' like Jesus or the 'new Moses' of Zimbabwe? Do the messianic proclaimers really know what Moses and Jesus stand for? What role has such messianic characterisations of Mugabe played in Zimbabwe politics? What are the implications of such messianic claims in relation to the Zimbabwean political landscape, human rights and democracy? How has the feeding of the masses in Zimbabwe built the messianic image of Mugabe? How much has Mugabe transcended that messiahship in giving food and land to Zimbabweans? How much have people taken from the messianic characterisations of Mugabe? To what extent can Mugabology and feeding of the masses be related to ancient kingship (ANE, Jewish, Hellenistic, Roman and Shona) and the feeding topic? How can we best understand Mugabology in the light of Jesus' messiahship and feeding of the masses? Thus, this is the basis upon which this study seeks to develop an analysis of kingship and feeding of the masses in ancient traditions and Mugabology in particular.

The Concept of Messiahship or Kingship, Definition of Terms and Challenges

Messiahship derives from the term 'messiah', which is the transliteration of a Hebrew term מָשִׁיחַ 'Mashiach' and the Greek equivalent is Χριστός 'Christos'. Both terms mean the 'anointed one', a verb frequently used for the ceremonial induction into leadership, for example, of priests, prophets or kings. The 'anointed' implied someone who was authorised to mediate on something in a state of honour and responsibility.¹⁰ In some societies, there are certain individuals particularly political leaders and community leaders who are loosely regarded as 'mes-

⁹ Cf. M F C Bourdillon, *Religion and Society: A Text For Africa*, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1990, 73

¹⁰ Cf. D Stevens, *Messiah-Definition*, <http://www.messiahcd.com>, 04 September 2009

siahs' for performing certain duties like: saving people from danger, feeding people, helping the poor, giving of land, maintaining of order and security.

The feeding enableness associated with such people sometimes drives their followers to refer them as 'messiahs' or 'divine' kings. In the case of feeding, messiahship derives from the leader's ability to fill the stomachs of the people with food. The scenario is that of leaders who are honoured for helping the disempowered people. In some cases the declarations are done for propaganda reasons particularly when there is a political crisis and failure of the leader to feed his people. It is important to note that, President Mugabe is not the first one amongst African leaders to be referred to as 'messiah'. There has been an upsurge of leaders in Africa who were once referred to as sons of God or messiahs, for example, Mobutu Sese Seko (Democratic Republic of Congo), Kamuzu Banda (Malawi), Nelson Mandela (South Africa), Idi Amin (Uganda) and Julius Nyerere (the former president of Tanzania). The above examples give us enough ammunition to critically look at the modern concept of messiahship in the light of feeding the masses.

The same claims of being sent by God can be observed on the international platform when the then President of the United States, G W Bush, revealed the extent of his religious fervor during a meeting with a Palestinian delegation at the Israeli-Palestinian summit in the Egyptian resort of Sharm el-Sheikh, four months after the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. One of the delegates, Nabil Shaath, who was the then Palestinian foreign minister is quoted saying:

President Bush said to all of us: 'I am driven with a mission from God. God would tell me, George go and fight these terrorists in Afghanistan. And I did. And then God would tell me George, go and end the tyranny in Iraq. And I did.'¹¹

Considering the consequences of the Iraq invasion and the controversial weapons of mass destruction allegations against Saddam Hussein that suggested otherwise; when politicians use religion to support their

¹¹ E MacAskill, *George Bush: 'God told me to end the tyranny in Iraq'*, The Guardian, 07 October 2005

claims or when some contemporary rulers are said to be ‘messiahs’, it then warrants a hermeneutics of suspicion¹² on such claims. There is need to find out if such leaders declared as sons of God have truly transcended the rhetorical messiahship claims. With this in mind, it is only after looking at ancient traditional understanding of kingship and their duties, that one can properly compare the messianic claims associated with our contemporary rulers.

It is the assumption of this study that the political authority of political rulers cannot only have been justified on the religious basis but the duties that rulers performed in order to justify their connection with the divine. This forms the science of politics in relation to the duties that the political rulers perform and the religious sanctioning that is given to eulogize their benevolence role. Although, Mugabe is a president in the modern day democratic understanding of leaders occupying political offices; the claims made on him by his followers possibly derive from the understanding of kingship and the duties they performed in relation to their subjects. The duties basically have to do with the giving of food, land, and creating security and order in society.

It is as a result of this background that, the concept of ‘messiahship or divine kingship’ is centred on the belief that a ruler or a leader is an incarnation, manifestation, mediator and agent of the sacred world. It is a political and religious form of organisation that repeatedly developed in cultures all over the world.¹³ It leads to a hierarchical structure

¹² The hermeneutics of suspicion is associated with Paul Ricoeur who meant to regard with suspicion our conscious understandings and experience, whether the deliverances of ordinary psychological introspection about one's desires or the moral categories of political leaders and ordinary citizens apply to themselves and the social world they inhabit. Beneath or behind the surface lay causal forces that explained the conscious phenomena that precisely laid bare the true meaning behind all hermeneutics. For Paul Ricoeur, all hermeneutics involves suspicion; that is, the text presents us with a challenge to believe that the true meaning of the text emerges only through interpretation. Interpretation is occasioned by a gap between the real meaning of the text and its apparent meaning, and in the act of interpretation suspicion plays a pivotal role. Hermeneutics of suspicion involves: saying, explaining, and translating, Cf. D Stewart, *The Hermeneutics of Suspicion*, Journal of Literature and Theology, Volume 3, Number 3, 1989, 296-307

¹³ Cf. *Of gods and kings: Divinity and Rulership*, <http://www.mc.maricopa.edu/dept, 30> August, 2009

which, however, fuses the social, economical, political and religious world assumed to be ordered and logical. It is important to note that, there are basic features of divine kingship that include the following: (i) the king is taken as the receptacle of the supernatural power; (ii) the messiah is taken as having descended from the divine; (iii) both the messiah and divine king are viewed as agents of the sacred.¹⁴ In this case, one can regard the two terms: 'divine kingship' and 'messiahship' as implying one and the same thing. Generally the term 'messiah' in the modern sense is used in the sense of 'liberating people' politically, economically, spiritually and socially. But on most occasions, messiahship in Zimbabwe is loosely used to imply the same meaning it had on the office, person and duties of a king. As the discussion on messiahship and feeding of the masses unfolds, the two terms are equally regarded since the concept of messiah can mean different things to different people in different contexts. There is however, little space in this book for discussing in detail such terminological challenges and discourses surrounding the terms 'messiah' and 'divine king'. I am also aware that, there are scholars like J C Muller¹⁵ who have looked at 'sacred kingship and divine kingship' as well as the history of the use of the concept. Interestingly he failed to come up with a clear distinction between the two terms. It is important to note that, despite the fact that, the concept of kingship will feature much on the traditions understudy when it comes to the discussion on Mugabology, the term 'messiah' is used though loosely applied to imply a 'king'.

There are cases where a messiah is an individual who assumes a special role of liberating people from tyrannical rule as done by Moses and the same expectation was put on Jesus to liberate the Israelites from the Roman yoke. So messiahship is broadly linked to liberation from oppression, diseases and hunger. The feeding role played by Moses and Jesus pointed to the divine duty played by the king or messiah in helping

¹⁴ Cf. T R Twyman, *Monarchy: The Primordial Form of Government*, <http://www.encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com>, 04 September 2009

¹⁵ Cf. J C Muller, 'Divine Kingship' in *Chiefdoms and States: A Single Ideological Model*, in H J M Claessen and P Skalnik, *The Study of the State*, The Hague: Morton Publishers, 1981, 239-250

disempowered people. Therefore, all types of divine kingship or messiahship share a number of basic functions that the king must fulfil to varying degrees depending on the society. The study has incorporated selected traditions in order to have a broader picture of what kingship entailed and the position that the feeding duty occupied. Feeding was also one of the duties played by the African kings as shepherds of the people and is still important in understanding Mugabology. In the African narrative, shepherdhood is associated with ancestral spirits and then the kings who lead people on the biddings of the ancestral spirits. M F C Bourdillon noted that:

The idea that the ruler symbolises the nation is in some sense sacred and has not entirely vanished amongst African rulers. This can be fathomed in the contemporary African setting where the President takes the image of the king when it comes to the duties he performs and the office he occupies. Through the institution of divine kingship, we can perhaps see why in many modern African states, political leaders acquire certain sacred attributes that place them above criticism and 'abuse'.¹⁶

Rulers are put as caring omnipotent fathers who must always be obeyed and not questioned such that raising a hand or foot or tongue against them becomes taboo. This has led S Muyebe and A Muyebe to argue that, symbolical elements are depicted and externalized in the African political discourses in such a way that a line of continuity is established between religious and the political symbolisms of African kingship to modern African democracy.¹⁷ The connection between religious and political power in African kingship illustrates how religious symbols can enhance political power.¹⁸ In the end some contemporary African leaders are taken and understood as earthly viceroys of the divine.

Mugabe and 'Divine' Election

The messiahship claims on Mugabe provoked debates amongst civic, religious and political groups. Aspects to note on Mugabe have to do

¹⁶ Bourdillon, *Religion and Society*, 77

¹⁷ Cf. S Muyebe and A Muyebe, *The Religious Factor within the body of Political Symbolism in Malawi, 1964-1994: A bibliographical Essay*, USA: Universal Publishers, 1999, 41

¹⁸ Cf. Bourdillon, *Religion and Society*, 76

with his childhood life, his participation in the fight for the independence of Zimbabwe, his ascendance to political power and his feeding duties which have been related and associated with features known of a pre-destined rulers. There are birth myths that have been touted to undergird Mugabe's divine electiveness to lead Zimbabwe. In one of the interviews done by H Holland, the brother of Mugabe, Donato, was quoted saying:

Our mother (Bona) explained to us that Father O'Hea (a Catholic priest) had told her that Robert was going to be an important somebody, a leader of Zimbabwe. Our mother believed Father O'Hea had brought this message from God. She took it very seriously. She believed Robert Mugabe was a holy child from God.¹⁹

H Holland adds that, Mugabe's mother left him in no doubt that he was to be the achiever who was to arise above everyone else, the leader chosen by God himself.²⁰ The Catholic priest Father O'Hea is said to have observed that Mugabe had 'unusual gravitas, an exceptional mind and an exceptional heart' (concerned about the welfare of others, the poor) such that the boy merited extraordinary attention.²¹ Presently the birthday of Mugabe is annually celebrated on the 21 of February (christened the 21st Movement) and some people take his birthday as witness to the extra-ordinary birthday of the Zimbabwean president. The president's birthday is likened to the symbolical beginnings of Zimbabwe hence the beginnings and ends of time. Absalom Sikhosana (former ZANU-PF Youth Leader) once regarded the birthday of Mugabe as important for the country's stability (cosmic order) and youth's future. The birthday celebrations are used to remind Zimbabweans about Mugabe's uprightness and goodness in availing food to the hungry and giving of land to the landless.²² The duty of feeding relates well to the attributes that were given to ancient kings on their 'divine' birthdays let alone the annual

¹⁹ H Holland, *Dinner with Mugabe: The Untold Story of a freedom fighter who became a tyrant*, Australia: Penguin Books, 2008, 6

²⁰ Cf. Holland, *Dinner with Mugabe*, 6

²¹ Cf. Holland, *Dinner with Mugabe*, 6

²² Cf. *The 21st February Movement Celebrations preps on course*, The Chronicle, 01 February 2010

Christmas' celebrations by Christians. It is not surprising to find at these birthday celebrations Christian praise songs for Jesus being turned into royal hymns on Mugabe.

The divine electiveness of Mugabe is also recounted basing on his participation in the liberation of Zimbabwe. Mugabe's goings in and out of Zimbabwe is interpreted as having been under the operation of the spirit world. Edgar Tekere²³ describes how they mysteriously with Mugabe escaped into Mozambique. He recalls how Chief Rekayi Tangwena and his wife (who was a spirit medium) helped them escape from the danger of colonial Rhodesian army. Mbuya Tangwena is said to have performed some prayers and rituals. In the process under spirit possession she is believed to have said:

You must take these people now, take them now. You must walk throughout the night and she described to them the route they were to take and warned Chief Tangwena of dire consequences if he disobeyed the instruction by saying that 'these people are the property of the country and if they fall into enemy hands it will be a serious crime for you to commit, Rekayi'.²⁴

When a medium is possessed amongst the Shona, it does not matter it's a woman as in the sense of Mbuya Tangwena, she is believed to speak with the voice of the spirits. Whatever the medium says are oracles and pronouncements to be respected by everybody. The understanding being that, spirits neither tell lies nor make mistakes. In this case Mbuya Tangwena's proclamations have been quoted as evidence that the spiritual realm was involved in the divine electiveness of Mugabe, way before the independence of Zimbabwe. However, it was not always the case that whatever the spirit medium said got respected. People had freedom to interrogate what the medium said especially if the pronouncements were not popular with the people.

²³ Edgar Tekere was a key figure in the struggle for the liberation of Zimbabwe. He was once the secretary general of ZANU-PF led by Mugabe in the post-independence Zimbabwe. He later on founded the Zimbabwe Unity Movement (ZUM) in 1990 that deprived Mugabe's wish of a one-party state in Zimbabwe.

²⁴ Holland, *Dinner with Mugabe*, 44

What is interesting is that, by being referred to as the ‘property’ of the country, it supposedly points to the ‘divine electiveness’ of Mugabe. ‘Property’ of the country in the Shona world view implied that Mugabe (though he was together with Tekere) was an embodiment of the wishes of the ancestral spirits as well as the wishes of the people. It is not surprising to find that some ZANU-PF ministers: Patrick Chinamasa (Minister of Legal Affairs), Emmerson Mnangagwa (minister of Defense) and the Vice President John Nkomo are reported kneeling before they greet and talk to Mugabe.²⁵ Kneeling has been taken in some circles as implying that, the ministers are paying homage to a divinely chosen leader. In the Shona cultural tradition, it is rare to find a man kneeling to another man except in the presence of Chiefs (though it’s not kneeling per se) as a sign of respect for their being representatives of ancestral spirits. If it is true that they kneel, then the behaviour by Chinamasa, Mnangagwa and John Nkomo is a public demonstration of the type of power that Mugabe wields and represent. It is the same type of power that they also want the public to probably realise and appreciate whenever they see Mugabe.

Documentation on the public Discourse and Mugabology

The Zimbabwean public space witnessed declarations that took Mugabe as the predestined caring ruler of Zimbabwe, for example, when women are chosen into position of authority. Yet in the colonial era, women were regarded as legal minors who could not own some property let alone having a bank account. The post-independent Zimbabwe brought some positive changes for women. This was echoed by ZANU-PF Senator S Thembanani who commenting in Parliament on the 30 percent women parliamentary representation and the choosing of a woman vice-president, Joyce Mujuru, said that:

Cde²⁶ R G Mugabe is a gift from God and as women we are fortunate to have such a leader, not only in Zimbabwe, but in Africa as a whole. On

²⁵ Cf. ZANU-PF Ministers ‘Kneel For Mugabe’, <http://www.newzimbabwe.com>, Accessed 16 December 2009

²⁶ The term ‘comrade’ with acronym ‘cde’ means ‘friend, colleague, companion, fellow soldier or comrade in arms’. The word politically implies a fellow socialist or

behalf of all women, I appreciate very much what the President has done to us. If it was not for him most of us would not have been here. The name Robert Gabriel Mugabe, I think when his parents gave him, they knew that he would lead this country and Africa as a whole.²⁷

The same sentiments were raised by Oppah Muchinguri²⁸ when she was quoted saying that:

President Robert Mugabe is our god given leader. Mugabe is our gift from God. We don't have any problem with him. If anyone tries to remove President Robert Mugabe from power, we will march in the streets and we are prepared to remove our clothes in support of him.²⁹

It is such claims where President Mugabe is put at the spiritual realm that we tend to become interested in looking at the political and religious discourses associated with modern rulers. The other notable public debate on the messiahship of Mugabe is when he was likened to Jesus by one of the ZANU-PF loyalists, Tony Gara, who out of his affectionate belief in Mugabology said in parliament:

communist and is often used as a form of address. Cf. J M Hawkins and R Allen (eds), *The Oxford Encyclopaedic English Dictionary*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991, 301. The word comes from Middle French *camarade* which means partner, comrade, and roommate, that is, one who shares the same room, also with the sense of close companion. The term is used before surnames in a conscious effort to avoid such conventional titles as 'Mr'. Cf. R K Barnhart (eds), *The Barnhart Dictionary of Etymology*, New York: The H W Wilson Company, 1988, 200. This is the case with parties in Zimbabwe that participated in the Liberation Struggle; where the title *cde* is a stock of address implying 'ally' and is reserved for those who participated in the Zimbabwean war of liberation. Mugabe is always reservedly and honorifically referred to as Comrade and not 'Mr'.

²⁷ Official Report Unrevised Zimbabwe Parliamentary Debates the Senate Vol 16, No 6, 14th September 2006.

²⁸ Oppah Muchinguri is the current Leader of the ZANU-PF Women's League. She was the private Secretary to Mugabe from 1980-1981. Then Minister of State in the President's Office from 1997-2000. She was appointed by Mugabe as the Manicaland Governor from 2000 to 2003. From 2003 till date; she is the powerful leader of the women's league.

²⁹ The Financial Gazette, 'Oppah Muchinguri prepared to strip for Mugabe', 2 November 2007

This country and its people should thank the almighty for giving us his only other son by the name of R Mugabe. This son of God has and is still serving the people remarkably well.³⁰

It is such claims of Mugabe remarkably serving the people well that we develop some interest to find out if Mugabe had really transcended and measured up to such characterisations. The claims might carry with them no cult, no sacrifice, and no priesthood but it appears as if are rhetorically meant to accord Mugabe some potential divinity. The sonship of Mugabe is related to his legitimacy where the office that Mugabe occupies is given some theological relevance by transferring royal power to the divine level. The attempt by and large graduates his office from the ordinary contestable office to an incontestable office that leaves the divine to decide on who should occupy it and when. This was confirmed in some political circles, when certain ZANU-PF loyalists advocated that reporters who criticised Mugabe were supposed to be hanged.³¹ Muga-bology is made to appear like a belief in Jesus those believing in him go to heaven and those who do not believe in him will face death. Muga-bology becomes a matter of life and death. Jonathan Moyo once regarded such comparisons of Mugabe with God as prevalent in ZANU-PF because like God, probably Mugabe demanded absolute respect and loyalty from supporters.³² It is common that every religion demands absolute loyalty, something that is sought by political groupings towards their leaders. It is this case of raising rulers to the status of an initiated member of the spiritual community where there was need for total commitment to him that we find worthy interrogating. This can probably be made possible by relating to the concept of kingship and how kings were viewed in the ancient traditions.

It is such messianic declarations that have formed the public transcript³³ that proclaims the power relations in the Zimbabwean poli-

³⁰ The Herald, "Maiden Speech for new MP (Mugabe is other son of God)-Tony Gara", 1 June, 1990

³¹ Cf. *Whites should 'go back where they come from'*, <http://www.eyewitnessesnews.co.za>, Accessed Online, 23 November 2010

³² Cf. The Standard, *Obert Mpofu Outshines Mugabe's Praise-Singers*, 21 November 2010, See Appendix 8

³³ *Public* in this sense refers to the action that is openly avowed to the other party in

tics and Mugabology. Given the usual power of the dominant elites to compel others to join them, the public transcript is partisan and meant to naturalize the authority of the leader, to conceal or euphemise the dirty linen of their rule.³⁴ If Mugabe is referred to as a 'gift from God' or 'God's only other son', what image does it portray to Zimbabweans? Can it be related to ancient kingship? How were ANE, Jewish, Hellenistic, Roman and Shona kings viewed? Interestingly the former Anglican Bishop Norbert Kunonga joined the fray claiming that:

As the church we see President Mugabe with different eyes. To us he is a prophet of God like Moses, who was sent to deliver the people of Zimbabwe from bondage of hunger. God raised him to acquire our land and distribute it to Zimbabweans. We call it democracy of the stomach.³⁵

It is the portrayal of Mugabe as a Moses proto-type in liberating and feeding the formerly disempowered masses that invites us for a comparison and analysis of 'Mugabology' with kingship and the duty of feeding of the people. The other notable public discourse on Mugabe came from Didymus Mutasa,³⁶ who was also cited claiming that:

Mugabe was Zimbabwe's messiah sent by almighty to lead Africa in general and Zimbabwe in particular to gain their land back, the best thing that has ever happened to the African continent'.³⁷

power relationship; whereas *transcript* is used in its juridical sense to refer to a complete record of what was said. This can include non-speech acts such as gestures and expressions. It is about power relations between the powerful and the weak. *Public Transcript* becomes an open interaction between subordinates and those dominating but usually a top-down communication. *Hidden transcript* characterizes discourses that take place 'offstage' (gestures, graffiti, speeches and practices that confirm, contradict or inflect what appears in the public transcript) beyond the direct observation by powerholders, Cf. J C Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*, London: Yale University Press, 1990, 2-3; R A Horsley (eds), *Hidden Transcripts and the Arts of Resistance: Applying the Work of James C Scott to Jesus and Paul*, Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004, 3-4

³⁴ Cf. Horsley, *Hidden Transcripts and the Arts of Resistance*, 4

³⁵ L Guma, *Ousted Bishop Kunonga urges Vote for Mugabe*, <http://www.swradio africa.com>, 17 April 2010

³⁶ Didymus Mutasa is the ZANU-PF secretary for administration. He is also the minister of state and public affairs in the President's office

³⁷ The Mail and Guardian, *Mugabe appoints trusted lieutenants to key ministries*, 16 April, 2005

For Bishop Kunonga and Didymus Mutasa, the messiahship of Mugabe is continentally related to his feeding of the masses most importantly through the giving of land as part of empowerment. Based on these claims, has Mugabe really managed to empower the people or else the reverse is true that Mugabe kept the messiahship to himself by creating conditions that make him remain the only one to feed the hungry masses?

Besides ‘Mugabology’ being linked to the giving of land, Josiah Hungwe, the former Governor of Masvingo, saw ‘Mugabology’ as restricted to his feeding of the masses by giving them food. Josiah Hungwe was affectionately quoted confirming this when he said that:

Wherever the Son of Man goes, the hungry are fed. The blind are made to see. We know you can create jobs for our youths, feed all the people in need of food because we heard you did the same in other provinces (Quoting from John 6: 1-15).³⁸

The biblical feeding of the masses by Jesus is related to Mugabe’s feeding prowess and this creates a good platform for comparison. If Jesus performed the feeding miracle and the baskets full of food were collected after the food miracle, the same context is postulated as defining Zimbabwe under the leadership of Mugabe. The traditional pattern of legitimating the royal authority of Mugabe is also drawn from the biblical texts which provide a general platform for us to look at the aspect of kingship and the feeding topic. What is interesting is that, despite his Catholic upbringing, Mugabe has never openly rebuked people who compare him with God, Jesus, and Moses or just dare to put him on such a divine pedestal. This has led some people to argue that, possibly Mugabe takes to heart that he had been send by God to lead Zimbabwe.

On one occasion, President Mugabe seems to have implied that after the historic March 2008 parliamentary and presidential elections. Instead of accepting defeat as expected by people, Mugabe argued that:

The MDC will never be allowed to rule this country-never, ever. Only God can remove me-not the MDC, not the British. We will never allow an event like an election to reverse our independence just through the strike

³⁸ The Herald, “*Wherever the Son of Man go, the hungry are fed*” , 22 March, 2001

of a pen on the ballot paper for that matter, our sovereignty, our sweat and all that we fought for and all that our comrades died fighting for. It is God who put me in this position not the British. So it is only God who can oust me.³⁹

President Mugabe gave the impression that, as the president of Zimbabwe more like a Church bishop he was operating under mystical instructions from God which his subjects failed to appreciate by thinking of voting for another party so as to oust him. Mugabe gave the impression that, he was following an invisible constitution and that, it was the spiritual power that was the 'enabling power'⁴⁰ in his reign allowing rulers like him to take control of situations they are otherwise unable to master. If Mugabe politically loses legitimacy power through a vote, he would still retain that political power from above. He is the president by the decree of the people and most importantly the decree of God. If there is any aspiring individual or group of people to choose another president, in Mugabe's words seems like, it was the prerogative power of God to do so in consultation with him. One then wonders why elections are carried out in the first place if God is the only one who changes leaders. However, that vocabulary is made to resonate with the general belief of most Zimbabweans on the existence of an invisible power that is responsible for changing political leaders. The religious picture that is given is that, Mugabe's leadership is in the grip of the holy or divine hence invoking a picture that was common to Jewish, ANE, Hellenistic and Roman kings. A comparative study of kingship in these traditions would be again interesting to relate with Mugabology.

So the attribution of Mugabe with religious symbolism has resulted in debates on the implications of such attributes in relation to the role of the constitution and the power of the people. The implications also include the livelihood outcome of those people supporting other political parties in accessing food. If Mugabe is regarded as messiah like Jesus, the obvious implication is that his mandate as president is only from God and nobody else. Is it then possible for one who is regarded as

³⁹ The Mail and Guardian, *Only God can oust me*, says Mugabe, 21 June 2008

⁴⁰ Cf. A Anderson, 'Pentecostal pneumatology and African power concepts: continuity or change?', *Missionalia*, Volume (1), 1991, 65-74

a representative of God to remain constitutionally faithful to the freedoms of citizens in choosing leaders? Is the use of religion justifiable to authenticate the power and popularity of a president who has lost it constitutionally? What are the religious and political implications on: the status of the president, the office he/she occupies and the duty of feeding people? Are the ZANU-PF claims symbolical of what they see in the person and office of Mugabe with the ancient kingship and the feeding topic? Can this be used to establish common characteristics found in ancient traditions on kingship and the duty of feeding? When Mugabe is proclaimed as messiah, what is the intention of the 'proclaimers'? Has Mugabe managed to transcend the messiahship accorded to him or it is just propaganda in the face of unpopularity and failure to feed the people? What can one establish from such proclamations? Are these messianic proclamations neutral statements or not? What could be the implication of such statements to the behaviour of hearers? Is Mugabe really 'a new Moses or messianic figure' like Jesus? What reading strategies can one apply in reading the book of Exodus and John in the face of the arguments by critics that 'Mugabe was in fact a Moses who had become a new Pharaoh or Herod, a saviour turned tyrant?'

State of Research: Literature Review on Feeding

Feeding is one of the aspects that this study will be looking at in relation to Mugabology. We can broadly prioritize feeding of the masses in Zimbabwe as follows:

- a) Even if land comes first, it is still linked to the aspect of feeding of the masses especially in the Zimbabwean context, where ownership of land is taken as a variable that can enable people to feed themselves;
- b) That Mugabe's government took some time to devise a policy for land resettlement. The first clear programme by government was an Emergency Relief food programme which started soon after independence and included the universal distribution of seeds, fertilizers and food through the agency of the ZANU-PF Committees.⁴¹ The years after independence were the years when Mugabe was so popular through the

⁴¹ Cf. T Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness and Guerilla War in Zimbabwe; A Comparative Study*, Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1985, 287

help of various players in filling the stomachs of hungry people. So this makes the concept of the messiahship and feeding of the masses become interesting. Feeding has been broadly defined as: the provision of land, food and nourishment to those lacking it. Feeding must not be understood as feeding done by parents to kids, when they 'spoon feed' them with porridge or any other basics. It is common that, when people hear about the 'feeding of the masses', what comes to the mind is the picture of a 'leader' who physically put some food into peoples' mouths. However, feeding in this study is taken as a composite variable that can broadly imply availing of food to those who are in need of it and as well as empowering people with resources like land that makes them able to fend for themselves. P E Stanwick,⁴² C Mileta,⁴³ R S Simpsons⁴⁴ give a general insight on the ethical role of kings in feeding their subjects through the giving of land and food, and how this built the different royal ideologies. The ability of the king to feed and provide for the well-being of his subjects merited his office. Feeding of the people with food and land played a greater role for ANE, Jewish, Hellenistic kings, Roman emperors and Shona kings, something that will be part of the attention of this study. Although, religion helped to make life interesting with its processions and other displays in ancient Rome; the traditional pacifiers of the Roman people were food, either subsidized or free. Political stability, social need and display of wealth were intertwined with the adequate provision of land and food to the people.⁴⁵ Feeding also played an important role in African kingship particularly the Shona kings.

African kings were respected by their subjects as a result of being generous donors and the benevolent lords of the people. Their legitimacy only functioned when they supplied their subjects with land,

⁴² Cf. P E Stanwick, *Portraits of the Ptolemies; Greek Kings as Egyptian Pharaohs*, University of Texas, 2002, 44

⁴³ Cf. C Mileta, *The King and His Land: Some Remarks on the Royal Area (BASILIKE CHORA) of Hellenistic Asia*, in D Ogden (eds), The Hellenistic World: New Perspectives, Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd, 2002, 159

⁴⁴ Cf. R S Simpsons, *Demotic Grammar in the Ptolemaic Sacerdotal Decrees*, Oxford, 1996, 226

⁴⁵ Cf. O F Robinson, *Ancient Rome: City Planning and Administration*, J Press Ltd, 1992, 146

ample food and traditional health care.⁴⁶ All other activities like mining, manufacturing, building, trade, politics and religion were linked to the provision of food.⁴⁷ This is the same observation given by J M Gombe that, all activities like *Mukwerera* or *Doro reMutoro* (rainmaking ceremony), *Nhimbe* (co-operation in cultivation, harvesting) were arranged by the Shona king to make sure that people had enough food to eat.⁴⁸ As benevolent and open-handed rulers, their feeding of the masses was taken as a royal gift from the ancestral spirits to the people.⁴⁹ Besides the focus on ancient kingship and the feeding duty, the feeding of the multitude by Jesus is then of interest in our discussion.

The gospel of John clearly mentions that the crowd wanted to forcefully install Jesus as king (John 6:15) and that happened soon after he had fed them with food. The miraculous feeding of the masses heightened Jesus' prominent role as king by virtue of filling his audience's stomachs with food.⁵⁰ However, it is difficult to relate the feeding miracle of Jesus with the feeding of masses by ancient kings considering its mystical and religious nature. What is of interest to this study is to understand Jesus' feeding miracle in its religious, social, economical and political context. The study offers a historical and developmental progression of kingship and the feeding topic in the various selected traditions.⁵¹ This is the context in which Mugabology has been sought in relation to feeding of the masses. ZANU-PF always reminds people about the character of Mugabe as: 'compassionate for the lives of the ordinary people as demonstrated in most of the Zimbabwean food crises'.⁵² The feeding of the masses in Zimbabwe has always played a critical role on Mugabology. The ZANU-PF Deputy Minister, Abedinigo

⁴⁶ Cf. U C Manus, *Christ; the African King: New Testament Christology*, Institute of Missiology Missio, 1993, 222

⁴⁷ Cf. D N Beach, *The Shona Economy: Branches of production*; in *The Roots of Rural Poverty in Central and Southern Africa*, University of California Press, 1977, 40

⁴⁸ Cf. J M Gombe, *Tsika Dza Va Shona*, The College Press, 1986, 90. See also, Appendix 5

⁴⁹ Cf. Manus, *Christ; the African King*, 223

⁵⁰ Cf. F D Ronald, *The Nature and Purpose of Jesus Miracles in the Gospels*, Michigan: University of Microfilms, 1984, 145

⁵¹ Cf. D R Foubister, *The Nature and Purpose of Jesus Miracles in the Gospels*, 144

⁵² Cf. J Makumbe and D Campagnon, *Behind the Smokescreen: The Politics of Zimbabwe's 1995 General Elections*, University of Zimbabwe, 2000, 145

Ncube, was quoted in 2000 telling villagers in Matebeleland during election campaigns that:

As long as you value the Government of the day by President Mugabe, you will not starve but we don't want people who vote for other parties and come back to us for food.⁵³

Basing on Ncube's statement, is feeding of the masses a sign of compassion or a show of patronage, political power over the life and death of the hungry powerless people?

Objectives

The central purpose of this study is to comparatively bring to light the concept of messiahship or kingship and feeding of the masses. This would enable us to interrogate Mugabology and the feeding topic. In order to achieve this, the study seeks:

- a) To analyze the public proclamations of Mugabe as 'second son of God, new Moses, messiah like Jesus and recently supreme leader' in relation to feeding of the masses.
- b) To exegetically analyze ANE and Jewish royal ideologies and the feeding topic. Selected OT texts on kingship and the feeding topic are going to be exegetically analyzed and related.
- c) To critically analyze the Hellenistic and Roman kingship and the feeding duty. This background is important in assessing Jesus' kingship and the feeding duty.
- d) To exegetically analyze the explicit selected NT texts on the kingship of Jesus and the feeding topic particularly in the gospel of John.
- e) To analyze the Shona kingship and feeding topic.
- f) To critically analyze Mugabology and the feeding of the masses.
- g) To analyze the strategies used by Christian, civic, peasants, opposition political leaders and musicians in de-messianizing Mugabology and feeding of the masses.
- h) To comparatively analyze the messiahship of Mugabe in the light of Jesus' messiahship.

⁵³ R Guest, *The Vampire State: Africans are not yet free*, in R Guest, The Shackled Continent: Africa's Past, Present and Future, London: Pan Books, 2005, 53

Relevance of the Study

The role of political leaders in feeding their people is really an issue that has cut across politics, human rights and spirituality. One cannot discuss on the divine electiveness of the political leaders without looking at their feeding enableness. The aspect of the feeding of the masses by kings is as old as humanity itself though recently there have been alarming complains against political leaders using food to manipulate the disempowered poor populace. Yet access to food is the right of every human being as clearly shown in Article 25 (1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) which says that:

Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, and housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.⁵⁴

The human's right to adequate food is explicitly recognized as part of the broader right to adequate standard of living, which makes it an important aspect in this work.

The number of people in the world dying of hunger, droughts, floods, civil wars, famine and hunger related diseases has been astronomical such that its discussion really warrants attention. Malnourished people are always appear on international media appealing for food aid and those are daily cases across the globe. On the other hand, rich nations to some extent use food to politically and economically influence developing nations. Feeding is also used by some rulers as a tool for retention of power and domestication of peoples' rights. It is used as a tool of reward and punishment for loyalty or disloyalty, or as a tool of inclusion and exclusion by those with reigns of authority. These concerns have raised the interest of this study on messiahship and the feeding topic. The focus of this study is to emphasize on the liberative form of

⁵⁴ G Kent, *Freedom from Want: The Human Right to Adequate Food*, Washington D C: Georgetown University Press, 2005, 45-59; See also, G Kent, *Food is a Human Right*, in R Pierre and B H Weston, Human Rights in the World Community: Issues and Action, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006, 192

messiahship and feeding. Why calling Mugabe 'messiah' in the face of many players who are also involved in feeding people in Zimbabwe? Are biblical scholars, theologians, Christians and ordinary people not justified to interrogate such a 'messianic characterisation' to protect themselves from embracing false messiahs? Jesus prophetically warned us and said in Matthew 24: 5 "For many will come in my name, saying 'I am the Christ and will mislead many'". Therefore a 'hermeneutics of suspicion' is necessary when we are faced with a situation where certain leaders are declared as 'messiahs'. This makes this topic relevant in exploring the religious and political discourses on messiahship and the feeding of the masses in Zimbabwe. However, this is only possible by first looking at ancient traditions on kingship and the feeding topic.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGICAL QUESTIONS

Methodology

This study incorporates a number of methods in analysing the concept of messiahship and feeding. The following methods: the Comparative Method, the Historical-Critical Method, Post-colonial criticism and the Qualitative Research Method are important in mapping out the direction and scope of the study. Since this study is interested in looking at the concept of messiahship and the duty of the feeding of the masses in the various backgrounds, the comparative method then becomes very important. It is as argued by C C Ragin that ‘thinking without comparison is unthinkable. And in the absence of comparison, so is all scientific thought and scientific research’.¹ The comparative method creates the platform that gives this study the power of comparing, noting similarities and differences leading to a degree of quality relation.² Whereas the comparative method is important in analyzing the concept of kingship and feeding of the masses in general, the Historical-Critical method is important in analyzing selected biblical texts on kingship and the feeding topic.

The historical-critical method is the whole collection of methodologies and strategies for understanding the ancient texts in the Bible. It was the dominant method in mid-nineteenth century during the era of enlightenment. In order to understand and appreciate the biblical texts, they must be interpreted in their historical settings which they reflected.³ In order for us to understand God’s gracious love to us today, we have to first understand how God historically to us today, we have to first understand how God historically manifested Himself as narrated in the Bible, e.g., liberation of the Israelites, their feeding and feeding of the masses by Jesus. The Historical Critical Method involves various methods like: textual, source, form, redaction and historical criticisms. It is important to note that, the methods cannot be regarded as the answer

¹ Cf. C C Ragin, *The Comparative Method: Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies*, California: University of California Press, 1987, 1

² Cf. E Sharpe, *Comparative Religion: A History*, London: Antony Rowe Ltd, 1986, 33

³ Cf. E Krentz, *The Historical Critical Method*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975, 32

in understanding the world of the Bible but they help to expose the dynamics, inaccuracies and to some extent disprove the historical truth of the Bible, hence the 'critical' flavour in it. The Historical Critical Methodological exercise seeks to exegetically read the ancient languages (used in the writing of the Bible) necessary to do exegesis as well as identify the historical, religious and literal context of the texts. E Krentz argues, the Historical Critical Method is a method that cannot be easily dislodged by recent methods considering its contribution to the understanding of the Bible.⁴ Recent methods include the Postcolonial Criticism that has proven to be popular with the downtrodden and formerly vulgarized groups.

Postcolonial Criticism and Its Contribution

Even though the above methods are helpful in interrogating the biblical texts, kingship, ideologies and feeding in broad; the postcolonial criticism can also go a long way in further critiquing our contemporary leadership in the postcolonial era. Postcolonial criticism has been associated with two sets of people as its pioneers:

- Theorist-activists like Frantz Fanon, Aime Cesaire, Albert Memmi and C L R James whose writings were resistant due to colonial racism and Marxist thinking. Other theorists include novelists like: Chinua Achebe, W E B DuBois, W Harris, Wole Soyinka and Ngugi waThiong'o;
- Creative writers like Edward Said's Orientalism text which is credited as having inaugurated postcolonial criticism. Other writings include those by Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, R S Sugirtharajah and G Spivak.⁵

Just like the historical critical method, Postcolonialism is committed to a close and critical contextual reading of the text. However, historical critical method concentrate much on the history, theology and religious world of the text whereas the postcolonial criticism focuses on politics, domination, empowerment, subordination, culture and economics of

⁴ Cf. Krentz, *The Historical Critical Method*, 32

⁵ Cf. S Sugirtharajah, *Exploring Postcolonial Biblical Criticism: History, Method, Practice*, United Kingdom: John Wiley and Sons Ltd, 2012, 12

the colonial milieu out of which the texts emerged.⁶ R S Sugirtharajah argues that,

The purpose of postcolonial reading is not to invest texts with properties that no longer have relevance to our context, or with excessive and exclusive theological claims which invalidate other claims. It seeks to puncture the Christian Bible's Western protection and pretensions, and to help reposition it in relation to its oriental roots and Eastern heritage.....It thrives on inclusiveness, and it is attracted to all kinds of all tools and disciplinary fields as long as they problematizes injustices, produce new knowledge which problematizes well-entrenched positions and enhance the lives of the marginalized.⁷

Postcolonial criticism is going to be very important in the case of Zimbabwe in relation to their historical understanding of kingship and feeding, and now Mugabology. The method helps to look at the ANE kingship and feeding, Biblical concept of kingship and feeding, Roman and Hellenistic kingship and whether Shona kings' traditional status, duties in feeding were liberating or patronising? The figure of Jesus becomes important in that debate. Rather than the Bible being an ancient text, it becomes an important asset in interrogating political leaders who are paraded as messianic and liberating in their feeding of the masses.

G Anzaldúa rightly pointed out that, postcoloniality looks at power systems and disciplines ranging from government documents to anthropological compositions and asks, 'who has the voice?... What reality does this disciplinary field, or government, or this system try to crush? What reality is it trying to erase? What reality is it trying to suppress?'.⁸ Taking this to the Zimbabwean context of messianic declarations and the feeding of the masses, postcolonial criticism help to identify: The voices that proclaim the messiahship of Mugabe, their proximity to the corridors of power, the biblical characters that are of interest

⁶ Cf. R S Sugirtharajah, *Exploring Postcolonial Biblical Criticism*, 2

⁷ R S Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonizing Biblical Interpretation: From the Bible in the Third World: Precolonial, colonial postcolonial encounters*, in B Ashcroft (eds), *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*, London: Routledge, 1995, 537-538

⁸ Cf. A Lunsford, *Towards a Mestiza Rhetoric: Gloria Anzualda on Composition and Postcoliality* in G A Olson and L Worsham (eds), *Race, Rhetoric and the Postcolonial*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999, 62

in their declarations and why, the hermeneutics employed by those not supportive of Mugabology. Postcolonial reading of the Bible emancipates the reader to interrogate the implication of dominant ideologies in a bid to dismantle hegemonic interpretations and trying to offer prescriptions. It takes a historical look at both old and new forms of domination. It deals with life in a postcolonial state, its conflicts and contradictions in the light of liberation.⁹ Therefore, instead of focusing on the past colonial contexts only, the postcolonial criticism helps us to interrogate our present contexts and how the welfare of the poor and hungry is addressed. All these endeavours will lead to a society where people can co-exist and be free from the age-old suppression, oppression and segregation.

Qualitative Research Method as Research Technique (QRM)

Besides the comparative and the Historical Critical Methods, there is need for a research technique like the QRM that helps in the analysis of media information (use of newspapers), symbolisms, ideologies and interviews. The qualitative research technique is also important in analysing Mugabology and feeding topic. The QRM is a field of inquiry applicable to many disciplines (Theology included) and subject matters. Qualitative researchers aim to gather an in-depth understanding of human behavior and the reasons that govern behavior. Cases can be selected purposefully, according to whether or not they typify certain characteristics or contextual locations.¹⁰ QRM relies on the following for gathering information: participant observation, non-participant observation, field notes, reflexive journals, structured interviews, unstructured interviews (which were done on selected chiefs), media information on Mugabe and feeding of the masses, analysis of

⁹ Cf. R S Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonizing Biblical Interpretation: From the Bible in the Third World: Precolonial, colonial postcolonial encounters*, 538; See also R S Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Criticism and Biblical Criticism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, 11; F F Segovia, *Mapping the Postcolonial optic in Biblical Criticism: Meaning and Scope* in R S Sugirtharajah (eds), *The Bible and Postcolonialism*, London: T and T Clark International, 2005, 29

¹⁰ Cf. C Seale, G Gobo and J F Gubrium, *Qualitative Research Practice*, London: Sage Publications, 2004, 329

documents and materials. In this case, information will be sifted out from newspapers that focus on Mugabe and feeding of the masses. The qualitative research is concerned with: the natural setting and the inductive analysis of the data particularly the role of media in the royal ideology of rulers.¹¹ In this light, the Zimbabwean state media played a leading role on Mugabe and the feeding of the masses. The state media especially the press, national radio and television as part of the visual and audio propaganda gave an official narrative on Mugabe and personality cultism. As in the manner of Big Brother in G Orwell's seminal novel 1984, Mugabe's picture is displayed everywhere; on public buildings, walls, public gatherings and even on public transport that ferry people. Portraits of Mugabe dominate assembly points where people are receiving food handouts. In some cases, people receive bags of grain with the portrait of Mugabe embedded on them. With the QRM, it helps us to fathom the political propagandist agenda set by the ruling elite to win the hearts and minds of the hungry and poor.

The Qualitative Research method is interested in looking at language, signs and meaning as well as approaches to analysis that are holistic and contextual rather than reductionist and isolationist.¹² The context in which Joseph, Moses, David and Jesus fed the people becomes important in discussing their messiahship in serving and empowering people. What can one learn from Jesus' messiahship and the feeding duty in the light of Mugabology? Therefore library material like books, electronic and print media that deals with: kingship and feeding in other backgrounds, Mugabology and the feeding of the people will be consulted in this study. The QRM helps to establish the biblical reading strategies of resistance used by the general people, church and civic leaders on the purported 'messiahship' of Mugabe in relation to the feeding of the masses. The method will help in making the historical-philological and comparative analysis of the concept of kingship and feeding of the masses in the various backgrounds and Mugabology. Both the QRM and the Postcolonial criticism call for social engagement where

¹¹ Cf. R C Bogdan, *Qualitative Research for Education; An Introduction to Theory and Methods*, Newton, MA: Allyn and Bacon, 1988, 27

¹² Cf. Seale, G Gobo and J F Gubrium, *Qualitative Research Practice*, 328

the past experiences can help create a just world that respect the weak, poor, minority and hungry. All the above methods have their strengths and weaknesses, but if combined together; they are going to complement each other in this study.

The Procedure for this Study

This study is divided into four parts (I-IV). Part I is the Introduction with two chapters.

- Chapter one has looked at the: Statement of the Problem, general perspective and simple definition of messiahship and feeding of the masses, Mugabology and its documentation on the public sphere; literature review on feeding, objectives and relevance of the study. The documentation on Mugabology in the public discourse set the tone on the discussion of kingship and the feeding topic in ANE, Jewish, Hellenistic, Roman and Shona traditions.
- Chapter two of Part I established some methodological questions that have mapped the direction of this study.

Part II has four chapters. It overallly looks at the kingship of Jesus in John 6 and its historical background.

- Chapter one analyses the concept of kingship and the feeding duty in ANE. The focus is on ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia. ANE kingship will form an important background to Jewish kingship and the feeding topic.
- Chapter two looks at the Jewish royal ideology in 2 Samuel 7:12-14 and the following selected Psalms (2, 45 and 72) and Early Jewish writings. Selected OT texts (2 Samuel 6:19, Genesis 41:41-57, Exodus 16:1-15) on the feeding duty of kings.
- Chapter three examines Hellenistic kings and the feeding duty. The chapter also analyses the selected Roman Emperors and their breadwinning duty. These backgrounds are important in the messiahship of Jesus and feeding of the masses.
- Chapter four interrogates the kingship of Jesus and feeding people especially coming on the bedrock of an environment used to kingship and the feeding topic. This will be done by exegetically looking at the feeding text in John 6:1-71.

Part III has three chapters. This part focuses specifically on the Zimbabwean context of kingship and feeding of the masses.

- Chapter one looks at the concept of kingship and the *Zunde RaMambo* (Chief's granary) in the Shona tradition. The chapter specifically looks at the Shona concept of kingship and feeding in the colonial era, the colonial dynamics on land and the growth of people needing food assistance creating a fertile ground for Mugabology in the post-colonial Zimbabwe.
- Chapter two analyses the messiahship of Mugabe in relation to the feeding topic. This will incorporate the structural feeding programmes and other welfarist policies that were introduced by Mugabe after independence particularly the period covering 1980-1996.
- Chapter three looks at Mugabology and the feeding topic in the period of crisis where feeding and the messiahship of Mugabe became a merger of the actual feeding of people with food and land as well as the feeding of naked propaganda. The chapter covers 1998-2008. The chapter also shows how biblical narratives and figures like Moses and Jesus were ideologically abused and transformed to focus on Mugabe.

Part IV has two chapters which give the overall conclusion to the research.

- Chapter one critically looks at feeding of the masses, the suffering and death of Jesus as a desacralizing factor to kingship in general. The chapter diverts from the broader topic of kingship and feeding of the masses to comparatively focus on Mugabology in the light of Jesus' messiahship.
- Chapter two gives a summary of the foregoing historical philological debate on kingship and feeding of the masses with Mugabe.

PART II: THE KINGSHIP OF JESUS IN JOHN 6 AND ITS HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

CHAPTER 1: THE DIVINE KING IN ANCIENT NEAR EAST

This chapter focuses on ANE (Mesopotamian and Egyptian) kings and the feeding duty. The reason for starting with ANE background is that, the institution of kingship is much older in the ANE than in other traditions. Kingship played a central role in ANE before it dawned in Israel.¹ This pagan background is important and also helpful in understanding the institution of ANE kingship and the role of feeding. The royal image and roles of the ANE king conveyed part of the ruler's supra-human qualities as one literally constructed by the gods.² The duties that the king played were regarded as not his own but mirrored the role of the spiritual realm in the lives of humanity. The image and the duty of feeding are important when relating to Jewish kingship (Ps 2, 45 and 72). These backgrounds are important in understanding Mugabology and the feeding topic in the Part III of this study.

The concept of divine kingship in Mesopotamia

The ANE kingship was not monolithic and changed frequently in the different stages of history. As kingship developed, it was given religious sanction in the idiom already prevalent in Egypt and Mesopotamia, 'of the king as a divine figure'.³ The Sumerian King List states that, kingship in Mesopotamia was 'handed down from heaven'.⁴ Kingship was

¹ Cf. P J Frandsen, *Aspects of Kingship in Ancient Egypt*, in N Brisch, Religion and Power: Divine Kingship in the Ancient World and Beyond, Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2008, 47

² Cf. I J Winter, *Touched by the Gods: Visual Evidence for the Divine Status of Rulers in the Ancient Near East*, in N Brisch, Religion and Power: Divine Kingship in the Ancient World and Beyond, Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2008, 81

³ Cf. N J Wyatt, *Myths of Power: A study of royal myth and ideology in Ugarit and biblical tradition*, Ugarit-Verlag, 1996, 294

⁴ Cf. F A M Wiggermann, "Theologies, Priests and Worship in Ancient Mesopotamia" in J M Sasson (e.ds) Civilisations of the Ancient Near East, New York: Scribner, 1995, 1863

not a simple office that was occupied with the contribution of people in choosing a king. With that understanding it implied that, the office of the king was ultimately connected to the gods as in the following Mesopotamian myths of creation:

The gods created humans to take care of the earth and do their work: Ea (one of the gods) the wise had created mankind, had imposed the toil of the gods on them and released the gods from it. The maintenance of the earth involved everything from tending the fields to building canals, providing adequate food for the subjects by the king, establishing social justice and economic prosperity. Kings were therefore appointed as representatives of the gods on earth to organise the work of humans.⁵

Kings were given a special role of organising everything on behalf of the gods. According to the myths, kings transcended all other beings and had a special duty of providing adequate food for their subjects. I J Winter lists the names of Mesopotamian kings who were associated with divine status as: Naram-Sin of Agade (ca.2254-2218 B.C.E), Ur-Namma of Ur (2112-2095 B.C.E), heir Sulgi (2094-2047 B.C.E), Eannatum of Lagash (ca 2500 B.C.E), Gudea of Lagash (ca 2110 B.C.E), Hammurabi of Babylon (ca.1792-1750 B.C.E) and Assurnasirpal II (890-884 B.C.E).⁶ In the world-view of the Mesopotamians, there was no separate category of life called 'religion' and no compartmentalised aspect of existence.⁷ Religion was life that pervaded the social, political and economic decisions.⁸ Religion explained the status of kings in relation to the duties they played in the life of their people.

The Myths about the births of Kings

The divine electiveness of the king was conveyed through birth myths. The myths were supported by imageries of kings as shepherds as shown below:

⁵ S Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989, 261

⁶ Cf. Winter, *Touched by the Gods*, 75-85

⁷ Cf. J N Postgate, *Early Mesopotamia: Society and Economy at the dawn of history*, New York: Routledge, 1995, 260

⁸ Cf. S Pollock, *Ancient Mesopotamia: The Eden That Never Was*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, 186

Shepherd envisaged by Ningirsu in his heart steadfastly regarded by Nanshe and endowed with strength by Nindar. The man described by Baba, the child borne by Gatumdug endowed with dignity and sublime sceptre by Ig-Alima, well provided with the breath of life by Dunshagar. He whom Nigiszida his god has made to appear in the assembly with proudly raised head (Gudea of Lagash).⁹

This imagery of a divine elected king created a scenario of a *de facto* divine ruler. The gods also portrayed as having formed the royal child (king) in the womb of its mother 'with their hands' or the 'child borne by Gatumdug' who was one of the gods.¹⁰ The belief was that the gods on their part are said to have taken an active interest in the ruler from the very moment of conception, birth and upbringing. Questions of legitimation tend to be implicitly overlaid with theological considerations. The gods are described as choosing the king by 'taking his hand'.

The divine favour and electiveness associated with kings is also seen from the Stele of the Vultures:

Ningirsu implanted the semen for Eannatum in the womb. Inana accompanied him, named him Eana-Inana-Ibgalakakalum (meaning: 'Worthy in the Eanna-Temple of Inanna'), and set him on the beneficial lap of Ninhursag. Ninhursag offered him her beneficial breast. Ningirsu rejoiced over Eannatum, semen implanted in the womb by Ningirsu. With great joy Ningirsu gave him the kingship of Lagas.¹¹

The Stele of Vultures clearly distinguishes the king from ordinary men as the semen that formulated him in the womb of his mother was that of the Ningirsu, one of the gods. The divine sanction of the king is obvious. In most cases, the royal ideology's emphasis on the divine election and coronation of the king resulted in absolute power vested in the king with justified violence and terror against dissidents.¹² All nominations as office holders totally depended on royal favour. Viewers perceived the ruler

⁹ Wyatt, *Myths of Power*, 293

¹⁰ Cf. H Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods: A Study of Ancient Near Eastern Religion as the Integration of Society and Nature*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978, 300

¹¹ J S Cooper, "Sacred Marriage and Popular Cult in Early Mesopotamia," in E Matsushima (ed), *Official Cult and Popular Religion in the Ancient Near East*, Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag, 1993, 34

¹² Cf. A Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East C.3000-330 B.C., Volumes I-II*, London: Routledge, 1997, 25

as an ideal leader bearing divinely-apportioned qualities which, by implication, were not legible to others.

Imageries, Hymns, Royal Inscriptions and Installation of the King

Imageries, hymns and royal inscriptions were used during the installation of ANE kings. They had one agenda of conveying the royal ideological message. They emphasized on the deeds and characteristics that the kings did want audiences to acknowledge.¹³ Imageries, hymns and royal inscriptions created a fertile ground for the acknowledgement of the king's ultimate rule and legitimacy amongst his subjects. Royal inscriptions were meant to publicise the achievements of kings as well as addressing a purely ideological audience that included: the gods, future kings, the administrative personnel connected with the palaces and temples, foreign diplomats, visitors and enemies of the king.¹⁴ The ideology is expressed directly through the verbal recitation of the honorific titles ascribed to the king as saviours and benefactors and his special relationship to the deity.¹⁵ The titles offered a mesmerised legitimate platform for the king and inextricably connected him to the gods.¹⁶ The royal inscriptions, imageries, hymns and honorific titles were never politically and religiously neutral. They acted as mobilization tools on behalf of the king. All these conceptions of the royal ideal helped to construct and perpetuate royal identities that had direct bearing on a king's right to govern and maintain his rule.¹⁷ They strengthened the position of the king within the community and furthered his activities. Three symbols particularly a hat, a stick and a stool were given to the king as symbol of his shepherdhood. The symbols recur time and again in the

¹³ Cf. A K Thomason, *Luxury and Legitimation: Royal Collecting in Ancient Mesopotamia*, Aldershot (u.a): Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2005, 59

¹⁴ Cf. M Liverani, *The Deeds of Ancient Mesopotamian Kings*, in J M Sasson(eds), *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, Volume I, Simon &Schuster Macmillan, 1995, 2354

¹⁵ Cf. J V Seters, *The Historiography of the Ancient Near East*, in J M Sasson, *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, Volume IV, Simon and Schuster, 1995, 2434

¹⁶ Cf. P Michalowski, *The Mortal Kings Of Ur: A Short Century of Divine Rule in Ancient Mesopotamia*, in N Brisch, *Religion and Power: Divine Kingship in the Ancient World and Beyond*, Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2008, 33

¹⁷ Cf. Thomason, *Luxury and Legitimation*, 59

hymns addressed to kings along with royal insignia as shown from the hymn to Rim-Sin, king of Larsa.¹⁸

Royal hymns emphasised on the legitimacy of the king and acted as propaganda texts.¹⁹ The hymns were meant to convey the royal message as well as entrenching the power of the king. Art and images helped the illiterate to appreciate the divinity and benevolence of the king. The Mesopotamian texts in the Sumerian and Assyrian king lists indicate that the king was purposefully shaped and elected by the gods to govern.²⁰ The imageries helped to portray the permanence of the rule of the king in shepherding the people as shown from the following Prologue to the Code of Hammurapi:

When exalted Anum, king of the Annunaki (the major gods), and Enlil, lord of heaven and earth, who decrees the destinies of the Land, decreed for Marduk, first born son of Enki, the role of Enlil to the entirety of people, making him the greatest of the Igigi-gods, called Babylon by his exalted name, made it pre-eminent in the world, and established in it a permanent kingship whose basis is founded like heaven and earth.²¹

The rule of the king is put in the rank of the gods' rule. If gods cannot be replaced then the same philosophy applied to kings. However, once elected by the gods, the king did not have free rein to rule arbitrarily rather he maintained divine favour and more practically, the assent of the people whom he governed through proper actions and deeds.²² The king had to make sure that he was able to please both the people he governed and gods. The king did not govern as he deemed. The welfare and the peace of the people were very important for the legitimacy of the king to stick. Kings who were tyrannical and bullying their subjects were viewed in bad light.

¹⁸ Cf. W W Hallo, *Early Mesopotamian Royal Titles: A Philologic Historical Analysis*, New Haven, Conn: American Oriental Series, 1957, 43

¹⁹ Cf. M Roaf, *Cultural atlas of Mesopotamia and the ancient Near East*, Oxford: Phaidon, 1990, 71

²⁰ Cf. Winter, *Touched by the Gods*, 75

²¹ Postgate, *Early Mesopotamia*, 268

²² Cf. Postgate, *Early Mesopotamia*, 268

The Mesopotamian Kings and Feeding

The divine electiveness of the king was consummated in the duties that the king played particularly feeding of the people. Therefore, access to food has its genesis in primeval times and access to resources like land created the needed bond of trust between the leaders and their subjects. The king as benefactor to the people is likened to smiling flowers and fruits whilst they adorn the tree, they exist not so much for the tree and on account of the tree only. Flowers and fruits contribute to the enjoyment of others than their own. The theme of feeding of subjects by kings played an important role in ANE traditions. Mesopotamian kings played a special role in feeding their people during times of famine, drought and floods which led to hunger. The Mesopotamian creation myths clearly show the special role played by kings in feeding. Provision of food to the subjects was one of important duties expected of the Mesopotamian king and it was religiously regarded as the king's mandate from the gods.

The favor of the gods obliges the ruler to adopt the rule of the shepherd, the benevolent guardian of people. The official propaganda of the Mesopotamian kings acknowledged that, kings owed their throne and the people their prosperity to the goodwill of the gods. The official propaganda went to the extent of presenting the Uruk kings through art, images and seals in various roles especially that in which they were shown feeding the flock, defeating the enemies and providing for the temples.²³ It is important to note that, royal inscriptions and poems about kings were biased, grossly exaggerated, one-sided, unreliable, bombastic and self-celebrative when it came to the feeding of the people by the king. A rosy picture was portrayed on the king and his benevolence role in making food accessible to everybody who was hungry including the king's enemies.

The image of king as benefactor is evidenced by the following inscriptions by Sin-kashid of Uruk (circa 1850 BCE):

²³ Cf. D Collon, *Ancient Near Eastern Art*, London: British Museum Press, 1995, 51

During his reign, according to the market rate of his land, one shekel of silver was the price of 3 gur of barley, of 12 minas of wool, 10 minas of copper, 3 ban of oil. His years were years of abundance!²⁴

The propaganda of the inscription is clearly seen when critically compared with situation that was obtaining on the ground. The inscription was officially written during the time of drought. Surprisingly the picture given is that of affordability and effortless accessibility of basics to everybody who was in need of food. Yet the information coming from the administrative texts of the time demonstrate on the contrary that the real prices of basics were three times higher.²⁵ With this information, it becomes clear that, the conventional role of the royal inscriptions was the control of information and the success of propaganda in winning the hearts and minds of the people; all to the benefit of the king's hold on power.

The major thrust was opinion control towards the king's legitimate rule through the manipulation and exaggeration of the benevolent capability of the king in feeding his subjects. Yet the situation on the ground was different and it is common knowledge that, prices are low in times of abundant commodities and the prices are high in times of food scarcity. What is interesting is that, the inscription gives a utopian picture that contrasts the actual situation on the ground by saying, 'His years were years of abundance', as a way to celebrate the king's capability.²⁶ Such inscription clearly shows that, the issue is not only about the use of phrases and religious attributes but opinion control. Time and again, royal inscriptions plead with the gods to send plenty of food to the people. It became one of the kings' traditional ways of using inscriptions, hymns and poems in the communicative conventions of propaganda.²⁷ So kings were presented in good light as reliable breadwinners and their success was believed to be only possible with divine help even in circumstances characterized by hunger and food shortages. The

²⁴ Liverani, *The Deeds of Ancient Mesopotamian Kings*, 2359

²⁵ Cf. Liverani, *The Deeds of Ancient Mesopotamian Kings*, 2359

²⁶ Cf. Liverani, *The Deeds of Ancient Mesopotamian Kings*, 2359

²⁷ Cf. Postgate, *Royal Ideology and State Administration in Sumer and Akkad*, in J M Sasson (eds), *Civilisations of the Ancient Near East*, New York: Routledge, 1995, 398

agenda was to confirm the following ideological code that: 'The gods put on the throne the right king'. Mesopotamian kings used the power of propaganda through several channels (royal inscriptions, seals, hymns, images, art and poems) of communication to control peoples' opinion towards the legitimacy, authority and benevolence of the king. The propaganda was always in place during times of abundance and was heightened during times of crises like food scarcity.

The Concept of Kingship in Egypt

Divine kingship was strongly affirmed in ancient Egypt just like Mesopotamia. The Egyptian concept of monarchy also merged politics and religion. The king was the ruler, judge and priest in one person.²⁸ J Kügler notes that:

Der König ist das Zentrum der ägyptischen Welt, Gott auf Erden, Bindeglied zwischen Menschenwelt und Götterwelt, Garant für Leben, Heil und Wohlstand seiner Untertanen und präsentiert sich als die Erfüllung menschlicher Heilserwartung.²⁹

The Egyptian king was the centre of life, guarantor of healing and prosperity of the people. He was the embodiment of peoples' salvation. The king made sure that as a representative of the gods, there was order, peace and justice (Gerechtigkeit) for all the people he led. The ascension to the throne as noted by J Kügler was supposed to bring:

- Harmonie zwischen den Göttern durch geordnetes Kultwesen,
- Harmonie zwischen Gott und Mensch durch ausreichende Opfer,
- Harmonie zwischen den Menschen durch Schutz der Schwachen und Rechtsprechung.³⁰

Therefore, the king was a representation of peace through the rulers' cultism, harmony between God and man by making sufficient sacrifice as well as creating harmony between the people he led, that is, the weak

²⁸ Cf. D O'Connor and D P Silverman (eds), *Ancient Egyptian Kingship*, Leiden: Brill, 1995, 9

²⁹ J Kügler, *Der Andere König: Religionsgeschichtliche Perspektiven auf die Christologie des Johannevangeliums*, Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk GmbH, 1999, 12

³⁰ J Kügler, *Pharao und Christus? Religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zur Frage einer Verbindung zwischen altägyptischer Königstheologie und neutestamentlicher Christologie Lukasevangelium*, Bodenheim: PHILO Verlagsges. mbH, 1997, 17

and the powerful, the poor and rich. The king was supposed to be the beacon of life, healing, justice and abundance against injustice, poverty, hunger, violence and disease. Egyptian Kingship originated in the Fourth millennium BC concomitantly with the state and was the state's central institution lasting for more than three thousand years into Roman times.³¹ The Egyptians believed that the king was the holder of a divine office derived from the realm of the gods. The roots of kingship were related with the beginnings of time, when gods ruled the earth.³² This is where the concept of kingship differs from that of Mesopotamia, in that the king in Egypt originated with the gods in their creation of the world hence the cosmic concept of kingship.

J Assman takes the Egyptian king as having been the incarnation of the creator god and thus divine.³³ The Egyptian king was perceived as formed by the gods in the womb of the mother, and at his birth the life fluid threw itself from the god to the royal child, the fruit of the *Hieros Gamos*.³⁴ The Egyptian king was an embodiment of the god Horus. From the Fourth Dynasty on (c.2600-2480), the Egyptian king was thought to be the son of the sun-god Re.³⁵ The sonship pointed to the special relationship that the king had with the gods. During the different times and in different genres of texts the king could be referred to by a variety of terms, for instance, some inscriptions of the Old Kingdom (2600-2150 BCE) or 4th-8th Dynasties) specified the king as a god. The king was said to have the powers of the gods: Hu (*divine utterance*), Sia (*divine knowledge*), and Heka (*divine energy and knowledge of magic*).³⁶ The use of the epithet 'son of Re' and later of 'image of Re' tended to emphasize the king's divinity and capability. Individuals could swear an

³¹ Cf. J Baines, *Kingship, Definition of Culture, and Legitimation*, in D O'Connor and D Silverman, *Ancient Egyptian Kingship*, Leiden: E J Brill, 1995, 6

³² Cf. R J Leprohon, *Royal Ideology and State Administration in Ancient Egypt*, in J M Sasson (eds), *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, Vol I, Simon and Schuster Macmillan, 1995, 274

³³ Cf. J Assmann, *Ma'at: Gerechtigkeit und Unsterblichkeit im Ägypten*, Munich: C H Beck, 1990, 219

³⁴ Cf. I Engnell, *Studies in Divine Kingship in Ancient Near East*, Basil Blackwell, 1967, 4

³⁵ Cf. Leprohon, *Royal Ideology and State Administration in Ancient Egypt*, 275

³⁶ Cf. Leprohon, *Royal Ideology and State Administration in Ancient Egypt*, 275

oath in the name of the 'king' (*nswt*) or in the name of god.³⁷ Does this then mean that the king was an actual incarnation of the god Re or Horus on earth? Did the king embody the qualities of Horus? R J Leprohon has a different perspective on the title 'son of Re' when he argues that, the title 'son of Re' associates the king with the god Re. However, according to the Egyptian kingship terminology, the use of the word 'son' places the king in an inferior position, with Re serving not only as his father but also as his patron and protector.³⁸ It is still problematic and difficult to understand ancient Egyptian kingship, when the king is said to 'be' one or another god. The ancient Egyptians possibly envisioned in their ruler a being and an office, the former originally mortal and the latter always divine.

The use of these divine titles lent themselves to flattery and propaganda, and could even be used ironically. In the Pyramid Texts, the king is related mainly to Osiris and Re though the other gods are also mentioned. So in death the king became one with the deities. The other version takes the king as identical with Horus, Osiris's son, and also with Osiris himself, Horus being the living king, and Osiris the dead one.³⁹ Representations about the king in a subservient position are a development that took place in the Middle Kingdom (c2000-1783 BCE) or 11th-13th Dynasties and second intermediate period (15th-17th Dynasties) where a new definition of the king as the 'image' of the sun-god was developed.⁴⁰ We find a shift in perspective in the Middle Kingdom on the understanding of kings when they are portrayed in human terms when the king occupies an intermediary position between the gods and humanity.⁴¹ D P Silverman observes that, during the New Kingdom there appeared to be a conscious effort, both in the texts and in the scenes, to equate the king with the powers of the divine world as 'identi-

³⁷ Cf. D P Silverman, *Divinity and Deities in Ancient Egypt*, in B E Shafer, *Religion in Ancient Egypt: Gods, Myths, and Personal Practice*, London: Cornell University Press, 1991, 65, Silverman, *Divinity and Deities in Ancient Egypt*, 67

³⁸ Cf. R J Leprohon, *Royal Ideology and State Administration in Ancient Egypt*, 274

³⁹ Cf. Silverman, *Divinity and Deities in Ancient Egypt*, 72

⁴⁰ Cf. E Hornung, *Conceptions of God in Ancient Egypt: The One and the Many*, New York. Cornell University Press, 1982, 139

⁴¹ Cf. Baines, *Kingship, Definition of Culture, and Legitimation*, 10

fication with the god', 'incarnation of the god'.⁴² The royal ideology of the New Kingdom reverted back to the Old Kingdom's understanding of kings as divine like gods. However, the rites did not metamorphose completely the mortality of the Pharaoh into a divine being.⁴³ On the negative side, the king's authority was wrapped in the mystical power at coronation that warranted an unwavering ruthlessness against dissidents.⁴⁴ Coronation insulated the holder of the office from challengers and endowed the king with power to take care of the people.

The Egyptian Kings and Feeding

Besides the legitimacy and power that the Egyptian king got from the above religious discourses, food stabilized the authority of the king. The ability to fill the stomachs of the people with food as well as providing enough land for them was a symbol of power and created a positive impression about the king as a good leader. Many Egyptologists believe that the early kings gradually gained a sphere of influence because they knew how to harness the Nile River. Egypt is believed to have been the breadbasket of Syria and Palestine through exporting grain, wheat and barley to their neighbors. The efficient organization of agriculture was linked to religion and the king was attributed with magical fertility. Rather than being warrior kings, they knew how to dish out pieces of land and feeding their people.⁴⁵ The giving of land was a special role of empowerment by the king to his subjects. In Egypt's Pharaonic history, the Egyptian king's fertility role was thought to intercede with the gods to assure fertile Nile floods that resulted in adequate harvests for the king to store grain and feed the people in the event of hunger.⁴⁶ The fertility of the Nile floods was an assurance to the king of adequate food. Adequate

⁴² Cf. D P Silverman, *Divinity and Deities in Ancient Egypt*, 66

⁴³ Cf. R J Leprohon, *Royal Ideology and State Administration in Ancient Egypt*, 275

⁴⁴ Cf. T Ambrose, *The Nature of Despotism: From Caligula to Mugabe, the Making of Tyrants*, London: New Holland Publishers Ltd, 2008, 16

⁴⁵ Cf. J Dunn, *Ramesses II: Anatomy of a Pharaoh and his family*, <http://www.tour.egypt.net/features/tories/ramesses2children.htm>-Accessed on 15 May 2010; See P Garnsey, *Famine and Food Supply in the Graeco-Roman World: Response to Risk and Crisis*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988, 98-100; G E Rickman, *The Corn Supply of Ancient Rome*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980, 70

⁴⁶ Cf. Dunn, *Ramesses II: Anatomy of a Pharaoh and his family*

food translated to the stability of the king's leadership, authority and reign.

The floods (droughts and famine) were linked to the fertility of the king. The floods enabled the people to water their crops using the canal system and that later translated to enough food for the people. The Nile water also served as a major transport hub for importation and exportation of grain. Bumper harvests were also associated with the king's fertility. There is also a corresponding propaganda feeding passage quoted by J Kügler about the blessing of Ptah on Ramses II that:

Ich gebe dir reichliche Nilüberschwemmungen; ich versehe dir die beiden Länder mit Wohlstand, Nahrung und edler Versorgung. Speisen sind bestimmt für jeden Ort, an den du trittst. Ich gebe dir fortdauernd Getreide, um die beiden Ufer in deiner Zeit zu nähren. Ihr Korn ist wie der Sand des Strandes; ihre Scheunen nähern sich dem Himmel, ihre Haufen sind wie Berge. Man freut sich und ist satt bei deinem Anblick, (denn) Nahrung, Fische und Vögel sind unter deinen Füßen; Ober- und Unterägypten nähren sich von deiner Versorgung.⁴⁷

There is promise to Ramses II of being given Nile floods, wealth, fine food supplies, meals wherever he would be treading and continual supply of corn as the sand of the beach. Both Upper and Lower Egypt are postulated as to be inundated with heaps of food hence becoming propaganda meant to portray the king as the capable of surrounding his people with food. In one of the documents King Amenemhet 1 from the Middle Kingdom, 12th dynasty is cited saying that:

I stood by the borders of the land, I inspected its interior and I was the one who cultivated grain, and loved the harvest-god. The Nile greeted me in every valley, none was hungry in my years, and none thirsted then. Men dwelt in peace through that which I wrought, and conversed of me.⁴⁸

It is the king who is portrayed as in charge of the land, the supply of grain and water is attributed to the king and associated with his benevolence. However, to say that none was hungry during Amenemhet's reign

⁴⁷ J Kügler, *Pharao und Christus*, 212

⁴⁸ W R Harper (eds), *Ancient Records of Egypt*, <http://www.etana.org/coretexts/14896.pdf>, Accessed Online 26 August 2010

make us suspicious. The documents give a rosy and propagandistic picture of abundance to every living soul in Egypt. This is further shown by King Amenemhet 1 who goes further to say that:

There was no poverty in my days, no starvation in my time, even when there were years of famine. I ploughed all the fields of Mah to its southern and northern boundaries; I gave life to its inhabitants, making its food; no one was starved in it. I gave to the widow as to the married woman.⁴⁹

The statement portrays the abundance of life under the gracious role of king Amenemhet 1. No one was in need in terms of food to the extent that poverty was foreign to them. Yet there are cases when Egypt experienced floods and famines that led animals and thousands of people to starve to death. There are hair-treading accounts of famines like the one that took place in the year 457 of the Hegira.⁵⁰ The famine lasted for seven years and was so severe that dogs and cats, and even human flesh were eaten.⁵¹ What is interesting is that, such incidents are not mentioned in the royal inscriptions, imageries and hymns.

There are incidents when people in fact depended on the rich to survive. The rich stored their corn in stone granaries upon which the waters were not able to penetrate.⁵² Besides the king, the rich also took part in feeding the hungry. In such situations of hunger, famine and drought; food or grain handouts by kings and the rich brought a sensible relief to a large portion of the population. The opulent supply of food by the rich was theologically interpreted as the provision of the king with the gods and excluding other generous players. However, the relationship was put to test when the Nile floods came up short where the king

⁴⁹ G Rawlinson, *Ancient Egypt*, <http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/searchq=cache:Zh9RPgmLlk4J:www.gutenberg.org/files/15663/15663h/15663h.htm+King+Amenemhet+I+was+one+who+grain,created+a+darling+of+the+corn+god.The+Nile+flood+did+me+any+respect+on+the+open+field.+It+is+not+hungry+in+my+years.And+they+thirsted+not+them+%28II,II%2961&cd=3&hl=de&ct=clnk&gl=de>, Accessed Online, 26 August 2010

⁵⁰ Cf. G Rawlinson, *Ancient Egypt*

⁵¹ Cf. G Rawlinson, *Ancient Egypt*

⁵² Cf. J Dunn, *Ramesses II: Anatomy of a Pharaoh and his family*

could as well be blamed.⁵³ Fertile Nile floods implied adequate food for the populace linked to the king as the breadwinner.

The underlying factor is that the Egyptian king was taken as the only benevolent savior in shepherding his people, as he ensured the well-being of his subjects and protected all, rich and poor. The benevolence of kings was achieved through the grain that was collected by the viziers and given to the people. The king had representatives or senior officials like the viziers (Middle Kingdom onwards), viceroy, overseers, governors, monarchs, mayors (Old Kingdom), stewards who helped him in administration of collected grain meant for feeding the poor people.⁵⁴ The political goods reaped from the feeding duty made people to associate food with the person and office of the king. Honorific titles like: 'provider of the people, savior and good god' were given to kings as homage respect to the benevolent provision of the king. The representatives' duties were to collect, store, and disburse the commodities that came into the state treasury: raw products such as grains, oils, wood, or metal, or manufactured goods such as foodstuffs, cloth, equipment and weapons.⁵⁵ These major departments brought a large amount of additional wealth into the country, which the king was able to use to his patronising advantage by feeding the masses.

The royal ideology dictated that the king was directly responsible for all of Egypt's good fortune. To him went the credit for military victories, his benevolence role in filling the stomachs of the hungry people with food and helping those in need. As a result, the scenes of abundance were carved on the outside walls of temples for all to see.⁵⁶ In the eyes of the people the king was the 'Provider of the People'. The feeding of the hungry people by the king was regarded as an incarnation of the high god Osiris. Osiris was the fertility deity who was identical with *Npr*, the grain god. Osiris was not only *identical* with grain-*Npr* the grain god but 'at one time quite widely held in ancient Egypt' as 'the actual maker of the corn'. It was, therefore, of great importance to impart vital force

⁵³ Cf. J Dunn, *Ramesses II: Anatomy of a Pharaoh and his family*

⁵⁴ Cf. Leprohon, *Royal Ideology and State Administration in Ancient Egypt*, 283

⁵⁵ Cf. Leprohon, *Royal Ideology and State Administration in Ancient Egypt*, 283

⁵⁶ Cf. Engnell, *Studies in Divine Kingship in Ancient Near East*, 8

associated with fertility to his son, the king.⁵⁷ Osiris's benevolence was realized through his son the king when food, grain and land were generously given to the people. The royal ideology postulated Pharaoh as the supplier of land and grain. This made Osiris and the king to become connected to the fertility, life and death of the people.

People were sometimes reminded of the misery, hunger and disease that had once occurred in the times of the previous kings. So Osiris was personified in corn, the material of their agricultural pursuits and the chief food upon which they subsisted.⁵⁸ The benevolent king as the representation of Osiris was then believed to control the forces of nature such that the people placed implicit confidence in him.⁵⁹ As a result of these unlimited powers that the king was believed to have acquired from Osiris or Re, it seemed that the least that the people could do in return for the king's beneficence of filling their stomachs with food was to become loyal and obedient subjects. What is noticeable in the thirty centuries of Egyptian kingship is the degree of continuity on the perspective of the king's presence as implying the bestowal of abundant life, food, waters, prosperity onto the subjects. The king caused abundance to flow on the land making him really a good shepherd and leader.

The king was also known for feeding builders of pyramids for the sake of development hence the food-for work projects. Egypt is known for many pyramids which have resisted the times by existing till today. One can be justified to then ask and wonder how these building projects were carried out. Who was feeding these labourers? Khufu was a pharaoh of ancient Egypt's Old Kingdom (2589-2566 BC) and generally the second pharaoh of the fourth dynasty who used food for thirty years to employ seven million men through forced labor to build pyramids.⁶⁰ However, feeding was the prime mover behind Khufu's exploitative building projects. The hunger crisis increased the number of people who

⁵⁷ Cf. Engnell, *Studies in Divine Kingship in Ancient Near East*, 8

⁵⁸ Cf. P Hadfield, *Traits of Divine Kingship in Africa*, London: Watts & Company, 1949, 7

⁵⁹ Cf. P Hadfield, *Traits of Divine Kingship in Africa*, 2

⁶⁰ Cf. *The Great Pyramid of Giza*, <http://www.oldandsold.com/articles10/famous-buildings-3.shtml>-Accessed on 20 March 2010

were prepared to freely offer their services in order to be fed. The building work was done during the annual inundation of the Nile, when the king fed and clothed the poorer classes. As a result of poverty and hunger, recipients of food handouts regarded the king as their ‘savior, messiah’ in saving them from the impending death of hunger and poverty.⁶¹ The king became the benefactor of the poor by supplying them with food in times of need. The exploitative offer was blurred by hunger and the masses took the king’s offer as representative of the gods at work in saving life.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown the status of the king in ANE and the duties that kings were expected to perform. It exposed the central political, economical, social and religious position that the king held amongst the people. Provision of food was one of the important duties that stabilized the reign of ANE kings. However, royal ideologies sometimes survived on propaganda, manipulation and exaggeration in a bid to present the king as the good and favored shepherd of the people. The Jewish religious and economical life had a closer relation with ANE life which persuades us to look at Jewish kingship and the feeding topic in the next chapter.

⁶¹ Cf. *The Great Pyramid of Giza*

CHAPTER 2:

THE DIVINE KING IN THE OT AND EARLY JUDAISM

This chapter looks at Jewish kingship and the duty of feeding. Special focus will be on selected OT royal texts: 2 Samuel 7:11-14; Psalms 2:6-7, 45:2-10 and 72. These texts have been selected because they feature a lot on debates to do with Jewish kingship particularly the Davidic royal ideology. The royal Psalms have further been used in the NT to qualify the messiahship of Jesus. The psalmody texts are also popular with Zimbabweans when they variously read them for spiritual, economical, political and social encouragement. Besides the focus on royal ideological texts, OT texts (2 Samuel 6:19, Genesis 41:41-57, and Exodus 6:1-15) on the feeding topic have also been selected for discussion. It is important to note that, on some issues our debate on the Jewish kingship and the feeding topic are motivated by the Hellenistic ideas that had an impact on the development and understanding of Jewish kingship (Early Judaism). In order to objectively engage on Jewish kingship and the feeding topic, the historical-critical and sociological methods are going to be used.

Status and Role of the Divine King in the OT

Jewish kings had certain duties they performed and these defined their relationship with YHWH and the people. The king was supposed to be a leader who preserved religion, diffused knowledge, justice (Gerechtigkeit) as well as making sure that there was enough food for the people.¹ The greatness of the king was measured by the profits he made for the kingdom. The good and benevolent king was supposed to be more solicitous for the public than his own private interest. The kingship' virtues and the status of the king were emphasized in relation to Israelite kingship. S Mowinckel argues that, the polytheistic nature of ancient societies point to the greater likelihood of similarities on the understanding of kings.² There was continuity and common oriental culture with iden-

¹ Cf. Rabbi J Z Ciechanowicz, *Adventures in Jewish Faith. Book II Jewish Mission*, New York: Shulsinger Bros Linotyping and Publishing Company, 2005, 103

² Cf. S Mowinckel, *He that cometh: The Messiah Concept in the Old Testament and Later Judaism*, Grand Rapids: Wm B Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2005, 21

tifiable features between the Israelite royal ideology and the ANE particularly on the royal claims to ‘divine’ status of the king.³ I Samuel 8:4-5 affirm this influence from other nations as shown in the following Hebrew Text translations:⁴

וַיָּקָם כָּל־זְקֵנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיָּבֹאוּ
 אֶל־שָׁמוּאֵל הַרְמָתָה: ⁴ Then all the elders of Israel gathered
 together and came to Samuel at
 Ramah,

וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו הִנֵּה אַתָּה זָקֵן וּבָנֶיךָ לֹא
 הֵלְכוּ בְּדַרְכֶיךָ עִתָּה שִׂמָּה־לָּנוּ מֶלֶךְ
 לְשִׁפְטֵנוּ כְּכָל־הַגּוֹיִם: ⁵ and said to him, “Behold, you are
 old and your sons do not walk in your
 ways; now appoint for us a king to
 govern us like all the nations.”

The plea to the prophet Samuel by Israel for a king gives the assumption that, even though Israel might not have borrowed most things from Her neighbours, the conditions of polytheism of the time had something on the self-images of the kings of Israel and Judah, that is, if we imagine that Israel was not unique from Her neighbours.⁵ Debates for or against ‘sacral kingship’ in Israel are still raging on.

The Davidic Dynasty (2 Samuel 7:11-14)

2 Samuel 7:11-14 is one of the OT texts that have featured much on discussions to do with Jewish kingship. It is clear from 2 Samuel 7:11-14 that, the presence, departure and legacy of the king works according to God’s plan:

³ Cf. S Mowinckel, *He that cometh*, 21

⁴ This study has extensively used various Bible translations which are commonly used by various Christian denominations world-wide. However, this study favours the RSV on most of the verses that are under debate. In cases of support and emphasis and further debate two versions, RSV and NIV can be consulted to show the similarities and differences on translations of certain Greek or Hebrew terms. The RSV or NRSV are commonly used in the Zimbabwean academic circles particularly whereas the NIV and KJV are commonly used by Christians’ particularly Pentecostal ones.

⁵ Cf Kügler, *Der Andere König: Religionsgeschichte Perspektiven auf die Christologie des Johannesevangeliums*, Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk GmbH, 1999, 14

12 כִּי יִמְלְאוּ יָמֶיךָ וְשָׁכַבְתָּ אֶת־אֲבֹתֶיךָ
וְהִקִּימְתִי אֶת־יֶרֶעְךָ אַחֲרֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר יֵצֵא מִמֶּנִּי
וְהִכִּינְתִי אֶת־מַמְלַכְתּוֹ:

12 When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.

13 הוּא יִבְנֶה־בַּיִת לְשָׁמַי וְכִנֵּנְתִי אֶת־כִּסֵּא
מַמְלַכְתּוֹ עַד־עוֹלָם:

13 He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

14 אֲנִי אֶהְיֶה־לּוֹ לְאָב וְהוּא יִהְיֶה־לִּי לְבֵן אֲשֶׁר
בְּהֻנְתּוֹ וְהִכַּחֲתִיו בְּשֶׁבֶט אַנְשִׁים וּבַגָּעִי בְּנֵי
אָדָם:

14 I will be his father, and he shall be my son. When he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men;

2 Samuel 7:11-14 has been taken by scholars as marking the climax of David's ascension to power. This comes after David's conquest of Jerusalem, his defeat of the Philistines and the entry of the Ark which led YHWH to permanently establish the royal house of David. Interesting history contradicted that prophecy. P R Ackroyd notes that,

In 587 B.C the Davidic kingdom came to an end; its last king, Zedekiah, was dead in Babylon (2 Kings 25:7), the previous king, Jehoiachim, was in captivity (2 Kings 25:27-30). This did not lead to a new kingship, though we find Zerubbabel, a Davidic descendant, as governor for a time (Ezra 3-6; Hag.2:20-23).⁶

What we only know is that, the only permanent rule of the Davidic house was later rhetorically built in the hope for an ideal Davidic anointed ruler (Jeremiah 32:14-26). 2 Samuel 7:11-14 says something about building the house of God. Unfortunately David is barred from building it and the task is given to Solomon, his son (12-13). The intro-

⁶ R Ackroyd, *The Second Book of Samuel: A Commentary*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977, 78

duction of the temple in the narrative symbolizes the presence of the deity in the selection of the Davidic house.⁷ The building of temples is not something new as Egyptian kings acted as pyramid builders and repairers. The first and second millennium Egyptian historiographical literature, known to Egyptologists as the *Königsnovelle*, or *royal novelette* literature also portrays the close relationship between kings and sanctuaries.⁸ 2 Samuel 7:14 pre-empts something interesting on the status of Jewish kings, a commonality with Egyptian myths which represents a special relation between David as the son of God and the Egyptian Pharaoh as the son of Re.

There are other traditions on the kings of Damascus in the ninth century B.C.E who took the name or title 'son of Hadad' (1 Kings 15:18) and one king of the Syrian state of Sam'al was called 'son of Rakib'.⁹ In all cases the king is identified as the son of the national deity, a similar phenomenon made about the Israelite king as the son of YHWH.¹⁰ However, in the case of Israel any parallels might be misleading as the language in 2 Samuel 7:11-14 had nothing to do with physical descent let alone divine kingship as understood in Egypt. The language seeks to qualify the patrimony of Yahweh over the king.¹¹ However, the subsequent development of the Jewish messianism on the Davidic hope ended up pointing to the notion of 'divine' sonship that characterized Israel in relation to their several contexts.¹² Even though 2 Samuel 7:13-14 points to the divine electiveness and permanence of the Davidic dynasty, it is also important not to overlook the role played by Nathan's propagandist prophecy in manipulating the minds of the people in the

⁷ Cf. P R Ackroyd, *The Second Book of Samuel: A Commentary*, 79

⁸ Cf. P K McCarter, *II Samuel (The Anchor Bible): A New Translation with Introduction, Notes and Commentary*, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1984, 2

⁹ Cf. P K McCarter, *II Samuel*, 207

¹⁰ Cf. F M Cross, *The Stele Dedicated to Melcarth by Ben-Hadad of Damascus*, Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research, 1972, Number 205, 36-42

¹¹ Cf. S A Cooke, *The Israelite King as Son of God*, Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, 1961, Number 73, 202-225; See also, P Kyle McCarter, *II Samuel*, 207

¹² Cf. J Marcus, *The Way of the Lord: Christological Exegesis of the Old Testament in the Gospel of Mark*, Louisville: John Knox Press, 1992, 142; see also, J M Scott, *Adoption as Sons of God: An exegetical investigation into the Background in the Pauline Corpus*, Tübingen: Mohr, 1992, 24

light of opposition to David's ascension to power. Nathan could have been a high ranking court prophet. In this text, Nathan's role is to act as mediator between David and Yahweh. As a court official, he could have benefited from status quo. It is not surprising that Nathan's oracle interweaves two motifs 'house of Yahweh' and 'house of David', deliberately marrying 'Yahweh's temple' with the 'Davidic dynasty'. In fact the extra-ordinariness, irrevocable, inviolable and absolute nature of the promise concerning David and his dynasty leaves a lot to be desired.¹³ Of interest is that, the Davidic royal ideology was closely linked to the Zion theology embodied in the temple. The temple was regarded as a divine guarantee of security for the nation and the Davidic dynasty, regardless of the justice (Gerechtigkeit) or injustice (Un-Gerechtigkeit) associated with the Davidic house (2 Sam. 7:16).¹⁴ 2 Samuel 7:13-14 is a political statement implied to give an effective protection of the king against political dissidents. If we interpret it using our modern context, the Davidic royal ideology would have been regarded as advocating for a one-party state ideology or one party state dictatorship. Israel became in effect the patrimonial estate of David's family (7:13, 15, and 16), something not encouraging in the context of modern day multi-party politics.

J Kügler argues that, 2 Samuel 7:12-16 can best suit the dynastic ideology where the sonship ideology has to do with the aspect of the legitimacy of the king and his social welfare.¹⁵ In that light, the king's place as the 'son of God' in the cosmic and social order mirrored those of YHWH in his heavenly realm. It is in that sense that, Nathan's prophecy guarantees the house of David eternal rule through the '*Vater-Sohn-Verhältnis zu Davids Nachkommen*'.¹⁶ The context is transformed to that of YHWH as the true king fighting and defending the Davidic king as his son.

¹³ Cf. A Chester, *Messiah and Exaltation: Jewish Messianic and Vision*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007, 217

¹⁴ Cf. R A Horsley and J S Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets and Messiahs: Popular Movements in the Time of Jesus*, Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1999, 97

¹⁵ Cf. Kügler, *Der Andere König*, 14; See also, P Kyle McCarter, *II Samuel*, 210

¹⁶ Kügler, *Der Andere König*, 14

The King as Son of God (Psalm 2)

There are various royal Psalms (for example 2, 18, 20, 28, 45, 61, 72, 89, 101, 110 and 132) that present a powerful portrayal of the Jewish king and his relation (as anointed) to YHWH. Most Psalms were traditionally regarded as composed by David (Acts 2:25, 34; 4:25). The concern about authorship is a later development. Psalms can be classified according to their literary types (*Gattungen*) and situation in life (*Sitz im Leben*). Gunkel distinguished them into six main types: Hymns of Praise, Enthronement Psalms, Laments of the Community, Royal Psalms, Laments of the Individual, and Individual Songs of Thanksgiving.¹⁷ Our focus is on the Royal Psalms that formed the main types. Most of Royal Psalms belonged to the pre-Exilic period, though it is possible that some of them are post-Exilic Messianic Psalms.¹⁸

The translation of Psalm 2 has major items to do with enthronement ceremonies if one considers the vocabulary about: Anointing (v.2), installation (v.6), legitimation (v.7) and empowerment (v.9, sceptre etc).

וְרוֹזְנִים
מְלֻכֵי-אֲרָץ יִתְצַבּוּ²
וְעַל-מְשִׁיחֹוֹ
נֹסְדוּ-יַחַד עַל-יְהוָה

² The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and his anointed, saying,

וְאֲנִי
נִסַּכְתִּי מַלְכִי עַל-צִיּוֹן⁶
הַר-קֹדֶשׁ:

⁶ “I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill.”

אֶסְפְּרָה אֶל חֶק יְהוָה אֲמַר אֵלַי בְּנִי
אֲתָה אֲנִי הַיּוֹם יָלַדְתִּיךָ:

⁷ I will tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to me, “You are my son, today I have begotten you”.

The king as the anointed one was installed by YHWH as the legitimate leader and was empowered to carry the sceptre of authority. Psalm 2 has been put in the context of the enthronement or coronation

¹⁷ Cf. A A Anderson, *New Century Bible Commentary on the Book of Psalms: Psalms 1-72, Volume 1*, Grand Rapids: Wm.B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972, 29

¹⁸ Cf. A A Anderson, *New Century Bible Commentary on the Book of Psalms: Psalms*, 39-40

ceremony of a new king.¹⁹ The author sees the kings of the earth planning to break the yoke of Yahweh's reign which David represents. The Judean king then pictures YHWH, the mighty ruler of the world laughing and preparing his flaming wrath against futile conspirators possibly as in the cases of Absalom and Adonijah.²⁰ The king's royal inauguration is here put under the banner of God's kingship. The king is made secure against plotters (2 Sam. 7:12-14 and Ps.2:7).

The vocabulary of begotteness and the fatherhood of YHWH (Ps.2:7-8) says something about the institution of covenant between Yahweh and a particular dynasty as in 2 Samuel 7:12-14. It must have been a covenant which thinks of an everlasting dominion (not worldwide) possibly in the period of the world-powers when universal dominion was conceived with the universal rule of God. We are also free not to imagine or associate it with the time of David or Solomon. It has been associated with the reign of Hezekiah when Israelites witnessed sweeping religious reforms to do with the worship of YHWH as the God of Israel and the Judean state experienced some notable increase in power.²¹ If it was not about David, the actual meaning is about the enthronement of the Jewish king who by being enthroned automatically assumed sonship. Psalms 2:7 did not imply that the king was deified (2 Sam.7:14; 1 Chron.28:6). Deification claims on Israelite kings might be difficult to hold because in most cases prophets criticized them.²² The Psalm recaptures the memory path of the covenant Yahweh made with David (2 Samuel 7:12-14). The poet seems to have combined the installa-

¹⁹ Cf. H Gunkel and B Joachim, *Introduction to the Psalms: The Genres of the Religious Lyrics of Israel*, Macon GA: Mercer University, 1998, 118; See also, J W Watts, *Psalms 2 in the Context of Biblical Theology* Horizons in Biblical Theology, Volume 12, Number 1, 1990, 73-91

²⁰ Cf. J H Eaton, *Kingship and the Psalms*, London: SCM Press Ltd, 1976, 112; See also, H Gunkel, *Einleitung in den Psalmen*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1921, 163

²¹ Cf. C A Briggs and E G Briggs, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Book of Psalms, Volume I*, Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1986, 13; See also, A Y Collins and J J Collins, *King and Messiah as Son of God*, Grand Rapids: Wm B Eerdmans, 2008, 40

²² Cf. A A Anderson, *New Century Bible Commentary on the Book of Psalms: Psalms 1-72*, 68; J L Crenshaw, *The Psalms: An Introduction*, Grand Rapids: William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001, 78

tion of David (2 Samuel 2:4) with the covenant recognition of sonship (2 Samuel 7:11-16) where several promises are given to David:

That he is to rank among earth's greatest kings, that his people are to dwell in peace undisturbed by foreign aggression, that he is to be the founder of a dynasty that will endure forever, that the relationship between God and the heir to his throne will be that which exists between a father and his son, and that God will never withdraw his covenanted love from him. Judean monarchs through their generations would have recited this text on their coronation days and at other suitable festivals claiming world-wide authority promised their forefather.²³

The Egyptian formula also portrays the deity addressing the king as 'my son'.²⁴ This can be related to the inscription of Amenophis III where one of the gods declares: '*He is my son, on my throne, in accordance with the decree of the gods.*' One of the Egyptian gods, Amun, declares to Haremhab's coronation that: '*You are my son, the heir who came forth from my flesh.*'²⁵ In the Canaanite tradition, the king was portrayed as an offspring of the gods who suckled the divine breasts.²⁶ The Israelite royal theology certainly aimed at making clear on the importance of the king in the society he led. The king is the anointed one (messiah) of YHWH (Ps 2:2, 7; 18:51; 20:7; 45), the chosen shield (Ps 78:70; 89:4) and authorised agent of YHWH himself. YHWH becomes the father and shield of the king.²⁷

The king is the only unique channel of the Lord's blessing to his people.²⁸ Any usurpers needed to demonstrate legitimacy for their ac-

²³ J W Rogerson and J W McKay, *Psalms 1-50: A Commentary*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977, 19

²⁴ Cf. E A Leslie, *The Psalms: Translated and Interpreted in the Light of Hebrew Life and Worship*, New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1949, 91

²⁵ M Görg, *Gott-König-Reden in Israel und Ägypten*, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1975, 260

²⁶ Cf. M Dahood, *Psalms 1-50: Introductions, Translation, and Notes*, USA: Doubleday and Company, 1965, 12

²⁷ Cf. H D Preuss, *Old Testament Theology II*, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996, 32

²⁸ Cf. K W Whiteham, *Israelite Kingship: The Royal Ideology and its opponents*, in R E Clements (eds), *The World of Ancient Israel*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, 134; see also, G H Wilson, *King, Messiah, and the Reign of God: Revisiting the Royal Psalms and the Shape of the Psalter*, in P W Flint and P D Miller (eds), *The Book of Psalms: Composition and Reception*, Leiden: Brill, 2005, 391

tions in overthrowing the anointed one on the throne. Perhaps that is the context where the role of prophets comes in, being sponsors of coups and bloodsheds. The Psalm addresses everyday issues of politics, plots and counterplots.²⁹ It guards against usurpers of power and plotting politicians. The Psalm is a fine example of propaganda designed to legitimise the overthrowing of the previous regime as done by David's replacement of Saul. The Psalm justifies David's rise to power and the struggle for succession. There is a possibility that some people were still sympathetic to Saul and felt deprived of their opportunity to take up the throne. The Psalm was a call to displeased people to be submissive to David as any rebellion or usurpation of the king's throne was interpreted as a transgression against the Lord. The ideological propaganda offered political, social and economical stability and unity that the king wanted. This was despite David's deplorable record of taking Uriah's wife, facilitating the butchering of Uriah (2 Samuel 11) and destruction of the family of Saul (2 Samuel 21). The traditions explicitly addressed the problem of legitimising the Davidic claim to the throne and countered threats from the urban elite by stressing the sacrosanct nature of the king by virtue of the king occupying a unique relationship with YHWH.³⁰ In this sense, religious discourses provide a justification for control of power and all strategic resources. The king's right to rule is defined in the ambit of religion. In such incidences, religious discourses gave the needed legitimacy to the king since coercion and force sometimes produces the unintended results.

The King as Elohim (Psalm 45:1-10)

Psalms 45:1-10 has also been classified amongst the Royal Psalms, although the precise *Sitz im Leben* (situation in life) cannot be determined. Some commentators consider the Psalm to be pre-exilic.³¹ The grammar, literary analysis, history, and theology used to analyze Psalm 45

²⁹ Cf. J Limburg, *Psalms: Westminster Bible Companion*, Louisville: Westminster Knox Press, 2000, 6

³⁰ Cf. Whiteham, *Israelite Kingship: The Royal Ideology and its opponents*, 134

³¹ Cf. F Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955 2), 77-78

reveals that the Psalm is a *Liebeslied* or wedding song or love poem or a song of holy love to do with ritual blessing of the king's deep veneration for the young monarch. The king stands uniquely under the blessing of God.³² The Psalm may be divided into two major segments: (1) one that praises the king (vv 2-11) and (2) the other that praises the queen (vv 13-18). The Psalm is not about YHWH but about the king who takes the place of God which makes it easily similar to the ANE portrayals of kings, particularly Egyptian kings. The Psalm commemorates the wedding³³ of a particular monarch or some king in the Davidic line (2 Sam 7:12-14; I Chron. 17:7-27; Ps 89). It is known that, a royal wedding in ancient Israel was a national event as the continuation of the royal dynasty depended upon it.³⁴ The artistic point of the Psalm would lie in the very comparison between the characteristics of a bridegroom and the attributes of a king. The poem could have been written by a cultic prophet and was used successively by different kings on the day of the royal wedding. The title of Psalms 45 affirms that it is part of a double collection of Korahite Psalms (Pss 42-49 and 84-85, 87-89) whose basic indentation is the praise of God through the reigning king (45:7 with Ps 44:5, 46:6-12, 47, 48:2-4, 9, 15, 84:4, 85:5, and 89).³⁵ The king is portrayed as staying under the shadow of YHWH's wings (Pss 42-43; 44; 45:4-6, 8; 46:8, 10-12; 47; 48:6-9; Ps 89:21, 39, 52). The relationship of the king with God is emphasized in this Psalm.³⁶ The Psalmist vocabulary presents the king's body and personality as fairer (beauty) than any men (45:2) and the king as possessing extraordinary beauty.³⁷ All these out-

³² Cf. Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms*, 77-78; R Paterson, *A Multiplex Approach to Psalms 45*, *Grace Theological Journal* (61), 1985, 29-48

³³ The bridal couple has been identified, for instance, with: David and Maacah (Abraham ibn Ezra); Solomon and Pharaoh's daughter (Kirkpatrick); Ahab and Jezebel (Hitzig); Joram and Athaliah (Delitzsch); Alexander Balas and Cleopatra, daughter of Ptolemy Philometer (Olshausen, Haupt); Aristobulus I and Salome (Duhm). It has been suggested also that the bridegroom was Jeroboam II (Ewald) or Jehu (Briggs), the identity of the bride being left undetermined, Cf. T H Gaster, *Psalm 45*, *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Volume 74, Number (4), 1955, 239-257

³⁴ Cf. J W Rogerson and J W McKay, *Psalms 1-50: A Commentary*, 213

³⁵ Cf. M Dahood, *Psalms*, Garden City: Doubleday, 1966, 270; See also, H Hayes, *An Introduction to Old Testament Study*, Nashville: Abingdon, 1979, 312-313

³⁶ Cf. M Dahood, *Psalms*, 312-313

³⁷ It was a common rule in antiquity that the king had to be abnormally handsome and

ward features and manners make him fit to receive God's blessings (Ps 23:5; Isa.61:3; Heb.1:9).

The king will defend the weak, a sign of his just rule (Gerechtigkeit) and righteousness. Those who are opposed to the king will fall by his sword, hence a justification of violence as in Ps 45:6-7:

כִּסְאֵךָ אֱלֹהִים עוֹלָם וְעַד שֶׁבֶט מִיֶּשֶׁר ⁷ 6 Your divine throne endures forever
 שֶׁבֶט מְלִכוּתֶךָ: and ever. Your royal scepter is a scepter
 of equity;

אֶהְבֶּתָּ צְדָקָה וְתִשְׁנֵא רָשָׁע עַל-כִּוְנוֹ ⁸ 7 you love righteousness and hate wick-
 מְשַׁחֵךְ אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהֶיךָ שֶׁמֶן שְׂשׂוֹן edness. Therefore God, your God, has
 מְחַבְּרִיךָ: anointed you with the oil of gladness
 above your fellows;

Psalms 45 idealised the king as God's representative and the bearers of His image upon earth. Psalm 45 as the Korahite Psalms in general is a reminder that the welfare of God's people was intricately intertwined with and indissolubly bound to the person of the king, an important feature related to the duties of kingship. The king is celebrated in this Psalm and possibly the more readily styled Elohim, when in his heavenly beauty, his irresistible δόξα (v 11) and his divine holiness seems to the psalmist to be the perfected realization of the close relationship in which God has set David and his seed to Himself.³⁸ The earthly Davidic king ideally personified God on the throne that he could justly be called god, implying in this case that God was reigning. A Anderson suggests that, anointment of the king with oil was a figurative expression implying that, God had granted the king blessings that exceed those of other peo-

free from all bodily blemishes. We have the cases of Saul, who is portrayed as 'taller from his shoulders and upward than any of the people'(I Sam 9:2), and David is described as 'ruddy, with a fine appearance and of handsome features' (1 Sam.16: 12), Cf. T H Gaster, *Psalm 45*, Journal of Biblical Literature, Volume 74, Number 4, 1955, 239-257

³⁸ Cf. M D Goulder, *The Psalms of the Sons of Korah*, Sheffield: JSOT Pr, 1982, 130

ple because kings were anointed in the name of Yahweh (were consecrated by Yahweh Himself, 1 Sam.15:17; 2 Sam.12:7; 2 Kings 9:6).³⁹ Theologically the importance of the person of the king in Psalms 45 can be noticed.

The King as the Source of Fertility (Psalm 72)

Psalm 72 is also important in analyzing the Israelite royal ideology. Psalm 72 is a prayer to God on behalf of an Israelite king,⁴⁰ hence a coronation Psalm. It was written either when a new king was being anointed or at the king's anniversary. It was possibly an intercessory petition to God for the king on his ascension to the throne. D J Human believes that, the portrayal of the king in the first verses reflect the image of a divine king and YHWH as behind the royal figure:

Endow the king with your justice, O God, the royal son with your righteousness. He will judge your people in righteousness, your afflicted ones with justice, and deliverance of the afflicted.

The king is the medium or agent of YHWH's justice and righteousness.⁴¹ C A Briggs and E G Briggs dispute that by taking the context of Psalms 72 as a petition by afflicted people against a previous king (obviously not David or Solomon) whose rule was in the reverse of justice (*Gerechtigkeit*) and righteousness. It was possibly Manasseh and his son Amon (2 Kings 21).⁴² The afflicted expected the king to act the surrogate rule of God on earth but to no avail. It makes sense to think that, the Psalm possibly by a court official was prayer to God on behalf of the oppressed poor. The previous king or the reigning king had failed to

³⁹ Cf. A A Anderson, *New Century Bible Commentary on the Book of Psalms: Psalms 1-72*, 350

⁴⁰ Cf. H Gunkel, *Die Psalmen-Übersetzt und Erklärt*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck Ruprecht, 1926, 305

⁴¹ Cf. D J Human, *An Ideal for Leadership-Psalm 72: The (Wise) King-Royal Mediation of God's Universal Reign*, [http://www.up.ac.za/dispace/bitstream/2263/10596/Human_Ideal\(2002\).pdf](http://www.up.ac.za/dispace/bitstream/2263/10596/Human_Ideal(2002).pdf), Accessed on 10 April, 2010; See also, D Jobling, 'Deconstruction and the Political Analysis of Biblical Texts: A Jamesonian Reading of Psalm 72', *Semeia* 59, 95-127

⁴² Cf. C A Briggs and E G Briggs, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Book of Psalms, Volume II*, Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1969, 133

bring justice and peace to the poor and weak. According to Proverbs 28:3, an oppressive king to the weak and poor is like driving rain that leaves no crops leading to hunger and poverty.

The Psalm was possibly a prayer for the reigning king or a prophecy of a future king who was to bring justice.⁴³ Social justice (*Gerechtigkeit*) in the Royal Psalms becomes a significant theme (Ps 72:1-4, 12-14). This constitutes the social dimension of the king's reign in bestowing justice (*Gerechtigkeit*) and righteousness (Ps 72:2-7; 12-17; 103:6), the foundation of Yahweh's throne (Ps 89:15; Prov 29:2). A lack of the *Gerechtigkeit* (justice) resulted in the deplorable destruction of society and cosmos. There is a blending picture of society and nature where the king becomes the personified life principle for the entire world. The enduring and universal dominion of the king is as a result of the just reign (*Gerechtigkeit*), for example, when '*all the kings and foreign nations come from the ends of the earth*' to serve him (Ps 72:8). Psalm 72 prays that the king may live as long as the sun endures. This can be taken as alluding to immortality, a prominent feature with Canaanite legends. However, it is clear that the Psalm does not suggest that kings were immortal by nature.

In this case, the king's office is a continuation of Yahweh's engagement and blessed accompaniment to his people, where the focus of the king is on the upliftment and defense of the poor, the oppressed and afflicted (Ps 72:1-4, 12-14). The Psalm is not only an ideal of what the just king must do but can be used to critique unjust leaders who fail to merit and sustain peace, bring justice (*Gerechtigkeit*), food and prosperity to their people. It is clear through this psalm that, throughout history there have been governments that served people well and those that did it poorly. Psalm 72 makes clear that a good government is concerned with three things: impartial judgment, justice (*Gerechtigkeit*) for all the people, relief from oppression and violence and availing food to the hungry. The current world reality of poverty, starvation and epidemics, abuse and exploitation of political and military power, mass

⁴³ Cf. W Houston, *The King's Preferential Option for the Poor: Rhetoric, Ideology and Ethics in Psalm 72*, *Biblical Interpretation: Journal of Contemporary Approaches*, Volume 7, Number 4, 1999, 341-367

manslaughter, oppression and violation of human rights is a call to look at the religious discourses associated with modern rulers. The Psalms have clearly shown us that, just as in ANE, kings were expected to do justice (Gerechtigkeit), to protect the poor and the oppressed as well as feeding them.

The Old Testament Texts on Feeding

The problem of access to food as indeed in every community was also faced by the Jewish society. The control of land by the king was part of economical, religio-political power.⁴⁴ The loss of land entailed the loss of entitlement, status and livelihood. As we know that the preponderant use of land is to produce food and the nutritional needs of the people. The Israelite king was to the kingdom what the wise is to the ignorant people, what the shepherd is to his sheep, the father to his children and what God is to all his creatures. The king was the shelter to the people and offered food to the hungry and thirsty, though Judaism exhorted all Israelites to be mindful of the needy people. The Hebrew prophets berated those who were content and comfortable while others were in great distress of hunger and poverty (Amos 6:1, 4 and 6). Taking care and being sympathetic to those in need was an important virtue. Since YHWH is the provident God, the king was supposed to do likewise. In circumstances of hunger, floods, droughts, plagues, famine and war, the king was supposed to be provident to his people. There are recorded biblical incidents where as a result of famine: Abraham was forced to go to Egypt (Genesis 12:10); Isaac went to Abimelech, king of the Philistines in Gerar (Genesis 26:1). We have incidences when the children of Jacob went to Egypt to buy grain (Genesis 42:1-3) which later on led to the enslavement of Israelites as reported in the book of Genesis. There were cases of famines in the reigns of David (2 Samuel 21:1) and Ahab (1 Kings 18:1-2). Then there is the incident of Naomi and her family who fleeing from Israel going to Moab (Ruth 1:1-2) as a result of hunger.

⁴⁴ Cf. V G Childe, *Man Makes Himself*, New York: New American Library Press, 1951, 107; See also, J Pastor, *Land and Economy in Ancient Palestine*, London: Routledge, 1997, 1

The problem of hunger is categorised by the prophet Jeremiah as the worst and painful experience than war. He says that: '*Happier were the victims of the sword than the victims of hunger, who pined away, stricken by want of the yield of the field*' (Lamentations 4:9). For Jeremiah, those who fall by the sword are better than those who fall under the banner of hunger. Peace and stability can be easily be bestowed when people have enough food. The extant Biblical and non-Biblical writings show that, the Jewish values, Jewish history and YHWH identified with the poor and hungry people. It is only the story of Esther that food is used to take a new twist than that of feeding the poor (Esther 5:4-14).⁴⁵ Whenever the kings failed to do their duties, they were strongly castigated as in the divine speech and shepherd metaphor of YHWH in Jeremiah 23:1-2; and Ezekiel 34:1-3.⁴⁶ The accusations on kings for neglecting the hungry people are followed by punishments. The punishment results in kings being relieved of their pastoral ministry and God claiming his flock back. YHWH as a good shepherd takes charge of the neglected and the weak (Jeremiah 23:1-2). The king was fully responsible for bringing peace, justice, righteousness and food to his subjects. Prophets and priests depended on the goodwill of the king to perform their duties. So feeding of the people was one of the duties that measured the electiveness of the Israelite king as a representative of God.

David's Duty of Feeding the People (2 Sam 6:19)

The shepherdhood of David in feeding of the people features in 2 Samuel 6:19. It is a short text that explicitly mentions the breadwinning distribution of cereal foods by David to the people. David is said to have given a loaf of bread, a cake of dates and a cake of raisins to each person in the whole crowd of Israelites, both men and women. And this was after the Ark was brought to Jerusalem and when they had made sacrifices in the celebration. The transfer of the Ark linked the kingship of

⁴⁵ Cf. D Resmick, *Esther's Bulimia: Diet, Didactics and Purim Paideia*, Duke University Press, *Journal of Poetics Today*, 1994, Vol 15, No1, 75-88; See also, L L Bronner, *Stories of Biblical Mothers: Material Power in the Hebrew Bible*, USA: University Press of America, 2004, 86

⁴⁶ Cf. J C E Tigchelaar, *Prophets of Old and the Day of the End Zechariah, the Book of Watches and Apocalyptic*, Leiden: E J Brill, 1996, 97

God to Davidic rule such that God's protection of the people manifested through God's protection of His anointed king (2 Sam 7:12-14). The bringing of the Ark to the city of Jerusalem transferred legitimacy and power from Saul's house to David.⁴⁷ David fulfilled his important duty as king by distributing food.⁴⁸ The distribution of food by David was in the context of festivity.

The distribution of cereal foods is interpreted as having been part of the cult offered to Yahweh, on the great sacrificial meal. However, the emphasis is placed on the distribution of bread (banquet of breads and cakes) to the hungry people.⁴⁹ David in this case is the principal celebrant in the ritual and supervised the procession. As patron, he donated cereal food to the people as traditionally done by kings to their subjects. The giving of cereal food to his subjects also portrayed the feeding enableness of YHWH. David's distribution of cereal food resonates with Psalms 72:16 which gives us a picture of Israelite kings as food donors, "*Let corn abound throughout the land; on the tops of the hills may it sway. Let its fruits flourish like Lebanon; let it thrive like the grass of the field*". The presence of the king made food to be enjoyed everywhere in the land. The picture given is that of corn being found throughout the land. So nobody was expected to be hungry. It exposes the theological and social role of ancient Israelite king as benefactor in nature and history using theocratic categories. The reign of God was associated with fertility of the land which is transferred to the king who then guarantees care and safety to his people. When the king gave land to the people, it

⁴⁷ The Ark of God was the most sacred symbol of tribal, covenantal Israel. It represented the holy war traditions of Yahweh as the divine warrior who fought for Israel. Jerusalem became inaugurated as both a royal center as well as religio-political center of Israel's life. Cf. A F Campbell and J W Flanagan, *1-2 Samuel*, in R E Brown, The New Jerome Biblical Commentary, London: Cassell Publishers Ltd, 1990, 156; See also, B C Birch, *The First and Second Books of Samuel: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections*, in L E Keck (eds), The Interpreter's Bible: General Articles and Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections for Each Book of the Bible including the Apocryphal/ Deutero-canonical Books in Twelve Volumes, Volume 1, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994, 1247

⁴⁸ Cf. W Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel, Interpretation*, Louisville: John Knox, 1990, 249; See also, P K McCarter, *II Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction, Notes, and Commentary*, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1984, 179

⁴⁹ Cf. Grottanelli, *Kings and Prophets*, 32

was part of bestowing his fertility to the people. This ideology shares in form and content with the Egyptian, Mesopotamian and later Roman royal tradition where the emperor was portrayed as ‘filling the land with food’.⁵⁰ It is overall clear that, in all these traditions the notion of the king as the breadwinner and provider of his people was shared.

Besides David giving food to the hungry people, Boaz is also the generous distributor of cereal grains (specific case of two widows, a mother in law and a daughter in law-Naomi and Ruth-Ruth 2 and 3). Boaz gave six measures of barley-Ruth 3:15-17). In the New Testament, we also find Jesus taking up the task as the new Moses and New Davidic king in feeding the people. The connection with the ideological theme of the generous king who bestows grain seems quite clear on the Boaz story but the scenario has messianic connotation about what a future king must do with the hungry poor.⁵¹ In all these scenarios, there is a link between the situations of festivity, famine, loss of land, hunger and feeding of the people. The messiah in that aspect came in the sense of a king, who gave people land, fed the hungry and protected the needy.

Joseph as the Breadwinner (Gen 41:41-57)

Besides the debate on David as the breadwinner, Joseph also features as the grain donor who saved people from hunger (41:41-57). The role of Joseph in feeding people is suggestive of somebody who had been made king in Egypt. Chapter 41 falls under the chapters labelled as ‘Jacob Saga’ which is a collection of traditions about Jacob and his sons. Several sources are believed as behind the composition of the Joseph story. However, many scholars now assume that the Joseph story had two forms, one in J and another in E which were later joined together by the final redactor. Our focal point is not discussing in detail the purported number of sources but to focus on Joseph as the grain donor. The Joseph narrative is interesting and to some extent awesome as the story unfolds. The scene changes from Pharaoh’s prison to Pharaoh’s palace, mirroring the rise of Joseph from a status of weakness to a status of

⁵⁰ Cf. Kügler, *Der Andere König*, 82

⁵¹ Cf. Grottanelli, *Kings and Prophets*, 37

power.⁵² The story exposes the inhospitableness that Joseph experienced in Egypt in his early days and Joseph's rise to the position of the king in Egypt. There is prideful reversal of powerful foreign model and a mythical attribution of the royal model to a son of Israel, who came as a slave.⁵³ Although Joseph is not mentioned as the son of God, it is likely that the expression of God's spirit in Pharaoh's speech should be read as a theological statement that point to the coronation of Joseph as an Egyptian king.

What one notices in relation to Joseph and the feeding topic is that, Joseph's interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams showed that he had more than ordinary wisdom by virtue of possessing God's Spirit (Gen 41:38). Pharaoh's royal dreams though in pairs (seven cows and seven ears of grain) pointed to the same result of a troubled future (41:1-7; 17-24). Pharaoh was justified as king to be deeply disturbed as the dreams portended an ominous future. And Joseph's counsel to Pharaoh (41:33-36) to store food during the years of prosperity was the kind of advice given by people with connection to royalty.⁵⁴ In fact Joseph does not boast in his own abilities, he diminishes himself and upholds the merciful God who worked through him. Joseph makes clear that, the success and reputation of his position (kingship) was in fact the success of God.

The ability by Joseph (41:33-36) to discern and foretell about what was supposed to be done in relation to the feeding duty portrays him a benevolent king. This is despite the fact that, this was institutional feeding linked to Pharaoh as king and not the personal feeding of Joseph. V P Hamilton takes Genesis 41:40-43 as pointing to Joseph as the vizier or prime minister, when Pharaoh said that:

⁴⁰You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders. Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you.

⁴¹So Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'I hereby put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt' ⁴² Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his finger and

⁵² Cf. T E Fretheim, *Genesis: Introduction, Commentary and Reflections*, 620

⁵³ Cf. C Grotanelli, *Kings and Prophets: Monarchic Power, Inspired Leadership, and Sacred Text in Biblical Narrative*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, 34

⁵⁴ Cf. V P Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 18-50*, Grand Rapids: W m B Eerdmans, 1996, 500

put it on Joseph's finger. He dressed him in robes of finer linen and put a gold chain around his neck.⁴³ He had him ride in a chariot as his second-in-command, and men shouted before him, 'Make way!' Thus put him in charge of the whole land of Egypt.⁴⁴ Moreover Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'I am Pharaoh, and without your consent no man shall lift up hand or foot in all the land of Egypt'.⁵⁵

Verses 40-44 describe an act of installation. The ancient versions' literal translation of the texts, for example, the LXX renders (i) 'over my palace- ἐπὶ τῷ οἴκῳ μου' point to Joseph being made the 'vizier'; (ii) 'and all my people are to submit to your orders' point to his authority as king; (iii) 'put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt- ἐπὶ τῷ στόματί σου ὑπακούσεται πᾶς ὁ λαός μου πλὴν τὸν θρόνον ὑπερέξω σου ἐγώ' expresses an epithet for 'Chief or vizier of the Entire land'; (iv) 'king's signet (which bore Pharaoh's personal seal), finer linen, gold chain and ride in a chariot' point to royal status of Joseph as the vizier or prime minister.⁵⁶ Joseph was the second in command to Pharaoh such that whatever he did in terms of feeding was part of the state's structural feeding. The transfer to Joseph of the royal seal (v.42) inasmuch as the vizier was recorded as the 'Sealbearer of the King of Lower Egypt' in the third millennium.⁵⁷ What is interesting in this story is that, the subsequent rise to power exceeds even the extravagant promise of his boyhood visions (37:6-9; 40:9-19). Joseph became in charge of both the palace (41:40) and the country (41:41, 43), making him a powerful man with wide-ranging authority.

Some scholars dispute any suggestion of Joseph as having been made vizier. According to R J Clifford and R E Murphy, there is no such evidence in the Egyptian records that Joseph was promoted to such a post. This glorification of Joseph is due to the author.⁵⁸ R J Clifford and R E Murphy fail to realize that, it is quite possible for Joseph to have at-

⁵⁵ V P Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 18-50*, 505

⁵⁶ Cf. V P Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 18-50*, 505; See also, R J Clifford and R E Murphy, *Genesis*, 39

⁵⁷ Cf. E Speiser, *Genesis: An Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1964, 315

⁵⁸ Cf. R J Clifford and R E Murphy, *Genesis*, 37

tained such a position with political clout. This is shown by De Vaux, who notes that.

Asiatic officials are known to have been employed by pharaohs of the Middle Kingdom hence Joseph's promotion must be seen as historically possible. Extra-biblical documents would seem to point to the probable arrival in Egypt of a Semite called Joseph who rose from the status of slave to a position which he exercised very high functions. They also show that a group of Semites probably settled in the Delta, which of course are the essentials of the story of Joseph and his brothers.⁵⁹

There is a possibility that, Joseph once historically lived in Egypt. Pharaoh could not have been physically killed, but Joseph's kingship role is also clearly shown by Pharaoh's response to Egyptians' cry for food.

Joseph proved his ability as prime minister when he saved people from hunger. Joseph developed land policies that made the land become fruitful during times of abundance. When the years of abundance were over, people cried to Pharaoh, wanting to be fed and Pharaoh directed them to Joseph by saying:

'Go to Joseph and do what he tells you.' When the famine had spread over the whole country, Joseph opened the storehouses and sold grain to the Egyptians, for famine was severe throughout Egypt. And all countries came to Egypt to buy the grain from Joseph, because the famine was severe in the entire world (41:55-56).

In the above text, Pharaoh exposes Joseph as having participated in the breadwinner role of the kings. Joseph's wisdom also enabled Egypt to become the bread basket for 'the entire world' (41:54, 56, and 57). The Egyptians' lives rested with Joseph and not only Pharaoh. J Kügler quotes JosAs to claim that '*Josef ist ja vom Pharao als Herrscher über Ägypten eingesetzt. Er ist 'König des ganzen Landes Ägypten und Retter und Korngeber'*'.⁶⁰ Joseph was indeed used by Pharaoh as the ruler, saviour and grain donor of Egypt. Besides the positives about Joseph's feeding role, Genesis 47:18-26 portrays clearly the frustration that people ended up having though Joseph worsened their plight. The conditions of hunger made

⁵⁹ R J Clifford and R E Murphy, *Genesis*, 37

⁶⁰ Cf. Kügler, *Der Andere König*, 80

Egyptians to desperately exchange their livestock (horses, sheep, oxen and asses) and fields for food. According to T E Fretheim, God's work of blessing through Joseph included the entire human race, not just the chosen ones or the elite members.⁶¹ However, we beg to differ from T E Fretheim by noting that, the feeding role by Joseph also exposes the bad side of how food is sometimes used by the powerful elite to enslave the weak. Joseph's feeding took away the land and livestock of peoples. Joseph behaved like most rulers who identify the problem and pretend to solve it but at the end leave the poor more vulnerable than before.

The picture shown in Genesis 47 besides displaying the kingship of Joseph also portrays the crisis that had been created by the famine. Egyptian records mention one such famine that lasted for seven years.⁶² D B Redford thinks that, the point of reference and the central problem addressed by the narrative of Genesis 47:18-26 is most probably the indebtedness of Palestinian peasants and their consequent loss of land. The loss includes children and personal freedom in times of famine and failed harvests.⁶³ The endemic indebtedness as a result of the loss of land leading to hunger and seeking food featured in the entire scope of the history of the ANE hence sharing convergences with the story of Joseph in Egypt. The biblical texts should be understood as principally targeting the social and political reality of the Palestine of the first millennium B.C.E. The Joseph story shares some interesting realities with the book of Amos, on the usurious loaning of grains, the mechanisms of surety possibly pointing to the same period of writing.⁶⁴ The enslavement of insolvent debtors as purported in the Joseph narrative also appears in the wisdom literature like: Proverbs 11:15 (loans, surety, and forfeiture), Proverbs 11:26 (cornering the market and the sale of grains), Proverbs 29:13-14 (the usurer, the poor man, and the just king). There is condemnation of the rich who take advantage of the poor, by

⁶¹ Cf. T E Fretheim, *Genesis: Introduction, Commentary and Reflections*, 623

⁶² Cf. J A Wilson, 'The Tradition of Seven Lean Years in Egypt' and 'the prophecy of Neferti', in J B Pritchard (eds), *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969, 31-32

⁶³ Cf. D B Redford, *A Study of the Biblical Story of Joseph* (Genesis 35-70), Leiden: Brill, 1970, 236-241

⁶⁴ Cf. C Grottanelli, *Kings and Prophets*, 34

accumulating so many properties. The rich and the powerful deliberately manufacture hunger and poverty in order to have total control on the people they feed. The benefactor knows that loyalty is one of the political goods that result from the feeding of the hungry. Feeding under whatever circumstances is not a neutral duty as it is connected to power and control of resources.

If the dilemma of the hungry people narrated in Genesis 41 and 47 *Vis a Vis* 'king' Joseph is to be taken seriously, the intention of Joseph was therefore not to save or give life to the people even though they claimed to owe their lives to him. Joseph's intention was to procure for the palace which he served total dominion and total ownership over the land and the people. He made it a reality through the perverse mechanism of debt where the palace amasses all the silver, all the livestock, and all the land except that of the priests.⁶⁵ Joseph's feeding of the masses exposes the shameful capitalistic role that he undertook in stripping off the poor from their properties. Joseph converted the people to become perennial beneficiaries of the king's food handouts. The loss of land by the people implied loss of possession, empowerment and entitlement creating a platform for the powerful to manipulate the weak, hungry and the property-less. Disloyalty to the king implied deprivation from food as well as life.

T L Thompson argues that, the presence of a Jew in the Egyptian court is the only means by which it is possible for the book of primordial, the book of Genesis, can be understood in relation to Palestinian famine and land displacement. The frequent relocations of the Patriarchs across the vast stretches of space, which are often ascribed to hunger or famines do not seem to be semi-nomadic at all, but should be interpreted along the lines of land dispossession.⁶⁶ The land dispossession factor relates so well to the Zimbabwean context. T L Thompson's analysis might be convincing to a certain extent but it is not convincing in the case of Jacob's movement. Jacob's movement is possibly not clear about whether Jacob had been displaced of his land leading to hunger or that

⁶⁵ Cf. Grottanelli, *Kings and Prophets*, 35

⁶⁶ Cf. T L Thompson, *The Historicity of Patriarchal Narratives: The Quest for the Historical Abraham*, Berlin: de Gruyter, 1976, 308-314

the movement was driven by hunger not linked to land dispossession. However, Joseph played a godly and kingly duty in saving peoples' lives such that countries beyond Egypt were saved as shown by Joseph's brothers' visit to Egypt.

The Feeding of the Masses by Moses (Ex 16:1-15)

Moses fits into the kingship equation by virtue of having fed the hungry masses in the desert (Ex 16:1-15; Num 11:18-23; 31-35). However, Exodus 16 has been linked to various sources as a result of the problem of understanding the logical sequence⁶⁷ and chronological inconsistencies of verses 1-36. There is the greatest likelihood that, a theological mind of the writer compelled him to override any chronological sequence. Due to such literary challenges, we are not going to look at the possible sources found in Exodus 16 as our focus is on the feeding topic. Interestingly the whole of Exodus 16 focuses on food in general compelling us to look at Moses' kingship and the feeding topic.

The food debate includes the promise by Moses of 'bread from heaven' to the hungry masses. Moses' kingship and his mediation of feeding by Yahweh is that, while grains are normally by the heaven's rain, Yahweh bypasses farming, directly raining down 'bread'.⁶⁸ It is such mystery that, the feeding by Moses has been theologically interpreted as symbolizing the provision and the compassionate power of God. The Manna from Yahweh was supernaturally sustaining and had replaced the Israelites' non-sustaining unleavened bread (Exodus 12:34).

⁶⁷ The problem is identified as follows: The initial response of God to the people's murmuring for food makes no reference to the complaint, but promises Moses bread from heaven. Moses and Aaron then in vv.6ff inform the people that Yahweh has heard their murmuring and that he will send flesh in the evening and bread in the morning. Then in v.10 Yahweh appears in a theophany and informs Moses of a message which he is to pass on to the people. However, it consists of an exact parallel to that which Moses has already made known to them previously. Further to that, evidences have been established suggesting that at an early stage in the development of the tradition the Manna and the quail stories circulated independently of one another though they were combined later in the various texts like: Numbers 11; Exodus 16, and Psalms 78, Cf. B S Childs, *The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary*, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1974, 275

⁶⁸ Cf. W H C Propp, *Exodus 1-18: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, New York: Doubleday, 1998, 593

The role of YHWH in the lives of Joseph and Moses and later their selection in feeding people is not coincidental if it is taken as ‘suggestive’ of kingship in the ancient traditions. Moses displayed extraordinary virtues when compared to ancient kings, especially in the Hellenistic royal ideology.⁶⁹ Moses’ feeding is different when compared with David and Joseph as well as ANE kings. This puts Moses on the spotlight as somebody who performed the duty of a divinely elected king when he fed the Israelites in the wilderness. If we are to imagine Moses as a real king, the material kingship symbolism helps us in that light. The rod (Exodus 4:20) that was given to Moses symbolised his appointment as chief and shepherd-king over his people. The sceptre and crown are important symbolical emblems of kingship. Some of the Jewish literature refer to Moses as king, for example, a) the *Exagoge* of Ezekiel where Moses becomes king at the time of his Sinai ascent; b) Philo duplicates the episode in a Midrash on Exodus 7:1, arguing that, Moses was named ‘god and king’ of the whole nation (Mos 1:158). The category of Moses as king is further expounded on in Mos.1.334.⁷⁰ The eleventh book of the Sibylline Oracles calls Moses a king. Justus of Tiberius, a Jewish historian and a contemporary of Josephus also considered Moses a king of the Jews just like Agrippa II.⁷¹ Besides the above selected Jewish literature, the Exodus event parades Moses as the common father of all the people he led; delivering them from the chains of slavery by Pharaoh, feeding and giving them water.

It is important to note that, Moses’ kingship contributes nothing to the contemporary reader if one does not emphasise his feeding of the people. The wilderness setting that Moses operated under exposes the challenges that Israelites faced. The narrative stresses the point that God divinely led and fed Israel in the itinerary wilderness journey. Besides Yahweh’s liberation of Israelites from Pharaoh, feeding was part and parcel of liberation. This was despite the fact that, the Israelites passed through the wilderness and murmured with dissatisfaction

⁶⁹ Cf. W A Meeks, *The prophetic-King: Moses Traditions and the Johannine Christology*, Leiden: E J Brill, 1967, 108

⁷⁰ Cf. J Lierman, *Mosaic Pattern of John’s Christology*, 219

⁷¹ Cf. J Lierman, *Mosaic Pattern of John’s Christology*, 220

against Moses (Exodus 16:2-4).⁷² In response to the murmurings, Exodus 16:6-34 alleges that, the Israelite murmurings stemmed from their rebellion against God though he continued to be gracious to them. The effect of the verses in the present feeding narrative portrays God as hard-hearted and unconcerned with the plight of the people. This is despite the fact that, the murmurings stemmed from the hunger which the crowd was facing but the author negatively casts such genuine complaints. In Numbers 11, there is a clear reason why God was justified to be angry against the Israelites. The Israelites' complain was not on their experience of hunger but that they were bored with the daily ration of manna. In the case of Numbers 11:4 and Psalms 78:30, there is an explicit condemnation of the desire for meat as illegitimate and unnecessary craving. What is interesting is that, the feeding enableness of the Pharaoh managed to secure the loyalty of the Israelites such that, they did not even see the oppression that Moses and colleagues talked about. Instead the people still longed for the 'Egyptian pots of flesh or meat' and 'bread aplenty' which disavows the biblical claims of heavy-handed oppression known of Egypt.⁷³ Their bond with Pharaoh as their breadwinner and Egypt was cemented on material satiation. What is clear in Moses' kingship and the feeding narrative is that, the desert situation was the opposite of the timeous feeding they got from the Egyptian Pharaoh hence becoming a troubling place for the Israelites. Pharaoh's feeding became a hindrance problem to the Israelites' appreciation and trust in God. They ended up failing to acknowledge YHWH's liberation and His momentous providence of food in the wilderness.

People became much concerned with material needs, developing much anxiety on what to eat and drink. In such a situation, the fear of Moses was not misplaced, considering the number of people given in

⁷² Cf. I Finkelstein and N A Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology's New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of Its Sacred Texts*, New York: The Free Press, 2001, 51

⁷³ Cf. W Brueggemann, *The Book of Exodus: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections*, in L E Keck (eds), *The Interpreter's Bible: General Articles and Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections for Each Book of the Bible including the Apocryphal/Deutero-canonical Books in Twelve Volumes*, Volume 1, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994, 812

Exodus 12:37, if taken literally and not metaphorically.⁷⁴ The number is put around 600,000 men excluding women and children plus an unspecified but apparently large ‘mixed multitude’ of non-Israelites. Numbers 1:46 gives a more precise total of 603,550. The 600,000 plus wives, children, the elderly and the ‘mixed multitude’ puts the figure around two million people compared with an entire estimated Egyptian population of around 3 million. What is interesting is that, no evidence exists that Egypt ever suffered such a demographic and economic catastrophe with the going out of the Israelites. There is no evidence that the Sinai desert, ever hosted millions of people and their herds, nor of a massive population increase in Canaan, which is estimated to have had a population of only 50,000 to 100,000 at the time.⁷⁵ Besides these challenges on the historicity of the feeding account, it is clear that it was impossible to provide sufficient food in the wilderness, for such a great crowd of people. The narrative shows the hero status given to Moses by the author that when people were in need, Moses interceded on their behalf and God gave the supply of food. Yet in their circumstance, they were just a band of run-away slaves, no savings, no food stored, and no prospective donor of food.

The crowd was so big that, Moses needed two or three freight trains to carry 150-200 tons of food daily for their needs. To prepare their food using firewood would make their needs not imaginable in terms of the costs that would have been incurred. Even if they had slaughtered flocks and herds, it would still not last as ironically impressed by Moses in Numbers 11:10-15, 22:

¹⁰Moses heard the people of every family wailing, each at the entrance to his tent. The Lord became exceedingly angry, and Moses was troubled. ¹¹ He asked the Lord, Why have you brought this trouble on your servant? What have I done to displease you that you put the burden of all these people on me? ¹²Did I conceive all these people? Did I give them birth? Why do you tell me to carry them in my arms, as a nurse carries an infant, to the land you promised on oath to their forefathers? ¹³ Where can

⁷⁴ Cf. K Mattis, *The Jewish Time Line Encyclopaedia*, Northvale: NJ.u.a Aronson, 1989, 56

⁷⁵ Cf. W G Dever, *Who were the Early Israelites and Where Did They Come From?*, Grand Rapids: WMD Eerdmans, 2006, 19

I get meat for all these people? They keep wailing to me, 'Give us meat to eat!' ¹⁴ I cannot carry all these people by myself; the burden is too heavy for me. ¹⁵ If this is how you are going to treat me, put me to death right now. ²² Would they have enough if flocks and herds were slaughtered for them? Would they have enough if all the fish in the sea were caught for them?

The broader statement exudes the frustration that Moses had and the burden which he was facing in making sure that the Israelites had enough food to eat. What is interesting is that, Numbers 11:12 invoke a female nursery of Moses as a 'Nursery Father'. L J M Claassens argues that:

In this text, Moses delivers a strong appeal where he basically offers his resignation as nurse. In a series of rhetorical questions, Moses asks whether he has conceived and given birth to these children so that he should be assigned the duties of a nurse carrying the nursing child in her bosom (Num 11:12). Moses knows that, they are on their way to a land of plenty, the promised land of milk and honey (Ex 3:8, 17; 13:5; Lev 20:24; Num 13:2). But in the meantime while journeying through the wilderness, somebody has to provide food for the 'infants'.....Moses expresses his utter inability to provide for the peoples' wants.....Moses urges God, whom he considers to be the real Mother to step in and fulfill God's maternal duties by providing food and care.⁷⁶

Interestingly Moses and Israelites' complaints are amicably addressed where: in place of Egyptian flesh, they are given quail and in place of the Egyptian bread, they have bread from heaven.⁷⁷ The bread from heaven contrasts from the bread that is made by human hands. Moses and Israelites failed to recognize God's care but that did not stop God from showing his sufficiency. J M Claassens brings the female image of God as a caring mother whose milk is enough for His children. Therefore, Moses was not supposed to be worried or to painstakingly provide the food and milk, since God fulfills that function.⁷⁸ The desert life that hopelessly seemed to be a threat to life had become a nurturing place of

⁷⁶ L J M Claassens, *The God who provides: Biblical Images of Divine Nourishment*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2004, 6

⁷⁷ Cf. W Brueggemann, *The Book of Exodus*, 813

⁷⁸ Cf. L J M Claassens, *The God who provides*, 7

abundance because Yahweh through Moses was in charge (Exod.14:4, 17). The Israelites had no option during their time in the desert except to trust God's gracious providence. In Egypt even though the Israelites were fed, it was not generously done. Pharaoh's bread just like the feeding of secular kings was characterized by coercion and affliction. Yet for Yahweh, the people were alternatively fed with bread in the morning and meat in the evening. People were supposed to only trust Yahweh's providence as part of their test than just gathering Manna. Yahweh had proved his ability to give the people: water, bread and meat (now not coming from the storehouses of Pharaoh) which was clearly a complete diet for human survival. In Egypt bread was received in exchange of labour as a reward for one's productive role. The Israelites failed to trustingly live up to the daily blessings that God showered on them.

Yahweh's gift of 'bread from heaven and meat' was different from how other secular kings fed people. With Yahweh, even the preparation and distribution of food is different. We are not told in the narrative about the processes that were taken in the preparation of that bread and meat. God bypasses what is known by His creatures so as to provide for them. There is no mention of the lighting of fire or mentioning of cooking except the impression that, the bread and manna was ready for consumption the moment it fell from heaven. The whole debate on the feeding of the Israelites in the wilderness ends up spiritual and miraculous when compared to the type of feeding known of kings. The provision of food by God exposed His genuine love for his people even though the people had done nothing (no toil or trouble) to deserve it (Exod.16:21). The divine providence of food by YHWH is a clue to his intimate nature and fellowship with His creation particularly on the gift of life and food.⁷⁹ The daily provision of food by God to the hungry Israelites declared His presence, glory, and fellowship with His children. He showed this by always responding to the Israel's cries (Ex 16:7, 8, 9, 12; Num 11:1-3, 20) by precisely doing what they requested.⁸⁰ In Numbers 11:17, he responded by coming down thereby bridging the distance and making Himself available to His people.

⁷⁹ Cf. L J M Claassens, *The God who provides*, 25

⁸⁰ Cf. L J M Claassens, *The God who provides*, 10

The view of mainstream modern biblical scholarship is that the biblical books which make up the Exodus story were written not as history, but to demonstrate God's purpose and deeds with His chosen people, Israel. D Friedrich and G Eliot argue that, the essentially theological motivation of the story explains the improbability of the underlying scenario. Moses' faith was in Yahweh who had promised people to prepare for the reception of the miraculous food of Manna and quails, not previously existing.⁸¹ Ibn Ezra is known for his polemic stance against anybody who sought to identify the biblical Manna with common food.⁸² Whether this is taken as a legend or not, it portrays the kingship of Moses in his generous mediating role of feeding people in the wilderness.⁸³ Moses' faith in God, made him become the donor of the manna as argued by Josephus (Book 3, Chapter 1.6).⁸⁴ Yahweh was in charge of the supply of bread including meat uncommon to all the people through the agency of Moses.

Yahweh's unfailing generous feeding was not based on patronage where the few elite benefited. Though carried out under the mediatorship of Moses, it transcended all royal charity feeding by secular rulers, who use charity feeding to stabilize and legitimize their power. What is interesting with Moses' kingship is that, he was the servant of the people who suffered frustration with them and his role as the liberator puts him differently from what was known of ancient kings. Even though the multitude was still unruly and mutinous against Moses than before; Moses' servant kingship made him continue to procure them some quantity of meat, not for a few days but for many years.⁸⁵ Yet ancient kings were in reverse served and it is commonly known that when there was hunger, the king was the last person to die of hunger. In fact the king's servants died on his behalf, something desacralized in Moses' servanthood kingship. Despite the challenges surrounding the

⁸¹ Cf. D F Strauss and G Eliot, *The Life of Jesus: Critically Examined*, London: SCM Press, 1973, 580

⁸² Cf. B S Childs, *The book of Exodus*, 298

⁸³ Cf. D F Strauss and G Eliot, *The Life of Jesus*, 580

⁸⁴ Cf. W Whiston and P L Maier, *The New Complete Works of Josephus*, Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1999, 113

⁸⁵ Cf. Whiston and Maier, *The New Complete Works of Josephus*, 136

authenticity surrounding the feeding of the people for forty years by Moses, the miracle remarkably portrays Moses with the image of an ideal and provident bread donor as a result of his trust in God. It led Joshua to realize the indispensable protection and leadership that Moses offered when he said in Mos. 11:9b that, 'Lord you are leaving. And who will feed this people'.⁸⁶ Joshua was implying that, under Moses' leadership and feeding enableness, people had been provided with enough free food (Ex 16:33; Deut 8:16; Ps 78:29; Hosea 11:4; Wisd 16:20. Moses became the shepherd of the people on behalf of Yahweh.⁸⁷ The shepherdhood feeding by Yahweh miraculously made everyone to have sufficient food, no surplus or scarcity of food. The equal distribution of food to all the people by YHWH (Ex 16:6) clearly shows the unique justice, merciful, gracious, patient, all-sufficient and the righteous God who does not differentiate between the poor and rich, weak and strong, male and female.⁸⁸ YHWH favors the justice of all including the oppressed, those at the margins of society, the poor and hungry. The ones who gathered a lot did not have too much whereas the ones who gathered little lacking nothing (Exod 16:17-18). They found that, they had exactly the same when they measured it. What is shocking is that, the Manna gathered for the Sabbath (v.23) did not go bad, yet would go bad when gathered in excess on other days. As a generous and compassionate shepherd, God could afford a day of rest for the people so as to make Israel experience God's care on their daily needs. L J M Claassens argues that:

The reason for this is that God is not only providing a day of rest for God's children, but also miraculously ensures that the rest does not occur at the expense of their daily needs.⁸⁹

God's provision was timeless and ensured that everybody had enough food at their disposal, even on the Sabbath days when they were at rest; a

⁸⁶ Cf. J Tromp, *The Assumption of Moses: A Critical Edition with Commentary*, Leiden: E J Brill, 1993, 246

⁸⁷ Cf. J Lierman, *The New Testament Moses: Christian Perceptions of Moses and Israel in the Setting of Jewish Religion*, 109

⁸⁸ Cf. L J M Claassens, *The God who provides*, 13

⁸⁹ L J M Claassens, *The God who provides*, 8

great sign of love and care. YHWH continued to nutritionally feed the Israelites in the Promised Land as testified in Deuteronomy 8:7-10.

The Early Judaism Concept of Kingship and Feeding

The exodus from Egypt and Moses' feeding motif formulated the religious discourses that became part of the second century Jewish literature. The literature is important in this study when it comes to the analysis of Early Judaistic concept of kingship and the feeding topic.

Herod's feeding of the people

Besides the Biblical references on feeding role of Joseph, Moses and David; Herod⁹⁰ is also credited with the important duty of feeding the people when there was a famine calamity. It was not clear whether the droughts were deriving from the anger of God or whether it was something natural like the earthquake in Judea in 31 BCE.⁹¹ The timing and the geographical extent of the drought was the determining factor. Everything people had stored was spent; there was no foundation of hope for relief remaining but only misery.⁹² The famine affected Judea and Syria, in the thirteenth and fourteenth years of Herod and seems to have been more terrible than in the days of Jacob. The two years were sabbatical years for which they expected God's providence but that blessing had been forfeited by the greatest years of famine. As a result of the distress, Josephus argues that, people ate many things that were once not eaten.⁹³

Herod had used most of the money in the building of cities. The miserable state of things procured more hatred, dissatisfaction and sus-

⁹⁰ Herod was 'unflinchingly loyal to and dependent on Rome'. The Romans saw the appointment of Herod, a Jewish king, as a good will gesture to the Jews of the Galut as well as a reward for Herod's loyalty and cooperation. Herod was unpopular even before his reign and it was the Roman spears that installed him on the throne. Herod's most famous building project, however, was the rebuilding of the Second Temple in Jerusalem. Herod bought a post from the Romans as general of the army of Celesyria, Cf. G A Shapiro, *Herod 'the Great'*, <http://www.mirrorofusersqual.net/~alyza/Jewish/Herod.html>, Accessed online, 19 November 2010

⁹¹ Cf. T Landau, *Out-Heroding Herod: Josephus, Rhetoric, and the Herod Narratives*, Leiden: Brill, 2006, 89

⁹² Cf. Maier and Whiston, *The New Complete Works of Josephus*, 514

⁹³ Cf. Maier and Whiston, *The New Complete Works of Josephus*, 518

picion against him from his subjects. Herod was unpopular with the people because of his economic policies that included: 1) the concentration of the land into the hands of the king and his henchmen so that the average Jewish farmer became a tenant paying excessive rents without means of support, 2) the exorbitant taxes impoverished many people, 3) the lavish spending on courts, gifts to patrons and allies as well the above highlighted expansive building programmes drained the wealth of the people.⁹⁴ Herod was known for corruptively giving land as gifts to loyal ministers, supporters, and military settlers at the expense of the ordinary people. S Freyne adds that:

The best lands became part of the royal possessions, either through confiscation or because their owners could not meet the heavy taxes which Herod exacted from the country people.⁹⁵

Higher taxes forced freeholders into debt and finally into tenant farmers or shameful peasants by virtue of losing land. In times of drought, people would become so desperate for food handouts from kings.

Besides all these challenges with Herod's economic policies, some scholars still regard Herod at one point as having been a selfless leader. Herod is reported to have sold his rich furniture and finest vessels (both of silver and gold) so as to feed the people. He used the proceeds to procure more grain from Egypt (*Ant.*15.306). As he was distributing the grain he reminded the people about the sacrifices he made to be able to feed them. Josephus notes that:

And Herod, taking care the people should understand that this help came from himself, did thereby not only remove the ill opinion of those that formerly hated him, but gave them the greatest demonstration possible of his goodwill to them, and care to them; for, in the first place, as for those who were able to provide their own food, he distributed to them their proportion of grain in the most exact manner; but for those many that were not able, either by reason of their old age, or any other infirmity, to provide food for themselves, he made this provision for them,

⁹⁴ Cf. M Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in Their Encounter in Palestine During the Early Hellenistic Period*, Vol.1, London: SCM Press Ltd, 1981, 271

⁹⁵ S Freyne, *Galilee from Alexander the Great to Hadrian*, Edinburgh: Clark Ltd, 1988, 164

the bakers should make their bread ready for them (Josephus, Book 15, Chapter 9.2).⁹⁶

Herod went further to furnish the needy population with clothes (*Ant.*15.310) and is reported as having aided the neighboring lands by giving land and seeds (*Ant.*15.311,313). Even though, Herod was interested in securing his legitimacy, he showed his selflessness by selling his property in order to feed the people.

However, P Garnsey begs to differ by arguing that, it was not only Herod who fed the people but the alleviation of the food crises was performed by the local men of wealth and the lion's share of aid came from Petronius (the Roman Prefect) though Herod garnered the credit for himself (*Ant.* 15.307).⁹⁷ Petronius as the Roman Prefect was interested in making sure that there was stability on his client-king's throne. Interestingly, the feeding produced favourable political goods as observed by Josephus that:

Now it happened that this care of his and this seasonable benefaction, had such influence on the Jews, and was so cried up among other nations, as to wipe off that old hatred which his violation of some of their customs, during his reign, had procured him among all the nation, and that this liberality of his assistance in this their greatest necessity was full satisfaction for all that he had done of that nature, as it also procured him great fame among foreigners. It looked as if these calamities that afflicted his land, to a degree plainly incredible, came in order to raise his glory, and to be to his great advantage; for the greatness of his liberality in these distresses, which he now demonstrated beyond all expectation, did so change the disposition of the multitude towards him, that they were ready to suppose he had been from the beginning not such a one as they had found to be by experience, but such a one as the care he had taken of them in supplying their necessities proved now to be (Book 15, Chapter 9.2).⁹⁸

The feeding paid off as people changed their hearts toward him. Herod is believed to have brought 35, 550,000-41, 850,000 liters of grain by ship

⁹⁶ Maier and Whiston, *The New Complete Works of Josephus*, 515

⁹⁷ Cf. P Garnsey, *Famine and Food Supply in the Graeco-Roman World*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988, 130; See also, J Pastor, *Land and Economy in Ancient Palestine*, London: Routledge, 1997, 121

⁹⁸ P Maier and W Whiston, *The New Complete Works of Josephus*, 515

and distributed them to the people. The imported grain was used for food and some for seed.⁹⁹ Herod's effort left him as a concerned breadwinner. J Pastor mentions about the stone weight from the thirty-second year of Herod with the following inscriptional words 'King Herod the Benefactor'.¹⁰⁰ The inscription parades the benevolence role of Herod on availing land and food to the hungry masses. It's obvious that the seed that was given to the people could have put Herod as a messianic figure considering that in most cases seed is hard to come by after a famine situation.

Herod managed to placate his subjects (*Ant.* 15.304) by his provision of food relief, clothing and inputs. As a result of filling peoples' stomachs with food, the old hatred towards Herod eventually turned out to be a cause for his overwhelming support though the king had used his political connections and shrewd policies to buy grain and save the population of Judea from perishing.¹⁰¹ The rebellious actions by the people towards Herod during famine typify what happens in every society when people are experiencing hunger, lack of opportunities, unemployment, famine and poverty. They turn against those in authority as happened in North Africa and the Middle East in 2011. All these experiences portray Herod to some extent as having been generous and loving, despite the fact that, he is reported in the gospels particularly Matthew as having been greed, selfish, lustful and cruel (Mt.2:16-19; Mt.14:1-12). Overall, the feeding duty was linked to the king's legitimacy and authority.

The Divine Wisdom/Word as Spiritual Bread (Philo)

The understanding of Moses, the role he played and the meaning and significance of Manna changed with time as shown by Philo. Philo believes that, Moses' encounter with God at the burning bush (Mos 1:63-84) marked the choosing of Moses as king. When discussing about Philo of Alexandria, there is need to take cognisance of his extensive allegori-

⁹⁹ Cf. P Garnsey, 'Grain for Rome', in P Garnsey, K Hopkins, C R Whittaker (eds), *Trade in the Ancient Economy*, London: Chatto and Whindus, 1983, 118

¹⁰⁰ Cf. J Pastor, *Land and Economy in Ancient Palestine*, 120

¹⁰¹ Cf. T Landau, *Out-Heroding Herod: Josephus, Rhetoric, and the Herod Narratives*, 122

cal method interpretation of scriptures. For Philo, Moses was the ‘most excellent provident king and perfect ruler’. Philo further allegorically interprets the Manna that Moses used to feed Israelites as to be understood as a metaphor for God’s wisdom.¹⁰² Philo was not interested in the context of the text in his argument. Philo says:

The multitude, the common herd, who have never trusted of wisdom, the one true food of us all, think that those who feed on the divine words live in misery and suffering and little know that their days are spent in continual well-being and gladness.¹⁰³

For Philo, the Manna was not only food for the body but the wisdom that was being distributed to Israelites as part of their salvation. Philo also allegorically interpreted Genesis 4:8-15 as shown in the text, *That the Worse Attacks the Better* (Quad deterius potiori insidari Soleat); Deut.115-118 to qualify the sustenance of God’s divine word in giving life to those embracing the life of learning that:

These ‘products’ are nourishment in the strict meaning of the word, supplied by the soul that is able, as the lawgiver says, to ‘suck honey out of the rock and oil out of the hard rock’ (Deut 32:13). Moses uses the word ‘rock’ to express the solid and indestructible wisdom of God, which feeds and nurses and rears to sturdiness all who yearn after imperishable sustenance. For this divine wisdom has appeared as mother of all that are in the world, affording to her offspring, as soon as they are born, the nourishment which they require from her breasts. But not all her offspring are (worthy to eat) divine food, but such as are found worthy of their parents; for many of them fall victims to the famine of virtue, a famine more cruel than that of eatables and drinkables. The fountain of divine wisdom runs swiftly and with a fuller and stronger current. When it runs down, it sweetens much as honey does; when it runs swiftly down, it comes in full volume as material for lighting up the soul, even as oil does a lamp. In another place he uses a synonym for the rock and calls it ‘Manna’. Manna is the divine word, eldest of all existences, which bears the most comprehensive name of ‘somewhat’.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Cf. C Bennema, *The Power of Saving Wisdom: An Investigation of Spirit and Wisdom in Relation to the Soteriology of the Fourth Gospel*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002, 198

¹⁰³ P N Anderson, *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel: Its Unity and Disunity in the Light of John 6*, Tübingen: Mohr, 1996, 216

¹⁰⁴ L JM Claassens, *The God who provides*, 92

Philo connects all the symbolism like the rock, honey and Manna as pointing to God's wisdom and feeding enableness. If God fed the Israelites with honey and gave them water from a rock, people must always expect the same wisdom and good food from Him. God's food nourishes both the body and soul with life and wisdom. As a result of the role that was taken by Moses in feeding the Israelites in the desert, Philo treats Moses as having been a Shepherd-become-king in Mos.1.60.¹⁰⁵ This is even shown by the Jews who often thought of Moses as their king (Num 27:16-26; Isa 63:11).

Manna is allegorically compared to God's wisdom or word as shown in Deuteronomy 8:3 and Wisdom 16:20-21, 26:

God humbled you by letting you hunger and by feeding you with manna, which your ancestors did not know, in order to make you understand that one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.¹⁰⁶

Philo's argument is based on Exodus 16:13-15, that, 'Manna' or 'bread from heaven' became a metaphor for divine wisdom/teaching, which is life-giving (*Mut.*259, Deut.115-118; *Her.*191; *Cong.*173-174; *Leg.All.*3.161-162; *Quaest.in Gn.*4.102; cf.*Sac.*86; Ex 16:13-15).¹⁰⁷ As the Manna descended to the Israelites, for Philo, it was God's wisdom that was falling on them for their salvation. Philo connects the divine word to the individual's cognitive processing of that word by arguing that:

The divine word spoke to each and every person according to his capacity. And do not wonder at this. For when Manna came down for Israel, each and every person tasted it in keeping with his own capacity-

¹⁰⁵ Cf. J Lierman, *The New Testament Moses: Christian Perceptions of Moses and Israel in the Setting of Jewish Religion*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004, 110

¹⁰⁶ G R O' Day and S Hylen, *John*, Westminster Knox Press, 2006, 77

¹⁰⁷ Cf. P Borgen, *Bread From Heaven: An Exegetical Study of the Concept of Manna in the Gospel of John and the Writings of Philo*, Leiden: Brill, 1965, 149; See also, C Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel: Meaning, Mystery, Community*, Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995, 97; P B Smit, *Fellowship and Food in the Kingdom: Eschatological means and Scenes of Utopian abundance in the New Testament*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008, 69; C Burchard, C Burfeind, *Gesammelte Studien zu Joseph und Aseneth*, Leiden: Brill, 1996, 290

infants in keeping with their capacity, young men in keeping in their capacity, and old men in keeping with their capacity.¹⁰⁸

In this case, Manna was given a spiritual meaning and context rather than the actual physical feeding of people with food. So when God fed the Israelites with Manna, He was feeding them with the knowledge of His existence hence God's wisdom. C A Evans observes that, the spiritualizing of Manna was a common theme in Judaism (Wis.Sol.16:20, 26, Neh. 9:20) and we find Philo turning Manna into a metaphor of wisdom.¹⁰⁹ It is clear that, in early Judaism, the understanding of Manna had changed to focus on the world to come (Mek.11, 119; Qoh.Rabbah 1, 9) and the future deliverer who would let the Manna fall down from heaven (MidrTanh.Exod.IV, 21). The Manna will only be for the righteous people and the Manna will be qualitatively better than the first Manna.¹¹⁰ The Israelites were supposed to realise that, their existence was not only depended on God's gift of Manna, but God's wisdom or words. In Proverbs 2:6, 10:27, 14:27, 19:23 and 22:4, the fear of the Lord leads to life. Obedience to God's wisdom is a choice between life and death in the present life and in future. The metaphorical interpretation of Manna shows the developments on the understanding of Manna where its significance was not only the nourishment of the body but redeeming the soul as well.

Jews as Children of God eating the Bread of Life (JosAs)

Originally 'Manna' or 'bread from heaven' as shown above had a literal meaning (Exod.16:4, 15, 31; Neh.9:15; Pss.78:24; 109:40; Wis.16:20-21) but was soon turned into a metaphor, signifying Jews as children who were symbolically privileged to eat the bread of life (Deut.8:3; Amos 8:11; Wis.16:20, 26; Mek.Exod.13:17). Bread is a common symbol for the Torah in most of the rabbinic literature and the tradition is traced back to

¹⁰⁸ L JM Claassens, *The God who provides*, 93

¹⁰⁹ Cf. C A Evans, *The Bible Knowledge Background Commentary: John's Gospel, Hebrews-Revelation*, USA: Cook Communications Ministries, 2005, 75

¹¹⁰ Cf. C Houtman, *Exodus: Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament*, Kampen: KOK Publishing House, 1996, 327

Eliezer ben Hyrcanus and Jeshua ben Chananiah (C.A.D 90).¹¹¹ The ‘bread and Manna’ phenomena developed various meanings with different contexts. In Joseph and Asenath (JosAs 16:14ff), the Manna is apparently equated with the honeycomb, the bread of life that is regarded as bestowing on receivers immortality.¹¹² The reasons for making this association between Manna and honeycomb follow that: Manna tastes like honey (Exod. 16:31) while Numbers 11:8 says that Manna tastes like ‘cakes baked with oil’. It is called ‘food of angels’ in Psalms 77:25 (LXX); both the Manna and Aseneth’s honeycomb are white (Exod. 16:31; JosAs 16:8); the Manna descended with the dew (Num. 11:9) and the honeycomb is made from dew (JosAs 16:14; cf. 16:8).¹¹³ So the Manna had a variety of tastes as claimed by Rabbi Ishmael who is quoted in the *Me-kilta de Rabbi Ishmael* saying:

Moses said to Jethro: ‘In this Manna which God has given to us, we can taste the taste of bread, the taste of meat, the taste of fish, the taste of locust, and the taste of all the delicacies in the world.’¹¹⁴

The various tastes of Manna as postulated by Rabbi Ishmael are testimony to the divine innovativeness of God in feeding His children, something expected today to his people.

In fact, in the ancient Jewish romance of *Joseph and Aseneth*, the Egyptian maiden Aseneth eats from a life-giving honeycomb. In partaking of the honeycomb, she is transformed into Joseph’s eternal bride. The angel then promises Aseneth a new kind of nourishment:

You will eat a blessed bread of life, and you will drink a blessed cup of immortality, and you will be anointed with a blessed oil of immortality (or ‘incorruption’, 15:5).¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ Cf. D Hill, *Greek Words and Hebrew Meanings*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967, 198

¹¹² Cf. C Houtman, *Exodus: Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament*, 327

¹¹³ Cf. E Crane, *A Book of Honey*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980, 34-36

¹¹⁴ J M Claassens, *The God who provides*, 2

¹¹⁵ In the longer of the two major forms of the text, this formulaic metaphoric language for Manna appears six times : three times in the triad, ‘blessed bread of life’, ‘blessed cup of immortality’, and ‘blessed ointment of incorruption’ (8:5; 15:5; 16:16); and three times in the dyad, ‘bread of life’ and ‘cup of blessing’ (8:9; 19:5; 21:21). By partaking of this holy food, drink, and chrism, Aseneth’s life was refashioned to a new life (15:5)

The ‘eating’ experience of the honeycomb by Aseneth is metaphorically likened to Israelites’ eating of the Manna in the wilderness which changed their lives then. It is clear in this context that, even though God is the source of life, the mediating feeding role by Moses in giving Israelites Manna had developed with time to an eschatological meaning. Philo saw Manna as ‘an ethereal and divine food’ meant for the righteous people of God only. This was reminiscent of Psalms 78:24-25:

וַיִּמְטֹר עֲלֵיהֶם מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם לֶאֱכֹל וַיִּגְזַר שָׁמַיִם
 נָתַן לָמוֹ: ²⁴ and he rained down upon them
 manna to eat, and gave them the grain
 of heaven.

לֶחֶם אַבְרָיִם אָכַל אִישׁ צִידָה שֶׁלֶח
 לָהֶם לְשָׂבַע: ²⁵ Man ate of the *bread of the angels*; he
 sent them food in abundance.

The ‘bread of angels’ is an apparent reference to the divine food eaten by angels, and as ‘bread of life’. It is food that confers salvation to those eating it. The exodus and wilderness experiences of the Israelites presented various perspectives with time in terms of how people socially and religiously engaged with the Moses’ feeding of the masses.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that, the Jewish king carried a central role in bringing order, peace, justice and food to his subjects. The propaganda played an important role in portraying and entrenching the rule of Davidic dynasty against coups as shown by Davidic royal ideology. With such royal ideologies, it is not surprising in the above traditions to find the Davidic house being associated with chosenness. Besides identical royal ideologies, kings played certain duties that defined their divine electiveness in the eyes of their subjects. However, a king who was able

and became the eternal bride of Joseph (15:6), Cf. A E Portier-Young, *Sweet Mercy Metropolis: Interpreting Aseneth's Honeycomb*, Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha, 2005, 14, 133-157; See also, C Burchard, *The Importance of Joseph and Aseneth for the Study of the New Testament: A General Survey and Fresh Look at the Lord's Supper*, Journal of New Testament Studies, 1987, Volume 33, 102-134; R D Chesnutt, *Perceptions of Oil in Early Judaism and the Meal Formula in Joseph and Aseneth*, Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha, 2005, 14, 113-132

to cater for the needs of his people had a secure reign. What is important in this chapter is that, being the breadwinner defined the important aspect of Jewish kingship and the same can be observed in the next chapter on Hellenistic and Roman kings.

CHAPTER 3:

THE HELLENISTIC AND ROMAN ROYAL IDEOLOGY

This chapter focuses on the Hellenistic and Roman kingship and the feeding topic. The interest is on how kings were portrayed in the public sphere and included the symbols that declared the divine electiveness of the ruler. The chapter looks at the connection between feeding and the king's legitimacy. This also involves looking at the role of propaganda in creating the legitimacy of the king in the phenomenon of feeding. The focus is on the use of feeding at public gatherings to invoke the legitimacy and authority of the king. This chapter will seek to show that the giving of food to the hungry masses has never been a neutral duty in the eyes of the king even if done on compassionate grounds.

Political Background in Antiquity: The Hellenistic Kingship

Hellenistic rulers had divine honours and the Greek adjective 'epiphanies' was used as an epithet indicating the ruler as the manifestation of the gods. Rulers' cultism was widespread in the Hellenistic world. It enhanced legitimacy of the king.¹ Alexander the Great could have been familiar with such ideas as observed by A Savill that:

Alexander's request for deification was neither a sign of megalomania nor loss of mental balance; on the contrary, it was a proof of his political sound sense and his acquaintance with the thoughts of eminent great authorities. He never discouraged his unlettered from their belief that he was a god.²

Alexander's claim made it become an official deification process as it was inaugurated by him and later by the Ptolemies and Seleucids. Alexander was believed to be a representative of Dionysus and the cult of Alexander became the cornerstone of ruler-cult and formed the basis for the imperial cult in the political and religious life of the empire.³ Ruler

¹ Cf. B Grossley (eds), *The Earth and its Peoples*, USA: Columbia University Press, 2009, 172

² A Savill, *Alexander the Great and His Time*, New York: Citadel Press, 1966, 140

³ Cf. D Cuss, *Imperial Cult and Honorary Terms in the New Testament*, Switzerland: Fribourg University Press, 1974, 25

cultism cemented the unity of the society but having the king as the centre to that unity.

Alexander was king of many nations and governed millions of people of different races such that the ruler's cult offered the unity and stability that he needed. Alexander's claim to be son of Zeus is interpreted as having been a 'rhetoric device to make him more impressive to his subjects'.⁴ Alexander's claim was a defacto plea to the throne as in ANE and the Davidic royal traditions. Interestingly, it was also with Zeus that the first Ptolemies and the first Seleucids identified themselves with. J Kügler further quotes in his book, *Pharao und Christus*, that,

Gewichtiger war es, vom Herrscher eine besondere Beziehung zu einer Gottheit mit herausragender Bedeutung auszusagen. Das wurde denn auch reichlich praktiziert. So erschien etwa Seleukos als Sohn des Apollon, was über das Vorbild Alexanders, der als Sohn des Zeus bzw. Ammon verehrt wurde, als indirekter Verweis auf ägyptische Tradition gelehen werden kann. Die Situation in Syrien ist durch eine intensive Verschmelzung hellenistischer und orientalischer Gottheiten geprägt, wobei unter ptolemäischen Einfluß auch ägyptische Traditionen zum Zuge kamen. So wurde etwa in Damaskus der alte Gott Hadad mit Zeus identifiziert und der lokale Wetter- und Himmels-gott als dessen Sohn Dionysos verstanden. Unter den Seleukiden wurde dann der Gedanke gepflegt, daß der König als wiedergeborener Dionysius Sohn des höchsten Gottes sei. Dementsprechend führten einige Könige Titel, die sie als Erscheinung des göttlichen Sohnes, der seinen Vater liebt, ausweis.⁵

For J Kügler, the special relationship between the king and God was emphasized where titles were taken to portray the appearance of the king as the divine son who loves the father. Several Ptolemies are believed to have taken titles that were usually given to gods and synthesizing this with Greco-Hellenistic and Pharaonic traditions.⁶ Hieroglyphic records show that, Alexander acquired a 'Re', Horus and the other three names that made up the Egyptian king's divine title.⁷ The adoptions gave Alexander some potential divinity in the eyes of his subjects. The adop-

⁴ Cf. G Hölbl, *A History of the Ptolemaic Empire*, London: Routledge, 2001, 112

⁵ J Kügler, *Pharao und Christus*, 136

⁶ Cf. G Hölbl, *A History of the Ptolemaic Empire*, 112

⁷ Cf. L R Taylor, *Roman History: The Divinity of the Roman Emperor*, New York: Arno Press, 1975, 55

tion can also be traced during the time of Ptolemies who besides their connection to Dionysius and Zeus, wanted to connect the Egyptian Osiris, Isis and Ptah.⁸ This is as quoted in J Kügler's book, *Pharao und Christus*, that

Da der wiedergeborene Osiris-Dionysos kein anderer ist als Horus, konnte damit die uralte ägyptische Tradition der Horusqualität des Königs in hellenisiertem Zuschnitt fortgeführt werden. In diesen Zusammenhang gehört auch die Identifikation von Kleopatra VII. mit der Göttin Isis, die damals schon zur hellenistischen Allherrscherin über Götter und Menschen aufgestiegen war. Seit Mitte 40er Jahre v.Chr. sind Münzen der Kleopatra als Isis bekannt. "Kleopatra verwendete auf diesen Münzen ein Motiv, das uns auch aus Darstellungen auf Stelen vertraut ist. Sie setzte sich selbst mit Isis gleich, die ihr Kind, Horus, stillt. Kleopatra also ist Isis, ihr Isis ist Horus."⁹

Cleopatra VII projected on coins with Isis nursing her child Horus, making her rule as the rule of the gods. A tradition was created amongst the Hellenistic rulers of associating and identifying them with various gods. It is the projection of the king to the spiritual realm and back to the earthly realm as bread winner that is of general importance to this study.

Hellenistic kings realised that to rule with wisdom during times of peace was more difficult than to win victories hence the vital role that religion played in cementing the peace and loyalty they thirsted for. It was the long practiced custom that a king was revered as if he was a divinity. We find religion being used as a willing donkey in projecting the king above the human level. The deities provided the only point of comparison for the power that was wielded by Hellenistic kings such that the divine honour was the only adequate expression of homage to the power of the king. The manifest power of the deities in the king and his benefaction were the starting point for such honours in relation to the duties that the king played. The continuous relevance of divine titles and the perspective of kings as divine are seen after Alexander, when his titles were further attributed to the Ptolemies and Seleucids.¹⁰ The Ptolemies

⁸ Cf. J Kügler, *Pharao und Christus*, 150

⁹ J Kügler, *Pharao und Christus*, 151

¹⁰ Cf. E Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, Michigan: Wm. B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003, 205

introduced the dynasty cult that included the living king. The Ptolemaic and Seleucids influence was felt in Judaism (basing on the interpretation of the LXX) when kings bore such titles as Saviour (σωτήρ) or *Epiphanes*, which implied divinity.¹¹ Even if not influenced, there is no doubt that Jews were familiar with Hellenistic ruler cults considering that Antiochus Epiphanes at one time tried to forcefully bring the phenomenon on Jews. W Horbury made an interesting remark that, ‘rulers’ cult inevitably attracted attention and imitation because it symbolised the focus of power’.¹² It could have only been a problem for the faithful monotheists as in the case of the Maccabees. Even if the kings were treated as gods, there was not the least assumption that they could act supernaturally. The divine honours and titles were given to the ruler as honour for king’s benevolent achievements indicating him as ‘the attested saviour’ (σωτήρ), for example, for Antigonus, Monophthalmos, Ptolemy I, Ptolemy IX and Cleopatra. Titles were associated with the ruler’s ability to win battles, availing of land and food as well as give protection to the people.¹³ The care the kings gave to the people then deserved similar expressions of gratitude as to the gods. When the cult was established during the lifetime of ruler, the rituals usually took place on the birthday of the king.¹⁴ Therefore Hellenistic ruler cult remained a matter of homage and not worship in the fullest sense as some would like to believe.

Hellenistic kings as Breadwinners

Hellenistic kings acted as breadwinners by giving food and land to the people. The lion’s share of the land was royal land for both Ptolemies and Seleucids. Hellenistic kings owned vast estates. However, most of the food consumed was imported, for example, grain. So the food was

¹¹ Cf. A Y Collins and J J Collins, *King and Messiah as Son of God: Divine, Human, and Angelic Messianic Figures in Biblical and Related Literature*, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008, 51

¹² Cf. W Horbury, *Messianism and the Cult of Christ*, London: SCM, 1998, 69

¹³ Cf A Erskine, *A Companion to the Hellenistic World*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2005, 433

¹⁴ Cf. Erskine, *A Companion to the Hellenistic World*, 438

very expensive as a result of the fluctuating price of grain.¹⁵ The kings particularly the Ptolemies created a rigorous economical situation in which pressures of taxes which varied from place to place were imposed on people and a significant number of people lost their land or were forced into dependant labour where in some circumstances they depended on the goodwill of the king to feed them.¹⁶ The trend of dispossession can be likened to the Joseph biblical episode of feeding that were freely given. The poor survived on bread, soup, porridge and green vegetables. The rich preferably ate refined meals. Overall bread was eaten by the majority throughout antiquity which led Homer to characterize the human race as 'bread-eating'.¹⁷ A sizable number of the population particularly the poor experienced food shortages as a result of crop failure and warfares. Due to such challenges, the Hellenistic tradition had virtues that kings were expected to fulfil the: incarnating justice (Gerechtigkeit), being of valour (protect the kingdom was sheltered from enemies), performing the philanthropic benevolence by generously availing food and land to the needy people and being pious toward the gods.¹⁸ In the case of feeding, justice broadly included filling the hungry's stomachs with food as well as empowering them with land. The virtue of the king in being the breadwinner indicated his divine origin and election in assuming the royal power.

The Hellenistic kings were seen as saviours and benefactors (ευεργέτης) in aiding their subjects. The philanthropic fatherhood or motherhood of the ruler was seen in availing land and food to his/her subjects. Ptolemy III and Cleopatra VII are known to have allegedly handed out corn to their subjects at the time of scarcity. The benevolence role of Ptolemy III was recorded in 238 BCE, when he is thanked as a benefactor (ευεργέτης) for donating grain to the population in a pe-

¹⁵ Cf. R I Pervo, "Panta Koina: The Feeding Stories in the Light of Economic Data and Social, in L Bormann, K D Tredici and A Shandhartinger (eds), Religious Propaganda and Missionary Competition in the New Testament World, New York: E. J. Brill, 1994, 177-182

¹⁶ Cf. J Pastor, *Land and Economy in Ancient Palestine*, 34

¹⁷ Cf. R Garland, *Daily Life of the ancient Greeks*, Westport: Greenwood Press, 2009, 141

¹⁸ Cf. F Dunand, C Zivie-Coche, *Gods and Men in Egypt: 3000 BCE to 395 CE*, USA: Cornell University Publishers, 2004, 202

riod of famine.¹⁹ It was an act that was viewed as symbolical of the king's foresight and good administration as well as a manifestation of his divinity.²⁰ The feeding prowess of Hellenistic kings became part of the memory for the fed people as the deeds of kings became the standard, 'frozen' and easy to decode for many centuries. Feeding became part of the public manifestation of the kings' power. The king declares his presence as messiah by manifesting himself through food in peoples' stomachs. Hellenistic kings were known for the daily food banquets which were given, for example, the Seleucid king, Antiochus VIII, is quoted saying that:

Everyone of the feasters would carry home uncarved meat of the land-animals, fowls and creatures of the sea prepared whole and capable of filling a cart; after all that quantities of honey-cakes and wreath of myrrh and frankincense (Athenaeus XII.540).²¹

There are incidences when corn was freely distributed every year or monthly to the poor citizens. There were free food and free games at the local festivals and these were associated with the benevolence role of the king to the poor.²² The incumbent king organized feasts at which abundant offerings of food were given to people. Benefactions through offering a feast to the population usually took place on the first day of one's assumption of office as an important message of the feeding enableness of the king.²³ Feeding was a sign of power over peoples' life and death. Feeding confirms the messiahship of the king in saving people from hunger, diseases and death.

Many religious food rituals and celebrations that were conducted portrayed the role that food played in the lives of people. This was particularly shown in the veneration of deities such as the grain goddess Demeter in Greece whose popularity manifested the importance of

¹⁹ Cf. J Pastor, *Land and Economy in Ancient Palestine*, 33

²⁰ Cf. J Pastor, *Land and Economy in Ancient Palestine*, 120

²¹ P Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander: A History of the Persian Empire*, USA: Eisenbrauns, 2002, 315

²² Cf. W W Turn, *Hellenistic Civilization*, London: Billing and Sons Ltd, 1966, 108; See also, V E Grimm, *From Feasting to Fasting, the Evolution of a Sin: Attitudes to Food in Late Antiquity*, London: Routledge, 1996, 38

²³ Cf. V E Grimm, *From Feasting to Fasting, the Evolution of a Sin*, 38

grains for the population.²⁴ The name of Demeter was synonymous with grain and its production (Diodorus Siculus, *Hist.* 2.36.2; Epictetus, *Diatr.* 2.20.32). This made Demeter to be a well-known deity whose presence was also attested in Ephesus.²⁵ P Garnsey notes that, grains formed one of the essential triad of: grain, wine and oil in Greece and Asia Minor. Free distribution of corn or grain was an act of generosity to the food supply problem.²⁶ Cereals occupied an important place in the ancient diet especially the daily dietary intake. Feeding of the masses by the Hellenistic king helped him gain public gratitude as well as placating the loyalty of the restless populace by providing their basic needs. This was despite the fact that the elite owned vast pieces of properties at the expense of the poor.

I Östenberg reports that, a large part of the furniture, plates and textiles displayed the treasures of Hellenistic kings and the practical functions of those showpieces at banquets.²⁷ Feeding besides the royal ideology of kings as divinely elected was another mode of communication between the king and his subjects. W H Salier notes that, the abundant and effortless supply of food was also a common feature of utopian literature. There are texts from the Hebrew Scriptures (Isa 25:6; 55:1) which join ancient Greek texts (Homer, *Od.* 9.108-11; Lucian, *Ver.hist.* 2:11-13) and apocalyptic visions (*Sib.Or.* 7.774-746; *2 Bar* 29:5-8) in picturing the abundance of food as one of the key features of an anticipated utopian order.²⁸ With that utopian picture, it was a fact that they were many people who depended on food handouts and there was a big gap between the poor and the rich. The wealthy people also took part in feeding the hungry. And they did this out of their volition and not on

²⁴ Cf. A Tripolitis, *Religions of the Hellenistic-Roman Age*, 17-21

²⁵ Cf. M W Meyer (eds), *The Ancient Mysteries A Sourcebook: Sacred Texts of the Mystery Religions of the Ancient Mediterranean World*, San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987, 17; See also, A Tripolitis, *Religions of the Hellenistic-Roman Age*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002, 17-21

²⁶ Cf. P Garnsey, *Food and Society in Classical Antiquity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, 18

²⁷ Cf. I Östenberg, *Staging the World: Spoils, Captives, and Representation in the Roman*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009, 104

²⁸ Cf. W H Salier, *The Rhetorical Impact of the Semeia in the Gospel of John*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004, 105

behalf of the king. The wealthy private citizens would spend their monies in buying grain, then sell it at lower prices thereby earning the title benefactor (εὐεργέτης) or doer of good. The rich people voluntarily did this by their food liturgies under which each wealthy man looked after a certain number of poor people so as to have peace in society.²⁹ Without peace, the wealthy elite were afraid of losing their savings and power that came with it in the event of uprisings and chaos. P Garnsey comments that:

The local elites showed just enough concern for the welfare of the masses to keep the peace. They worked the rudimentary food supply system and ensured through their periodic acts of euergetism that food crises did not degenerate into famines. In antiquity, food was power.³⁰

Therefore, private citizens also practiced benefaction. However, the power of propaganda always showed kings as capable bread donors and excluded other players in circumstances where the king would have failed to feed and empower the disadvantaged groups of society. The giving of food to the hungry was related to the giving of power.

The Roman Kingship

The Hellenistic royal ideology had an influence on the Roman understanding of Emperors. I Gadel notes that:

Roman culture without strong Greek influence never existed. Many scholars have seen the phenomenon of ruler worship as a Greek import especially in the second century B. C, when the Hellenistic influence in Rome became far stronger and more direct than before.³¹

When Rome conquered the East, the same divine honours, religious beliefs and philosophical teachings of humanity and the gods current in the Hellenistic world were transferred to the Roman world. So the conception of the divinity of the emperor developed as did the empire itself after the old republican form of government had proved itself inadequate.

²⁹ Cf. W W Turn, *Hellenistic Civilization*, 106

³⁰ P Garnsey, *Food and Society in Classical Antiquity*, 33

³¹ I Gadel, *Emperor Worship and Roman Religion*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, 32

quate to the rule of a wide domain.³² It further increased by sojourn of various Romans at the courts of eastern kings where there were people who more than any other treated the king as a god. We find Caesar's divinity was supported by divine ancestry being traced to Venus. In his grand building project, he honoured Venus as a divine ancestor and invoked her patronage on the whole city.³³ As a result Roman emperors got respect and legitimacy through their association with deities. It earned Julius Caesar something of many-sided divine fatherhood also similar to what Egyptian kings possessed.

The public birthday celebrations, the calendar festivals, monuments, decrees, rituals, the games after every four years, the placing of Caesar portrait on coins, erection of his statue in all temples and the naming of a month after him legitimized his rule as divinely elected including those who succeeded him.³⁴ Public festivals, statues and coins were visual expression about the status of the emperor as the *divi filius* title was disseminated in the regular life of communities through public celebrations.³⁵ They became the official titulature of the state in conveying the Roman dynastic ideology to the subjects as in Egypt and Mesopotamia. The Emperor's unavoidable presence and power was felt by their subjects through a series of coins that praised the emperor. Ruler cultism became a means of maintaining and negotiating the power of the emperor. People encountered the emperor's power wherever one travelled in the empire, for example, through buildings dedicated to various emperors, inscriptions connecting emperors with organized games, statues and other paraphernalia. Inscriptions referring to the divinity of the emperor often inscribed on statue bases and altars also played a significant role in shaping public opinion.³⁶ J D Crossan, J L Reed and V Tilborg mention that, inhabitants of the city were con-

³² Cf. Taylor, *Roman History*, 38

³³ Cf. Taylor, *Roman History*, 72

³⁴ Cf. Taylor, *Roman History*, 74

³⁵ Cf. S R F Price, *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984, 48

³⁶ Cf. J Meggitt, *Taking the Emperor's Clothes Seriously; New Testament and the Roman Emperor*, <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=3278>, Accessed on 15 April 2010

fronted with the emperor in a limitless number of places, times and events in the form of a public or private cult.³⁷ This makes it clear how Roman power was cultivated and how Roman imperial ideology of emperors as sons of gods was passed to the people through various channels of propaganda like inscriptions, coins, statues and festivals where peoples' were given food, hence a similar phenomenon in ANE royal ideology.

Julius Caesar was the first Roman emperor who after his death was declared a god. Augustus then adopted it as official cult.³⁸ During the ensuing battle for power with Mark Antony, Octavian (later 'Augustus') used his status as Caesar's son to bolster his legitimacy against Antony. The claim of continuity with Caesar sufficiently aroused the support of troops and the general public in defeating Octavian's rivals. Further to that, there was a myth that, Octavian's mother, Atia, had been visited and impregnated by Apollo,³⁹ hence giving divine ancestry to Octavian. It is clear from Augustus's claims that, in his competition with Antony, he used both aspects of divine kingship to rival Antony by: his filial connection to Caesar and his patronage of Apollo. However, his connection with Caesar harvested for him the needed support as Emperor. Ruler cultism became a political matrix for later emperors to claim divine sonship to get the attention of the people. The common and official title of Augustus Caesar in Greek documents was 'Emperor Caesar Augustus, son of god'. An inscription from Pergamum refers to Augustus as 'The Emperor Caesar, son of god, Augustus, ruler of all land and sea'.⁴⁰ Augustus's reign was typified as the new reign of Saturn, the Roman equivalent of Kronos, the ruler of the golden age. He was the ordained ruler of the world, and Augustus was also the

³⁷ Cf. J D Crossan and J L Reed, *In Search of Paul: How Jesus' Apostle Opposed Rome's Empire with God's Kingdom*, London: SPCK, 2005, 244; See also, V Tilborg, *Reading John at Ephesus*, Leiden: Brill, 1996, 174

³⁸ Cf. Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 208

³⁹ Cf. Peppard, *The Eagle and the Dove*, 431-451; A Smith, 'Unmasking the Powers': *Toward a Postcolonial Analysis of 1 Thessalonians*, in R A Horsley, *Paul and the Roman Imperial Order*, USA: Trinity Press International, 2004, 55

⁴⁰ Cf. J Meggitt, *Taking the Emperor's Clothes Seriously: New Testament and the Roman Emperor*, <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=3278>, Accessed on 15 April 2010

long-awaited restorer of peace.⁴¹ Famous inscriptions as that erected by the Council of Asia celebrated the birth of Augustus as new beginning to life, beginning of the good for the world, the divine logos, and Augustus was hailed as the source of all good things and was the giver of life.⁴² Augustus held the position of *pontifex maximus* (high priest) and the title *divi filius* (son of a god). Yet the same titles had been given to Caesar.⁴³ O Hekster notes that, to be ‘son of god’ in the Roman Empire, during that time, meant primarily to be the son of the emperor, whether begotten or made.⁴⁴ It became the trend with first century Roman emperors to equally favor the cult of the Emperor as ‘son of god’ whether begotten and adopted as it bestowed legitimacy and prestige to their rule.

Tiberius and Claudius encouraged and admired the marks of adoration that came with the cult whereas Vespasian skeptical as he was about divine honors introduced it in the west. The unpopularity and cruelty of Tiberius (14-37),⁴⁵ Caligula (41-54), Nero (54-68),⁴⁶ and Domitian (81-96) prevented their deification by the senate, though they had been worshiped in their lifetime, especially in the eastern provinces.⁴⁷ How-

⁴¹ Augustus was typified as the savior figure in the new age, the greatest benefactor of all times, the *divi filius*, the victorious Augustus, Cf J T Squires, *The Plan of God in Luke-Acts*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, 41; See also, H Koester, *From Jesus to the Gospels*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007, 208

⁴² Cf. V Ehrenberg and A M Jones, *Documents Illustrating the Reigns of Augustus and Tiberius*, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1976, 98

⁴³ Cf. D J Good, *Jesus the Meek King*, Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1999, 50

⁴⁴ Cf. O Hekster, ‘*Descendants of Gods: Legendary Genealogies in the Roman Empire*’, in L Blois, P Funke and J Hahn (eds), *The Impact of Imperial Rome on Religions, and Religious Life in the Roman Empire*, Leiden: Brill, 2006, 26

⁴⁵ Tiberius is credited as having removed the rights of people in democratically assembling and he reformed the law of treason, *lex maiestatis*, which applied only to the acts of crime against the state. The law was made to apply to any words or conduct, even looks or gestures that could be interpreted as hostile to the emperor as well as stamping out any opposition. The laws resonated so well with the cloak of royal divinity or divine right associated with kings that bred authoritarian monarchs, Cf. T Ambrose, *The Nature of Despotism: From Caligula to Mugabe, the Making of Tyrants*, 20

⁴⁶ Nero was popular with the construction of numerous buildings, baths, gymnasiums for the only reason of entertaining people and then the high statue of himself which was 120 feet high. Art, statues, coins, baths, sport were part of royal ideological propaganda by the Roman emperors, Cf. G T Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars*, translated by R Graves, London: Penguin Classics, 2003, 56

⁴⁷ Cf. H F Burton, *The Worship of the Roman Emperor*, Journal of the Biblical World, 1912,

ever, G Adams observes that, one of the most observable features of Domitian's reign was his emphasis on the erection and restoration of public buildings: especially temples and shrines.⁴⁸ Further to that, Domitian venerated his deceased relative and combined this with the worship of the deity Jupiter so as to strengthen his own position as emperor.⁴⁹ Domitian's piety towards Jupiter graduated him to a position of prominence in the Imperial Ideology as a representative of the deity, Jupiter. K Scott argues that, Domitian depicted himself as the earthly representative of Jupiter, and the chosen leader of the Roman Empire.⁵⁰ Therefore, the invocation of Jupiter gave Domitian the divine sanction to his position as emperor, given that senatorial support was no longer adequate.⁵¹ This clearly shows how Domitian wished to be perceived and how he located himself with respect to his predecessors as well as the people that he led. Interestingly in the mid-first century, the title 'son of god' began to be used for Jesus Christ pausing questions in terms of what sense was the concept 'adoption or begetting' as highlighted in the gospel of John to be understood in relation imperial sonship? The attempt by the Pharisees to entrap Jesus on taxes in Matthew 22:15-22 shows the depth of imperial cultism and what it stood for. In response, Jesus asks for a denarius to be brought to him and asks, 'Whose image and inscription is this?' The image on the coin was of Tiberius Caesar and Jesus tells his critics to give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar. But what did the inscription really say? On the front, the coin said 'Tiberius Caesar, son of the divine Augustus'. The reverse side of the coin read 'Greatest Priest'. In Greek, Tiberius coins and inscriptions read 'Θεού του Υιός ('son of god').⁵² So the cult of the emperor had little spiritual power as compared to the political power it accrued. The cult on the

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⁴⁸ Cf. G Adams, *Emperor Domitian and Temple Construction*, <http://www.anistor.gr/english/enback/e043.htm>, Accessed Online, 06 January 2012

⁴⁹ Cf. A Garzetti, *From Tiberius to the Antonines: A History of the Roman Empire AD 14-192*, London: Methuen, 1974, 267

⁵⁰ Cf. K Scott, *The Imperial Cult under the Flavians*, New York: Arno Press, 1975, 139

⁵¹ Cf. J R Fears, "Jupiter and Roman Imperial Ideology", ANRW, 2.17.1, Berlin: Gruyete, 1972, 75-77

⁵² Cf. G Mills, *What Jesus Meant*, USA: Penguin Group, 2006, 87

living Hellenistic kings and Roman Emperors regarded as a supreme form of honor and loyalty from the subjects. It is abundantly clear that Hellenistic kings and Roman emperors were fully alive to the honours offered them, something interesting to observe on Mugabology. The Roman emperor was a central feature of the cultural context of the first century and must consistently be taken into account in the exegesis of the NT,⁵³ especially the kingship of Jesus and the feeding topic in the gospels.

The Role of Roman Emperors as Breadwinners

Roman emperors were also understood as breadwinners just like ANE, Jewish and Hellenistic kings. Roman Emperors like: Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, Nero and Domitian were involved in giving of food and land. The feeding policies kept the emperors highly visible. Feeding was not something that was done throughout the year but was an intervention measure applied to those lacking food. The achievements of the emperors were measured in availing grain to the hungry masses.⁵⁴ Augustus claims in the RES GESTAE DIVI AUGUSTI that, on various occasions he gave grain to the people. He clearly states in the Res Gestae 15 that:

²To the Roman plebs I paid out three hundred sesterces per man in accordance with the will of my father ³and in my own name in my fifth consulship I gave four hundred sesterces apiece from the spoils of war; ⁴a second time, moreover, in my tenth consulship I paid out of my own patrimony four hundred sesterces per man by way of bounty, ⁵and in my eleventh consulship I made twelve distributions of food from grain bought at my own expense, ⁶and in the twelfth year of my tribunician power I gave for the third time four hundred sesterces to each man.⁷These largesses of mine reached a number of persons never less than two hundred and fifty thousand.⁸In the eighteenth year of my tribunician power, as consul for the twelfth time, I gave to three hundred and twenty thousand of the city plebs sixty denarii apiece.⁹In the colonies of my soldiers, as consul for the fifth time, I gave one thousand sesterces

⁵³ Cf. Meggitt, *Taking the Emperor's Clothes Seriously*

⁵⁴ Cf. M K and R L Thornton, *Julian-Claudian Building Programs: A Qualitative Study in Political Management*, USA: Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers, 1989, 5

to each man from the spoils of war; about one hundred and twenty thousand men in the colonies received this triumphal largesse.⁵⁵

It is clear from the above assertion that, Augustus was the benefactor to the people. Just like Herod, Augustus went a step further in giving out from his own personal savings so as to secure food for his subjects. Distribution of grain to the hungry masses gave credit to his office and person as a generous bread winner.

The emperor acted as both the benefactor and saviour of his subjects. In return the masses showed their appreciation by showering the emperor with titular honours. Augustus further states in RES GESTAE 5:2, 15:1-3 and 18:1 (other sources on the practice of feeding by Roman rulers may be found in Cicero, *Sest.*48.103; Juvenal, *Sat.*7.174;8.118;10.44-46;10.81; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.*32.31;66.26) respectively that:

⁵¹The dictatorship offered me by the people and the Roman Senate, in my absence and later when present, in the consulship of Marcus Marcellus and Lucius Arruntius. ²I did not accept. I did not decline at a time of the greatest scarcity of grain the charge of the grain-supply, which I so administered that, within a few days, I freed the entire people, at my own expense, from the fear and danger of hunger in which they were. ³The consulship, either yearly or for life, then offered me I did not accept.

¹⁸Beginning with the year in which Gnaeus and Publius Lentulus were consuls,⁸ whenever taxes were in arrears, I furnished from my own purse and my own patrimony tickets for grain and money, sometimes to a hundred thousand persons, sometimes to many more.⁵⁶

Augustus' claim to sacrifice his personal belongings earned him the respect of being the shepherd of the peoples hence the breadwinner to their physical needs. J Pastor claims that, in 28 B.C, Augustus quadrupled the allowances of grain meant for the hungry people.⁵⁷ Augustus was a shepherd whose food supply became a vital component in build-

⁵⁵ *The Res Gestae of Augustus, Part III*,15, 369, http://www.penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Augustus/Res_Gestae/3*.html, Accessed Online, 11 May 2010

⁵⁶ *The Res Gestae of Augustus, Part III*, 15

⁵⁷ Cf. J Pastor, *Land and Economy in Ancient Palestine*, 120

ing his patronage system and Augustus was designated as ‘the Nile of Egypt who inundated the land with food’.⁵⁸ It is clear that, whether rhetorically or not, Augustus’ feeding agenda had reached many areas indicating the level of food dependence that characterized the poor. All the other programs were linked to his ability to provide grain. Adequate supply of food stabilized and brought public order to the Roman society. It is common that, anxiety over the food supply resulted in civil unrest. The problems of famine and food shortages were the problems that Tiberius as successor of Augustus failed to resolve making him unpopular with people. However, it is always the case that failure of access to food by the people leads to the ruin of the state and the authority of the ruler.

Yet Augustus in his search for peace had provided people with land, money, food and jobs to keep them away from rioting. People became merrymakers and at the same ardent followers of Augustus. However, Augustus’s feeding programmes were not neutral food benefactions but were meant to subdue any possible violence, uprisings and riots by the unemployed.⁵⁹ The creation of theaters and the provision of baths and circuses (all for entertainment) were political goodies and not for charity. Bread and games were important basic communication channels between the emperor and his people. The provision of food had always been Julius Caesar’s concern before his death, since the food supply was not adequate.⁶⁰ The provision of food set as the premise which other Emperors were measured against as people longed for such good old days when they were generously fed. Feeding by Roman emperors was a fishing rod for popular support and dominance. Emperors’ imperial largesse included the provision of grain and sometimes with wine. Wine was amongst the benefactions of the emperor, for example, an inscription from the Kyme celebrates the various benefactions of one Kleanax who, amongst other things, distributed ‘sweet wine’ to everyone in the city.⁶¹ The dependence on food handouts by the Roman people

⁵⁸ Cf. F Dunand, C Zivie-Code, *Gods and Men in Egypt: 3000 BCE to 395 CE*: USA: Cornwell University Press, 2004, 203

⁵⁹ Cf. Thornton, *Julion-Claudian Building Programs*, 6

⁶⁰ Cf. Thornton, *Julion-Claudian Building Programs*, 47

⁶¹ Cf. B Salier, *Jesus, the Emperor, and the Gospel According to John*, in J Lierman, Challenging Perspectives on the Gospel of John, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006, 292

exposes how hunger and poverty can be of much benefit to the legitimacy and power of the ruler. Besides these public relations efforts (bread and games) portraying Augustus as the ‘friend of the people’, feeding efforts were meant to personally confirm him in power.⁶² The Roman emperors realized that, the divine electiveness ideology alone would not earn them the loyalty they needed from the people. Yet the feeding and giving of grain programmes was a tried and tested device that earned emperors a ready credit to become personal friends, patrons, benefactors and saviors of the people. During times of famine, people would either think of the days when they were fed as done by Israelites when they thought of the food rations they got from Pharaoh in Egypt.

Feeding was a symbol of the shepherdhood of the king. Therefore, feeding is not always something to be done by everybody. If one gave food to the hungry masses without the blessing of those in power, such a generous action could be suspiciously censored as an ambitious move to the royal throne. J Kügler quotes Germanicus, the father of Gaius (Caligula) who ‘erroneously’ did that:

Er bereiste inoffiziell Ägypten, was an sich schon der Erlaubnis des Kaisers bedurft hätte. Dort reagierte er auf eine Hungersnot mit dem Öffnen der Staatlichen Kornspeicher und machte sich damit zum Liebling der Massen. Bei Kaiser Tiberius kam diese Aktion nicht als Zeichen unschuldiger Menschenliebe an, sondern als durchaus verfrühter Anspruch auf den Thron. Die Verstimmung war entsprechend.⁶³

Germanicus paid an unofficial visit to Egypt which had not been sanctioned by Tiberius. Surprisingly, Germanicus made his visit and actions suspicious by responding to a famine call in Egypt. He donated some grain and became the darling of the masses. However, Emperor Tiberius ignored Germanicus’s generous actions by choosing to look at the motive of Germanicus. Tiberius took feeding of the hungry as not a symbol of innocence and love but as a quest for power and recognition. Feeding is and has never been a neutral undertaking. The act of feeding possibly explains why the incumbent political leaders always want to be the ones distributing food through their partisan structures to the hungry; even in

⁶² Cf. Thornton, *Julion-Claudian Building Programs*, 88

⁶³ J Kügler, *Der Andere König*, 84

cases where the source of food have no financial contribution from them. They don't trust other players like NGOs to do it for political reasons. Tiberius did not take lightly Germanicus's feeding gesture because he felt that it was a challenge to his person, office and authority as emperor.

Feeding besides being administered to desperate hungry people could manifest at public events. Caligula was very popular for frequently appearing on such public events promoting the 'bread circuses'. He realised the political goods that came out of feeding the hungry subjects. His appearances on such events were contrary to his predecessor, Tiberius, who preferred a private life.⁶⁴ T Ambrose notes that, of all the Roman emperors, Caligula was certainly the most popular for his bread circuses. Even in his last despotic months, he still remained the top favourite of the ordinary people whilst feared and hated by the elite and the patriarchs.⁶⁵ Feeding defined Domitian's reign as emperor. However, Domitian is known to have established himself as a brutal autocrat who had constant fear of persecution such that he demanded undue honours and deference which made him unpopular with the Senate. Tacitus mentions that, Domitian executed many wealthy citizens in his bid to obtain their property. The persecution included members of his family and many of his illustrious subjects.⁶⁶ He was also known for being brutal against Christians. The gospel of John, the Johannine epistles and the Book of Revelation are dated during the reign of Domitian as emperor. Sadly Domitian's feeding of the people was selective and rewarding to loyal supporters. According to B W Jones,

Domitian himself is plausibly portrayed as the architect of a 'personal monarchy', a 'benevolent despot' who made every effort to surround himself with loyal, capable subordinates. While he may have been reclusive, distant, and suspicious by nature and consequently severe with op-

⁶⁴ Cf. T Ambrose, *The Nature of Despotism: From Caligula to Mugabe, the Making of Tyrants*, 91

⁶⁵ Cf. T Ambrose, *The Nature of Despotism: From Caligula to Mugabe, the Making of Tyrants*, 91

⁶⁶ Cf. *Roman Emperor, Domitian*, <http://darkside.hubpages.com/hub/domitian>, Accessed online, 06 January 2012

ponents both real and imagined, he was nevertheless attentive to the demands of his office and generous to his carefully chosen supporters.⁶⁷

As the benevolent emperor who watered and fed his people, Domitian improved the water supply so as to make his loyal supporters happy. The benevolence included bread circuses and largesse that involved giving people food. Interestingly, as a power-hungry emperor, he bought the loyalty of the army by increasing salaries of the army members as part of his feeding.⁶⁸ As a result of these developments one can claim that, the bread typology of feeding defined the patronage reign of the ancient rulers.

Conclusion

Hellenistic and Roman kings' status, office and duties were reminiscent of the gods; something that created a defacto throne for their rule in the public eyes. The loyalty to the king and legitimacy was built through various symbols like: royal inscriptions, images, religious discourses that connected the king to the divine and food banquets. Religious discourses served as part of the recipe of the king's legitimacy, authority and the feeding duty. Sponsored food banquets by kings were not generous charity programmes but political investments by the king. Feeding of the hungry by the king was an important symbol that declared his presence amongst the people. Feeding was an undertaking that was never left to anybody to do so. Feeding was a sign of power such that the failure to feed the people bred disloyalty, change of political allegiance and rebellion. It is as a result of this that, the kingship of Jesus and his feeding duty as portrayed in the NT particularly John 6 in the next chapter becomes very important in this study.

⁶⁷ B W Jones, *The Emperor Domitian*, <http://bmcr.brynmawr.edu/1992/03.06.10.html>, Accessed Online, 06 January 2012

⁶⁸ Cf. *Roman Emperor, Domitian*, <http://darkside.hubpages.com/hub/domitian>, Accessed Online, 06 January 2012

CHAPTER 4: JOHN 6: JESUS' AS THE SERVANT-KING AND BREADWINNER

This chapter has selected NT texts that will be analysed in the light of the kingship of Jesus (Mt.1:18-25; Lk 1:26-35, 44-45; Mk.1:9-11; Mt 3:13-17; Lk 4, Mt 4). However, the major focus on Jesus' kingship and feeding of the masses will derive from John 6. The following questions will act as a guide: Why did the crowd attempt to install Jesus as king (6:15)? What was the meaning and significance of Jesus' reaction to the crowd's attempt? What makes Jesus' kingship unique? How should Jesus' broader concept of bread in John be broadly understood in relation to his kingship and the feeding topic? How can Jesus' Bread of Life phenomenon be best understood in the light of kingship and feeding topic?

Jesus' Kingship in the New Testament

Before we move to the gospel of John, let the Synoptic Gospels shed light on Jesus' kingship. It is worth noting that, if the gospel of Mark was targeting the Roman audience, it becomes interesting to look at how the figure of Jesus fared in an environment that was used to rulers being regarded as 'sons of gods'. For Mark, Jesus was God's son (Mk 1:1) and Matthew tries to qualify Jesus' Davidic royal lineage (Matthew 1:1). Jesus' sonship to God lays ground for his unique servant type of kingship. Therefore we have to imagine that, even though the gospels are interested in the good news that Jesus was bringing, the concept of the divine kingship of Jesus had a stronger sense if one takes into consideration the environment in which Jesus operated.

The Baptism of Jesus in the Light of his Kingship (Mk 1:9-11; Mt 3:13-17)

On baptism, Mark 1:9-11 reports that, Jesus saw the sky opening, the Spirit descending on him and he heard a voice from the heavens saying, 'You are my son, my beloved, with you I am well pleased'. The voice from heaven qualifies the significance of the descent of the Spirit and the portrayal of Jesus as king at baptism. The descending of the Spirit on Jesus when related to the traditional Jewish perception confirms the

coronation of Jesus as king. In the Jewish tradition, the gift of the divine spirit normally signifies appointment and the endowment of the charisma of leadership as judge (Judg 3:10) or king (1 Sam 16:13).¹ The Spirit of the Lord was usually associated with the qualities of an ideal king (Isa 11:2) and the gift of prophecy (Mic 3:8). For Mark, Jesus as king was going to uphold virtues of justice (Gerechtigkeit) and the liberation of people. However, the messiahship of Jesus by implication is not presented in the common royal and military terms but is reinterpreted in prophetic terms.² It is likely that, Mark's portrayal of Jesus' baptism responds against the Hellenistic and Roman rulers' ideology. Besides the focus on Baptism as done by the first gospel, Matthew and Luke focused on the birth of Jesus.

The Conception of Jesus in the Light of his Kingship (Mt 1: 18-25; Lk 1:26-35, 44-45)

The two gospel evangelists (Mt 1: 18-25; Lk 1:26-35, 44-45) hide the paternity of Jesus by putting his origin in the work of the Holy Spirit and God the Father. Jesus for the evangelists had no human father. Luke 1:32 incorporates the *Most High* vocabulary as reference to the fatherhood of God. The *Most High* vocabulary relates well with the Roman concept of sonship, for example, Tiberius declared himself, son of Augustus, the divine one, the *Most High*.³ The title *Most High* biblically applied to God and continued to be employed in the period of the Second Temple to refer to the transcended position and reverence given to God. In non-Jewish, non-Christian Greek texts, *Most High* occurs as a name for Zeus.⁴ When put in its sociological context, it is likely that for the audience of Luke who were familiar with Roman imperial cultism and the cult of 'Zeus Most High', the scene evoked myths and legends about the births of Hellenistic and Roman kings. According to A Y Collins:

¹ Cf. Boismard, *Moses or Jesus: An Essay in Johannine Christology*, Belgium: Leuven University Press, 1993, 40

² Cf. A Y Collins and J J Collins, *King and Messiah as Son of God*, 128

³ Cf. A Y Collins and J J Collins, *King and Messiah as Son of God*, 145

⁴ Cf. A Y Collins and J J Collins, *King and Messiah as Son of God*, 146

The author of Matthew and his predecessors were aware of Greek and Roman stories about great men being fathered by deities with human women. The story of Jesus being born of the Holy Spirit is analogous to an inspiration by Hellenistic and Roman stories about kings, but the typical form of the story is adapted to a Jewish context.⁵

It is not surprising that, the claims on Jesus as born of the Spirit leaves us with parallels to make on Jesus as a king. However, the all powerful-ness of God is made different from other backgrounds when God is purported to have turned Mary's womb to hold the baby without the normal way of involving the male seed of Joseph.⁶ In ANE, Hellenistic and Roman traditions, the gods are sometimes portrayed as exposing their lusts by engaging in physical union with human females.⁷ It is only with the gospel narratives on Jesus' birth that God's economy of miracles leaves Jesus as a unique king.

The Temptation of Jesus in the Light of his Kingship (Lk 4, Mt 4)

Jesus' kingship can be sifted out from the temptation narratives. The 'bread' requests (Lk 4:3) posed on Jesus by Satan is important in this study as it links Jesus with the standard repertoire of the ideals expected of kingship in feeding their subjects. According to J Kügler, the request by Satan points to:

Die Vorstellung vom Herrscher als Brotgeber erscheint hier aber in persiflierter Form, da es nicht um die Versorgung hungernder Massen, sondern um die Selbstversorgung des Gottessohns geht. Die Versu-

⁵ A Y Collins and J J Collins, *King and Messiah as Son of God*, 138

⁶ Cf. F Machingura, *Can the Virgin of Jesus be Explained and Understood?: A Scientific Point of View, The Zimbabwean Concept of Virginity*, Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag Dr Müller, 2011, 17

⁷ Cf. L Strobel, *The Case for the Real Jesus, 2nd Edition: A Journalist Investigates Current Challenges to Christianity*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Company, 2009, 134; See also, R Balmforth, *The New Testament: In the Light of Higher Criticism*, London: Swan Sconneschein and Company Ltd, 1905, 67; B V D Walle (eds), *World Mythology: Egypt Syncretism and State Religion*, London: Paul Haulyn Ltd, 1963, 116; K Crim (eds), *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1976, 939; R E Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke*, New York: Doubleday, 1993, 310

chung, messianische Macht selbstsüchtig einzusetzen, wird von Jesus unter Hinweis auf biblische Frömmigkeit abgewiesen.⁸

The temptation of Jesus puts the idea of the breadwinner in a satirical form where the son of God is expected to supply bread to the hungry masses. The other important aspect in the temptation of Jesus is that, Jesus portrays his servanthood type of kingship by refuting all the kingship ideals that were suggested by Satan. The meekness and servanthood attitude of Jesus' kingship is a critique of despotic kings who abuse power for self-glorification (Satan asking Jesus to worship him (Mt 4:8, Lk 4:5-8)). The temptations of greatness, superiority, selfishness, good life and power shown to him by Satan had no hold on Jesus as known of ancient kings and modern day politicians. Now we turn to the book of John which is central in this study on Jesus' kingship and the feeding topic.

The Gospel of John: Date, Place and Redaction History

The historical context, possible date and place of origin of the book of John are important in determining the social context that influenced the theology of the book. The authorship of the Gospel has been variously associated with: John the Elder, John the Apostle, Lazarus, the anonymous beloved disciple (19:26), a disciple of John the Apostle and the Johannine school of thought. B Vawter notes that, the earliest witness to the authorship of John is Irenaeus of Lyons (180 AD) who claims that, the Gospel was produced at Ephesus by John the apostle, a beloved disciple of the Lord and also an eye witness (13:23; 19:26ff; 20:2-9).⁹ The absolute identity of the 'beloved disciple' has proved to be irretrievable. M E Boismard made an interesting suggestion that Luke was among the disciples of John responsible for the fourth gospel in its final form.¹⁰ However, there is no evidence to treat the Gospel of John as having been

⁸ J Kügler, *Der Andere König*, 25

⁹ Cf. B Vawter, *The Gospel According to John*, in R E Brown (eds), *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, Englewood: Prentice-Hall, 1968, 414; See also, F J Maloney, *The Gospel of John: Sacra Pagina, Series*, Volume 4, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1998, 6

¹⁰ Cf. B Vawter, *The Gospel According to John*, 418

written by the above named individuals. In fact, scholars¹¹ treat the Gospel as an anonymous work written by somebody whose absolute identity is difficult to establish, a position preferred in this study.

When it comes to the place of origin, Alexandria is proposed as a possibility because of the heavy reliance on the Gospel by Gnostics of Alexandria in the second century.¹² In some cases, Ephesus is also proposed as the possible place of origin as intimated by Iranaeus above. According to M E Boismard,

If a non-Palestinian origin of the fourth Gospel is maintained, it was most likely either Alexandria, where there was a large sizable Essene population. If not Alexandria, then Ephesus which may well have had an Essene community in the first century A.D.¹³

Therefore one can safely claim that, the place of origin for the Gospel is either Alexandria or Ephesus. When it comes to dating, suggestions vary from pre-70 A.D to the final quarter of the second century.¹⁴ However, any earlier date proposal advanced by J A T Robinson is not possible if the fourth gospel was written later than the synoptic gospels.¹⁵ Therefore the majority of scholars¹⁶ date the Gospel of John from 90 to 115 A.D which seems reasonable. Besides the authorship, date and place of origin being difficult to determine, scholars have found the social setting and distinctiveness of John difficult to understand when compared to

¹¹ Cf. G R O'Day, *John*, in C A Newsom and S H Ringe, The Women's Bible Commentary, Louisville: John Knox Press, 1992, 293; See also, R E Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, 1997, 371; F J Maloney, *The Gospel of John: Sacra Pagina Series*, Volume 4, 9

¹² Cf. S van Tilborg, *Reading John in Ephesus*, Leiden: Brill, 1996, 67; See also, W H Brownlee, 'Whence the Gospel of John?', in J H Charlesworth (ed), John and the Dead Sea Scrolls, New York: Crossroad, 1991, 188

¹³ M E Boismard, 'The First Epistle of John and the Writings of Qumran', in J.H. Charlesworth (ed.), John and Qumran, London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1972, 156-65

¹⁴ Cf. D A Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, Leicester: Intervarsity Press, 1991, 82

¹⁵ Cf. J A T Robinson, *Redating the New Testament*, London: SCM Press Ltd, 1976, 254-311

¹⁶ Cf. D A Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 86; See also, Gail R O'Day, 294; A Reinhartz, *The Gospel of John*, in E S Fiorenza, Searching the Scriptures: A Feminist Commentary, New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1994, 561; J Kügler, *Politics of Feeding: Reading John 6 (And 1 Cor.11) as Testimonies of Socio-Political Conflicts on How to Eat Lord's Supper*, Awaiting Publication with BiAS Series, 2012

the other gospels. For D A Carson, there is strong agreement amongst theologians and biblical scholars that, the Gospel was written under the reign of Emperor Domitian (AD 81-96) which finds support from J Kügler who postulates that, the fourth gospel was written in an environment of intensified imperial ideology and cultism where rulers were hailed as breadwinners.¹⁷ Suggestions have been made to determine the context in which the gospel of John was produced but none of those suggestions have been widely approved.¹⁸ The following context has been suggested as possibilities: persecutions from the Jews, the docetic heresy and conflict over the authority. The above possibilities overshadowed any clarity that can be sought in the gospel. It makes sense to imagine that, a social life of rejection and persecution seems to have coloured the world view of the fourth Gospel if one considers the vocabulary of the book.

The world is typified as under the 'Prince of this world or satanic forces' (14:30; 16:33 and 17:15-16). The language (language of opposites) in John makes it distinct from the other Synoptic gospels, for example, the discourse on: life and death, the world above (8:12) and the world below, light and darkness (12:36), spirit and flesh, love and judgement, perishable and imperishable, temporary and permanent, truth and falsehood (14:17; 15:26; 16:13), believers and unbelievers. The themes in the book of John are a picture of the community's challenges, exploits, beliefs and practices. The fourth evangelist drew his sources not from the synoptics (though some scholars take the Synoptics gospels as the possible source as the Johannine knew about the Synoptics) but from non-historical sources.¹⁹ R E Brown, J L Price and R Kysar take the gospel of John's pervading ethical and eschatological dualism as plausibly having a background in the Qumran dualism.²⁰ There are remark-

¹⁷ Cf. D A Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 86; See also, J Kügler, *Politics of Feeding: Reading John 6 (And 1 Cor.11) as Testimonies of Socio-Political Conflicts on How to Eat Lord's Supper*, Awaiting Publication with BiAS Series, 2012

¹⁸ Cf. L M McDonald and S E Porter, *Early Christianity and Its Sacred Literature*, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2000, 305

¹⁹ Cf. R E Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, 1997, 363

²⁰ Cf. R E Brown, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament*, in J H Charlesworth, *John*

able similarities in terminology and thought between the writings from Qumran and the Gospel. Even though the gospel is set in Palestine and showing the fulfilment of OT prophecies, John's dualistic language appears much at home in the atmosphere of Gnosticism, Hermeticism and other Hellenistic speculations (e.g., the Hermetic literature and the later Mandaean writings as well some pagan mystery religions).²¹ The link would put the date of writing for the gospel of John around the 70s which finds little support as shown above. The Johannine idiom of language shows that the Johannine community had a link to the various heritages that Palestine had come in contact with when they were under the influence of different imperial authorities. However, the Palestinian soil was the primary catalyst to the interpretation of messiahship of Jesus. John portrays Jesus sharing God's glory in his ministry (1:14; 2:11; 11:4, 40) as well as in the creation of the world.

The Pre-Existence of Jesus and the Bosom Royal Ideology

The prologue (1:1) in John has been debated in relation to Jesus' kingship. The notion of pre-existence is emphasized in the first verses of the gospel of John. No other gospel makes that claim. What is clear in John is that, when creation took place, Jesus Christ was there. The evangelist John relates the pre-existence of Jesus with God and this fits well with the Egyptian and Roman royal ideologies. The opening verses of the Fourth Gospel offer a very different starting point on Jesus' Christology from that of the Synoptic Gospels. In John, there is no interest on the human patriarchal genealogical history.²² If John 1:1 were to be taken as a 'genealogy', it is a special one because it peeps into the affairs and his-

and the Dead Sea Scrolls, New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1990, 1; See also, J L Price, *Light from Qumran Upon Some Aspects of Johannine Theology*, in J H Charlesworth, John and the Dead Sea Scrolls, New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1990, 9; R Kysar, *The Fourth Evangelist and His Gospel: An Examination of Contemporary Scholarship*, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1975, 215

²¹ Cf. B Vawter, *The Gospel of John*, 416; V Magezi and P Manzanga, "A Study to Establish the Most Plausible Background to the Fourth Gospel (John)", HTS Theological Studies, Volume 66, Number 1; C H Dodd, *Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, Cambridge: University Press, 1968, 133

²² Cf. C Blomberg, *Jesus and the Gospels: An Introduction and Survey*, Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1997, 162

tory of the divine not human origins. For J L McKenzie, John seeks to show that Jesus already existed as God's Logos 'ἀρχηλόγος' at the beginning of time.²³ In the light of John, Jesus existed as God's wisdom and this finds support in the Old Testament where the word of God is God's manifestation, the revelation of Himself, whether in creation, in deeds of power and grace, or in prophecy (Prov. 3:19, 8:22, 8:27, 30).

Besides the prologue, the 'I AM-evgw, eivmi' sayings (4:26; 6:20; 6:35; 8:24, 28, 58; 13:19; 18:5-8) in John explicitly expose Jesus' exalted nature as the favoured emissary of God. The evgw, eivmi-*I Myself* sayings just like the prologue intersect to establish Jesus' origin, identity, divinity and significance to the audience.²⁴ The *I Myself Am* sayings reflect his dealings with humanity where in this case of feeding of the masses, his presence nourishes people.²⁵ Jesus' presence brings restoration of life to the hungry, sick and poor. YHWH made the same 'I AM' claims in some passages of the Hebrew Scriptures (Exodus 3:13-14; Deut 32:39; Isa 41:4; 43:10; 46:4; 48:12; 52:6). YHWH's declaration restored and liberated the Israelites who were in captivity. The quality being pushed in the prologue and 'I AM' sayings on Jesus' kingship is that of a royal Son of God. D Burkett relates it to the Greco-Roman world by arguing that:

For John, Jesus existed in some form 'in the beginning' before he appeared on earth as a human being. In terms of Greco-Roman ideas about divine men, John's Jesus is an incarnation of a god. While Matthew and Luke present Jesus as a Jewish demigod, who comes into existence at his birth, John presents him as an incarnation, an already existing spirit that takes on human body.²⁶

²³ Cf. B Vawter, *The Gospel of John*, 422

²⁴ Cf. G Mlakuzhyil, *The Christocentric Literary Structure of the Fourth Gospel*, Rome: Editore Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 1987, 315; See also, L Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971, 340; H Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997, 208

²⁵ Cf. P Borgen, 'The Unity of the Discourse in John 6', *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 50, 1959, 277-278; See also, C Blomberg, *Jesus and the Gospels*, 163

²⁶ D Burkett, *An Introduction to the New Testament and the Origins of Christianity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, 219

So the beginning of the gospel of John almost echoes the early verses of Genesis 1:1, making John 1:1 an interesting episode in appreciating the kingship of Jesus and his mission. A Brent observes that, the mention of *λόγος* in John establishes links with essential Stoic thought on imperial ideology and the Roman political theory which saw the emperor as the embodiment of the ‘Logos’ of God.²⁷ The cosmic order was linked to the emperor’s status.

John mentions that Jesus was in the ‘bosom or lap of the Father-κόλπος, an age-old royal vocabulary about ancient kings’ origin. John 1: 18 states that:

¹⁸ Θεὸν οὐδεὶς ἑώρακεν πώποτε·
μονογενῆς θεὸς ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ
πατρὸς ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσατο.

¹⁸ No one has ever seen God; the
only Son, who is in the bosom of the
Father, he has made him known.

The placement of Jesus in the bosom or lap ‘κόλπος’ of God points to the parenthood of God hence the conception of Jesus by the Holy Spirit. The word ‘bosom or lap’ has generally been used in the Old Testament to refer: to the womb of the mother (1 Kings 3:20), the son’s relation to the father’s lap (Num 11:12) and also as a sign of concern influenced by a strong relationship (2 Sam 12:3). The ‘bosom’ concept can be related to the Egyptian New Kingdom, Hellenistic and Roman royal ideology where there are birth myths that celebrated the king as God’s son whose position is in the lap or bosom of a deity, something that can be likened and sifted out from the vocabulary of John. Augustus is portrayed with images holding the Roman state in his hands, placing it in his lap. Augustus’ holding of the Roman state implied that he was the father of the state and the Roman people.²⁸ Domitian is also shown in the built temple’s inscriptions and images seated on the lap of God.²⁹ Therefore, the ‘bosom-lap ‘κόλπος’ concept had a traditional meaning showing the fa-

²⁷ Cf. A Brent, *The Imperial Cult and the Development of Church Order: Concepts and Images of Authority in Paganism and Early Christianity Before the Age of Cyprian*, Leiden: Brill, 1999, 44

²⁸ Cf. Kügler, *Der Andere König*, 63

²⁹ Cf. Kügler, *Der Andere König*, 64

ther-son relationship between the emperor and the supreme gods. What is then challenging is whether John redactionally designated Jesus' kingship to reigning or not. There is a possibility that, John redactionally moulded his material and Jesus' kingship as a response to the rulers' ideologies that he knew. B Salier also notes that:

The imperial cult and its ideology of imperial power is precisely one such broadly relevant and widespread cultural feature of the ancient world. There is evidence of the cult as the likely locale of the 'publication' of the Fourth Gospel in Ephesus. With this in mind, there is greater possibility that the Fourth Gospel evangelist deliberately constructed Jesus' kingship to resonate with the imperial cult of the time.³⁰

Therefore, the kingship Christological trajectory in John points to the bosom ideology which displays the transfer of the royalty and dignity of a heavenly kingdom and cosmic rule of God to Jesus as the 'king of Israel'.

It is in the gospel of John where Jesus and God are frequently referred to as king. In the gospel of John the designations: king of Israel and king of the Jews are applied to Jesus, for example, in John 1:49 which says 'then Nathaniel declared, Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the king of Israel'. The 'son of God' was a common title associated with kings in the different cultures. However, opinions differ as to whether the title had any messianic connotations in Judaism. It is only in the late Second Temple Judaism when certain Hebrew passages like: 2 Samuel 7:14; Psalms 2:7 and Psalm 89:26-27 were actually taken as implying a royal messiah. The identity in John is that, by declaring Jesus as the 'king of Israel', John was stressing the earthly presence of the king of Israel who enjoys communion with the father.³¹ What is interesting is that, there is no information that shows Jesus disapproving Nathaniel's claims. In fact Jesus promises that he will see greater things than these (1:51). This is as if Jesus was indicating that, Nathaniel's characterization of him as son of God and king of Israel were correct. Jesus seemed to indicate some eagerness for the messianic title, not elsewhere discerni-

³⁰ B Salier, *Jesus, the Emperor, and the Gospel According to John*, in J Lierman, Challenging Perspectives on the Gospel of John, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006, 285

³¹ Cf. R Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971, 107

ble in him. There is a greater possibility that, the title 'Son of God' is used in parallel with that of 'king of Israel', but only affirming the father-sonship relationship as in 2 Samuel 7:14, Psalms 2 and 110 (LXX).

There are other passages in John that can be sociologically interpreted as calling for the political interpretation of Jesus' ministry particularly when taken in the context of Africa where political conflicts of various forms have been witnessed. Passages that come to mind are the acclamation of Jesus as the king of Israel upon his entry into Jerusalem and the claim to kingship in the trial before Pilate (18:33, 36-37, 39). Throughout the trial proceedings, Jesus is mocked by the soldiers as the 'king of the Jews' (19:1-3). It is only in the Gospel of John where the final Jewish renunciation of Jesus takes the form of a renunciation of his kingship (19:15). It is also in John where the *titulus* on the cross, 'Jesus the Nazarene, the King of Jews', is spelled out in three languages and at the same time Jewish leaders protesting against such choice of words.³² The mockery occurs as the ironic investiture and coronation of Jesus when Jesus is later on presented before the Jews with a purple robe and a crown of thorns.³³ The purple robe and the crown of thorns are two known symbols of Jesus' kingship and suffering. However, John still insists that the glory of Jesus' kingship is exhibited through his meekness when he made a young ass his throne (12:13-14). An ass is known the world over and even in the ancient societies as a humble animal, something which displays the lowliness of Jesus kingship. The materiality nature and imagery of Jesus' sign of feeding the masses resonates so well with ancient traditions where feeding mostly entailed the king's generous benefaction.³⁴ The picture of Jesus, besides him being the king and breadwinner mirrors the works of the unseen God in the lives of people.

³² Cf. J Lierman, *The Mosaic Pattern of John's Christology*, in J Lierman (eds), *Challenging Perspectives on the Gospel of John*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006, 216; See also, M Smith, *Theology of the Gospel of John*, 86-89

³³ Cf. F J Moloney, *The Johannine Son of Man*, Rome: Las, 1978, 205

³⁴ Cf. G E Ladd, *The New Testament and Criticism*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967, 137; J Frey, J G Watt and R Zimmermann, *Imagery in the Gospel of John: Terms, Forms, Themes, and Theology of Johannine Figurative Language*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006, 264

John 6:1-15: Presentation of the Text with Translation

¹ Μετὰ ταῦτα ἀπῆλθεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς πέραν τῆς θαλάσσης τῆς Γαλιλαίας τῆς Τιβεριάδος

² ἠκολούθει δὲ αὐτῷ ὄχλος πολὺς, ὅτι ἐθεώρουν τὰ σημεῖα ἃ ἐποίει ἐπὶ τῶν ἀσθενούντων.

³ ἀνῆλθεν δὲ εἰς τὸ ὄρος Ἰησοῦς καὶ ἐκεῖ ἐκάθητο μετὰ τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ

⁴ ἦν δὲ ἐγγὺς τὸ πάσχα, ἡ ἑορτὴ τῶν Ἰουδαίων.

⁵ Ἐπάρας οὖν τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ θεασάμενος ὅτι πολὺς ὄχλος ἔρχεται πρὸς αὐτὸν λέγει πρὸς Φίλιππον· πόθεν ἀγοράσωμεν ἄρτους ἵνα φάγωσιν οὗτοι;

⁶ τοῦτο δὲ ἔλεγεν πειράζων αὐτόν· αὐτὸς γὰρ ᾔδει τί ἔμελλεν ποιεῖν.

⁷ ἀπεκρίθη αὐτῷ [ὁ] Φίλιππος· διακοσίων δηναρίων ἄρτοι οὐκ ἀρκοῦσιν αὐτοῖς ἵνα ἕκαστος βραχύ [τι] λάβῃ.

⁸ λέγει αὐτῷ εἰς ἐκ τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ, Ἀνδρέας ὁ ἀδελφὸς Σίμωνος Πέτρου·

⁹ ἔστιν παιδάριον ὧδε ὃς ἔχει πέντε ἄρτους κριθίνους καὶ δύο ὀψάρια· ἀλλὰ ταῦτα τί ἐστὶν εἰς τοσοῦτους;

¹⁰ εἶπεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς· ποιήσατε τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἀναπεσεῖν. ἦν δὲ χόρτος πολὺς ἐν τῷ τόπῳ. ἀνέπεσαν οὖν οἱ ἄνδρες τὸν ἀριθμὸν ὡς πεντακισχίλιοι.

¹ After this Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberius.

² And a multitude followed him, because they saw the signs which he did on those who were diseased.

³ Jesus went up on the mountain, and there sat down with his disciples.

⁴ Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand.

⁵ Lifting up his eyes, then, and seeing that a multitude was coming to him, Jesus said to Philip, "How are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?"

⁶ This he said to test him, for he himself knew what he would do.

⁷ Philip answered him, "Two hundred denarii would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little."

⁸ One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him,

⁹ "There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two fish; but what are they among so many?"

¹⁰ Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place; so the men sat down, in number about five thousand.

¹¹ ἔλαβεν οὖν τοὺς ἄρτους ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ εὐχαριστήσας διέδωκεν τοῖς ἀνακειμένοις ὁμοίως καὶ ἐκ τῶν ὀψαρίων ὅσον ἤθελον.

¹² ὡς δὲ ἐνεπλήσθησαν, λέγει τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ· συναγάγετε τὰ περιθῶ σέουσιντα κλάσματα, ἵνα μή τι ἀπόληται.

¹³ συνήγαγον οὖν καὶ ἐγένμισαν δώδεκα κοφίνους κλασμάτων ἐκ τῶν πέντε ἄρτων τῶν κριθίνων ἃ ἐπερίσσευσαν τοῖς βεβρωκόσιν.

¹⁴ Οἱ οὖν ἄνθρωποι ἰδόντες ὃ ἐποίησεν σημεῖον ἔλεγον ὅτι οὗτός ἐστιν ἀληθῶς ὁ προφήτης ὁ ἐρχόμενος εἰς τὸν κόσμον.

¹⁵ Ἰησοῦς οὖν γνοὺς ὅτι μέλλουσιν ἔρχεσθαι καὶ ἀρπάζειν αὐτὸν ἵνα ποιήσωσιν βασιλέα, ἀνεχώρησεν πάλιν εἰς τὸ ὄρος αὐτὸς μόνος.

¹¹ Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted.

¹² And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, “Gather up the fragments left over, that nothing may be lost.”

¹³ So they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten.

¹⁴ When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, “This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world.”

¹⁵ Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

Exegetical Analysis of John 6:1-15 in the Light of the Feeding Topic

John 6 is the most debated chapter in the book of John in relation to the feeding topic. If the duty of feeding was one of the virtues of ancient kingship, the sixth chapter of John will form the centerpiece to the long dialogue on Jesus as one of the kings that fed his subjects with bread. Food marks the beginning and end of Jesus’ ministry. The miracle of wine (2:1-11) inaugurates the coming of God’s kingdom through Jesus whereas the breakfast on the shore (21:1-14) consisting of bread and fish seals Jesus’ feeding prowess that manifested in John 6:1-15.³⁵ Jesus’ multiplication of loaves is the only miracle that is found in all the four

³⁵ Cf. L J M Claassens, *The God who provides*, 102

gospels causing problems as to whether or not John's account is dependent on the Synoptic accounts. S Mendner sees the dependence as obvious whereas C H Dodd, E Haenchen, W Wilkens, E D Johnston and R Bultmann deny any dependence.³⁶ However, the assumption is that John's account is independent from the Synoptics. We can also imagine that, if John's account was copied from the Synoptic tradition, it would imply that, the differences, omission, additions, parallels and changes in John point to the theological hand and theological motivation on the part of John. The evangelist hurriedly draws the reader to the fact that, Jesus was being followed by large crowds as a result of the signs that people saw (6:23, 26).³⁷ What is noticeable in John 6 is that, the feeding of the masses and the bread talk are haphazardly discussed in the different portions of John 6 (1-15; 25-59), something attributed to two different redactional layers of the gospel.³⁸ It is noticeable that, the flow of the information about Jesus' feeding of the masses with bread and fish is disturbed by Jesus walking on the water, only to be resumed with the evangelist' narration of Jesus' accusation against the crowd that, they were looking for him because they had eaten bread and were filled (6:26).

Textual critics have divided the narrative in John 6 into three or four episodes: (1) the sign or feeding story (vv.1-15) where Jesus dialogues with his disciples; (2) the interlude (vv.16-21) and the part on Jesus walking on the sea and his discourse with the disciples; (3) the discourse (vv.22-59) focusing on the sayings of the crowd to Jesus and (4) last the response by Jesus (vv.60-71).³⁹ It is as a result of these divisions that, some source-critical scholars argue for the disunity in John 6 hence the various literary sources that underlie this chapter. Some scholars

³⁶ Cf. R E Brown, *The Anchor Bible: The Gospel According to John (i-xii)*, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1966, 236; See also, E D Johnston, "The Johannine Version of the Feeding of the Five Thousand-An Independent Tradition?", *Journal of New Testament Studies*, 8, 1961, 151-154; C K Barrett, *The Gospel According to St John*, London: SPCK, 1955, 34

³⁷ Cf. W H Salier, *The Rhetorical Impact of the Semeia in the Gospel of John*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004, 82

³⁸ Cf. S J J Beutler, *The Structure of John 6*, in R Alan Culpepper, *Critical Readings of John 6*, Leiden: Brill, 1997, 115

³⁹ Cf. S J J Beutler, *The Structure of John 6*, 116

dismiss suggestions that point to the different parts in John 6. They see some coherence in the stylistic and linguistic unity in John's theology thereby dismissing the literary judgments raised against chapter 6. Therefore, with the exception of John 6:16-21, the whole chapter is occupied with food and the result of eating for consumers of bread (6:35).⁴⁰ John 6 sets the scene in verses 1-4 on the mountain⁴¹ whereas in other gospels, it was in the wilderness. The characters in John 6 are established as: Jesus, the disciples, the elite Jewish leaders and the crowd and the setting of feeding.⁴² John 6 has a multitude of themes interwoven in it. John Painter⁴³ divides chapter 6 into six parts:

- 1-15 Multiplication for 5000
- 16-24 Walking on the Sea
- 25-34 Request for a Sign
- 35-59 Remarks on the Bread
- 60-69 Faith of Peter
- 70-71 Passion theme: betrayal

The general consensus amongst scholars is that, John 6 is a 'Bread Topic' chapter which must be treated as a basic unity focusing on the concept of bread.

A Socio-Economical and Political Analysis of John 6

It was the marvelous supply of food to the hungry multitude that suggested the idea of bestowing the kingship mantle on Jesus. Jesus mani-

⁴⁰ Cf. P B Smit, *Fellowship and Food in the Kingdom: Eschatological Meals and Scenes of Utopian Abundance in the New Testament*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008, 301

⁴¹ Matthew mentions the Mountain in the second account of the multiplication of loaves (Mt 15: 29). The significance of the Mountain cannot be overlooked in John just like in the Synoptic gospels tradition as shown on Jesus' transfiguration and temptation as shown in the main text. The Mountain evokes the memory of Sinai, where Moses mediated the revelation that points to Christ (Mk 3:13; Mt 5:1). Cf B Vawter, *The Gospel According to John*, in R E Brown (eds), *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, Englewood: Prentice-Hall, 1968, 415

⁴² Cf. F J Moloney, *The Function of Problems in the Interpretation of John 6*, in R A Culpepper, *Critical Readings of John 6*, Leiden: Brill, 1997, 129; T Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of St John*, USA: Magi Books, 1980, 339

⁴³ Cf. J Painter, *Inclined to God: The Quest for Eternal Life*, 362

feasts a wish to feed the people from his own stores, considering that the people had lingered with him for so long, the disciples regard that intention as impossible (6:15). According to Philip, even an eight months' wage would not have been enough to feed such a great crowd let alone for each one of them to just have a bite. In the other gospels, it is reported that, the disciples suggested that Jesus send the crowd away and buy food for themselves (Mk 6:30-44). The vocabulary of the Johannine narrative exposes the level of poverty that Jesus' audience were experiencing. In the modern economy, poverty and hunger are as a result of an unjust socio-economical, political order and exploitation by the powerful. There are several reasons that cause poverty and hunger making the report in John 6 not an exception. Some are beyond human control but in most cases, man is responsible for the poverty and deliberate starvation of others so as to reap economical and political goods such as accumulation of properties, power, loyalty and submission of the poor. P L Kutzner made an interesting observation that can help us understand Jesus' feeding of the multitude as follows:

Behind hunger stands poverty; Behind poverty stands powerlessness; Behind powerlessness stands: the influence of the powerful with the strength, resources, knowledge, organisation and arms to keep economical and political advantages to themselves. Behind poverty stands the willingness of the advantaged to benefit from the weakness of others. Behind world hunger stands within the nations and between nations an unjust order.⁴⁴

One can also imagine that, behind the poverty and hunger that was experienced in Palestine, Rome was to blame. The Palestinian Jews could have understood better Jesus' feeding statement in Luke 6:21 that 'Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled', in the face of landlessness, poverty and hunger. P L Kutzner's description makes sense when one analyses the context of Jesus' feeding duty in an agricultural economy. Agrarian societies base their lives on agriculture and land as their primary source of wealth and power. Whoever controls the state

⁴⁴ P L Kutzner, *World Hunger: Getting at the Roots*, in S Bengu, The Role of the Church in Nation Building, Geneva: LWF, 1982, 31

determines the ownership of land, distribution of resources and the agricultural surplus produced by peasants.

On the religious side, seventy members of the Sanhedrin, or High Council of Jerusalem were drawn from the Jewish sacred and secular aristocracies (chief priests, elders and scribes) who shared the responsibilities in governing the Jewish polity. The Sanhedrin administered the treasury, collection of various taxes and tithes which they imposed on the same poor people.⁴⁵ Most members of Sanhedrin and the political elites were absentee landlords which caused them to be hated by the landless peasants. We can view them as having been daylight thieves and robbers just as the purported benefactors who exploited the poor. The root cause of so many people to depend on food handouts is the oppressive economical, political, religious and social structures. There is a sharper perception of the social realities behind the Johannine feeding texts thereby pointing the texts to the social matrix of the deprivation of the poor. Most of the people had lost their land and became exposed to hunger.

The feeding of people by Jesus happened in a society that was experiencing periodic shortages of food hence chronic malnutrition or undernourishment as evidenced in John 6:7 when Philip said 'two hundred denarii would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little'.⁴⁶ Peasants by virtue of being propertyless in terms of land had nothing to be proud of as their labour was owned by land-owners. Peasants constituted the largest expendable and degraded class⁴⁷ of the agrarian

⁴⁵ Cf. H C Waetjen, *A Reordering of Power: A Socio-Political Reading of Mark's Gospel*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989, 5

⁴⁶ Cf. P Garnsey, *Food and Society in Classical Antiquity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, xi

⁴⁷ The degraded group comprised of unskilled labourers like: shepherds, prostitutes, porters, burden bearers, tanners, miners and others who were engaged in offensive and ritually unclean work or sold their body or animal energy. The expendables formed the largest mass like: beggars, vagrants, thieves, outlaws, lepers and others, Cf. Waetjen, *A Reordering of Power*, 11. M Rostovtzeff brands them as common people who included: peasants who toiled in fields, village artisans, carpenters, blacksmiths, cobblers etc, Cf M Rostovtzeff, *The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire*, Volume 1, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926, 270. Fishermen also fall under the degraded group as fishing was controlled by the ruling elites. The local rulers (king, tetrarch, prefect) sold fishing rights to brokers (telonai-commonly translated 'tax collectors' or

society who lived and were subjected to a life of abject poverty, hunger and diseases.⁴⁸ They occupied the very bottom of the societal ladder and formed a large mass of the unemployed, deprived and dehumanized people subject to malnutrition and disease. What is surprising is that:

The rhetoric of power all too easily produced an illusion of benevolence when deployed in an imperial setting. The symbolism of benefaction was an ideological concealment for the true exploitative nature that prevailed between the aristocracy and the peasantry'.⁴⁹

The exploitative setting tipped in patronage that defined the social relations between those in power against the powerless and the have-nots. According to K C Hanson and D E Oakman,

The huge gap between the 'power-elites' and the rest of the population created a platform for patronage by which elites could increase honor and status, acquire and hold office, achieve power and influence, and increase wealth. Patronage facilitated the maintenance of power difference and control by those with power (patrons), exchanging their exercise of it on behalf of others (clients) in return for their clients' support, honor, information, and loyalty. It kept the social hierarchy intact.⁵⁰

The feeding enableness of Jesus and the immediate attempt by the crowd to make him king pointed to the underlying conflict between early Palestinians and the invading Romans where the common people besides regarding Jesus as their king saw his actions addressing their concerns of deprivation. The act itself unearths the hunger and poverty that loomed against illusions of abundance churned by those in power. The permanent state of disaffection prevailing in Palestine, and particularly

'publicans') who in turn contracted fishers. The fishers received capitalization along with fishing rights and were therefore indebted to the brokers. Many taxes were in play till the preserved fish and fish sauces. Therefore the fishers could hardly be classed as 'entrepreneurs' in such an environment that was highly regulated, taxed, and hierarchical economy. The surplus they got went to the brokers and the rulers, Cf K C Hanson and D E Oakman, *Palestine in the time of Jesus*, 107, 109; See also, W H Wuellner, *The Meaning of 'Fishers of Men'*, Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967, 23-24

⁴⁸ Cf. G E Lenski and J Lenski, *Human Societies: An Introduction to Macrosociology*, 4th ed, New York : McGraw-Hill, 1982, 268-78

⁴⁹ Horsley, *Paul and Politics: Ekklesia, Israel, Imperium, Interpretation*, 30

⁵⁰ K C Hanson and D E Oakman, *Palestine in the time of Jesus: Social Structures and Social Conflicts*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998, 73

in Galilee can make one believe that the mission of Jesus, in so far as it included a popular appeal to the Galilean masses, was in danger of becoming involved in political disturbances. Even though Jesus' feeding happened in a situation free from famine, flood and drought, his feeding appealed to the memories of hunger and poverty experienced by the people. Jesus might have had other ideas but the people had no time for other possibilities other than instituting a king who identified with their day to day challenges.⁵¹ In such a context, food supply would always become a precarious topic for the majority of the population which made feeding a political topic. The supply of bread was an important political act of rulers in the Roman, Hellenistic and ANE societies such that, filling one's stomach was not to be taken for granted particularly in conditions of food shortages.⁵² This is important in the context surrounding John 6:15 where the people could neither keep food for their journey nor feed themselves as reported by the evangelist. Jesus' provision of food and wine (John 2:1-11) presented him as a benefactor who was able to both feed and water his people and in so doing abundantly providing two of the three staples of the Mediterranean diet.⁵³ It is in such a context that the feeding duty by Jesus and the title 'king of Israel' could be understood particularly the reason why the hungry and powerless crowd became so excited to bestow Jesus as their immediate prophet-king.

The traditional Palestinian peasant population worked hard to have a living but at the same time suffered for centuries under many rules before the coming of Jesus, for example, under Persian, Seleucid, Hasmonean, then Herod and later his son, Herod Antipas. It is from this context that we can understand why as from the days of the Maccabees to the oppositions of Judas the Galilean and later Zealots, Jews were known for their resilience in opposing foreign rule. M Rostovtzeff argues that, the social and economical conditions of Palestine did not change in both the Hellenistic and Roman periods.⁵⁴ As a result of such

⁵¹ Cf. W A Meeks, *The Prophet-King*, 89

⁵² Cf. J Kügler, *Politics of Feeding: Reading John 6 (And 1 Cor.11) as Testimonies of Socio-Political Conflicts on How to Eat Lord's Supper*, Awaiting Publication with BiAS Series, vol. 7, 2012

⁵³ Cf. B Salier, *Jesus, the Emperor, and the Gospel According to John*, 292

⁵⁴ Cf. M Rostovtzeff, *The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire*, 664

conditions, as in the case of Jesus, most of the beneficiaries to his miraculous activities were poor peasants. It is known that, Judaea was troubled by a preponderance of stone complemented by a deficiency of water and a borderland made up of the hill country standing in close proximity to the desert. And peasants survived on subsistence economy which was characterised by a small surplus.⁵⁵ Pressure on the land was immense as a result of population growth, poor communications and regional insecurity. In such circumstances, every square inch of the land needed to be cultivated. Unfortunately, the yields were very low such that in times of scarcity, grain had to be imported from Egypt.⁵⁶ One-fifth of their crop produce had to be saved for next year's seed. Then there were market taxes, land taxes on the harvest, poll tax on house members, compulsory labour and in all likelihood also tithes to the temple. On the other hand, Herod by the goodwill of the Romans ruled as a king over a large area, with a large tax base and huge personal income, yet the majority of peasants struggled to survive. Herod was typical of agrarian rulers and client king of Rome, who got taxes from peasants' annual production.⁵⁷ The situation of the landless peasants was direly difficult and it is during the reigns of Herod the Great and Herod Antipas that, the situation for the peasant household further deteriorated. Herod Antipas brought economical changes that were far-reaching, working to establish a Greco-Roman style of economy, which favoured cities and the elite. This resulted in many peasants becoming landless through the expansion of great estates and through the marketization of the economy.⁵⁸ So the majority of the Judean population ended up forking their living by working the land of the elite as hired labourers.

In contrast to peasants, large landowners produced more than enough enabling them to lend money, seed and food to the impover-

⁵⁵ Cf. H Moxnes, *Putting Jesus in Context: A Radical Vision of the Household and Kingdom*, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003, 150; See also, S Applebaum, 'Judaea as a Roman Province: The Countryside as a Political and Economic Factor', ANRW II/8, 1989, 363

⁵⁶ Cf. T J M Ling, *The Judean Poor and the Fourth Gospel*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, 80

⁵⁷ Cf. H Moxnes, *Putting Jesus in Context*, 150

⁵⁸ Cf. H Moxnes, *Putting Jesus in Context*, 150

ished smallholders who used their land as surety.⁵⁹ Failure to pay back the money resulted in the loss of land which led to poverty and this put to test the perspective of land as sacred and the inalienable right of every person. M Rostovtzeff adds that:

The largest part of Judea, Galilee, and Samaria remained, as before, a land of villages and peasants. And it is sufficient to read the Gospels from this point of view to realize the extent to which Palestine was an agricultural land and how rustic was the character of the life of the common people.⁶⁰

The economic changes in this period affected the viability of peasant households as social groups and households' food security was threatened and heads of families were no longer able to provide for the livelihood of their families. The authority of the father in the family was loosened and heavily questioned, and the traditional authority and kinship could not be sustained. The dispossession and marginalization of the lower classes, unjust rents and taxes, crop failures, loss of land, and unemployment constituted the socioeconomic context of Jesus' ministry in the narrative world of the gospels.⁶¹ In most cases the disaffected peasants reacted through 'social banditry' and social bandits became peasants who had been repressed and separated from their land and village.⁶² They ended up stealing so as to survive and Jesus did not waste his time confronting the social bandits. So we find Jesus coming on the scene challenging those who owned land and possessions by feeding the hungry thereby attending to their social problems.⁶³ Schottroff and Stegemann suggest that, widespread poverty was a feature of first-century

⁵⁹ Cf. J Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, London: SCM Press Ltd, 1969, 82

⁶⁰ M Rostovtzeff, *The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire*, 270

⁶¹ Cf. Waetjen, *A Reordering of Power*, 7

⁶² Cf. K C Hanson and D E Oakman, *Palestine in the time of Jesus*, 87

⁶³ In that case, Jesus is the agent of socio-economical and political change who benefits those below the social strata and at the same time fighting an unjust order that was causing the majority to depend on food handouts. Jesus stood as a representative of the reversal of the oppressive system. Jesus' mission was both spiritual and material, a protest against the oppression of the poor, hungry and weak people. Cf. H Räisänen, "Exorcisms and the Kingdoms: Is Q 11:20 a Saying of the Historical Jesus?" in R Uro (eds), *Symbols and Strata: Essays on the Sayings Gospel Q*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1996, 133

Palestine. The Gospels' exclusive reference to *ptochoi* for the 'poor' therefore explained an accurate reflection of a first-century context in which destitution was the order of the day for the sizable part of the population.⁶⁴ The tone of the disciples and Jesus in John 6:5 that, When Jesus looked up (as if to acknowledge the source of His power) and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, 'Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?' displays absolute poverty on the part of the crowd that Jesus was serving. John 6:6 also displays that, Jesus asked this question to Philip to test his disciples as the reliable benefactor, even though he knew what was in His food storehouse. And John's reportage of 5000 men who could not feed themselves is an indication of the level of poverty. The type of barley bread that was provided by the lad is witness to the degree of poverty and hunger. Barley as grain was considered inferior to wheat. R D Aus argues that,

One indication is that wheat is mentioned before barley eleven times in the Hebrew Bible (Deut 8:8; 2 Sam 17:28; Isa 28:25; Jer 41:8; Ezek 4:9; 45:13, Joel 1:11; Job 31:40; 2 Chron 2:9 and 27:5). In 2 Kings 7:1, 16, Elisha predicts that a measure of choice (wheat) meal will be sold for a shekel, yet two measures of barley for the same amount, showing the relationship between the two. Revelation 6:6 notes that with denarius one could purchase a quart of wheat, but three quarts of barley, thus making barley three times less valuable. In 1 Kings 5:8, barley is fodder for 'horses and swift steeds', showing that it was also used for animals. Bread made from barley was prepared with less care than that from wheat. Barley was associated with the common people. Joseph writes in Ant.5.220 that 'of all seeds, that called barley was the least worth'.⁶⁵

In John 6:9, it is categorically clear that, the loaves were of barley, a testimony to the value that can be attached Jesus' audience when compared to those who ran the levers of power and economy (religious and political) in time of Jesus. Jesus reverses it by abundantly availing not only bread but fish as well.

⁶⁴ The poor possibly included the following groups: captives, the blind, the oppressed, mourners, the humble, the hungry, the thirsty, the lame, lepers, the deaf, the maimed, widows, the homeless and beggars, Cf T J M Ling, *The Judean Poor and the Fourth Gospel*, 100

⁶⁵ R D Aus, *Feeding the Five Thousand: Studies in the Judaic Background of Mark 6:30-44 par. And John 6:1-15*, USA: University Press of America, 2010, 16-17

The messiahship of Jesus and his feeding of the masses would make a lot of sense if analysed in the light of an environment where feeding was not a neutral act under the bedrock of poverty, hunger and deprivation. The resultant social-political act of trying to make Jesus king (John 6:15) clears the air as feeding has always been a political topic. There were bound to be implications of rebellion against Rome as implied in the vocabulary used by John that 'they were about to come and take him by force to make him king'.⁶⁶ The crowd had interpreted everything in a political way as a result of their situation. It is clear that, the messiahship discourse was mostly nurtured by national adversity and food deprivation. People expected a messiah who would ascend the throne of his ancestor David, free the Jewish people from the Roman yoke and then found a kingdom that would last forever. And that kingdom was going to be characterized by the restoration of peace, lessening of imposed burdens and the availing of food to the needy population. The Davidic messianic hopes were once crystallized around two revolutionary leaders, Menachem the son of Judas the Galilean and Simon bar Giora. They armed groups of brigades and became leaders of insurrection. People understood them as bearers of the Davidic messianic hope.⁶⁷ In response, the Romans took any movement in socio-political terms and suppressed them even where as noted by Josephus that suppression appeared not justified at all.⁶⁸

It is obvious that, Jesus' ministry did not operate in a social vacuum as the environment had something to contribute. The political agenda had a say on the minds of Jesus audience, for example, their understanding of liberation and the filling of their stomachs by Jesus. They took it politically particularly coming at the bedrock of the Passover Feast and its placement in the gospel of John. R E Obach and A Kirk notes that, the reaction of the people was not surprising as the element of liberation had always been associated with the celebration of Passover. The

⁶⁶ Cf. R E Obach and A Kirk, *A Commentary on the Gospel of John*, New York: Paulinist Press, 1979, 97

⁶⁷ Cf. Marcus, *The Way of the Lord*, 147

⁶⁸ Cf. J D Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant*, San Francisco: Harper, 1991, 159

first Passover took place in the context of winning freedom from the oppression of the Pharaoh. God had raised a prophetic leader for them in the mould of Moses, who fed them with manna.⁶⁹ A J Köstenberger adds that:

The connections with the Mosaic provision in the wilderness and the figure of 'the prophet' are clear as the crowd acknowledge (John 6:14-15). The connections with Moses recall the deliverance of Israel, as does the Passover context. John helps the reader to see that Jesus is characterised by features of previous of God's servants like Moses.⁷⁰

Jesus' feeding evoked memories of God's liberation and His feeding prowess that saved the Israelites. So the miracle of feeding by Jesus resonated well with central conventional Palestinian messianic hopes and political resolution to the Roman occupation. The plight of the common people conscientised them more about the capability of Jesus in addressing their needs than the authorities of the time. Jesus could have realized all these political dimensions and the consequences, thereby wisely choosing to take the less risky option by converting such political elements into pure spirituality.⁷¹ The hope to help the hungry was burdensome as indicated by the disciples that, such provision would not go anywhere with many people (John 6:9). After all it was not the duty of the disciples to feed or fill the stomachs of all the people who came to their gatherings.

Interestingly Jesus' response of telling them to get organised (John 6:10) was something quite practical. Jesus became the chief propagator of socialism, where those without were not left to die but are taken care of. The socialist ethos can be sifted out in the Early Church as shown in Acts 4:32 that 'All believers were one in heart and mind. No-one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had'. It is only in the gospel of John (6:11) where Jesus

⁶⁹ Cf. R E Obach and A Kirk, *A Commentary on the Gospel of John*, 97; R H Lightfoot, *St. John's Gospel, A Commentary*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957, 349-56

⁷⁰ A J Köstenberger, *Encountering John: The Gospel in Historical, Literary and Theological Perspectives*, Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999, 99

⁷¹ Cf. D F Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, London: SCM Press Ltd, 1972, 295

as the benefactor-host or patron distributes the bread himself and not the disciples. People are called to discipleship and selflessness. It is on this aspect that, Jesus showed them that shared prosperity is the goal of God's economy. For T Popp and B Kollmann, Jesus' soloistic behaviour underlined his unique authority and knowledge, as well as his character as a caring and provident Messiah.⁷² Jesus for the crowd had become the breadwinner who incarnated amongst them. The incarnation is confirmed in John 1:14: 'And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth. We have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father'. Jesus' audience witnessed the glory of the Father as opposed to the domineering glory of men through the miraculous feeding of the Son. His feeding of the multitude was not just mere feeding but indirectly confronted forces that dehumanised people whom God so loved. It was a blessing from God. There was more than enough for everyone, including leftovers as symbol to the gracious provision of abundant food by God. All the gospel evangelists agree that the multitudes 'were filled' implying that they had a real substantial meal and not mere scraps of food. It was a fulfilment of Deuteronomy 8:10 that 'And you shall eat and be full, and you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land he has given you. After eating to the full without paying anything save to open their mouths. The crowd was supposed to bless the Lord for remembering them in the face of hunger and poverty. Jesus' feeding and the crowd's eating brought satisfaction and left-overs. Something not expected of ancient kings. It is a narrative that brings joy to people who still experience hunger that God unconditionally loves them and can feed them. The image is also motivating in the face of some contemporary governments that fail to feed their people.

W H Salier comments that, even though the duties and benefactions of the bread-donor were wider than bread, the feeding action of Jesus would have been seen as the action of a generous and wealthy

⁷² Cf. P B Smit, *Fellowship and Food in the Kingdom*, 304; See also B Kollmann, *Ursprung und Gestalt der frühchristlichen Mahlfeier*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1990, 105; T Popp, *Grammatik des Geistes. Literarische Kunst und Theologische Konzeption in Johannes und 6 Arbeiten zur Bibel und ihrer Geschichte 3*, Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2001, 284-285

benefactor, if not a god.⁷³ The hungry crowd even tasted fish, a relish eaten by the elite. N Purcell claims that, a taste for fish was something only affordable by seriously well-to do where even the very wealthy went even further than eating them and reared them.⁷⁴ But with Jesus, even relishes known to be a preserve for the rich were made generously accessible to the needy. Jesus managed to show himself willing and able to supply an abundance of two or three staples of the Mediterranean diet, with two of the three products signifying the blessing of God (Deuteronomy 7:13; 11:14; Ps 4:8 (LXX); Joel 2:19).⁷⁵ John's narration in 6:13 that, they gathered and filled twelve baskets, accentuates the uniqueness of the event and the super-abundance of the miracle. By so doing, Jesus became a generous benefactor to the needy and hungry people. People were not only being fed but they were also witnessing the mightiness of God on the earthly space, a challenge to the rule and power of earthly rulers. If we are to imagine that, the mountain and wilderness where Jesus fed the people was still an occupied space of those in authority, Jesus' feeding was a reversal and sign of his enableness in making that space a habitable one for the poor and hungry. Who would have ignored him after he had proven himself to be a capable breadwinner? Interestingly in Mark 6:17-29, Jesus' feeding comes after that of Herod's banquet and Herod gave a 'banquet' for his courtiers and officers and leaders of Galilee.⁷⁶ Herod's banquet was not an ordinary function but a closed and high-standing royal banquet. As if to mock Herod's feeding at his banquet, Jesus' feeding was a sharp contrast as it targeted and filled the stomachs of the poor. According to R D Aus, what is interesting is that,

Jesus is represented as praying and saying a benediction (6:41), something not mentioned at Herod's birthday banquet. Jesus' feeding of the 5000 is described as completely peaceful.....no mention is made of anyone's rushing to be first, or of loud, boisterous behaviour. All is very or-

⁷³ Cf. W H Salier, *The Rhetorical Impact of the Semeia in the Gospel of John*, 105

⁷⁴ Cf. N Purcell, 'Eating Fish: The Paradoxes of Seafood', in J Wilkins (eds), *Food in Antiquity*, Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1995, 132-149

⁷⁵ Cf. W H Salier, *The Rhetorical Impact of the Semeia in the Gospel of John*, 106

⁷⁶ Cf. R D Aus, *Feeding the Five Thousand: Studies in the Judaic Background of Mark 6:30-44 par. And John 6:1-15*, 131

derly, and no one gets injured. In contrast, John the Baptist is murdered at Herod's feast, and his head is gruesomely brought into the banquet room on one of the platters just before having been used for carrying the rich food in and out.⁷⁷

Further to that, Jesus' just and righteous pro-poor approach is confirmed in Luke 14:15-24 where Jesus urges his host (a Pharisee) to inclusively invite the poor, the disabled, and the blind when he gives a banquet. In Luke, Jesus freely mingles with the poor, outcasts and sinners (Lk 5:29-32; 15:1-2; 19:5-7). Jesus' feeding unconditionally extends to all people; something that must happen today in our time, where those with wheels of power must respect and see the need to help the poor.

A new heaven was being created against the man-made 'fake and unsustainable many heavens' that had been created by kings or emperors of the time where power and resources were unevenly distributed on the earthly spaces.⁷⁸ According to A Moyo, Jesus was creating new socio-economic structures that would facilitate the development and realization of a new world.⁷⁹ With Jesus' actions, the world was witnessing the true light in a world of darkness (1:9) characterised by death, hunger, godlessness, civil strife and diseases. People followed Jesus because they identified with his teachings and actions which provided them with security and food in the here and now. Jesus' struggle became their struggle, a struggle which was against the invisible and visible political and religious oppressors as well as a struggle against those that withheld the bread from the poor and hungry.⁸⁰ Jesus' bread winning role was a pointer to a society where the hungry or thirsty are taken care of in accessing food and water, not letting them die for lack of it. In fact the narrator of the Johannine gospel seems to have reminded the people about the identity of Jesus as 'the Word who was with God and the same Word

⁷⁷ R D Aus, *Feeding the Five Thousand*, 132

⁷⁸ Cf. M W Dube and J L Stanley, *Descending from and Ascending into Heaven: A Postcolonial Analysis of Travel, Space and Power in John*, in M W Dube and J L Stanley (eds), *John and Postcolonialism, Travel, Space and Power*, London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002, 3

⁷⁹ Cf. A Moyo, *Theological Perspectives on Development in Zimbabwe*, in C Hallencreutz and A Moyo, *Church and State*, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1988, 377

⁸⁰ Cf. Moyo, *Theological Perspectives on Development in Zimbabwe*, 388

which was God' (1:1) that all things were in his hand as a justification to his close relationship with God (3:3), the creator of every living soul. As the Logos, Jesus was advocating for a just society that strived to distribute God-given wealth. The feeding prowess of Jesus besides critiquing the feeding style of ANE kings, Hellenistic kings, Roman emperors and Jewish kings in fact heralded his source of power as shown in John 3:31-32 that 'The one who comes from above is above all; the one who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks of about earthly things'.

The Historical Challenges to Jesus' Feeding of the Masses

There are historical challenges that one faces in understanding the feeding miracle of Jesus, for example, the natural multiplication of bread and fish. Nothing is peculiar in giving food to the needy people as it is a social duty that can be done by both religious and non-religious people. How food was made available to such a big crowd is really a marvel to talk about and remember. Surprisingly, neither the one rule nor the other natural rules were observed in the feeding miracle by Jesus. The multiplication of the bread is not gradual. J H Bernard notes that, neither in John nor in the Synoptic narratives is there any mention of lighting a fire and cooking of fish on the occasion of the miracle.⁸¹ Yet we cannot presume that, the meal was of raw, fresh fish and bread. In fact there is the acceleration of the natural process where people are used to first grind the grain, knead it, bake it to produce bread or eat it raw from the husk in the wilderness where they were, resulting in this unique miracle. The multiplication of the bread and fish could have taken place either in the hands of Jesus, or in the hands of the disciples who dispensed the food, or in the hands of the people who received it.⁸² The supranatural explanation of the feeding miracle still maintains that the feeding miracle rests with Jesus in actually giving food. But, how did Jesus perform this miracle? Brittion⁸³ argues that, Jesus caused his

⁸¹ Cf. J H Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St John*, Volume 1, Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1969, 178

⁸² Cf. Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, 512

⁸³ Cf. A Brittion *Towards Sustainable Feeding Schemes*, http://www.diakonia.org.za/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=214&Itemid=54, Accessed Online, 25 August 2010

small store of provisions to be distributed and the consequence of this is that the entire multitude obtained enough to eat. The crowd was encouraged to share what they had brought. The miracle came in the sense of the better providing to share their food with those who were in want. The distribution by Jesus was then imitated leading to the general distribution of bread and the whole multitude was then satisfied.⁸⁴ A Britton's claims are not supported by what is in John 6. There is no mention of people contributing on their own except the young boy. A Britton struggles to explain away the miraculous multiplication of five loaves and two fish. No other explanation can be offered to address the concerns of the two scholars.

If feeding is taken as figurative, then the gospel of John can be interpreted as having applied the narrative of a miracle presented by tradition to the production of figurative discourses out of which the legend spun that miraculous narrative. This has led some critics to dismiss the feeding miracle as a legend, fictitious, a duplicated fable hence not historically true.⁸⁵ We suffer the same challenges in understanding the feeding story as in the case of Moses' giving of manna. The natural explanation and other explanations as shown above, easily fall into problems as a result of this unhistorical origin when related to the number of people believed to have been fed and in the case of Jesus, the baskets that were collected by the disciples after the end of the feeding mission. How is it possible that out of five loaves and two fishes, after Jesus and his disciples had reserved enough for themselves, there could be in a natural manner be twelve baskets filled for distribution among the people?

The natural explanation has so many questions that are left unanswered making the Johannine feeding narrative let alone the synoptic ones retain the miracle aspect. D F Strauss opts for theological explanation of the feeding miracle by noting that:

There is no question here of an unscrupulous narrator, who would designedly surpass the true history of the miraculous multiplication of the

⁸⁴ Cf. D F Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, 513

⁸⁵ Cf. Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, 511

loaves and fishes. The entire gospel Evangelists are agreed that Jesus miraculously fed the multitude.⁸⁶

H Olshausen interprets the feeding miracle in relation to the moral state of the participants, and supposes that the miraculous feeding of the multitude was effected through the *intermediation theory* of their spiritual hunger.⁸⁷ Unfortunately the *intermediation theory* does not take into consideration that, real food was distributed among the multitude as reported by John that, each enjoyed as much as one wanted. The end residue was much greater than the original, making it naturally peculiar. Feeding in this sense is understood as some soteriological quality that is much more than the physical nourishment of the body. The understanding by H Olshausen is that the feeding miracle by Jesus was focused on instilling faith on the multitude (with a direct effect only on the bodies of the hungry persons) with the implication that the miracle had no effect on the unbelieving.⁸⁸ Jesus in this sense undertook to multiply the loaves and fishes for the sake of producing a certain moral condition in the multitude. Just as happened to the Israelites in the wilderness when they were fed with manna, the moral emphasis is on trusting God. This can be related to the corresponding assurance given to believers of eternal life (John 6:40, 47). This possibly explains the reason why, Jesus meeting the disciples at the other side of the lake changed the discourse from debating about the actual giving of bread to Jesus' lecture on the Bread of life (25-59).

Jesus' giving of Bread (6:1-15) in the Context of the Bread of Life (6:25-52)

The feeding miracle in John 6:1-15 as discussed above cannot stand alone without looking at the next verses (6:25-71)⁸⁹ where Jesus engages in the bread of life debate. The mention of bread from heaven marks the

⁸⁶ Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, 511

⁸⁷ Cf. Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, 511

⁸⁸ Cf. Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, 511

⁸⁹ Scholars and Commentators like P B Smit, J S Webster, R E Brown and P Borgen have come up with various subdivisions of their own, though however not part of the discussion

starting point for Jesus antitype discussions (6:32-33). The bread of life forms the climax of the debate where Jesus alone personifies the heavenly bread hence the legitimate messenger of God and king. The juxtaposition of Moses and Jesus on the bread issue is then antithetical where all the eschatological expectations are fulfilled in Jesus.⁹⁰ Jesus becomes the embodiment of life and death to believers, the bread that descended from heaven. It is difficult in certain circumstances to take the meaning of bread in its literal sense as it was meant to portray the salvific mission of Jesus against false teachers of the law (Pharisees).⁹¹ Jesus categorically states the importance of using teachings that are figurative, for example, John 16:25 where he claims that 'though I have been speaking figuratively, a time is coming when I will no longer use this kind of language but will tell you plainly about my Father'. In this case, the bread of life debate seems to come on the fore after a rhetorical challenge to Jesus to perform more signs (6:30) or provide more bread (v.26). For the crowd, if Jesus was the divine messenger they expected the perpetual supply of food (manna) since there was a general belief that, when the Messiah comes he would outdo Moses the great national hero of Israel in the wonders he had done.⁹² Jesus' mere pronouncement 'I am the bread of life' did not produce any conviction to the crowd without a sign comparable to Moses' supply of Manna.

As a matter of fact, the bread of life debate by Jesus puts to light the tension between the aspect of faith and works. According to J H Bernard and R E Brown:

Jesus declares that the 'work of God' is to believe the one whom God sent. For the crowd, the identity of this one is clear. They believe Moses and they keep the law. They choose to compare Jesus' action on the preceding day with the wonders done by Moses. They ask for a sign, one that would persuade them to believe Jesus. They do not require just any sign, but a sign that is comparable to Moses' greatest miracle, the provision of

⁹⁰ Cf. Kügler, *Der Andere König*, 92

⁹¹ Cf. Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, 516

⁹² Cf. J H Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St John*, 195

Manna. And their request for a sign, 'bread from heaven' is a direct challenge to Jesus' identity.⁹³

The crowd's request was a serious physical, public and honor challenge to Jesus when reference was given to the Exodus experience which lasted for 40 years under the mediation of Moses. People were freely fed with Manna considered to be bread from heaven. With this behind their minds, why would they switch their loyalty from Moses to Jesus? Moses as the prophet-king (6:14-15) had managed to deliver, provide them with security and sustenance of food.⁹⁴ In Qumran 'the prophet' was expected as one of three messianic figures along with the two messiahs (4QTestim 5, 11 QS 9.10).⁹⁵ The Hellenistic ruler could be his own prophet, for example, several Ptolemies and possibly in the Roman circles. Augustus bound together sovereign power and prophetic authority.⁹⁶ The coincidental characterization of Jesus through the two offices also establishes possible connections with traditions that considered Moses in royal terms, yet they all engaged in the bread-winning expedition. Therefore the crowd demanded a sign from Jesus as conditionality for their belief and loyalty to Jesus. In order to redeem back his honor, Jesus introduces Moses to correct the crowd's misunderstanding on Moses' traditional kingship role.

Miracles and signs though accompanied by particular oracles acted as authentic functions for other prophets as well. It was natural to regard a prophet accredited by 'signs' as a claimant to kingship.⁹⁷ The challenge to Jesus to produce Manna is understandable if the crowd regarded Jesus as the Prophet-like-Moses. A prophet was expected to de-

⁹³ S Harstine, *Moses as a Character in the Fourth Gospel: A Study of Ancient Reading Techniques* London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002, 62; See also J H Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St John*, Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1928, 195; R E Brown, *The Gospel According to John I-XII: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, New York: Garden City, 1966-70, 265

⁹⁴ Cf. B J Malina and R L Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary on the Gospel of John*, 131

⁹⁵ Cf. E Haenchen, *A Commentary on the Gospel of John Chapters 1-6*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984, 272

⁹⁶ Cf. Kügler, *Der Andere König*, 86; See also, W Meeks, *The Prophet-King. Moses Traditions and the Johannine Christology*, Leiden: Brill, 1967, 99

⁹⁷ Cf. Dodd, *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel*, 215

liver people from hunger and diseases. There is a striking resemblance⁹⁸ in details between Moses' feeding of the masses though some scholars relate to Elisha's feeding miracle.⁹⁹ Moses used explicit signs to authenticate himself as the chosen emissary of God and this is used in the Fourth Gospel to connect 'shmei,a.' with the authentication of Jesus.¹⁰⁰ Exodus type signs were associated with true deliverers.¹⁰¹ The provision of Manna was regarded as the greatest miracles by Moses in the Jewish history (Exod. 16:4, 15; Num 11; Ps 78:24 'He rained on them Manna to eat and gave them the bread of heaven' and Wisdom 16:20 'You fed your people with the nourishment of angels, and you sent them from heaven bread that took no labour').

John indicates that, with the coming of Jesus, all OT prophecies were fulfilled in Jesus' Christological works. There is sufficient evidence that the advent of a prophet also figured in the popular expectations of the time. It is therefore not surprising that, the crowd hailed Jesus as the

⁹⁸ In the wilderness, there was fear that people may suffer from hunger and the Israelites murmured against Moses. In John, Jesus and his disciples were worried that people would suffer from hunger. The directive by Jesus that people needed to be fed can be paralleled to the directive by JHWH to Moses to feed the people with manna and quails. In both accounts the multitude seemed too great to satisfactorily feed them, but in both accounts the multitude were miraculously fed. Some resemblances with Elisha (2 Kings 4:42-43) have been related. In both accounts, there is emphasis on the collection of the remaining fragments (an over-surplus). The description of the loaves (6:9, 13) is viewed as peculiar to John and regarded as a reminiscence of Elisha in 2 Kings, where we are told how Elisha fed a considerable number of men on a seemingly inadequate supply of bread. One can notice some similarities and differences between the Jesus and Elisha miracles. In the light of John 6:1-15, the narratives on Moses and Elisha undoubtedly show prophets could be associated with miraculous provision of foodstuffs (Ex.16:1-36, 17:1-7; Elijah-1 Kings 17:8-24). In the Elisha feeding miracle, there are 100 men who are fed with 20 barley loaves and the left-overs were vaguely stated as 'much more' (the figure is not given). In both accounts, there is the mention of a servant or 'lad' (2 Kings 4:42, John 6:9) with 'barley loaves' (2 Kings 4:42, 6:9). What is outstanding is that, even if it is possible to relate Jesus' feeding to Elisha's feeding; Jesus feeding was extra-ordinary as it went above what Elisha had done. He proved to be Lord of hunger, Cf. R D Aus, *Feeding the Five Thousand*, 34

⁹⁹ Cf. Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, 517

¹⁰⁰ Cf. M Smith, *The Theology of the Gospel of John*, in J D G Dunn, New Testament Theology, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, 108

¹⁰¹ Cf. P Barnett, *The Jewish Sign Prophets-A.D 40-70: Their Intentions and Origin*, New Testament Studies, 1981, Volume 27, 679-697

coming prophet who may have stood in the ancient tradition (6:14). The mission of Moses as sent by God was clear to the Jews through the signs that he performed, so is also the same with Jesus in the Fourth Gospel where miraculous signs chronicled his mission from the Father. The feeding miracle of Jesus needed an explanation as the crowd misunderstood it and Jesus found that opportunity when he addressed the crowd's motivation in seeking him (v.26). The crowd possibly took Jesus for a miracle worker who provided people with mortal food. And the same misunderstanding manifests with our Zimbabwean politicians who take Jesus' feeding as a mobilization tool. As a result they miss the greater significance of Jesus' provision of food that bestows eternal life to consumers. Jesus puts the record straight by first arguing that 'the bread from heaven' did not originate with Moses, but his Father.¹⁰² Moses was merely a mediator and not patron to Israel on that memorable feeding event. Secondly, that Moses did not provide the 'true bread' as given by God. Moses as a character in John 6:32-33 is put in four ways that: a) it was not Moses but God who pastorally gave bread from heaven; b) the giving of the bread is not restricted to the past but is a present reality; c) the Manna was not the true bread from heaven but he who comes down from heaven; d) the true bread gives life to the world.¹⁰³

C H Dodd demonstrates it in a symbolic equation to prove the supremacy of Jesus as the new broker of God's life-giving food over Moses:

Bread=Torah=Moses<Jesus=Incarnate Word=True Bread.¹⁰⁴

Jesus' relationship with the Father is analogous to that of the Manna with God (associated both with Jewish tradition of the: Torah and Wisdom), not with that of Moses with God. Overallly Jesus outbids Moses 'himmelweit'.¹⁰⁵ In the bread of life discourse, Moses is only introduced

¹⁰² Cf. L Morris, *The Gospel According to Moses*, 363; See also, H Strathmann, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1951, 120

¹⁰³ Cf. L Morris, *The Gospel According to Moses*, 363

¹⁰⁴ Cf. C H Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953, 336

¹⁰⁵ Cf. P B Smit, *Fellowship and Food in the Kingdom*, 311; See also, T Popp, *Grammatik des Geistes*, 323; M Stare, *Durch ihn Leben: die Lebensthematik in John 6*, NTA NF 49,

in John to show his insufficiency when compared to Jesus, the true bread from heaven. T L Brodie and N R Petersen note that:

This new clarity required a decision of faith. The crowd was supposed to realise that something greater than Manna, something greater than Moses is to eat the true bread from heaven and to believe in Jesus thereby escaping from death. Will the crowd continue to believe Moses whose miracles could not prevent death, or seek life? By naming Moses, Jesus introduces a discussion on the dichotomy of maintaining a tradition that did not bring life to its participants and taking part in a new miraculous event that does bring life.¹⁰⁶

The latter references to Manna by Jesus (6:25-34) fits well with John's setting for the multiplication scene. There is an interesting affinity between the fourth Evangelist (6:31-'*Our forefathers ate the Manna in the desert; as it is written: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat'*') with the celebrated passages on feeding of the Israelites in the wilderness (Ex.16:4, Num.11:4, Ps 78:24-25). The passages seem to have been perfectly adapted to engender the expectation that its antitype would occur in the Messianic times. Manna for Josephus in Antiquities III.1.6 was 'divine and miraculous' food.¹⁰⁷ The Mosaic Manna augurs well with the miraculous giving of bread by Jesus. Jesus becomes the new Moses through whom God fed the Manna-food to the Israelites during the Exodus as would be expected in future (Exodus 16, Deut 18:15 where Moses says 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me among your own people; you shall heed such a prophet).

The movement of the debate is interesting in the sense that, Jesus contrasts between bread meant for the stomach and bread meant for the soul, both being linked to human life. The graph of debate moves from a discussion on the material bread on the human plane (earth) to the spiritual plane (heaven) and back to the human plane. P Borgen argues that, in the case of John 6, Jesus used the homiletic technique in

Münster: Aschendorff, 2004, 148-150

¹⁰⁶ T L Brodie, *The Gospel According to John: A Literary and Theological Commentary*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1993, 281; See also, N R Petersen, *The Gospel of John and the Sociology of Light: Language and Characterization in the Fourth Gospel*, Valley Forge P.A: Trinity Press International, 1993, 103

¹⁰⁷ Cf. R E Brown, *The Anchor Bible: The Gospel According to John (I-XII)*, 262

his bread of life discourse where the statement that opens the homily (6:35) on eating bread to the ‘bread from heaven’ and back to the theme of ‘eating’ (6:49-50).¹⁰⁸ Faith and Revelation just like Jesus’ feeding of the masses also dominates the Samaritan woman narrative, for example, the movement from the earth seeing and hearing Jesus upwards through faith ‘visualizing God in charge through Jesus’.¹⁰⁹ The Samaritan woman as a representative of women helps the implied reader by her active participation and theological dialogue that exposed the identity and mission of Jesus.¹¹⁰ Jesus admonished his audience to move from the superficial, material level of food and water by putting much emphasis on faith in Jesus. The language of foodstuffs is set aside and the focus is put on the fruits of faith in Jesus: resurrection and eternal life. Belief in Jesus according to John is part of ‘work or action’ that will bring to believers food and water that lasts for eternal life. Therefore seeing (sign) alone was not enough according to Jesus (2:11; 14:11; 20:29 ‘Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed’).

Due to this Johannine ‘bread vocabulary’, similarities have been noticed between John’s bread of life debate 6:31-58 and Philonic midrashic developments of the Manna tradition. P Borgen established the following position that: a) both Philo (*Mut.*258-260; *Leg. all. III* 162, 168; and *Congr.*170, 173-174) and John (6:31-58) employ fragments of the haggadic Manna tradition along with other OT motifs, as an ‘exegetical paraphrase’ of an OT text; (b) a ‘common homiletic pattern’ may be identified within Philo’s (*Mut.*253-263; *Leg. all. III* 162-168) and John’s (6:31-58) use of the Manna tradition, but their uses are more creative and less ‘wooden’ than later Palestinian concept of the Manna motif.¹¹¹ Philo’s interpretation of the Manna tradition (*Mut.*253-263) was guided

¹⁰⁸ Cf. P Borgen, “Observations on the Midrashic Character of John 6,” *ZNW* 54, 1963, 232-40

¹⁰⁹ Cf. M M Beirne, *Women and Men in the Fourth Gospel*, 81; See also, F E Schüssler, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins*, London: SCM Press, 1995, 328; R Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St John*, London: Burns and Oates, 1982, 420

¹¹⁰ Cf. M M Beirne, *Women and Men in the Fourth Gospel: A Genuine Discipleship of Equals*, London: Sheffield Academic Press Ltd, 2003, 89

¹¹¹ Cf. P N Anderson, *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel: Its Unity and Disunity in the Light of John 6*, Tübingen: J C B Mohr, 1996, 53

by the socio-religious and historical needs of his Alexandrian audience where Manna was used as symbol for Jewish wisdom only accessible to the obedient selected few.¹¹² The same approach on the Manna tradition by Philo can be noticed in the bread of life debate by John. The bread of life for John becomes a metaphor for Jesus who, as Wisdom incarnate, came down from heaven to give life to the world in the form of divine wisdom-revelation.¹¹³ The Manna motif for John is introduced to display and prove the superiority of Jesus and his heavenly origin. In the Fourth Gospel the Son descends from the Father before he ascends (John 3:13), something different when compared to Moses who must ascend to God first and then descend again (Exod.20).

Heaven for John represents the incomparable highest order and realm that Jesus represented. The powerlessness that could have been seen in Jesus changed with his connection to the heavenly Father and highlights his supremacy and dominion over every earthly authority. The bread of life discourse took a shift in John where belief forms part of the eating of the bread. It develops a broad based meaning that involves giving eternal life to the body and soul of the person, something more when compared to the bread offered by secular kings and political leaders whose role of feeding satiates the stomachs. He was now the faithful and capable supplier of bread that imparted real life to those with the eyes of faith. Jesus is quoted encouraging people to work for the imperishable food (6:27) that leads to complete nutritional satiation evidenced by eternal life. There is contrast between perishable food and imperishable food.

For Jesus, bodily satiety does not last as hunger would strike again. The same contrast was made by Jesus in John 4 between water that would temporarily quench thirst and the water that eternally satisfies thirst forever. This type of food and water that Jesus gives does not need money but the ears of faith. According to P B Smit,

In both cases of the lining water and the bread of life, John's theology is cast in the shape of a nutritional symbolical process leading to utopian satiation. That the effects of the acceptance of this bread of life and the

¹¹² Cf. P N Anderson, *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel*, 53

¹¹³ Cf. Borgen, *Bread From Heaven*, 168

living water are not only to be viewed in terms of 'realised' eschatology but also in terms a futuristic eschatology that results in eternal life (John 6:22-71). The end to hunger and thirst and the gaining of eternal life is achieved through the reception of the true bread of life, i.e., the incarnated and glorified Son of Man (Jn. 6:48-51, 58).¹¹⁴

Isaiah 55:1 made such an invitation to everyone who is thirsty to come to the waters, even with no money. Isaiah asks the fooling question 'Why spend money on what is not bread and labor on what does not satisfy the soul?' The bread of life discourse portrays Jesus as nourishment where the flesh (σάρξ) of Jesus is taken as symbolic of life for the body and soul of humanity. M M Thompson notes that, of all the passages in John where σάρξ is used, it mostly refers to the human realm (the mortal suffering or death of Jesus) or the insufficient earthly perspective in contrast to the divine and natural existence when contrasted to the life given by the spirit.¹¹⁵ It was a startling turn of events when Jesus talked about giving his flesh (σάρξ) which automatically brought dispute, shock and horror to the Jewish listeners particularly if they took his statements at face value.¹¹⁶ If taken literally the statement by Jesus was nothing short of cannibalism and who would dare stand for that? Interestingly the type of cannibalism was controversially far from hunger, war or famine.

In fact in the OT tradition, 'to eat someone's flesh' is a symbol of hostile action (Ps 27:2; Zech 11:9). The drinking of blood on the other hand was regarded as a horrendous thing forbidden by God's law (Gen 9:4; Lev 3:17; Deut 12:23; Acts 15:20), for whom the blood of animals was *tabu* and was forbidden to be eaten as food (Gen 9:4; Deut 12:16).¹¹⁷ All the prohibitions were based on the understanding that 'blood is life' or 'blood as the seat of the soul' (Gen 9:4). The prohibition is also found in Deuteronomy 12:23 that 'Only be sure that you do not eat the blood; for the blood is the life, and you shall not eat the life with meat' and Le-

¹¹⁴ P B Smit, *Fellowship and Food in the Kingdom*, 322-323

¹¹⁵ Cf. M M Thompson, *The Humanity of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988, 49

¹¹⁶ Cf. F J Moloney, *The Function of Prolepsis* in R A Culpepper, *Critical Readings of John 6*, Leiden: Brill, 1997, 141

¹¹⁷ Cf. R E Brown, *The Anchor Bible: The Gospel According to John*, 284; J H Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St John*, 209

viticus 17:11, 14 and 19:26 'You shall not eat anything with its blood'.¹¹⁸ Other explanations have been given to the bread of life discourse by Jesus. Besides Jesus' words in John 6 referring to the Eucharist, the challenge to the disciples of Jesus to ingest flesh and blood of Jesus could have been acutely felt during the persecution of Christians by Domitian (80s and 90s). The persecution produced challenges that had not been witnessed before in relation to Christian faith. The bread of life discourse cannot be viewed in isolation to John's Christological content and other themes like: eschatology, soteriology, logos, predestination of Christian believers, Jesus' signs and works as shown by his feeding of the masses, and his relation with God the Father. In John, the Bread of Life discourse develops life giving functions linked to one's faith or belief. John 6 has some Jewish background where food and bread are symbolically presented as representing the divine word and wisdom, for example, in Amos 8:11-13 'Behold the days are coming when I shall send a famine on the land, not a famine of bread or a thirst for water, but for hearing the word of the Lord'.

P Borgen believes that, John's understanding of the Manna is guided by the situation faced by the evangelist, one in which not persecution but Docetism was the problem, and verses 51-58 are used against the Docetists.¹¹⁹ In that light, the whole bread of life debate about ingesting the 'flesh and blood' of Jesus in verses 53-58 is directed on the Docetists who the evangelist accused of being 'externalists' who needed to be corrected for the exaggerated expressions of spirituality. Instead of a Eucharist interpretation, the evangelist in chapter 6 is addressing a crisis and impact to the Christian community caused by the docetic Christology and the literalistic sacramentalism used to combat Docetism.¹²⁰ Its practical implications were a cause for concern when it related to the believers' preparedness to suffer and be exposed to death in the face of

¹¹⁸ Cf. J H Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St John*, 209; B J Malina and R L Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary on the Gospel of John*, 136

¹¹⁹ Cf. P N Anderson, *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel*, 54

¹²⁰ Cf. J D G Dunn, "John VI-A Eucharistic Discourse?", *New Testament Studies*, 1970, Volume 17, 328-338

persecution.¹²¹ Docetism demeaned the suffering and death of Jesus as well as the suffering of Christians.

Unfortunately, the bread-talk, i.e., flesh and blood, food and drink misunderstanding led some disciples to leave Jesus as they could not stand it when Jesus said to them,

I tell you the truth, unless you can eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood; you can have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink (John 6:53-54)

On hearing this, many of Jesus' disciples said, 'This is hard teaching. Who can accept it?' (6:60). For P B Smit, J Kügler and J S Webster, the murmurings and withdrawals by the disciples typically created a scene of the wilderness wanderings (Ex 16:2, 7, 12; 17:3; Num 11:1, 14:27; 1 Cor. 10:10).¹²² Yet the bread of life had nothing to do with bodily life nourishment but the divine nourishment of man's spirit. 'Flesh and blood' sacramentally becomes an encounter with Jesus who shares his life and that of his Father with us (6:53). One who feeds on it guards against spiritual death and assimilates the true living Bread of life (ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ἄρτος ὁ ζῶν). Yet the bread given to the Israelites in the wilderness and touted by the leaders of the Synagogue was death-producing, yet the bread of life by Jesus gives eternal life. The disciples who chose to leave were representative of Jews who had kicked themselves out (John 6:66). The discourse portrays Jews as having refused to embrace the life of eternity preferring the bread that fills their stomachs. On the other hand, it was an act of unbelievers leaving out because they were not interested in sharing representing the rich elite class of the time who were only interested in belief and faith alone. Sharing has never been attractive to the rich as a result of their upper-class theology that was exclusivist. The upper-class theology was also dominant in Corinth (1 Corinthians 11:17-33) where the rich wanted to enjoy themselves but not prepared to share

¹²¹ Cf. P N Anderson, *The Sitz im Leben of the Johannine Bread of Life Discourse and Its Evolving Context*, 27, 41

¹²² Cf. P B Smit, *Fellowship and Food in the Kingdom*, 312; See also J S Webster, *Ingesting Jesus: Eating and Drinking in the Gospel of John*, Atlanta: SBL, 2003, 82; J Kügler, *Der Jünger, den Jesus liebte* SBB 16, Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1988, 200-201

with the poor.¹²³ It was only Peter who declared his allegiance as a sign of his knowledge about Jesus' proclamation (6:68). People should have realized that the bread broken and shared with those in need has blessed power for life than bread that remains unbroken, guarded, unshared and hoarded.

John shows that the signs that Jesus performed were supposed to be spiritually and not materially understood. The bread provided by Jesus is a form of nourishment which transcends all earthly bread and John would like to advocate that, this food must be the goal of the people's searching. The contrast also could have implied that, Jesus' messiahship rivaled or contrasted with the life-giving role of kings and emperors. The 'bread of life' discourse shows that men do not have a monopoly on witnessing and being partakers of eternal life as women are also incorporated by virtue of their faith and faith alone.¹²⁴ The multitude failed to realize that Jesus' physical feeding was a sign of Jesus' ability to feed them spiritually (6:30-31).¹²⁵ The Manna which the Jews got was not meant to make them hostage to Moses but was meant to provoke them to look at the source behind the provision coming through Moses and now through Jesus as God's special revelation.

The Eucharist and the Feeding Topic (6:51-71)

John 6 exposes the Bread of Life Discourse as a juxtaposition of Jesus' two-fold presence to believers in the *preached word* (his revelation-Logos) and as *sacrament* in the Eucharist. B Weiss, E Schweizer, R Bultmann, V Bussche, C K Barrett, C H Dodd and R E Brown divide John 6:35-59 into two parts. The first part (6:35-50) as referring primarily to revelation but secondarily to Eucharist and the second part (6:51-58) explicitly referring to Eucharist though regarded as a later addition to include an anti-

¹²³ Cf. J Kügler, *Politics of Feeding: Reading John 6 (and 1 Cor.11) as Testimonies of Socio-Political Conflicts on How to Eat the Lord's Supper*, *Awaiting Publication with the BiAS Series*, vol. 7, 2012

¹²⁴ Cf. G R O'Day, *John*, in Carol A Newsom and S H Ringe, *The Women's Bible Commentary*, Louisville: John Knox Press, 1992, 294-295

¹²⁵ Cf. C Bennema, *The Power of Saving Wisdom: An Investigation of Spirit and Wisdom in Relation to the Soteriology of the Fourth Gospel*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002, 197

docetic theme.¹²⁶ G H C McGregor took the whole of John 6 as sacramental by virtue of: reference to Passover (6:4); Jesus distributing bread and giving thanks (v. 11); Jesus claiming to be the bread of life (v.51); reference to eating and drinking (v.53).¹²⁷ Most scholars regard John 6:51-58 as having been added later to bring clearly the Eucharistic elements that were already there in 6:35-50 and the NT Last Supper texts. John 6 exposes the various stages in the composition of the gospel and how the Christian community reflected deeply on their sacramental life in relation to the work and message of Jesus. A new Eucharistic language can be noticed running through verses 51-58: 'eat', 'feed', 'drink', 'flesh' and 'blood'. Even John 6:11 shows some Eucharistic flavour 'he gave thanks' is more allusive to the Eucharist than the Synoptic word 'he blessed' (Mk 6:41, Mt 14:19). The Eucharistic word in John is also used in 1 Corinthians 11:23 and Didache 9:4.¹²⁸ The vocabulary incorporated is more on faith symbolized by eating the 'flesh of Jesus' than the actual eating. To eat and drink the flesh and blood of Jesus symbolizes communion with the Giver and the source of life who is God. Eternal life no longer comes by just believing in Jesus but through feeding on the flesh of Jesus and drinking his blood (6:54). The final implication is as understood by most first century Christians in the Eucharist for our salvation (6:53-58).

Even present Christians and interpreters have not missed the sacramental allusion and consider the passage as pointing to the sacrament of the Eucharist. It is known that, in the early Christian art (from the second century) bread and fish, as well as bread and wine appeared frequently in Eucharistic symbolism.¹²⁹ Eternal bread may only be realized through the Eucharist and the procedural meaning is that of: Bread-Manna-Eucharist. The major problem we have is that, scholars who evidently presuppose John 6:51c-58 as indeed having Eucharistic meaning fail to appreciate the connection of the unity to the whole of John 6. M J J

¹²⁶ Cf. R E Brown, *The Anchor Bible: The Gospel According to John*, 272

¹²⁷ Cf. G H McGregor, "The Eucharist in the Fourth Gospel", *Journal of New Testament Studies*, 1963, Volume 9, 114-116; See also, W G Kümmel, *Theology of the New Testament*, London: SCM Press Ltd, 1996, 311

¹²⁸ Cf. B Vawter, *The Gospel According to John*, 435

¹²⁹ Cf. Dodd, *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel*, 200

Menken and H Klos dismiss any Eucharist postulations in John 6:51c-58 by coming with another approach to the bread of life passage, arguing that:

The passage is a logical continuation of the preceding Christological part of the discourse, a continuation which also contains a Christological message. In this approach, the terms 'bread', 'flesh' and 'blood' in vv.51c-58 refers primarily to the person of Jesus, and not to the Eucharistic elements. It finds support in the 'I am'-saying of 6:35: "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger and whoever believes in me, shall never thirst." This saying suggests that 'to eat' and 'to drink' metaphorically indicate belief in Jesus.¹³⁰

Early Church fathers like Clement of Alexandria, Origen and Eusebius dismissed understanding the bread of life discourse in the Eucharistic way. For them the flesh and blood of 6:55-58 spiritually meant no more than did the bread from heaven as reference to Christ.¹³¹ Even though there are two schools of thought for and against the Eucharistic connotations on these texts, the underlying factor is that belief in Jesus and participation in the Eucharist are not mutually exclusive, a pointer to the period of the early Church. The provision of food by God to the Israelites became embodied in the figure of Jesus. According to L J M Claassens,

This trajectory offers some important perspectives on the metaphor of the God who feeds did not remain an abstract theological expression but became concretized in the sacrament of the Eucharist.¹³²

The Eucharist is a combination of eating and believing, eternal life in the here and now (realized eschatology) as well as in the hereafter (final eschatology). It is part of the soul belief that is linked to the sustenance of body. The Eucharist projects kingship and feeding of people far above the type of feeding practiced by any ruler. The Eucharist transforms the lives of believers and can fill all the loopholes in every human spirit. It

¹³⁰ M J J Menken, *John 6:51c-58: Eucharist or Christology?*, in R A Culpepper (eds), *Critical Readings of John 6*, Leiden: Brill, 1997, 185; H Klos, *Die Sakramente im Johannesevangelium*, Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1970, 66-69; See also, J D G Dunn, "John VI-A Eucharistic Discourse?", 329

¹³¹ Cf. R E Brown, *The Anchor Bible: The Gospel According to John*, 272

¹³² L J M Claassens, *The God who provides*, 100

reflects the immensity of God's love and His fellowship with His creatures.

It is then important to note that, the Eucharist besides feeding peoples' souls also feeds their stomachs.¹³³ Contemporary scholars as in our case have understood everything to do with the Eucharist as having nothing to do with the feeding of the stomach but spirituality. Yet the Eucharist celebrations were part of the broader feeding topic as observed by J Kügler that:

Christians of today are NOT used to eat at the 'table of the Lord'. When the Lord's Supper is celebrated this is usually done in an extremely reduced and symbolic form that has nothing to do with filling one's stomach. In Early Christianity, they really did eat when they came to celebrate Lord's Supper (1 Cor.11:17-34). Obviously the Christians in Corinth had a big problem with Eucharist as some members of the community didn't want to share. They enjoyed food and wine and left nothing for others whilst at the same time not only were filled up with food but were even drunk. The Lord's Supper was a real banquet where not only bread and wine were served but also other food like fish was consumed.¹³⁴

The aspect of filling the stomachs with food is implied in 1 Corinthians 11:17-34. The Eucharist celebration is a challenge to us on how we should celebrate it in the face of hunger and poverty. The celebration should invoke in us the compassionate will to challenge political and community leaders to live up to their mission in combating hunger and poverty. Participation in the Eucharist as happened at Corinth is a reminder to believers that we commit ourselves to making something of the claim that God feeds all people. We must make sure that everybody is included on the all inclusive-table of feeding and sharing.¹³⁵ L J M Claassens points that:

The Eucharist becomes the place where people are encouraged to participate in the metaphor of God's provision of food, a reality by feeding the hungry, working toward finding solutions for famine in the world, and

¹³³ Cf. J Kügler, *Oberseminar Contribution*, 08 June 2011

¹³⁴ J Kügler, *Politics of Feeding: Reading John 6 (and 1 Cor.11) as Testimonies of Socio-Political Conflicts on How to Eat the Lord's Supper*, Awaiting Publication with the BiAS series, vol. 7, 2012

¹³⁵ Cf. L J M Claassens, *The God who Provides*, 106

breaking down the barriers of racism, injustice, and separation, huge gap between the rich and poor.¹³⁶

Our biblical reading of feeding of the masses and celebration of the Lord's Supper by Jesus should provoke all believers to actions that benefit all people, even those in the margins of society. When one reads the feeding miracle in John 6 (unlike in other gospels), Jesus encourages the disciples to gather the left-over pieces (v.12). The reason given for the collecting of the remaining pieces of food is that 'in order that nothing may be lost'. The statement has drawn much attention as to what that meant, considering that people would still go back to their homes. Commentators have taken 'gathering of pieces' as something to do with the elements of the Eucharist practices in the Early Church where the Church took care of the remains of the Eucharist.¹³⁷ It may, indeed, be that this is what Jesus said.¹³⁸ But J McPolin thinks that, the gathering up of the fragments so that they are not lost (6:11-13) calls to mind the gathering up of the fragments at the end of the Eucharist celebrations where people would have really eaten to fill their stomachs (Didache 9:3-4; 10:1-3).¹³⁹ The Eucharist was a real meal that nourished the spirit as well as the body as evidenced in Didache 10:1-3.

The transformation of Eucharist celebrations to become symbolic like the modern day symbolic celebrations seeking to nourish the spirit took a long time to be realised.¹⁴⁰ It is possible that the item of John's narrative on 'gathering up of the fragments' was a reading back into the Fourth Gospel from the later practice of the church, but there appears to be another plausible explanation for this feature. It may be that the Jewish custom of leaving something over for those who served lies behind the incident recorded here.¹⁴¹ And besides this specific cus-

¹³⁶ L J M Claassens, *The God who Provides*, 107

¹³⁷ Cf. E C Hoskyns, *The Fourth Gospel*, London: Farber and Farber, 1947, 289; See also, G H C Macgregor, *The Gospel of John*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1928, 131

¹³⁸ Cf. E D Johnston, "The Johannine Version of the Feeding of the Five Thousand-An Independent Tradition?", *Journal of New Testament Studies*, 8, 1961, 151-154

¹³⁹ Cf. J McPolin, *John*, Delaware: Wilmington, 1979, 65

¹⁴⁰ Cf. J Kügler, *Hungrig Bleiben!? Warum Das Mahlsakrament Trennt und Wie Man die Trennung Überwinden Könnte*, Würzburg: Echter, 2010, 44, 64-66

¹⁴¹ Cf. A McNeille (eds), *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St*

tom, it is to be noted that the Eucharist celebrations satiated the stomach and the human spirit. The preservation of 'left-over pieces' in John 6:12 was a common practice in antiquity. A number of Talmudic passages show the extreme care with which bread was handled. One Talmudic story shows striking parallels to the Johannine feeding story when A Abaye said:

Formerly I thought that the sweeping away of the crumbs took place for the sake of neatness, but the teacher explained to me, because this letting crumbs lie on the ground leads to poverty. Once the spirit of poverty pursued a man; but he was not able to do anything against him, because he was not very careful with the crumbs.¹⁴²

As a result of the fear of being accursed with poverty and hunger, gathering of crumbs or fragments of bread from the floor of a banquet room or from the grass upon which people had been sitting became a trend with banqueters. In order to be absolutely sure in case of bread crumbs falling in between the blades of grass; one chose to dig up the entire area of grass near where he has sat and threw everything into the river, thereby fooling the angel of poverty.¹⁴³ When discussing on the kingship of Jesus and the feeding topic, it is prudent to look at the spiritual and the material aspect of the Eucharist celebration. John's symbolic use of bread brings out the soteriological implications of his Christology.¹⁴⁴ So the bread of life and the Eucharist discourse in John 6 cannot be holistically understood without relating it to the feeding topic and the kingship of Jesus. P N Anderson believes that:

Put otherwise, the Johannine Jesus is here portrayed as declaring that those who seek Jesus in hopes of the more stomach-satisfying bread than the bread of the soul missed the whole point of the soul-reaching miracle. Jesus was not a thaumaturgy-Markan, pre-Markan, or otherwise. He came to reveal and incarnate the human-divine saving and revealing dialogue. The physical effect of Jesus' miracles in John is always embel-

John, Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1928, 179

¹⁴² E D Johnston, "The Johannine Version of the Feeding of the Five Thousand-An Independent Tradition?", *Journal of New Testament Studies*, 8, 1961, 151-154

¹⁴³ Cf. R D Aus, *Feeding the Five Thousand*, 66

¹⁴⁴ Cf. J Painter, *Jesus and the Quest for Eternal Life* in R Alan Culpepper, *Critical Readings of John 6*, Leiden: Brill, 1997, 82

lished in order to magnify their revelational value. Semeiology always depletes ontology.¹⁴⁵

Jesus expected his audience as portrayed by John, to couch their historical messianic expectations with the authentic mission of Jesus in feeding both the body and the spirit. In John 4:10-11 and 6:1-15, Jesus invites people for-all satisfaction of hunger and thirst.

The bread of life was also a metaphor for Jesus crucified. Jesus' giving his life for the world on the cross bespeaks the paradoxical cost of discipleship for Jesus' followers.¹⁴⁶ The theology of the cross symbolized by the Eucharist and the aspect of feeding souls are important on the kingship of Jesus. M Welker points out that, the center of the Eucharist is on Jesus' suffering and dying, brokenness, torn, shedding of blood, mourning, guilt and shame which are evoked by the cross carried by Jesus. It symbolized God's choice to associate with the pain of this world.¹⁴⁷ John clearly shows the link between Christology and soteriology. J McPolin notes that:

Though we may call the gospel of John the most sacramental of all gospels, John's centre of attention is never the sacraments themselves or the cultic life of the community. Rather his interest centers on the mission, self-revelation of Jesus on earth and saving humanity through his death. In the work and words of Jesus he sees signs and reminders that point to his continued presence amongst his people.¹⁴⁸

The bread of life when presented in the Eucharistic celebrations testifies about Jesus' suffering and death, the beacon of humility in Jesus' kingship sealed in his resurrection. Following Jesus was not just for benefits but costly to the extent of one losing life. Therefore; the 'eating of the flesh and drinking of the blood' of Jesus must be understood as metaphors respectively for coming and believing in Jesus.¹⁴⁹ In order to share

¹⁴⁵ P N Anderson, *The Sitz Im Leben*, 29

¹⁴⁶ Cf. Bennema, *The Power of Saving Wisdom*, 201; See also, P L Anderson, *The Sitz im Leben of the Johannine Bread of Life Discourse and Its Evolving Context*, in R A Culpepper, *Critical Readings of John 6*, Leiden: Brill, 1997, 6

¹⁴⁷ Cf. M Welker, *What happens in Holy Communion?* Translated by John F Hoffmeyer, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000, 103

¹⁴⁸ J McPolin, *John*, 75

¹⁴⁹ Cf. J D G Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit: A Re-examination of the New Testament*

in the resurrection of Christ would then entail the willingness on the part of Christian believers to participate in his suffering and death against just eating bread for the stomach. It is one of the important aspects ignored by politicians and other people who ignorantly compare Jesus' messiahship with their political leaders. It is important to note that, while the formal *Sitz im Leben* of John 6 was constant, the situational contexts in which its content was delivered homiletically continued to change.¹⁵⁰ Jesus reveals God in his wisdom teaching and the climax of this revelation is displayed on the cross, hence the saving revelatory wisdom of God and shepherdhood of Jesus.

Bread of Life and Shepherdhood of Jesus

The shepherd metaphor forms one of the images that John uses to characterize Jesus kingship role in feeding the masses. Jesus clearly shows his shepherdhood in John 6:39, where Jesus is not prepared to lose any of his sheep. In John 10:11-14, Jesus shows the qualities of a good shepherd who lays down his life (John 3:16) for his flock against the bad one who abandons the sheep to the predators, robbers or thieves and runs away. Jesus as the shepherd is prepared to voluntarily lay down his life on behalf of the sheep. Jesus' shepherdhood does not only focus on Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs (the basic needs that sustain peoples' lives) but Jesus goes a step further in his shepherdhood by choosing to sacrifice his life for the people he leads.

The shepherdhood of Jesus is literally different (John 10:17-18; 15:9-10; 17:23, 26, 17:24) from how a shepherd was understood when it came to shepherding. The saviourship of Jesus in John clearly articulates in reverse claims to power on Jesus by metaphorically annihilating other forms of power as known by his audience, for example, the Roman supremacy. This relates so well with Philo's use of images of the cosmic pastoral function of God in connection with Psalm 23:1, where the entire

Teaching on the Gift of the Spirit in relation to Pentecostalism today, London: SCM Press, 1970, 184

¹⁵⁰ Cf. P N Anderson, *The Sitz im Leben of the Johannine Bread of Life Discourse and Its Evolving Context*, 58

cosmos is to acknowledge God as shepherd.¹⁵¹ The shepherd metaphor in John 10 can also be taken as a good example of the transformation process where the wisdom or logos schemes are fundamentally modified and changed to become part of the Christological kingship of Jesus. His characterisation as shepherd in the perspective of feeding is a foretaste of the Messianic banquet that believers will witness hence portraying Jesus as an eschatological Shepherd Messiah. If God is one with Jesus as intimated in John, then it becomes logical that, all other earthly powers are subservient to Jesus' authority. Interestingly Jesus' Christological power is bestowed on all Christian believers. All Christian believers become heirs with Christ in the kingdom of God. They cease to be servants to Jesus as in the case of ancient kingship and contemporary political leadership. The bread of life and the shepherd metaphors help us in understanding the identity and mission of Jesus in relation to the aspect of his kingship and feeding of the multitude.

Conclusion

The evangelist John displayed the kingship of Jesus and how Jesus' kingship could have been motivated by the Johannine community environment which was used to Hellenistic and Roman kings. The feeding of the multitude by Jesus was a known traditional duty that put Jesus in the shoes of ancient kings. Feeding stabilized the authority of kings and Jesus' feeding was an indirect kingship declaration. The behaviour by the multitude in trying to make Jesus their king was not misplaced considering the fact that, the Palestinian economical, religious, social and political environment agitated for a messiah. However, Jesus' withdrawal from the crowd envisioned the type of messiahship that he represented. The shepherd and Bread of life metaphors reverse the political interpretation of Jesus' kingship and feeding of the masses. Therefore, Jesus feeding must be analysed in the light of the cross, death and resurrection which form the economy of salvation. Before we engage on that discussion, there is need to also look at the Zimbabwean traditional terrain of kingship and the feeding topic.

¹⁵¹ Cf. Kügler, *Der Andere König*, 124

PART III: THE ZIMBABWEAN CONTEXT

CHAPTER 1: THE SHONA¹ KINGSHIP AND THE ZUNDE RAMAMBO (Chief's Granary) CONCEPT

It is important to note that, the institution of kingship was one of the important pillars of life amongst the Shona people. The Shona chief hereinafter referred to as king played a central role amongst the Shona people of Zimbabwe. There are royal rituals and symbols that helped to rhetorically project the Shona king above the ordinary people, making him an embodiment of the divine. The Shona king's status, office and duties were linked to the divine world. This chapter basically focuses on Shona kingship and the *Zunde RaMambo* or the 'Chief's Granary' of food. The Zimbabwean people in some cases use the traditional concept of kingship and the feeding topic as a measurement of Mugabology. This chapter is very important as it helps to characterise and situate the person, status, office and duties of Mugabe as the bread-donor in Zimbabwe.

Putting the term 'Chief or King' in its Perspective

There is inadequate information and controversial dichotomy between the term 'king and chief' in the broader African context and amongst the Shona in particular. However, of less controversial but confusing is perhaps the use and application of the term 'chief'. In the Zimbabwean context, kingship was often used indiscriminately to represent a king and a chief.² In this study, the term 'king' denotes the head of a kingdom. Therefore the terms 'chief and king' would be interchangeably used but

¹ Zimbabwe has two major tribal or linguistic groups-the Shona (about 70 percent of the black population) and the Ndebele (about 20 percent), with the other 10 percent being made up of the Tonga, Venda, Shangaan and others, Cf. M Auret, *From Liberator to Dictator: An Insider's Account of Robert Mugabe's Descent into Tyranny*, South Africa: New Africa Books, 2009, 9

² The chief was understood as the person next to but subordinate to the king. When there were several chiefs subordinate to the king, the principal chief would be the paramount king or head chief. The rest would be just chiefs and those under them would be sub-chiefs. The leader at the village level would be the headman, though sometimes erroneously called a 'chief'

having the same implication in meaning, in order to avoid unnecessary and confusing hair splitting of terms. The Shona word ‘mambo’ or king was applied to the ruler who was believed to act with the authority of the ancestors especially chiefs or kings.³ The Shona chiefs’ featured a lot in the written accounts of adventurers, travellers and traders. Unfortunately in most of the accounts that were given, the king’s status was misunderstood. Kings were usually presented as dictators of the past yet that is not true. As a result, the misrepresentation of the Shona kingship is still with us where some contemporary African politicians seem to suggest that African kings were authoritarian figures.⁴ Yet chiefs are still respected in most of Zimbabwean’s rural areas and chiefs are regarded in political circles as the ‘face of the rural constituency’ and the gate keepers of Zimbabwean culture and traditions. President Robert Mugabe also highlighted the importance of chiefs in Zimbabwean politics when he said:

If we do not consult chiefs on governance, whom do we consult? Chiefs have the right to participate in determining the right policies and criticising the Government. We would never agree to that nonsense that chiefs should be neutral players in the governance of the country.⁵

For Mugabe, chiefs still hold authority and enough respect in governance issues. In order to fully understand the status and importance of Shona king, there is need to look at the place of ATR in the lives of the Shona people and the religious status of the Shona chief in the broader society.

³ Cf. D Lan, *Guns and Rain: Guerrillas and Spirit Mediums in Zimbabwe*, London: James Currey, 1985, 211

⁴ Cf. D Maxwell, *Christians and Chiefs in Zimbabwe: A Social History of the Hwesa People: 1070s-1990s*, London: Edinburgh University Press, 1999, 5

⁵ *Chiefs to play active role in governance-President*, The Sunday Mail, 18 October 2009, See also, Appendix 1

The Place of ATR in the Shona Society and the Sacrality of Shona kings

It is difficult to fully understand the status, office and duties of the Shona king without appreciating the role that ATR plays in the Shona society. A M Moyo observed that, ATR has always occupied a central position in the life, thought, and institutions of the African peoples. Their histories, societies, and cultures cannot be understood apart from their religious beliefs and practices.⁶ Religious beliefs and practices influence the political space that is occupied by the Shona chief just as in ANE, Jewish, Hellenistic and Roman traditions. Religion pervades all aspects of life and thought of the Shona people.⁷ It is not possible to make a distinction between religious and non-religious especially in relation to the roles played by the chief in the Shona society. The chief then plays the role of the priest and ruler as done by Moses.

In ATR, there are many religious specialists and the Shona chief is counted as one of the religious practitioners. The African in general and the Shona in particular, feel that God cannot be approached directly hence the need for intermediaries. In most cases, the following act as practitioners: priests (in some societies a king plays the role of the priest), diviners/medical practitioners, spirit mediums (spirits of the departed chiefs), elders and kings. Ancestral spirits play an intermediary role at the supernatural level between God and the people. The ancestral spirits constantly communicate with the living through the services of kings and spirit mediums. The legendary power of early departed chiefs is expressed in the belief that their spirits remain the powerful guardians of the chiefdom. The departed chiefs continued their rule through chiefs who acted as their successors.⁸ Any displeasure on the part of the spirits could result in: hunger, drought, floods, diseases, locust swarms, misfor-

⁶ Cf. A M Moyo, *Religion and Political Thought in Independent Zimbabwe*, in C Hallencreutz and A Moyo, *Church and State in Zimbabwe*: Gweru: Mambo Press, 1988, 197, See also, Appendix 1

⁷ Cf. P Fry, *Spirits of Protest: Spirit Mediums and Articulation of consensus Among the Zezuru of Southern Rhodesia*, Cambridge University Press, 1976, 109

⁸ Cf. M F C Bourdillon, *The Shona Peoples: An Ethnography of the Contemporary Shona, with Special Reference to their Religion*, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1998, 104; See also, The Financial Gazette, 'Sustaining Traditional Culture', 20 May 2011-Appendix 1

tunes and pestilences. The duties and importance of an ancestor spirit reflect the political importance of the chief when he was alive. The spirits of former leaders are thought to travel between earth and heaven like eagles, interceding with God on behalf of the nation.⁹ For the living dead to play a critical role in the lives of the living there was need for co-operation with the king.

Myths usually surrounded the origin and person of the king, making them unordinary persons in their occupation of office. The Shona kings were the centre of the community's order. According to M Abeles, kings incarnate a legitimacy that transcends their powers. The king belongs to the whole society but finds himself projected above the same society as living incarnations of the totality of society.¹⁰ K Bediako describes the authority of kings as strictly speaking, the authority of ancestors.¹¹ In the Shona society, chiefs are incarnations of ancestral spirits. The king's political power arises from the supernatural power of the ancestral spirits besides the power coming from the people he leads. In general, the chief was never elected by balloting. He was said to be appointed by ancestral spirits and did not appoint himself. When the chief died, a new one had to be appointed by ancestral spirits through a spirit medium based on: intelligence, humility, generosity, manliness, and physical fitness.¹² The aspect of generosity is going to be important in analysing the chief as the grain or bread donor of the people he leads.

The Shona Kingship as Hereditary

It is important to note that, besides being appointed by the ancestral spirits, chieftainship is hereditary. The heredity is usually in the male lines that are usually selected on seniority and suitability. However,

⁹ Cf. T N Huffman, *The Soapstone Birds from Great Zimbabwe*, African Arts, 1985, Vol.18, Num.3, 68-100

¹⁰ Cf. M Abeles, "Sacred Kingship and the Formation of the State", in H J M Claessen and P Skalnik (eds), *The Study of the State*, The Hague: Mouton, 1981, 12

¹¹ Cf. K Bediako, *De-Sacralization and Democratization: Some Theological Reflections on the Role of Christianity in nation-building in modern Africa*, Transformation: An International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies, 1995, Vol.12, 5-11

¹² Cf. G B N Aiyittey, *Indigenous African Institutions*, 2nd Edition, Ardsley: Transnational Publishers, 2006, 145

there are cases in some parts in the pre-colonial Zimbabwe where females could also become kings, for example, in the seventeenth century women had political authority as chiefs. The head of Mutapa state had many wives who administered their own houses, lands and vassals. In another incident in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the daughters, sisters and paternal aunts of the Manyika paramount chief got appointed as rulers with subject territories.¹³ Aunts to the king played an important role in choosing the successor after the death of the incumbent. There are also accounts of women who once ruled as headwomen and chiefs in the Mtoko, Seke and Chihota in the present Mashonaland East.¹⁴ However, such women were only powerful by virtue of being close or related to powerful men like kings but did not obtain such political positions in their own right.

The kingship office was reserved to certain lineages by right of genealogical link to the founding ancestors. Founding ancestors were members of the family that first settled or founded the settlement.¹⁵ The founding ancestors made sure that, as long as the chief was still alive and was competent in executing his duties, there was no debate about his replacement even though the king was very old. It was regarded as demeaning the chief to debate about his possible successor when the king was still alive or to argue that the chief was no longer competent because of his age. According to M F C Bourdillon, the Shona added a proviso to their generational system of rotation that 'A man cannot be chief while he has a 'father' alive over whom he has to rule'.¹⁶ This proviso ensured that the chief always remained an elderly senior man.

What is of interest is that, after the death of the chief, the succession to the chieftainship rarely took place without debate as succession was very flexible. This practical democracy is sometimes not, however, generally recognized by the Shona themselves: for them their chiefs are not elected by anybody, but are born chiefs and the power of

¹³ Cf. M F C Bourdillon, *The Shona Peoples; An Ethnography of the Contemporary Shona, With Special Reference to their Religion*, 2nd Edition, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1982, 51

¹⁴ Cf. M F C Bourdillon, *The Shona Peoples; An Ethnography of the Contemporary Shona, With Special Reference to their Religion*, 2nd Edition, 51

¹⁵ Cf. Ayittey, *Indigenous African Institutions*, 143

¹⁶ Cf. M F C Bourdillon, *The Shona Peoples*, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1976, 125

their ancestors to help them.¹⁷ In fact, the Shona heredity concept of chieftainship resonates well with the Davidic royal ideology in 2 Samuel 7: 14 where those from the house of David were regarded as pre-destined to become kings for life. The king was supposed to have the following qualities: generosity, political strength, fairness, firmness and restraint, ability to handle people, settlement of disputes and give wise council.¹⁸ Generosity and the breadwinning prowess of the chief are highly valued amongst the Shona people. Gaudy extravagance by the chief in face of deprivation, poverty and hunger constitute sufficient grounds for divestiture and lack of respect on by the subordinates.

The office of the chief has an influence on understanding the duties and office of the President in sub-Saharan Africa. S Muyebe and A Muyebe assert that, in many of the cultures in the sub-Saharan Africa, the office of the chief is religiously framed and has been transferred to the office of the president.¹⁹ For K Bediako, belief in ancestors plays an important role in the construction and deconstruction of political realities to do with the African states.²⁰ Traditional dynamics on the status and role of chiefs are then important in understanding the royal ideology some modern African rulers. Chiefs' lives were veiled with secrecy, for example, their eating habits, health and marital life. Some went to the extent of making sure that the chief's feet did not touch the ground by either carrying him or making him walk on a special mat. People also did not speak badly about them lest the spirits might be angry and punish the whole society. The traditional religious tendency sacralised the authority and the political office of the chief by implication turning it into a defacto throne. I Schapera argues that:

The chief, as head of the tribe, occupies a position of unique privilege and authority. He is the symbol of tribal unity, the central figure around which the tribal life revolves. He is at once ruler, judge, maker and guardian of the law, repository of wealth, dispenser of gifts, and leader in

¹⁷ Cf. Bourdillon, *The Shona Peoples*, 128

¹⁸ Cf. J C Buxton, *Chiefs and Strangers: A Study of Political Assimilation Among the Mandari*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963, 71; H J M Claessen, *The Early State*, The Hague: Mouton, 1978, 577

¹⁹ Cf. Muyebe, *The Religious Symbolism*, 18

²⁰ Cf. Muyebe, *The Religious Symbolism*, 19

war, priest and magician of the people. His exalted status is reflected in the ceremonial rituals surrounding him and in the obligations of his tribesmen towards him. It is a serious offence for any tribesman to use abusive language about him, or to speak or behave improperly towards him or in his presence.²¹

I Schapera's analysis of African kingship is another typical and erroneous way that African kingship have been characterised and understood as dictatorial, of which such claims cannot be established in ancient African kingship. The analysis is important in looking at how such erroneous characterisation of African kingship has been manipulated by contemporary African politicians to suppress dissenting voices.

Coronation/Installation and Divine Kingship

The 'sacrality' bestowed on the office of the chief derived from the installation rituals. The installation rituals usually led by Shona spiritual mediums changed the status of the Shona king. At the ceremony the Shona Chief was given the emblems of the office: lion or leopard's skin, an axe, staff or sceptre of office. The small axe, staff or small hoe are common with chiefs. However, the present government emblems of office given to Zimbabwean chiefs include: a cloak, a pith helmet, a stick or sceptre and a large pendant. As from independence in 1980, people have witnessed President Mugabe being given traditional material insignia, for example, in 1982 he thanked the chiefs for the gift of traditional weapons they had presented to him.²² This is as if Mugabe is taken as one of the Shona kings.

In Matebeleland (the western part of Zimbabwe), chiefs are commonly seen with robes, headdresses made of leopard or lion skins; symbols associated with a clever, courageous and strong chief.²³ The

²¹ I Schapera, I, *A Handbook of Tswana Law and Custom*, London: Oxford University Press, 1955, 62; See also, *The Herald, Assaulting chiefs taboo: Charumbira*, 04 October 2010-See Appendix 2

²² Cf. *Division Will Destroy US; Says Mugabe*, *The Herald*, 18 October 1982, See Appendix 6

²³ In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), a leopard has remained a symbol of royalty and kings are the only ones allowed to sit on a throne covered with a leopard skin. It is also the same in ancient Benin where only kings were allowed to hunt a leopard. The late president of DRC, Mobutu Sese Seko used to put on a leopard skin

skin of the cheetah and lion symbolise dominance and the protective rule of ancestral spirits. When kings, chiefs and African presidents adorn themselves in animal skins of leopards, lions and baboons; it is not their love for animals' beauty and ornamental quality but they will be tapping on existing traditions and beliefs which are linked to kingship spiritual myths, honour and political power of ancient high ranking personalities. Usually the animal insignia represent the means of the continuity of office from the ancestral times.²⁴ Besides the selected animal insignia for kingship, a handful of soil was also given to the installed Shona king as an indication to ownership of the land as well as the source where the king was going to get the food to feed his people. The spirit medium commonly say the following words at the installation ceremonies: '*May the ancestral spirits make all evil to depart from you. May you hold the country well and look after your people and be able to feed them*'.²⁵ The presence of the spirit medium was there to symbolise transcendent power whereas the king represented secular power from the people. So the medium transferred the transcendent power and the duties represented by the ancestral spirits to the king.²⁶ In some African countries, the power imagery of the chief as the living descendant of the ancestral spirits is still symbolised by giving him eggs, or a baby baboon or pangolin²⁷ or skin of a lion or cheetah. A pangolin is traditionally re-

cap and that was the same with the late Vice-president of Zimbabwe, Joshua Nkomo. President Robert Mugabe is reported as owning two lion cubs that are kept at Harare's Lion and Cheetah Park. The South African president, Jacob Zuma, is usually pictured dancing on traditional celebratory occasions adorning leopard skin headdress and other leopard insignia that covers the body, Cf. M Sibanda, *The Empire of Lions: Mugabe's Pets*, Dailynews, 19 April 2011-See Appendix 3

²⁴ Cf. Manus, *Christ, the African King*, 217

²⁵ Bourdillon, *The Shona Peoples*, 110

²⁶ Cf. Ayittey, *Indigenous African Institutions*, 154

²⁷ A pangolin or ant-eater (Haka) is a creature that lives in the bush far from the people and their villages. What is interesting about the animal is that, when found by hunters, it does not run away like a truly wild animal. It curls up into a ball and waits to be taken to the *Mhondoro* or chief in whose spirit province it was found. A pangolin is a delicacy only eaten by lawful chiefs or spirit mediums. The argument raised is that, if an ordinary person ate it, there was a high possibility of going mad or being cursed by the spirits by mysteriously losing one's teeth. A pangolin is respected and avoided by people, for example, it cannot be wantonly killed like other ordinary animals. In Zimbabwe, it is common see President Mugabe being given pangolins on his

garded as 'sacred animal' which is only supposed to be eaten by chiefs who are representatives of ancestral spirits. Eggs and the pangolin symbolise fertility and rule respectively.²⁸ Eggs in the hands of the chief connote the expected tenderness of his rule and interaction with the periphery members of society. When eggs are gripped hard, they easily break as a pointer to what dictatorial kings can do to their subjects. Tenderly rule was therefore expected of Shona chiefs and is also expected of contemporary African rulers.

In other African traditions, the sacralization of the chief was shown by symbolically lowering him onto the stool. G B N Ayittey notes that:

The lowering of the chief on the stool was meant to convey to him the idea of continuity of the office from the ancestral spirits and the political community. The chief became, thereafter, the one who sat on the stool. The stool legitimised his occupancy of the office and the chief was informed in an indirect way, that he was distinct from the stool or the nation for which it stood: the nation was believed to be immortal and he was mortal. In being lowered onto the stool his person became sacralized and he was granted immunity while he occupied the stool. But his person and office sanctity flowed from the stool offered by the spirits.²⁹

The immunity offered to the king during his rule was a sign of respect to the ancestral spirits. In most of the African societies, members of the community swore an oath of allegiance to the elected king, promising to serve him as the chosen occupant of the stool of their ancestors.³⁰ One of the important ways amongst the Shona by which respect is shown to the chief is through an honouring dance accompanied by feasting on millet beer and meat supplied by the new chief as the new bread winner. A

birthdays, independence and Heroes celebrations, Cf. *Mugabe's Present Disappears-Pangolin*, <http://www.zimbabwemetro.com/news/mugabes-present-disappears/>, Accessed Online, 13 April 2011; See also, *Mugabe's Birthday Pangolin Gift Disappears*, http://www.zimdiaspora.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=5421, Accessed Online, 13 April 2011

²⁸ Cf. Maxwell, *Christians and Chiefs in Zimbabwe*, 22

²⁹ Ayittey, *Indigenous African Institutions*, 149

³⁰ Cf. K A Busia, *The Position of The Chief In the Modern Political System of Ashanti*, London: Oxford University Press, 1951, 11

newly installed king symbolises restoration of order and normalcy.³¹ Besides the giving of 'material and animal insignia', the installation of the chief was also symbolized by the lighting of fire, an indication of the beginning of life, continuity and vitality. The lighting of fire was also a symbol of the prosperity of the ruler and his people.³² Installation and accession rituals to kingship were rites of passage which reinforced the king as different from the ordinary people and having a close contact with the spiritual powers that control the land.³³ The royal rituals are linked to the well-being of society.

Hierarchy, Cosmic Order and the Creation of Autocracy

The titles given to Shona kings reflected the political hierarchy of the African peoples and the duties they played in bestowing justice and order. God was religiously attributed with the same titles that were given to chiefs like: God as king, ruler, father, lord, master and judge. However, Shona kings were not understood as messiahs and sons of God like in ANE, Jewish, Hellenistic and Roman traditions. The understanding was that, God reigns over the universe but with the help of the ancestral spirits in administering justice, peace, and benevolence. The ancestral spirits also needed the services of chiefs to bring the needed cosmic peace and order. The titles that are then associated with the chief indicated the respect and honour that is due to the ancestral spirits and God. The religious sanctioning of the king's office brought loyalty, legitimacy and protection to the king. Pure force does not always work to make people co-operate, which made the centrality of religion important in the rule of Shona kings.³⁴ It is important to note that, sometimes people co-operate with rulers because religious discourses engaged about rulers make them think that it is the right thing to do. People are made to feel that the honour they give to the chief is possibly the same honour given to God and ancestral spirits.

³¹ Cf. J S Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd, 1971, 184

³² Cf. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 185

³³ Cf. Bourdillon, *Religion and Society*, 86

³⁴ Cf. K Mannheim, *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1952, 244

The chiefs' pedigree in 'divinity' and closeness to the ancestral spirits, make them stand in a better relationship with the ancestral spirits than all other members of the community. Public criticism of the chief is regarded as endangering the chief's spirituality as well as the political potency. This has led some critics to argue that, ATR has always been there to support the authority of leaders and make the royal throne a defacto preserve of the elite. Divine kingship to a certain extent shows how a leader symbolised the well-being of the society but at the same time disguising the political reality of their autocratic powers. Their authority was not easy to challenge and criticise. M Fortes and Evans-Pritchard made the same observation that:

These sacred symbols which reflect the social system endow kingship with mystical values which evoke acceptance of the social order that goes far beyond the obedience exacted by the secular sanction of force. The social system on the chief is, as it were, moved to a mystical plane, where it figures as a system of sacred values beyond criticism or revision.³⁵

The concept of political organization is formed with the chief at the top and the inclusion of the ancestors changes the status of the chief.

The comingling of Shona kings with ancestral spirits had a powerful symbolic dimension on how the kings were to be viewed by the generality of the people. The ancestor cult, by functioning *inter alia*, as the guarantor of the authority of the chief created the most potent symbol of the sacralization of authority and power of African traditional politics.³⁶ This sacralization of rulers' power puts the final source of symbolical jural authority on a pedestal where it is inviolable and unchallengeable thus able to mobilize the consent of all who must comply with it.³⁷ The association of sacred authority and political power in the person of the traditional ruler is a way of effectual integration of altar and throne.³⁸ The sacrality associated with kings has led U C Manus to argue that:

³⁵ M Fortes and Evans-Pritchard (eds), *African Political Systems*, London: KPI, 1987, 18

³⁶ Cf. Bediako, *De-Sacralization and Democratization*, 5-11

³⁷ Cf. Fortes and Evans-Pritchard (eds), *African Political Systems*, 137

³⁸ Cf. A V Leeuwen, *Christianity in World History: The Meeting of the Faiths of East and West*, London: Edinburgh House Press, 1964, 165

It separates the kings from the subjects and endows them with mystical forces and the charisms which grant them the vital force to bear the responsibilities of their office. It is precisely this gift of mystical powers which sets the kings apart from the 'impure' world; makes them the only persons authorized to transcend the others and instill awe and fear in their subjects.³⁹

The sacrality that Chiefs derived from the cult of ancestors guaranteed them supernatural sanction to the political and juridical authority on the daily affairs of their subjects. M Weber identified three helpful types of legitimate control: charismatic authority, traditional authority and rational-legal authority. Each of the three types of authority⁴⁰ produces what are regarded as 'ideal types' of authority found in different societies. I would agree with M Weber's second category of traditional authority as the one that validly describes the legitimacy of Shona kings. The traditional authority of the chief is linked to traditional solidarity of the community comprising the living and the dead. Their legitimacy and authority is based on the traditional basis where their authority rests on a community's established traditional ancestral belief in the sanctity of the office, person and authority of the chief. Respect to the institution of kingship is regarded as giving respect to the ancestral spirits, thereby a possible ground for breeding autocratic leadership.

³⁹ Manus, *Christ, the African King*, 218

⁴⁰ (1) The *charismatic authority* is based on leaders who are able to sway and control their followers by direct emotional appeals which excite devotion and strong loyalties. There is no fixed hierarchy of officials and no legal rules governing the organization of leaders and followers. Examples of such figures are: Jesus and Mohammed. (2) *Traditional authority* is guided by the belief in the rightness of established customs and traditions. Leaders command authority and obedience from their subjects on the basis of their inherited traditional status. The long established positions of power oblige their subordinates to respect them. Examples are all traditional kings who owe their position to inherited status and personal loyalty of their subjects. The ANE, Jewish, Hellenistic, Roman and Shona kings fall under that specification. (3) *Rational-legal authority* is based on the acceptance of a set of impersonal rules. Commands are issued based on authority on the legal framework which supports their authority. Examples are tax inspectors, teachers, Cf. M Haralambos, *Sociology: Themes and Perspectives*, 282

The Shona Kingship and Traditional Democracy: Checks and Balances

The king's office always had some power checks and balances. This was done to protect it from abuse and misuse by some tyrants. However, it is undeniable that, the African chief wielded vast powers which led many observers to characterise the chief as 'autocratic'. M F C Bourdillon gives an interesting insight that:

It is in court that the authority of the Shona chief was most often seen in practice, and the limitations of his power to judge reflected the limited political power of a traditional chief. Many old men say that in the past no chief could impose his own will on unwilling subjects. If he tried people would simply move elsewhere and the chief would be left without a following.⁴¹

N J J Olivier also adds that the chief "was surrounded and supported by various bodies and institutions like the Council of Elders that prevented him from becoming an abusive ruler. It was a peculiar type of democracy that was not based on the principle of free elections".⁴² Of course, some few societies did not have such mechanisms. However, if a despotic chief dominated the council he was either killed or abandoned by the people as raised above. People had strategies of resistance that they could invoke in case of an abusive and exploitative king. The emphasis by African politicians on the permanence of contemporary African rulers and criminalization of opposition politics does not have any semblance whatsoever in ancient African kingship. G B N Ayittey had this to say:

In theory, the African chief ruled for life. But in practice and under normal circumstances, he so ruled as long as his people allowed it which was an important distinction. He could be destooled (removed) at any time if he failed to perform his traditional duties or if his people so

⁴¹ Bourdillon, *The Shona Peoples*, 132; See also, The Financial Gazette, "Sustaining Traditional Culture", 20 May 2011-Appendix 1

⁴² Cf. N J J Olivier, *The Governmental Institutions of the Bantu Peoples of Southern Africa*, in *Recueils de la Societies Jean Bodin XII*, Bruxelles:Fondation Universitaire de Belgique, 1969, 112

wished, irrespective of how long he had been in office. Overallly the African chief was held accountable for his actions at all times.⁴³

The people had the right to overthrow a bad king though the institution of kingship was never questioned. G Y Amoah gives an example of the chief being 'destooled or removed' if he became blind, or impotent, or suffered from leprosy, madness, or fits, or if his body became disfigured.⁴⁴ This position puts to rest the assumption that, African kings were dictatorial and behaved as they wished. It is strikingly clear that in exercising his powers, the chief could not have ignored the feelings of his people.

The chief frequently asked his people 'to bring their minds', in other words 'to express an opinion'. Most of the decisions taken by the chief were normally taken by chiefs-in-council and not by lone dictatorial fiat. Elderly female members of matrilineal descent groups were also consulted in the decision-making process on issues affecting the family or community. Every voice in society was heard and peoples' freedom of expression was rest assured without fear or favour. Dissent was open and free, but with due respects to the chief such that, dissidents were not harassed, arrested or jailed.⁴⁵ The chief's primary duty was to determine a consensual position so as to maintain justice, peace and order in society. This was put in simple terms by Julius Nyerere (first president of Tanzania) that: 'The very origins of African democracy lay in ordinary oral discussion'.⁴⁶ Participation in the decision-making process by ordinary people was encouraged and people were at liberty to present their various viewpoints. In addition to that, the fear of incurring the displeasure of the ancestors by misrule checked chiefs and kings against becoming cruel and inhumane toward their people.⁴⁷ Thus, it was very difficult for the chief to oppress his people and expect the blessing or cooperation of ancestral spirits. The ancestral spirits instead of just pro-

⁴³ Ayithey, *Indigenous African Institutions*, 171

⁴⁴ Cf. G Y Amoah, *Groundwork of Government for West Africa*, Illorin: Gbenle Press Ltd, 1988, 175

⁴⁵ Cf. Ayithey, *Indigenous African Institutions*, 105

⁴⁶ Cf. A Mazrui, *The Africans*, London: BBC Publications, 1986, 75

⁴⁷ Cf. Ayithey, *Indigenous African Institutions*, 157

tecting the chief as commonly misunderstood in fact empowered the people and pitted them against any misrule by the chief or king.

Traditional Solidarity (kinship) and the Authority of the King

Besides the important role played by ancestral spirits in cementing the authority of the chief, kinship governed social relationships between people in a given community like marital customs, regulations and human behaviour. The 'totemic' system bound and still binds together the entire life of 'tribe' as it covers animals, plants and non-living objects.⁴⁸ Anthropologists and Sociologists have realised that, the kinship and totem system is complicated to be addressed fully in this chapter. However, what is clear is that, kinship is a vast network stretching horizontally across to everybody in any given African community. The kinship system includes the departed ones as shown in the biblical genealogies. Genealogies and histories have continued to act as legitimating charters or political arguments for chiefs' claims to social, economical and political power. Traditional solidarity was another strategy which enabled chiefs to enhance their social, economical and political influence.⁴⁹ Traditional solidarity plays an important role in the political claims to authority in the contemporary African political institutions. Attempts are made to trace the reigning ruler with known and respected ancient kings of the nation.

Totems were also part of traditional solidarity, unity, belongingness and common affinity that determined peoples' behaviour in terms of courtship and then marriage where one cannot marry from the same totem. Most tribes identify with the chiefs totem such that obedience or disobedience to the chief transferred to obedience or disobedience to the ancestral spirits hence God. Chiefs claimed mystical authority by 'right of their position as autochthonous owners of land' and 'their access to a body of knowledge which derives from their position as living representatives of the ancestors through their totem.'⁵⁰ Totems in kinship created

⁴⁸ Cf. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 104

⁴⁹ Cf. T O Ranger, 'Tradition and Travesty: Chiefs and the Administration in Makoni District, Zimbabwe, 1960-1980', *Journal of Africa* 53 (3), 1982, 20-41

⁵⁰ Cf. J Alexander, 'Modernization, Tradition and Control: Local and National Struggles over

a social structure, a network of social relations and shared orientations at macro-level, micro-level, interpersonal level, group level and village level.⁵¹ Critics still argue that, besides all the positives that can be highlighted, traditional solidarity or kinship had an inherent inclination towards authoritarianism or one-party state. K A Busia noted that:

The idea of solidarity has relevance for the growth of one-party states in Africa...a strong predilection for a one-party state emanates from the traditional cultural emphasis on solidarity.⁵²

K A Busia realized that the emphasis on kinship was problematic with the coming of African independence, especially when projected onto the political institutions of the African nation state where there are various parties with different ideologies. It is common to find that, people with different minds being criminalized and labeled as evil forces bent on causing disorder. The kinship solidarity or consensual politics undergirded the political ideology of several African political leaders in the early years of their post-independence era.⁵³ We have examples like Leopold Senghor of Senegal, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia, Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya, Hastings Kamuzu Banda of Malawi, Sekou Toive of Guinea and Robert Gabriel Mugabe of Zimbabwe.

The General roles of the Shona Chief

The traditional African chief performed many functions as the political head of the tribe. He was responsible for administration and the maintenance of good order.⁵⁴ The chief was the religious head of the tribe, the presumed direct and living representative of the ancestral spirits whose duty was to: pay homage to or placate ancestral spirits by rituals, sacrifices, and offerings so as to obtain their blessings. He mediated between

Authority and Land: A Case Study on Chimanimani District in Zimbabwe, Oxford: Balliol College, 1990, 2; See also, P A Erickson and L D Murphy, *Readings for a History of Anthropological Theory*, Canada: University of Toronto, 2010, 227

⁵¹ Cf. P M Blau, *On the Nature of Organisations*, New York: John Wiley, 1974, 56; See also, P M Blau and W R Scott, *Formal Organizations: A Comparative Approach*, California: Stanford University Press, 2003, 27

⁵² K A Busia, *Africa In search of Democracy*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972, 3

⁵³ Cf. Bediako, *De-Sacralization and Democratization*, 5-11

⁵⁴ Cf. Bourdillon, *The Shona Peoples*, 111

them and his people in order to prevent the ancestral spirits from punishing the community with pests, floods, droughts, sickness, or hunger.⁵⁵ According to G B N Ayittey, when angered, the ancestral spirits blighted the earth and withheld its fertility, visited illness upon the living and threatened with the extinction or disappearance, through death so that human life was endangered.⁵⁶ Ancestral spirits showed their pleasure on the chief and the Shona society by granting the living plentiful fruits of the earth and rain. Therefore life (*vupenyu*) and divine electiveness of the chief was measured by his ability to bring order, justice and peace to his chiefdom.⁵⁷ The act of judging is *kutonga* and the chief was expected to give right judgments.

The Shona society was highly patriarchal though in some areas of Zimbabwe it was matriarchal where women were elected as chiefs. So women took advisory and leading roles in the running of the kingdom, that is, from the family level as well as at the political level. The chief is taken as a senior member of society. He is called *Baba* (father), *Sekuru* (grandfather) and *Babamukuru* (great father) such that his subjects become his children as in the kinship system.⁵⁸ He is the senior descendant of most important spirits of the land, forming an important relationship with the peace in society. The chief was the final authority on matters pertaining to the use and possession of land.⁵⁹ He empowered his subjects by fairly giving them land and in some cases cattle to those without draught power. C Mararike argues that, land and cattle were critical assets to the functioning of the Shona society.⁶⁰ The distribution of land by the king was part of feeding and empowering his people though he could as well distribute grain to the hungry subjects as in the case of *Zunde RaMambo*.

⁵⁵ Cf. Olivier, *The Governmental Institutions of the Bantu Peoples of Southern Africa*, 56

⁵⁶ Cf. Ayittey, *Indigenous African Institutions*, 2nd Edition, 162

⁵⁷ Cf. Bourdillon, *The Shona Peoples*, 131

⁵⁸ Cf. Bourdillon, *The Shona Peoples*, 114

⁵⁹ Cf. Olivier, *The Governmental Institutions of the Bantu Peoples of Southern Africa*, 53

⁶⁰ Cf. C G Mararike, *Survival Strategies in Rural Zimbabwe: The Role of Assets, Indigenous Knowledge and Organisations*, Harare: Mond Press, 1999, 13

The Zunde RaMambo Traditional Duty of feeding people

Zunde RaMambo is a Shona method of growing and storing grain for use when food supplies are either high or low. It was a traditional practice associated with the feeding prowess of Shona kings. It was also practiced amongst the Ndebele people and is still called 'Isiphala SeNkosi'. *Zunde* or *Isiphala* is a Shona word with various meanings, at communal and also at family level. The term implies a large gathering of people taking part in a common activity. The *Zunde RaMambo* concept resonates well with Joseph's advice to Pharaoh on the storage of grain in preparation for the long famine. In the perspective of the Shona, Joseph was a clever king who was concerned about saving his people from hunger. *Zunde* may refer to plenty of grain stored for future use in a particular community. *Zunde* normally means an informal, in-built social, economic and political mechanism.⁶¹ The *Zunde RaMambo* is still practiced in some parts of Zimbabwe but not with the same vigour it used to have in ancient Shona times. According to chief A Chivenge (not his real name),

Zunde RaMambo is meant to produce adequate food which the chief distributes to the needy especially during times of drought, famine, land shortages, floods or fire destroying homes. The concept has helped a lot in uniting my people when we help the unfortunate people.⁶²

The concept of *Zunde RaMambo* is geographically understood in various ways. In some areas of Zimbabwe, the plot itself is called *Zunde RaMambo*, and in other areas it refers to the granary in which the food is stored, whereas in some places it connotes to the yield from the land which is stored in granaries at the chief's compound.⁶³ It is common in Zimbabwe to find central food storage facilities at the chief's homestead. The *Zunde* played important religious, economic, social and political

⁶¹ Cf. C G Mararike, *Revival of Indigenous Food Security Strategies at the Village Level: The Human Factor Implications*, <http://www.archive.lib.msu.edu/DMC/African%20Journals/pdf/Journal%20of%20the%20University%20of%20Zimbabwe/vol28nl/juz028001005.pdf>, Accessed Online 17 May 2010

⁶² Cf. Chief A Chivenge, *Interview*, 26 March 2011

⁶³ Cf. *Comms breakdown threatens Zunde RaMambo Projects*, Chronicle, Tuesday, 12 October 2010-See Appendix 4

functions. Members of the community would take turns to participate in the farming process, for example, preparing the land, sowing, weeding and harvesting. Harvesting was normally done by both men and women. The activities done at the *Zunde RaMambo* are almost the same as *nhimbe* or traditional weeding field ceremonies shown in Appendix 5. Participation in the *Zunde RaMambo* was an expression of oneness, belonging, reinforced collaborative relationship and loyalty to the chief. People brought their own inputs like the various types of grain for planting.

Everybody was expected to offer their services; even those without cattle could do something like weeding as others ploughed. However, women by virtue of constituting the biggest percentage of population provided extra labour that included: preparing food, fetching firewood and water. According to E Schmidt, the primary producers of the agricultural surplus were African women particularly after colonialism when men out-migrated, leaving women to become responsible for most day to day work.⁶⁴ The chief had no obligation to compensate those who would have worked on the *Zunde*. The primary aim of *Zunde* was to ensure the community had adequate food reserves that could be used in times of food shortage or special occasions. The Zimbabwean regions that experience most of the droughts are mooting the idea of reviving knowledge in the *Zunde* concept.⁶⁵ The Shona understand the chief's responsibility in feeding the hungry of society as the same as the responsibility played by the father on his family. The Shona kings through the *Zunde RaMambo* were respected as generous donors as well as the benevolent lords of people. In order to achieve and maintain his legitimacy, the king was supposed to ensure that his subjects had enough food,⁶⁶ hence the *Zunde RaMambo* philosophy. The feeding itself and giving of land by the chiefs was associated with the providence of the

⁶⁴ Cf. E Schmidt, *Peasants, Traders, and Wives: Shona Women in the History of Zimbabwe, 1870-1939*, Harare: Baobab, 1992, 59

⁶⁵ Cf. *Chief Mataruse plans Irrigation scheme for Isiphala seNkosi/Zunde RaMambo*, The Chronicle, 25 August 2009-See Appendix 1

⁶⁶ Cf. Manus, *Christ, the African King*, 222

ancestral spirits. The belief being that, the ancestral spirits take care of the living descendants.

In the post-colonial Zimbabwe, the *Zunde RaMambo* concept has been adopted by Christian organisations like the Johane Masowe Vadzidzi vaJesu WeChishanu, a breakaway church from the mainstream Johane Masowe church. Patients and their relatives who come for prophetic healing sessions work in the *Zunde*/field of Mudzidzi (Disciple) Juwa and the produce is used to feed the patients. Mudzidzi Juwa is quoted saying:

We adopted the Zunde RaMambo concept because it was helpful in feeding patients on daily basis. Just like the biblical episode of Jesus when he freely fed people. Around 500 people are fed everyday with the Sadza (Zimbabwean staple food), though patients look for their relish.⁶⁷

The *Zunde RaMambo* system promotes self-sufficiency through the hard-work by the subjects and symbolically displayed the prosperity of the king and his leadership. It was as a result of the *Zunde RaMambo* concept that, the Shona people regarded the chief as the main repository of wealth whose function was to assist needy members of society by supplying them with land, food and drink and treat visitors in regal fashion.

It is crucial to note that, such wealth or the grain gathered did not belong to the chief as a person. The chief merely held the grain on behalf of the ancestral spirits and in trust for the whole society. Any member of the village in dire need could call upon the chief and subsist on his largesse.⁶⁸ Failure to feed his subjects implied failure of leadership and rejection by the ancestral spirits. As benevolent and open-handed rulers, African kings would grant royal gifts of food, titles and rewards to their subjects. Royal gifts and honours by the king helped to ensure loyalty and followership.⁶⁹ It was therefore part of the royal generosity of the king and the feeding part that made the king or chief become the bread or grain donor to his people. Feeding of people was not

⁶⁷ *Zunde remapositori roraramisa ruzhinji* (The Zunde of the Apostles sustains many), Kwayedza, 04 February 2010-Appedix 1

⁶⁸ Cf. Ayittey, *Indigenous African Institutions*, 154

⁶⁹ Cf. Manus, *Christ, the African King*, 223

done daily but in the cases of food shortages and famine. There were no cases of people who would die or faint from hunger. In years of bumper harvests there were no cases of people seeking food from the chief's granary or feeding trough. As the benevolent chief, the subjects showered their chief with honorific titles like: master, judge, shepherd, saviour, lord and liberator. The benevolence function of being the bread winner, land-donor and the protective functions fulfilled by the chief were not seen in terms of servanthood. The chief did this for his own legitimacy and most importantly on behalf of the ancestral spirits.

The Beneficiaries of the *Zunde RaMambo*

The stored grains were distributed with special priority to orphans, elderly people, disabled and sick people and others who were in need of food.⁷⁰ The food was also used to feed: the chief's soldiers (*Machinda aMambo*) due to their role as the protectors of the community, subjects (complainants and accused) awaiting trial, the chief's advisors (*Zvikonzi*), the destitute and travellers who stopped in the village for the night. Travellers without other contacts counted on the chief for hospitable accommodation and food. The chief had a heavy burden during times of hunger and all requests for food were supposed to be accented to. After the drought, the chief would distribute seeds in form of small grains as done by Herod in preparation for the rainy season. The community was therefore motivated to provide free labour for *Zunde raMambo* because they benefited from the food, security and protection provided by the chief.⁷¹ J C Blackman adds that, the traditional role of chiefs is, therefore, to protect the livelihood of the people and their environment.⁷² The peace that the chief was expected to bestow in the chiefdom was solely based on the adequate supply of food. The *Zunde* was also the political rallying mechanism. C Mararike noted that, even

⁷⁰ Cf. *Comms breakdown threatens Zunde RaMambo Projects*, Chronicle, 12 October 2010- See Appendix 4

⁷¹ Cf. V Moyano, *The Shona Custom of Zunde RaMambo: The Chief's Granary*, http://www.unitedchurch.ca/files/planning/theme/intercultural_gathering.pdf, Accessed Online, 19 May 2010

⁷² Cf. J C Blackman, *Chiefs and Strangers: A Study of Political Assimilation Among Mandari*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963, 63

though the chief was regarded as generous and helpful in sustaining peoples' lives in times of food scarcity, the chief used *Zunde* to control his people in trying times of food shortage.⁷³ Besides the legitimacy that the chief got from the religious sanctioning, the *Zunde* gave the king the wanted loyalty. Food was perceived not only as a means of meeting nutritional requirements, but also as a social tool which brought people. By being the grain, land and bread donor; the chief assured his subordinates with hope, long life and good health.

When food is scarce, the chief expected people to share the little they would have stored. This is clearly shown in the following statement by chief Matarutse (not his real name) that:

My people look forward to me as provider even in times when I will be also clueless on what to do with the level of hunger in my kingdom. Sometimes if the whole country is experiencing food shortages, the President and his government take long to react. Maybe because they will be also clueless forcing us to appeal to various stakeholders like NGOs. In some cases, we end up clashing with certain ZANU-PF senior officials who are not comfortable with us getting food handouts from foreign sponsored NGOs. In such trying times of hunger, drought and famine, I expect my people to share with others the little food they have just as done by Jesus when he performed miracles from the little bread and little fish he got from the young man. What Jesus did is typical of what is expected of us as chiefs and what chiefs expect their people to do in sharing the little they have in times of hunger. Jesus was practising African socialism or communalism. We lean on each other; no one should starve.⁷⁴

It is this context that, honorific titles were a sign of appreciating what the king was doing to the people in times of food shortages. It did not matter the people had worked and helped in storing the food. The honorific titles should be understood within the realm of the services that were offered by the king to his people. Titles indicated the respect and honour that people bestow upon the chief.⁷⁵ Some elevated titles like: saviour,

⁷³ Cf. C G Mararike, *Survival Strategies in Rural Zimbabwe: The Role of Assets, Indigenous Knowledge and Organisations*, 15

⁷⁴ Cf. Chief Mataruse (He is both a chief and an elder in the Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe), *Interview*, 19 April 2011

⁷⁵ Cf. Bourdillon, *The Shona Peoples*, 46

protector and benefactor (*chikodza nherera*-benefactor to the subjects: widows, orphans and disadvantaged) point to the duties that the chief plays in saving and protecting peoples' lives by giving them food and land.

The Displacement of the Chiefs influence by the colonial system

The coming of colonialism in the 19th Century had some impact on the status, office, duties and person of the chief. Chiefs became the target of the colonial settlers as a result of their religious and political power. It is important to note that, the powers of the chief were compromised when they were removed with the coming of the early colonial administrators, who introduced the Roman-Dutch law which limited the powers of chiefs in trying cases and other malefactors. The colonial administrators did away with traditional leaders' authority and in some cases they just incorporated them into their colonial political structure for easy control of the people. J S Mbiti believes that, the sacredness associated with the office of the chief and traditional monarch lost its sacredness as a result of the changing concept of time more than those of politics.⁷⁶ Some chiefs started associating themselves with the white administration and became unpopular with their people.

The installation of the chiefs instead of being led by spirit mediums were now led by government officials.⁷⁷ Chiefs started depending on the government salary to supplement their income from farming, payment of court fees, grants of land and other favors. Each chief began receiving a salary or allowance, though small, it was in excess of the average earnings of black workers in the country. Some ended up receiving large perks depending on their co-operation with the colonial government.⁷⁸ The political, religious and economical power of the Chief was eroded as the colonial regime took custody of it⁷⁹ and chiefs no longer

⁷⁶ Cf. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 187

⁷⁷ Cf. Bourdillon, *The Shona Peoples*, 111

⁷⁸ Cf. C Pallery, *The Constitutional History and Law of Southern Rhodesia 1888-1965*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966, 478; See also, "Sunday Opinion: Like Smith, Mugabe is abusing Chiefs", *The Standard*-24 April 2011-Appendix 1

⁷⁹ Cf. P S Nyambara, *Immigrants, 'Traditional' Leaders and the Rhodesian State: The Power of 'Communal' Land Tenure and Politics of Land Acquisition in Gokwe, Zimbabwe, 1963-*

fed their people through food and land. Land defined their identity, sustainability to life as well as spiritual relation with ancestral spirits and God.⁸⁰ Chiefs' loyalty was now on the salaries they got, and not the people and the ancestral spirits. D Maxwell observed that:

After colonialism, traditional chiefs seeking to retain their popular legitimacy were often compromised through unavoidable association with the colonial state. They were obliged to oversee the collection of the hated hut tax, and impose unpopular agricultural practices at the behest of the colonial regime.⁸¹

In the eyes of the people, chiefs were no longer representatives of the ancestral spirits but had become government employees. Chiefs became much afraid of losing their income or being vetoed out of office and replaced by loyal chiefs. Yet at the same time, failure to own a piece of land exposed rural people to hunger and disease. The chiefs' claim to feed their people in times of need and their claim to ancestral supernatural authority were made redundant as they were no longer custodians of the land and peoples' lives. Interestingly the ZANU-PF government further displaced the power of chiefs through patronage, a replay of the colonial style as shall be shown later.

The Land Dispossession: Institutionalisation of Hunger and Poverty

It is important to note that, after the violent land dispossession and loss of indigenous African lives, one can safely speak of "masses" in the derogatory sense as many Zimbabwean local people started depending on food handouts to survive. The violent and heartless dispossession of Af-

1979, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 2001, Vol. 27, Number 4, 771-191; See also, A Chimhowu and P Woodhouse, *'Officially' Forbidden but not Suppressed: Vernacular and Markets on Communal Lands in Zimbabwe: A Case Study of Svosve Communal Lands*, Zimbabwe, University of Manchester: Institute of Development Policy and Development, 2006, 19

⁸⁰ Cf. G Chavhunduka, *The Traditional Healers and the Shona People*, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1978, 23-31; See also, G Chavhunduka, *Traditional Medicine in Zimbabwe*, Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications, 1994, 43

⁸¹ Maxwell, *Christians and Chiefs in Zimbabwe*, 42

ricans from their fertile land led to the revolt of 1896-97.⁸² The very grievances that fuelled the first rebellion by indigenous peoples formed the foundation to the liberation movements in the mid-1960s like: ZAPU and ZANU. The violent dispossession, loss of lives and the artificial structures that were created acutely maintained an over-populated, uneducated and diseased African areas that lay side-by-side the under-utilized European land.⁸³ The types of farms in Zimbabwe were not like the types of farms known in Europe today, for example, in Britain where an average family owned a farm, it is 65 hectares; in France, it is 35 hectares whereas giant farms in the US are between 200 and 250 hectares. Surprisingly the average size in Zimbabwe was 3000 hectares. In other extreme cases, there were farms of between 15, 000 to 20, 000 hectares which were owned by individual white farmers.⁸⁴ As a result of such extreme inequalities, indigenous people experienced *Shangwa*, a Shona word for drought or the misery or the disaster that Africans underwent after the dispossession against which there was no assured defence.⁸⁵ It became impossible for the first time to store surplus grain through the *Zunde RaMambo*. Yet the Shona still thought that it was the duty of the chief to supply everyone with enough land and food.

The colonial land dispossession was legally institutionalized by the various legislative pieces that were meant to totally push Africans off productive lands into natural regions⁸⁶ IV and V. The two regions, IV

⁸² Cf. T O Ranger, *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia 1896-97*, London: North-western University Press, 1968, 74

⁸³ Cf. Roger Riddell, *The Land Question: From Rhodesia to Zimbabwe*, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1978, 30

⁸⁴ Cf. G Shire, 'Robert Mugabe: Sinner or Sinned Against?', *African Business*, 2003, 12

⁸⁵ Cf. D N Beach, *The Shona Economy: Branches of production*, in R Palmer and N Parsons (eds), *The Roots of Rural Poverty in Central and Southern Africa*, University of California Press, 1977, 43

⁸⁶ The natural regions were as follows: 1) Region 1: receives rainfall above 1050 mm per annum with some precipitation in all months of the year. They specialise in fruit, tea, and coffee and intensive livestock production. 2) Region 2: receives rainfall of about 750-1000 mm per annum but seasonally confined, with well-defined dry season. It is good for large scale intensive crop and livestock production. Regions 1 and 2 are the only regions known for giving a secure and promising life as compared to the other regions. 3) Region 3: receives rainfall of about 650-800 mm per annum with regular mid-season dry spells. It is best for livestock production with fodder crops. 4) Region 4: experiences rainfall of around 450-650 mm per annum with periodic seasonal drought

and V, are still characterised by low rainfall and poor soils. This writer comes from region V, Chivi district of Masvingo, known for annual severe droughts even in cases where the majority of areas in Zimbabwe receive above normal rainfall. The climatic conditions in regions IV and V are not meant for human habitation but for game ranching yet the majority of people were forced to go there. Prior to white settlement nothing had prevented Africans from occupying such lands they had been driven into, but most of them had deliberately avoided going there because of the adverse conditions in such regions. D M Stanley mentions about the Sabi Valley's (Region V) harsh climatic conditions that:

The Sabi valley' temperatures in summer are anything over 43°C in the shade. It is impossible for Natives to work there between 10 a. m and 3 p.m. Otherwise a couple of days see them crippled. Even whites in boots suffer to a certain extent. It is malarious and the general conditions are not favourable for human habitation as the heat is unbearable. The areas are so bad that are called 'baboon' areas. The average rainfall for the twenty-year period between 1932 and 1952 was 454 mm making best be regarded as semi-desert.⁸⁷

During times of drought, people in such areas are sometimes reduced to eating fruits of a wild tree called the 'baobab' due to endemic starvation which people face every four years. Folklore has it that once upon a time a woman from Chivi had nothing for herself and her children to eat, so she boiled some stones and afterwards gave her children the 'soup'. This fable metaphorically characterizes the level of desperation, hunger, poverty in general and food insecurity in regions IV and V that are still overcrowded and have dry conditions. This made life to become much complicated for the indigenous men, for example, where the husband

and severe rainy season, dry spells. It is good for livestock production and drought resistant crops. 5) Region 5: is too low and erratic for even drought resistant fodder and grain crops. It is good for extensive livestock and game ranching, Cf. *Geography of Zimbabwe*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geography_of_Zimbabwe, Accessed Online 03 September 2009

⁸⁷ H Moyana, *The Political economy of Land*, 128; See also, M I Meltzer and H M Hastings, 'The Use of Fractals to Assess the Ecological Impact of increased Cattle Population: Case Study from the Runde Communal Land, Zimbabwe', *Journal of Applied Ecology* 29 (3), 1992, 635-46

was customarily expected to provide his wife not only with vegetable gardens, firewood, wells to fetch some water but also with fields in which to cultivate staple grains. The father was supposed to make sure that all his sons had adequate land as they moved towards maturation and marriage.

As a result of these challenges, studies have shown that Matebeleland provinces, Bulawayo and Masvingo (Region IV and V) are the worst-off in terms of malnutrition and stunting, something that is interesting in the debate about messiahship leadership and the feeding topic in the post-independence Zimbabwe. Poverty and hunger remains largely a rural phenomenon in Zimbabwe such that whoever comes up with food aid or food handouts automatically becomes a messiah. In fact segregation in its Rhodesian form was *possessory segregation*, because it meant that the races were segregated in the matter of possessing land.⁸⁸ Possessory Segregation resulted in land that was assigned for Africans being often insufficient, uncultivable and far too removed from both rail, road and market centres in case they wanted to market their produce. This was an absolute segregation which also led to absolute poverty for the majority of indigenous Africans.⁸⁹ The infertility of the land and scarcity of water in regions IV and V meant that less food was produced with the continuous cycle of poverty which led to undernutrition, malnutrition and scurvy. For the first time, Africans lacked land as a vital resource in both quantity and quality.

On the other hand, the Acts officially divided the country into two separate societies along racial lines, European areas and Native Reserves where peasants were forbidden from owning land outside their barren reserves.⁹⁰ Pieces of legislation promoting commercial agriculture for the whites and subsistence farming for the blacks were put in place and these included the Land Apportionment Act (LAA) of 1930 and

⁸⁸ Cf. R Gray, *The Two Nations: Aspects of the Development of Race Relations in the Rhodesians and Nyasaland*, London: Oxford University Press, 1960, 60

⁸⁹ Cf. R Gray, *The Two Nations: Aspects of the Development of Race Relations in the Rhodesians and Nyasaland*, 60

⁹⁰ Cf. M T Nziramasanga and M Lee, 'Distributive Policies and Economic Growth', in C Mumbengegwi (ed), *Macroeconomic and Structural Adjustment Policies in Zimbabwe*, New York: Palgrave, 2002, 56

1940⁹¹, Native Land Husbandry Act (NLHA) of 1951⁹² and the Land Tenure Act (LTA)⁹³ of 1969.⁹⁴ The laws according to A Lake were also designed to further minimize points of contact between black and white thereby creating two nations in one nation.⁹⁵ O B Pollak adds that, the LAA was called the ‘white man’s Bible’ and a Rhodesian advanced form of apartheid which divided the nation on the basis of African and European lands.⁹⁶ It was more like the Biblical separation of the sons of darkness and sons of the light as in the gospel of John.

The legislative Acts created social, religious, political and economic discourses that described African farming and land tenure systems as inherently unproductive and destructive. Such views got justified by the reserve systems that were created in most of southern African countries (like South Africa, Namibia, Zambia, Mozambique and Malawi) with specific reference to Zimbabwe.⁹⁷ According to H Moyana, as from the time of land dispossession ‘to be peasant was bad enough, but

⁹¹ The LAA made land to be divided on a racial basis with colour of a person’s skin determining which area he or she could farm and where he or she could live.

⁹² The Land Husbandry Act contained five parts; however the second part raised the anger of Africans as it called for the ‘destocking’ of African cattle. The Act’s main objectives were: (i) to provide for a reasonable standard of good husbandry; (ii) to limit the number of stock in any area to its carrying capacity; (iii) to allocate individual rights in arable areas and in communal grazing areas; (iv) to provide individual security of tenure of the arable land and individual security of grazing rights in communal areas; and (v) to provide for the setting aside of land for towns. Each household was supposed to have five cattle and this had an impact on the African economy and draught power for farming; exposing them to hunger as they could not till adequate food for their respective families. From the foregoing debate, there is conclusive evidence that the insufficiency of land in the African areas was the major cause of overstocking, dwindling harvest, endemic starvation and general economic starvation. Cf. H Wels, *Private Wildlife Conservation in Zimbabwe: Joint Ventures and Reciprocity*, Michigan: Michigan Press, 2003, 59

⁹³ LTA forbade the Church from having multi-racial Church services. It prevented the black and white ministers of religion from living in the same house and went as far as barring missionaries from living in the rural areas

⁹⁴ Cf. J F Holleman, *The Shona Customary Law, with reference to kinship, marriage, the family and the estate*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1952, 45

⁹⁵ Cf. A Lake, *The Tar Baby Option*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1973, 11

⁹⁶ Cf. O B Pollak, *Black Farmers and White Politics in Rhodesia*, http://afraf.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/reprint/74/2_96/263.pdf, Accessed Online, 18 July 2010

⁹⁷ Cf. T Scarnecchia, *Land Resettlement in Zimbabwe*, Taylor and Francis Ltd, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 2003, Volume 29, 320-321

to be landless peasant was destiny to destruction' by hunger and poverty.⁹⁸ Interestingly, the policies worked to the amazement even of their authors because as the African peasantry increased in population; there was a decrease in productivity and increase in poverty and hunger that ensured an expansion of the supply of labour.⁹⁹ As a result, the elite were robbing the poor majority in the name of God and business. When the majority poor fought back to reclaim their freedom and humanity, it was characterised as violence and barbaric. The land alienation policies and artificial shortages placed locals between a hard place and a rock pushing peasants into wage employment as domestic and farm workers, where they were rendered incapable of accumulating surpluses.¹⁰⁰ J M Mackenzie adds that, forced labour policies, hut and poll taxes were formulated leading males to labour outside the domestic unit which further undermined the ability of many households to provide for themselves.¹⁰¹ Taxes extracted labour from indigenous people and this was crucial for commercial agriculture which manufactured hunger for the indigenous people. The male migration resulted in the dawning of women-headed families in communal areas, a trend which exists today in Zimbabwe as men migrate to cities seeking employment. R Theisen cites a further drop in communal crop yields since the energetic male heads were absent for more than nine months of the year resulting in increased pressures on women's time and effort in food production. Women-headed households had to reduce the range of crops they traditionally grew due to shortage of labour.¹⁰² Hunger and poverty became

⁹⁸ Cf. H Moyana, *The Political Economy of Land in Zimbabwe*, Gweru: Mambo Press, 2002, 46

⁹⁹ Cf. C Onselen, *Chibaro: African Mine Labour in Southern Rhodesia 1900-1933*, London: Pluto Press Ltd, 1976, 94

¹⁰⁰ Cf. G Arrighi, 'Labour Supplies in Historical Perspective: A Study of the Proletarianisation of the African Peasantry in Rhodesia', in G Arrighi and J S Saul (eds), *Essays on the Political Economy of Africa*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983, 180-234; See also, O Vengayi, *Aluta Continua Biblical Hermeneutics of Liberation: Engaging Slavery Texts in the Bible in the struggle against Exploitation of Domestic Workers in Zimbabwe*, PhD Thesis submitted with the University of Bayreuth, 2012 (BiAS series vol. 9, 2012)

¹⁰¹ Cf. T D Shopo, *The Political Economy of Hunger in Zimbabwe*, Harare: Zimbabwe Institute of Development Studies, 1985, 21

¹⁰² Cf. R Theisen, *Agro-economic factors relating to the health and academic achievement of rural school children*, Salisbury: Tribal Areas of Rhodesia Research Foundation, 1975,

the order of the day for most peasants. Rhodesia's particular brand of capitalism was far from the world of competitive capitalism found in textbooks. Like land dispossession; employment, education and healthy were segregated.

Access to education and health was highly minimal for Africans. The Rhodesian settlers were given classical British schooling (F1) while the Africans enjoyed only primary and trade education (F2). Generally it was a deliberate and conscious effort made by the colonial state with the approval of some Church leaders to maintain an illiterate black populace. R J Zvobgo raises an important question by saying that: 'how else does one explain the absurd policies of F1 and F2 systems for blacks with academic 'O' Level standards being open only to whites?'¹⁰³ Schools were grouped into A, B, C and D in the decreasing order of attention and development. The colonial regime introduced the bottleneck system that worked against the progression of Africans leading to extreme inequality in all facets of life.¹⁰⁴ In cases where the churches contributed to African education, the achievement in educational development was more in using education to recruit few African pupils into church membership.¹⁰⁵ Interestingly, even though the church had many schools than the colonial government, the schools did not serve the majority of Zimbabweans but only those who were deemed intellectually bright and the rest were turned away to serve as labourers in farms and mines or as domestic workers in towns. The system created a ready source of cheap labour. What is true is that few missionaries until the 1950s questioned as an illegitimate system. Bishop Lamont is quoted in his pastoral letter saying that:

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¹⁰³ Cf. R J Zvobgo, *Colonial Education in Zimbabwe*, Harare: SAPES, 1994, 80

¹⁰⁴ Cf. J R T Wood, *Rhodesian Insurgency*, <http://www.memoriesofrhodesia.com/media/documents/insurgency-1.pdf>, Accessed Online, 16 August 2010; See also, L T Kapungu, *Rhodesia: The Struggle for Freedom*, Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis, 1974, 86; M O'Callaghan, *Southern Rhodesia, The Effects of a Conquest Society on Education, Culture and Information*, Paris: UNESCO, 1977, 145

¹⁰⁵ Cf. W R Peaden, *Aspects of the Church and Its Political Involvement in Southern Rhodesia, 1959-1972*, *Zambezia Journal*, Vol.7 (2), 1979, 191-211

Colonialism was legitimate where it meant the acquisition of land which was uninhabited or sparsely populated so that full use could be made of it. Colonial administration could be beneficial particularly as, 'The African is as yet equipped neither academically nor technically nor economically to assume complete control of a highly complex and industrialized country.'¹⁰⁶

It is generally clear that, the church was not prepared to tackle the causes of inequalities as a result of their patronising perspective of indigenous people. There was no real income for Africans such that they were literally starved in order to make them sell their labour for food.¹⁰⁷ M Mbeki observes that, the African continent at large was overwhelmed spiritually and intellectually by European imperialism where indigenous religions were also marginalised, vulgarised and vilified by missionaries.¹⁰⁸ Due to immense economical, political, social and religious pressures, peasants became a band of disempowered 'masses' depending on food hand outs initiated by the colonial government for survival.

The Colonial Feeding Programme

People were no longer independent but had to wait for the food that was distributed in their restricted reserves.¹⁰⁹ J Illife argues that, 'African grain production per head' declined during the colonial period forcing African families to become increasingly depended on maize purchases and wage labour economy. When unemployment hit the wage labour economy, hunger became endemic among the poor peasant masses as they could not buy food. Drought conditions aggravated food scarcity in the reserves making more rural households to become dependent on the colonial state's food relief.¹¹⁰ However, there is plenty of evidence that in the nineteenth century, before colonisation, black farmers had a system of agriculture that was very successful enough to allow them to feed

¹⁰⁶ Peadar Kirby, *Aspects of the Church and Its Political Involvement in Southern Rhodesia*, 191-211

¹⁰⁷ Cf. R Riddell, *The Land Question: From Rhodesia to Zimbabwe*, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1978, 74

¹⁰⁸ Cf. M Mbeki, *Architects of Poverty: Why African Capitalism Needs Changing*, Johannesburg: Ultra Pvt Ltd, 2009, 15

¹⁰⁹ Cf. C S Banana, *The Church and the Struggle for Zimbabwe: From the programme to Combat Racism to Combat Theology*, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1996, 284

¹¹⁰ Cf. J Illife, *Famine in Zimbabwe: 1890-1960*, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1990, 80, 103, 108

themselves and to trade the surplus.¹¹¹ And in cases where local people experienced food shortages, the *Zunde RaMambo* protected such people from hunger. M F C Bourdillon states that when white settlers arrived in the country, black farmers were ready to exploit new market and provided the settlers with grain and livestock for food.¹¹² Before the introduction of Legal Acts, Africans produced more yields in grain, kept more cattle, sheep and goats.

L Vambe observes that, after the coming of settlers, local people still believed that as long as they grew enough food for themselves they were spared the humiliation of working for the foreigners and receiving food from them.¹¹³ However, the colonial government assumed the role of bread-winner which was formerly played by the Shona chiefs. People depended on the state for food handouts. Yet for the Shona to receive food handouts from whatever quarters particularly in a bumper harvest season is shameful. Laziness is strongly shunned by the Shona people. The shame is worse when one receives handouts of food from foreigners let alone the Western colonialists. The guiding Shona religious belief was that, it was the role of chiefs as ancestral appointees to feed the people in case of food shortages, not foreigners who were not known by the ancestral spirits and were not part of the lineage. However, the succession of droughts and confinement of local people in reserves created an environment where they had no choice except to survive on food aid. The colonial government became the 'new messiah' who used 'forced or fake generosity' to feed the shamed masses residing in the created reserves.

As from 1960s, more and more food was imported into the reserves. Many people needed direct government relief as a result of rising unemployment, rising poverty levels and food shortages.¹¹⁴ The situation in the created urban centres was worse as there was no alternative to help them fork out a living. People resented the colonial regime and

¹¹¹ Cf. C Onselen, *Chibaro: African Mine Labour in Southern Rhodesia 1900-1933*, London: Pluto Press ltd, 1976, 42

¹¹² Cf. Bourdillon, *The Shona Peoples*, 71

¹¹³ Cf. L Vambe, *An Ill-Fated People*, London: SCM Press ltd, 1972, 176

¹¹⁴ Cf. Illife, *Famine in Zimbabwe: 1890-1960*, 103

the sentiments created a fertile ground for the liberation ideologies and theology. People looked forward to someone who would be raised by God and liberate them. Liberation theologies based on the book of Exodus, figures of Moses and Jesus argued that, God was on their side and that a messianic figure in the mould of Moses and Jesus was going to be raised. The economic and political predicament of the urban workers and rural peasants became natural support for liberation leaders like Joshua Nkomo, Ndabaningi Sithole and Robert Mugabe. Special focus was put on Mugabe when he took over the leadership of ZANU-PF in 1975 and the belief for most of the peasants was that Mugabe would feed them and become their messiah in the independent Zimbabwe.¹¹⁵ It is important to note that as a result of these challenges and experiences, people were more fundamentally interested in a government that would narrow the inequalities and eliminate the poverty. A government that would satisfy the basic needs of the poorest sections of society and help empower the rural peasants with fertile land.

The Missionary and Colonial Enterprising Ideologies

On the religious front, the Missionaries supported the colonial policies with their oppressive structures making the Church a silent partner in the oppression of the African people. On the other hand, Africans spiritually interpreted their status as that under the hold of the colonial spirit. J Kurasha made an interesting observation that:

The Church operated amphibiously in and out of the white community. The Church was part of the colonial spirit and Africa was occupied by that colonial spirit. Colonialism and the Church were one flesh, one body and one spirit. If Colonialism being the mother spirit was unaware of the evils of racism in this logic of the spirit, it follows that the body of Church would not have been able to do otherwise or to see otherwise. Therefore the rebellion against Colonialism, even attributed to the Church, was basically a rebellion of key players within the Church.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ Cf. H Moyana, *The Political Economy of Land in Zimbabwe*, Gweru: Mambo Press, 2002, 118

¹¹⁶ Banana, *The Church and the Struggle for Zimbabwe*, 61

For Kurasha, there was no difference between the institutional Church and colonial state. The Christian missionaries used the Bible to implore the colonial subjects to lay up treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt as settlers (Mt. 6:20), traders and missionaries acquired mineral and land resources leading to the hunger and poverty of Africans.¹¹⁷ This was shown by the first Catholic missionaries who set up their first 'Christian village' at Chishawasha mission. The land given to them by Cecil Rhodes's private commercial enterprise and the British South Africa Company was 20,000 acres of Chishawasha land acquired for the Church by dispossessing and stocking hunger on the local population.¹¹⁸ Given this fact, a number of mainstream Churches (Catholic Church, Church of Christ, Lutheran, Salvation Army and the Methodist) have themselves for generations been landowners and done nothing to empower the indigenous Africans against hunger and poverty. It is a clear *coup de grace* that stripped indigenous people of dignity and their only means of survival.

The Bible as a Subjugating Tool

Throughout the colonial era, the missionary-led Churches were supportive of the colonial government and its repressive systems. The churches in Zimbabwe were generally condemned for their lack of solidarity with Africans in times of dispossessions, hunger, troubles and poverty. In cases where the Church condemned the structural systems of injustice, it was just cosmetic without any tangible impact. Most of the traditional churches were conservatively concerned about the general peace and soul-winning. The Bible was invoked to maintain the pacifistic mentality and status quo. Sr Janice McLaughlin observed that, ZANU observed that, missionaries had an agenda of softening people in a bid to preserve the rights and rule of whites.¹¹⁹ This was echoed by Mugabe who said that:

¹¹⁷ Cf. A E McGrath, *Evangelical and Future of Christianity*, Downers Grove II: Intervarsity Press, 1995, 141

¹¹⁸ Cf. M Meredith, *Mugabe: Power and Plunder in Zimbabwe*, Oxford: Public Affairs, 2002, 20

¹¹⁹ Cf. J McLaughlin, *On the Frontline: Catholic Missions in Zimbabwe's Liberation War*, Harare: Baobab Books, 1996, 55

If you study the history of the Church in South Africa, Zimbabwe and elsewhere in Africa you will discover that originally the Church tended to side with colonial authorities. Colonialism itself was completely wrong and unchristian (un-Jesus like) but the Churches at first held it as justified. Missionaries came to Africa to spread the gospel but in the process of opening the way for colonialism. Society became organised on the basis of race and the Churches supported the racist and oppressive legislation which exposed the majority to hunger.¹²⁰

Therefore the Bible became an important tool in silencing the indigenous populace and stereotyping indigenous religions as well as the authority of chiefs. Chiefs lost respect in the eyes of their subjects as they were labelled as new agents of the devil. In some cases indigenous people were made to accept their conditions of hunger and poverty.

The generality of the people then accused the broader Church of siding with the colonial Government. This perspective was shown by Munangatira who was quoted saying that:

If asked to choose between the Church, the Bible and Nationalism, almost all Africans would choose the latter. The clergy identified with the Government, and the Church's silence when discriminatory laws were passed has made her suspect in the eyes of Africans.¹²¹

It was the general understanding among the Africans and Zimbabweans in particular that their plight of hunger, disease, lack of education had been caused by the colonial settlers supported by the Church that hid behind the Bible to justify the unjustifiable situation. Bishop Skelton of the Anglican Diocese of Matabeleland bemoaned the half-hearted effort of the Church in fighting the oppression of people and the interracial worship. He argued that:

The Church representative, the missionary was a captive of the racist ethos and one feels impelled to submit that the Church was itself in dire need of liberation, more so than the subjugated black.¹²²

¹²⁰ R Mugabe, *Our War of Liberation : Speeches, Articles, Interviews 1976-1979*, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1983, 153

¹²¹ I Linden, *Church and State in Rhodesia 1959-1979*, New York: Columbia Press, 1979, 59

¹²² K Skelton, *Bishop in Smith's Rhodesia: Notes from a Rhodesian Octave 1962-1970*, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1985, 91-120

The oppressed were made to feel that to endure suffering and being violated against would make them move closer to the kingdom of God than their oppressors. Texts that prepared victims to give another cheek to evil ones (Mt 5:39) were quoted in Church services and Bible studies. The reading narratives used emanated from those in power and was meant to make poverty and hunger sound acceptable to the disempowered masses. This deliberate approach to the Bible impacted greatly on how peasants viewed the Bible in relation to poverty and hunger. Missionaries cited Luke 6: 20-22 as lullabies for those in poverty. Parables of the Prodigal son (Lk.15:11-32), Richman and Lazarus (Lk.16:19-31) found a lot of space in Bible studies and sermons by missionaries. The understanding being that, those who lack food now will have it in abundance in the afterlife. However, peasant masses also had strategies of resistance and they developed their own reading strategies of the Bible. The book of Exodus, figures of Moses and Jesus offered them hope in their condition. Moses was used as an example of what a messiah would do in leading disempowered hungry masses against the colonial dictatorship. In that light, there were leading religious Christian figures who helped put across the narrative of the peasant masses.

The Church Also Played a Part in the Liberation of Zimbabwe

However, in criticizing the traditional churches, it is unfair to select only the evidence which points to their failure and suppress contrary evidence in the 1960s, as some critics tended to do. Some Church members of both races sincerely worked for full racial justice and equality. It is put on record in the 1960s that, some individuals in traditional churches began to stand against the inhuman and oppressive treatment of the black majority and supported the liberation of Zimbabweans. Although, the stance was belatedly done, they still ruffled the feathers of the colonial government and got persecuted, by getting deported or jailed without trial.¹²³ There are incidents of church leaders and some missionaries who sacrificed their lives for the independence of Zimbabwe which would generally not make any sense to take the church and her mem-

¹²³ Cf. Auret, *From Liberator to Dictator*, 47

bers as having been the sole Trojan horse of colonialism. There are examples of Christian organisations, men and women of the cloth labeled as enemies of the state during the 1965 UDI by Ian Smith, the Prime Minister of Rhodesia.¹²⁴ We have examples like, Bishop Lamont, Father Dieter Scholz, Father Ribeiro, Sister Mary Aquina, the CCJP who were kept under constant surveillance; some leading to arrests and deportation.¹²⁵ Further to that, mission Churches and AICs of late were the major source of logistical support to ZANLA/ZIPRA providing guerillas with food, medicines, money and transport for them to have access to towns and cities. The figure of Jesus (Mat. 25: 35-36) was used to support the downtrodden, oppressed, hopeless, the hungry, sick, clothless and those arrested under frivolous charges. Therefore the role of the Church through some Christian leaders cannot be overlooked in that respect. Organisations like the CCJP, The Lutheran World Federation and the WCC were involved in feeding refugees and guerillas in the fight for the liberation of Zimbabwe.¹²⁶ The WCC gave financial help which went as far as helping fighters secure food, clothing and shelter. There are incidents where communities had become largely Christian obliging guerillas to respect Christianity for the sake of getting the needed support of the people in that area as was the case in Marange District where members of an Independent Church refused to provide food to the guerillas until they allowed church members to practice their religion freely. This resulted in a compromise being reached.¹²⁷ Credit must also be given to Churches that offered assistance in various forms, e.g. education, health, and feeding programmes.

M F C Bourdillon and P H Gundani emphasize that, the combined Churches (Catholic, Methodist, Salvation, Anglican, Evangelical

¹²⁴ Cf. M Lapsley, *Neutrality or Co-Option?: Anglican Church and State from 1964 until the Independence of Zimbabwe*, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1986, 15

¹²⁵ Cf. M Meredith, *Our Votes, Our Guns: Robert Mugabe and the Tragedy of Zimbabwe*, New York: Public Affairs, 2002, 5

¹²⁶ Cf. A M Moyo, *Religion and Political Thought in Independent Zimbabwe*, in C Hallencreutz and A Moyo, *Church and State in Zimbabwe*, Mambo Press, 1988, 203

¹²⁷ Cf. M F C Bourdillon and P Gundani, *Rural Christians and the Zimbabwe Liberation War*, in C Hallencreutz and A Moyo, *Church and State in Zimbabwe*, Mambo Press, 1988, 141, 151

and Church of Christ) still own a number of Church-oriented institutions like: schools, clinics and hospitals. Thousands of Zimbabweans owe their help in terms of education, health, shelter and food to the Church.¹²⁸ Some political leaders received help from Mission Schools and Clinics that were run by mainline Churches. However, liberation leaders who later on became the leaders of the independent Zimbabwe, that is, Robert Mugabe (Leader of ZANU) and Joshua Nkomo (Leader of ZAPU) continued in some cases for political reasons to vilify missionaries as key agents in the colonial project. This is not surprising at all, considering that, their respective party political commissars had been schooled in Marxist-Leninism and viewed Christianity as a retrogressive and regressive ideology.¹²⁹ They argued that, the Church had in the past supported and accepted the colonial system and therefore did not deserve any sympathy or attention in the new Zimbabwe.¹³⁰ What is interesting is that, as usual, politicians are hypocrites who are prepared to get the help of the Church and at the same time castigating it as long it suited them.

The General Protest against the Bible, Christianity and Christians

The liberation fighters broadly protested against the Mission Churches and their teachings, despite the fact that some missionaries and Christian leaders supported the liberation struggle. The protest generally ended up targeting reluctant Christians who were against the use of violence in the liberation struggle. So in many places, Christians were forced to burn or bury their Bibles, prayer or hymn books and avoided displaying any emblems of Christianity (like putting on distinctive Christian robes/clothing) to preserve their own lives. Some people like the Vapostori (members of the African independent Churches) who in peace time refused any contact with tobacco and alcohol were forced to

¹²⁸ Cf. Bourdillon and Gundani, *Rural Christians and the Zimbabwe Liberation War*, 166

¹²⁹ Cf. Maxwell, *Christians and Chiefs in Zimbabwe*, 125

¹³⁰ Cf. J McLaughlin, "We Did It For Love": *Refugees and Religion in the Camps in Mozambique and Zambia During Zimbabwe's Liberation Struggle*, in C Hallencreutz and A Moyo, *Church and State in Zimbabwe*, Mambo Press, 1988, 141

drink millet beer and to take the ritualistic snuff in connection with the ancestral spirits' rituals.¹³¹ D Lan adds that:

Joining the resistance required a rejection of Christianity which was firmly associated with the white state. Guerrillas made some attempt to appeal to belief in spirit mediums against folk Christianity.¹³²

This hostility towards Christianity was shown by the nationalist fighters who allowed prayer to God the Father (Mwari Baba) but they would not allow the name of Jesus to be mentioned as he was taken as an ancestor of whites.¹³³ The attack on Christianity was ideological and this ran in line with the popular thinking in which traditional spirits and chiefs symbolized control over: the land and its products, fertility, abundance of food and power; economical, religious, political and mystical in opposition to white domination.

ATR was regarded as representative of African identity, spirituality and catered for their needs as Africans. The Christian ideology, spirituality and beliefs were regarded as representative of settlers' authority. This caused the guerillas to look for chaplaincy in ATR. It is clear that, any liberation movement that sought to reach and mobilize the peasantry had to identify with the peasant religion (ATR). In order to win their support, a radical position was taken against anything to do with westernization. The open distaste towards westernization was shown in various ways by AICs and Spirit mediums. D Lan notes that:

Spirit mediums objected to the new techniques of agricultural production, like the use of fertilizer in farms arguing that ancestral spirits disliked the smell it gives 'their earth'(bringing hunger). Mediums were against Western-style of clothes, factory-produced foods, Western medicines, metal utensils and cigarettes. The smell of the clinic or hospital was taken as harmful to them. They could not ride cars, buses or tractors as the smell of petrol was also regarded as harmful. They ate from wooden plates and drank from dried gourds.¹³⁴

¹³¹ Cf. Bourdillon and Gundani, *Rural Christians and the Zimbabwe Liberation War*, 147

¹³² T O Ranger, 'Holy Men and Rural Communities in Zimbabwe, 1970-1980', in W J Sheils (ed), *The Church and War*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983, 448

¹³³ Cf. Bourdillon and Gundani, *Rural Christians and the Zimbabwe Liberation War*, 154

¹³⁴ D Lan, *Guns and Rain*, 143

The same hostility was displayed by some of the African Indigenous Church prophets like Shoniwa Masedza Tandi Moyo of Gandanzara, later known as John the Baptist or Johana Masowe, who became popular for preaching against Western Christianity, education and medication.¹³⁵ Shonhiwa took the Bible as affirmatory to an exposition of the values, dignity of all humankind before God, Africans included. T O Ranger observed that, there was a general repudiation of the political and religious economy of missionary Christianity, by both spirit mediums and apostolic movements.¹³⁶ They developed a liberation theology that articulated peasant aspirations and narratives. The AICs approach to the Bible was motivated by the peasant narrative.

The same resistance was found with Spirit mediums that protected traditional authority by isolating themselves from the settler rule which had compromised the power of chiefs. Spirit mediums imitated the former undisputed authority of chiefs before colonialism. They formed a significant force of influence to peasant consciousness precisely by focusing on the peasants' right to land and access to food. All the ritual prohibitions by spirit mediums and apostolic prophets were a symbolic protest against the exploitation of blacks by the white dominated capitalist systems, environment and markets. It is important to note that, with the coming of independence, the prohibitions fell away. Most of the mediums started riding cars, buses, running personal businesses and even consulting western medical practitioners.

The Nehanda and Mugabe Tradition: The creation of Traditional Authority

As Christianity was being shunned, special focus was put on spirit mediums. The Nehanda, Kaguvi, Chaminuka and Mkwati traditions received the most attention and the greatest praise was on Nehanda based on the argument that, the medium had participated both in the first liberation struggle of 1896 and in the second *Chimurenga* war. Some schol-

¹³⁵ Cf. C M Dillon-Mallone, *The Korsten Basket Makers: A Study of the Masowe Apostles and Indigenous African Religious Movement*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1978, 54

¹³⁶ Cf. Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness and Guerrilla War in Zimbabwe*, 185

ars like T Turino and musicologists credit Mugabe with introducing nationalism accompanied with music attached to emotionalism in order for the struggle to succeed, something which continued into the independent Zimbabwe. The building of national and emotional appeal at ceremonies was through the use of thudding drums, ululation by women dressed in national costumes, offering ancestral prayers, dances and music.¹³⁷ Countless songs were composed and performed about Nehanda and Mugabe. One of the popular liberation songs in pre and post independent Zimbabwe goes as follows:

Mudzimu-we-e-e x 2	Oo-o-o Ancestral Spirits
Nandi Nehanda Mudzimu Wedu Baba	O-o-o-o Spirit Medium Nehanda Our Ancestral Spirit
Titarirei Mambo Tidzose Zimbabwe	Help Us to Return Zimbabwe
Nandi vaMugabe-e-e Mutungamiri Wedu	O-o-o-o Mr Mugabe-e-e Our Only Leader
Nhai vaMugabe-e-e-e Mutungamiri WeZimbabwe	O-o-o-o Mr Mugabe the only leader of Zimbabwe
Titungamireiwo Titore Zimbabwe	Lead Us in Taking Zimbabwe
Vana Mai nanaBaba vari kunetseka-a-a	Our Mothers and Fathers are facing Difficulties
Nhai vaNehanda Mudzimu-u Wedu Baba	O-o-o-o Spirit Medium Nehanda Our Great Spirit
Nhai vaChaminuka Mudzimu Wedu Baba ¹³⁸	O-o-o-o Spirit Medium Chaminuka Our Ancestral Spirits

¹³⁷ Cf. T Turino, *Music as Social Life: The Politics of Participation*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008, 145; See also, N Shamuyarira, *Crisis in Rhodesia*, London: Andre Deutsch, 1965, 67-68

¹³⁸ Cf. ZANLA *Forces War Songs*, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0gxerTyYaDs&p=E767F46281748F6F&playnext=1&index=2>, Accessed Online 26 July 2010

This song was sung by ZANU-PF functionaries before the independence of Zimbabwe, when Mugabe was already referred to as the only and predestined leader of Zimbabwe. Mugabe was placed in the category of spirit mediums like Mbuya Nehanda as an indication that, Mugabe was more than a secular leader who continued from where the Nehanda and other spirit mediums had left.

Nehanda was established as the *Mhondoro* who protects the whole of Zimbabwe, making Zimbabwe become a single spirit province.¹³⁹ Mugabe became the appointed king for the new Zimbabwe that was going to come. D Lan adds that:

The symbolism of the *Mhondoro* gains its extraordinary effectiveness as an expression of the struggle for Zimbabwe from its ability to combine the economic and political aspects of this struggle in a single unforgettable image: the chiefs of the past, independent and prosperous, benign and generous to their followers, in sole possession and control of their bountiful, fertile lands. The image was then put on Mugabe.¹⁴⁰

It is around 1977 when the guerrillas demanded ultimate and exclusive allegiance to Mugabe.¹⁴¹ A memory path was created where Mugabe was presented as a symbol of traditional spirituality and authority. The religious and political authority that was bestowed upon chiefs by spirit mediums became linked with Mugabe at the gaining of independence in 1980. The political authority of chiefs had progressively shifted to the mediums then to the guerillas and the established ZANU-PF political committees and finally Mugabe. Mugabe became the centre of focus as the divinely elected-leader of Zimbabwe. It is one of the messianic characterizations that need to be analyzed and find out how much Mugabe has transcended that messianic narrative and the feeding topic.

Conclusion

The Shona people attribute divinity to the chief through the ritual of installation. The chief as the political leader becomes possessed by the ancestral spirits, making his throne a defacto throne. The ancestral spirits

¹³⁹ Cf. Lan, *Guns and Rain*, 218

¹⁴⁰ Lan, *Guns and Rain*, 219

¹⁴¹ Cf. Ranger, *Peasant Consciousness and Guerrilla War in Zimbabwe*, 207

vicariously exercise their authority through the personal medium of the chief. The Shona chief as in ANE, Jewish, Hellenistic and Roman traditions on kings was the heart-beat of the Shona society. Even though the Shona chief is an embodiment of ancestral spirits that does not imply that the chief wantonly does everything as he deemed. Dictatorial tendencies are not accommodated in the Shona Traditional Institutions as normally implied by mischievous politicians. As much as ancestral spirits are believed to sacralize the authority of the chief, they also prevent rulers from brutalizing their subjects. It is also the duty of the chief to empower his people with land in times of crises which make his feeding a religio-political and social duty as the breadwinner. Failure by the kings to feed their followers is regarded as betrayal to the people and the ancestral spirits. Feeding of the people is a sign of political power. However, colonial changes witnessed in the lifestyle of the people created a platform for Mugabology.

CHAPTER 2: MUGABOLOGY IN THE PHASE OF EUPHORIA AND ABUNDANCE

This chapter seeks to show that, the historical events that marked Zimbabwe in the colonial era are vital in understanding Mugabology. It looks at the perception that people had on Mugabe as their leader. What is interesting is that, people venerated Mugabe more than his counterpart, the former President of Zimbabwe, C S Banana. The chapter exposes how in the early years of independence Mugabology became the great symbol of liberation, hope, providence, abundance of food, peace, justice and wisdom. It interrogates the royal ideology built on Mugabe as the ‘messiah, son of God, new Moses, supreme leader, divine king and breadwinner’.

Challenges in Understanding Mugabology

The reign of Mugabe over the years has led indigenous Zimbabweans: black and white, high and low, male and female, religious and non-religious, struggle to make sense of him.¹ It is one of the controversial challenges surrounding Mugabology. Mugabology as already highlighted is the term we are using for the first time to refer to the ideology built around President Mugabe. This is possibly the same with what S Gatsheni refers to as Mugabeism. According to S Gatsheni:

Mugabeism is a term that has been used loosely in print and electronic media to refer to the constellation of politics that has crystallized around the person of President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe. The term is often used in a negative sense, though some admirers of Mugabe used the term to signify positive revolutionary tradition opposed to colonialism and imperialism.²

It is my humble admission that, any debate on Mugabology either attracts or shies away people. For critics, discussing on the ‘messiahship’ of Mugabe in the context of Zimbabwe is like somebody who chews some well-cooked rice and ending up grinding some pieces of gravel in

¹ Cf. A Norman, *Mugabe: Teacher, Revolutionary, Tyrant*, Gloucestershire: History Press, 2008, 61

² S J Ndhlovu-Gatsheni, *Do ‘Zimbabweans’ Exist? Trajectories of Nationalism, National Identity Formation and Crisis in a Postcolonial State*, Oxford: Peter Lang, 2009, 234

the mouth. It is common to find people who admire the early years of Mugabe's reign and at the same time feeling ashamed of Mugabe's reign from the late 1990s to 2008. This was echoed by M Tigere who said: 'there are two Zimbabweans': one of the 1980s that she identified with, and the second of the 1990s and 2000s that she is ashamed of identifying with.³ There are those critics who have found a 'vampire' in Mugabe's reign and those people who would see a 'messiah, son of God and supreme leader' in Mugabe's entire reign.

What clearly exists are two inextricably intertwined but opposing views that both take Mugabe as either the messiah and revolutionary leader who singularly created a haven of order, freedoms, peace and abundance of food for the people or Mugabe as an undertaker who individually dragged Zimbabwean people to the hell of violence, human rights violation, hunger and chaos. As a result of these dynamics, it is important to look at the years of post-independence Zimbabwe in a nuanced fashion. Of interest, is not specifically whether Mugabe is a messiah or not, but how kingship 'religious ideas' are appropriated on Mugabe. This part on Mugabe is not interested in offering a biographical profile of Mugabe but is interested in looking at the contours that contributed to Mugabe's messiahship in relation to the feeding topic and also the contours against the messiahship of Mugabe in relation to feeding.

The Various Groups' Perspective of Mugabology

The entry point to Mugabology in this chapter is by trying to relate Mugabe's victory as the first black prime minister of Zimbabwe and the various religio-political interpretations that were given. The kingship of Mugabe starts with his swearing in as the prime minister after the 1980 elections. The swearing ceremony presented different images in the eyes and minds of different people. For the ordinary black citizens, Mugabe was the epitome of freedoms from hunger, disease, oppression and ignorance. He was an agent of God.⁴ Leading historians, journalists, an-

³ Cf. Gatsheni, *Do 'Zimbabweans' Exist?*, 16

⁴ Cf. H Campbell, *Reclaiming Zimbabwe: The Exhaustion of the Patriarchal Model of Liberation*, South Africa: New Africa Books, 2003, 68

thropologists and theologians provided narratives of the victors' version of Mugabe which of late created a full blown: militarism, authoritarianism, personality cultism, intolerance and 'acceptable' violence.⁵ The majority of people related and interpreted Mugabology according to their religious, political, social and economical contours of life.

The Kingship of Mugabe and the Shona Traditional Concept of Installation

Traditionalists regarded Mugabe's swearing in ceremony as epitomising the coronation ceremonies of chiefs. They were witnessing the installation of the Shona king at the throne of power with the blessing of the ancestral spirits. Some chiefs betrayed the people and the role of spiritual mediums in leading the struggle. At independence, ZANU-PF strategists evoked the traditional conceptual role of spirit mediums in the installation of kings. In the 1980 elections that led to the independence of Zimbabwe, ZANU-PF T-Shirts and printed banners had Nehanda's (one of the respected spirit mediums) head and shoulders hovering above those of Mugabe as a recommendation and pointer to the triumphant king or warrior of the present.⁶ Nehanda was a spirit medium that was instrumental in the first Chimurenga of 1893-96. It is important to note that, associating Mugabe with spirit mediums and former respected kings is a feature that has been maintained by ZANU-PF in most of the elections, for example, 2008 Presidential Run Off elections.⁷ Many similar designs with Nehanda and Mugabe appeared on cloths printed to celebrate the independence of Zimbabwe. The message appeared as if the national political and spiritual power that Nehanda commanded in the struggle for Zimbabwe's independence had been passed on to Mugabe as the new overall king of Zimbabwe. It looked like, the sacred authority associated with Shona kings was passed on to Mugabe. There was a general attempt by President Mugabe and ZANU-

⁵ Cf. Ndhlovu-Gatsheni, *Do 'Zimbabweans' Exist?*, 15

⁶ Cf. D Lan, *Guns and Rain: Guerrillas and Spirit Mediums in Zimbabwe*, 218, See also, The portrait of Mugabe on Appendix 11

⁷ Cf. T O Ranger (eds), *Evangelical Christianity and Democracy in Africa*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, 31; See Appendix 11 (b)

PF to create an autocratic society with a national political religion that interweaved with the political structure centred on him. The ZANU-PF idea was both religious and political. The impression being that, Mugabe had been chosen by the Zimbabwean spirits to lead the nation of Zimbabwe.

For African traditionalists, Mugabe's ascendance to power against the colonial regime was a fulfillment of the ancestral spirits' wishes that the country be ruled by blacks. He appeared just like one of the ancient Shona kings. One of the leaders of the biggest AICs-Johane Masowe WeChishanu, Madzibaba Nzira, once prophetically announced that Mugabe was a 'divinely appointed king of Zimbabwe and no man should dare challenge his office'.⁸ The perspective of Mugabe as a 'divine king' was built before independence but became pronounced from the first day of his installation as the Prime Minister of Zimbabwe and the royal ideology continued to grow during his reign. For some critics, as from independence the royal ideology on Mugabe bred a one-party state ideology in Zimbabwe where the presidential throne became his defacto sacral throne or an 'axis mundi'. In fact this is how the office of a traditional chief is perceived in this context. A chief's adornments are the 'the axis mundi or the center of hierophany' if we are to borrow M Eliade's vocabulary.⁹ The 'axis mundi' is where the spiritual converges with the physical and the ruler can be understood in that category. By and large, it appears the traditional perception of Mugabe as the king of Zimbabwe produced a dilemma in relation to his retirement, even when people within and without his party wanted him to retire and felt that he had become a liability to the development of the nation. A Chigwedere, the former ZANU-PF Minister of Education, Sports and Culture, confirmed this when he was quoted (Wikileaks file cables) in 2000 by T Macdonald, the US Ambassador, saying:

Mugabe has become a liability for the party (ZANU-PF), and the sooner he retires the better. It would be very difficult for him to do so, however,

⁸ Cf. 'Mugabe Bishop' has Jail Term Reduced, <http://www.newzimbabwe.com/pages/kunonga6.13745.html>, Accessed Online 05 October 2010

⁹ Cf. M Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, USA: GmbH, 1957, 53

because it is not in the African tradition for chiefs to simply step aside and become 'ordinary men. Only God can retire a chief'.¹⁰

In the eyes of known traditionalists like Chigwedere, Mugabe was the president of Zimbabwe but in reality he was just like one of the Shona chiefs or kings.

The symbolical perspective of Mugabe as king and representative of the ancestral spirits has constantly been shown when material and animal emblems are given to Mugabe at public ceremonies. Mugabe receives traditional gifts from chiefs and it is common to find Mugabe being given the skin of a leopard or lion, small ritual axe or *gano* traditionally used by Shona chiefs. The ritual axe or *gano* is usually carried by both chiefs and spirit mediums as a symbol of the guardianship of land and the chieftainship.¹¹ There are also occasions when Mugabe has been given a pangolin known to be a symbol of fertility and the presence of the invisible ancestral spirits. For the traditionalists, Mugabe symbolically represented the power of chiefs and ancestral spirits implying that the throne that he occupies is divine. Mugabe's swearing in was immediately followed by the lighting of the fire to mark the independence of Zimbabwe. The lighting of fire as already highlighted was a common practice by Shona chiefs when a new chief was installed after the death of the old chief. The annual lighting of fire on the 18th of April has become a ritualistic annual practice, where celebrations in Zimbabwe are marked by President Robert Mugabe who lights the fire as a symbol of independence, continuity and prosperity of the country. Symbolically it implies that Mugabe is the reigning king today, tomorrow and years to come.

The further coincidental diminishing of the chiefs' power after independence was taken as a pointer to their replacement by Mugabe as the new overall king. The attention and authority that chiefs used to get spiritually and politically were transferred to Mugabe as the new 'divine king'. In 1980, the Zimbabwe government created administrative struc-

¹⁰ E Mushava, *Mugabe must retire-Chigwedere*, The Daily News, 18 September 2011

¹¹ Cf. *The Concept of Mhondoro Amongst the Korekore Speaking People in the North-Eastern Zimbabwe*, <http://upetd.up.ac.za/thesis/submitted/etd05052009174557/unrestricted/04appendices12-13.pdf>, Accessed Online, 19 September 2010

tures (Village Development Committees-VIDCOs; Ward Development Committees-WADCOs and Rural District Councils-RDCs) that assumed responsibility to do with development in rural areas.¹² The structures were expected to work alongside traditional leaders and ZANU-PF political structures visible in all parts of the country pointing to omnipresence of Mugabe in all parts of the country. All communal land ceased to be under the chief's control but was held in trust for the people by President Mugabe.¹³ Besides the demeaning of chiefs and spirit mediums' power, ATR had mixed fortunes with the attainment of independence such that, there was a gradual retreat from indigenous religions to Christianity. The religious symbols of ATR were superseded by those of Christianity.¹⁴ Some people were not impressed by the usurping of the power of chiefs' and spirit mediums.

The displeasure was shown in the early 1980s drought when the blame was placed on the new black government for taking away the authority of the chiefs and putting it on Mugabe. According to one of the spirit mediums,

When people come to ask why there is so little rain and hunger. The Mhondoro says it is not your problem it is because of President Mugabe. Most of the chiefs are not hearing cases. They had been judges but ZANU-PF officials have been selected to hear their cases. As a result chiefs feel that their authority has been taken and not many people are recognizing their authority. It has been put into Mugabe's hands. Mugabe now behaves like the overall king.¹⁵

The creation of the District Councils was interpreted as a strategy by Mugabe to leave chiefs with no power at all. The chief was allowed to allocate land to members of his community only in consultation with the Rural District Council which was controlled by the government as pro-

¹² Cf. D Maxwell, *Christians and Chiefs in Zimbabwe: A Social History of the Hwesa People: 1070s-1990s*, London: Edinburgh University Press, 1999, 181

¹³ Cf. J Herbst, *State Politics in Zimbabwe*, Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications, 1990, 6

¹⁴ Cf. E Chitando, 'Down with the devil, Forward with Christ!': A Study of the interface between religious and political discourses in Zimbabwe, *African Sociological Review*, 6 (1), 2002

¹⁵ D Maxwell, *Christians and Chiefs in Zimbabwe*, 181

vided for under section 5 (g) of the Traditional Leaders Act.¹⁶ This implied that, community courts which were manned by chiefs were taken over by elected officials such as councilors. Legal Acts were put in place to make Chiefs become directly appointed and subservient to Mugabe. The Traditional Leaders Act (Chapter 29:17 of 1998) sets out guidelines on how chiefs are to be appointed by the president, under section 2, 3, 4 (2) a, c, where the president had the power to remove the chief if he deems so through the relevant ministry.¹⁷ This impacted greatly on the status, power and duties that chiefs played in their respective communities. Chiefs supported Mugabe and ZANU-PF in the hope that they would get preferential treatment in resource allocation like food and land.¹⁸ According to A G Chavhunduka, unfortunately 'village governance has been a subject of political interference for a long time by different political leadership in a bid to create conditional loyalties'.¹⁹ Therefore for traditionalists, Mugabe became the replacement of chiefs.

The Christian Perspective of Mugabology

Christians had their own perspective of Mugabology. Even though, the nationalists' fighters and their leaders viewed Christianity in bad light, the hostility against the Church was toned down. Churches were partners in the development of the country as well as maintaining of peace and justice. For many Christians, Mugabe had become an answer to what they had been praying for many decades. Zimbabweans had looked forward to development in which there would be an elimination of demeaning factors like: sickness and death, poverty, hunger, ignorance and superstition, exploitation and discrimination.²⁰ Zimbabwe's inde-

¹⁶ Cf. *Traditional Leaders Act, Chapter 29:17*, http://www.parlzim.gov.zw/cms/Acts/Title29LOCALGOVERNMENT/TRADITIONAL_LEADERS_ACT_29_17.pdf, Accessed Online, 17 May 2010

¹⁷ Cf. *Traditional Leaders Act, Chapter 29:17*

¹⁸ C G Mararike, *Survival Strategies in Rural Zimbabwe*, 102

¹⁹ Cf. G Chavhunduka, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Agricultural Industry*, Harare: Government Printers, 1982, 66-67

²⁰ Cf. Moyo, *Theological Perspectives on Development in Zimbabwe*, in *Church and State*, 380

pendence mirrored a common vision to the majority of people. They were witnesses to the historic demise of the stifling and degrading shackles of colonial subjugation and looking forward to the dawn of the new era of equal opportunity.²¹ Obadiah Musindo likened the blood that was shed in the struggle for the independence of Zimbabwe to the blood of Christ for the ultimate freedom of humanity. And that ultimate freedom was coupled with the independence message by Mugabe that encapsulated the message of reconciliation.²² In that message, Mugabe's policy of forgiveness and reconciliation held out an olive branch towards the former foes of the African majority and to the various groups that were antagonistic to each other.

The message of reconciliation after the painful war led Mugabe to be widely acclaimed as the heroic revolutionary and messianic figure. Mugabe's miracle of reconciliation led people to place him in the same category with Gandhi, Mother Teresa and Martin Luther King.²³ Just like ancient kings, Mugabe was bringing justice and peace to a divided society. For many Christians, Mugabe's message of reconciliation touched on love, the chief pillar of Christianity and one of the important virtues associated with ancient kings. Mugabe to them literally was a 'son of God' for he had fulfilled what Jesus had taught in Matthew 5: 9 that 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God'. Interestingly, the Zimbabwean Churches in general had the reconciliation agenda on their programme and this theme was recurrent in most of their subsequent utterings making the reconciliation messages the integral part of ministry.²⁴ So Mugabe was now a fulfillment of all the prophecies they had been waiting for. The Church's theology of forgiveness resonated so well with Mugabe's reconciliation message.

As a result of the reconciliation call by Mugabe, it was not surprising to find the former Catholic Archbishop Pius Ncube describing

²¹ Cf. Banana, *The Church and the Struggle for Zimbabwe*, 265

²² Cf. R G Mugabe, *Independence Message*, Harare: Ministry of Information Library, 1980, 23

²³ Cf. J Kilgore, 'We are All Zimbabweans Now: A Review', <http://www.newzimbabwe.com/opinion1921We+are+all+Zimbabweans+now/opinion.aspx>, Accessed Online, 28 February 2010

²⁴ Cf. C S Banana, *The Church and the Struggle for Zimbabwe*, 268

Mugabe's Independence Day speech, 18 April 1980, as the most Christian speeches he had ever heard from a politician.²⁵ As a result, the majority of Christians took Romans 13 as their rallying call for Christians to pray for the government that had been instituted by God. Mugabe was the chosen leader of Zimbabwe and any opposition to his leadership was regarded as going against God's plans. Biblical texts were appropriated to qualify the legitimate rule of Mugabe. Mugabe was taken as a Saviour who had rid the country of oppression and was further magnanimous in forgiving the past evils committed then. This is also the context that Mugabe has to be understood in relation to those who continued to regard him as the new Moses. For the proclaimers, Mugabe liberated his people from bondage as done by Moses to the Israelites. Therefore the Church at large felt that, the time was ripe to help in development and preaching of the gospel. There was a convergence of fulfillment of prophecies on Mugabe as the Prime Minister of Zimbabwe. In consequence, the Church generally accepted Mugabe's leadership and was prepared to co-operate with the government's policies. Religious and political personnel moved closer to each other. The themes of Zimbabwean gospel preachers and musicians portrayed the mood that Christians had on Mugabe. Secular and Gospel musicians alike expressed the prevailing circumstances of the time. According to F Zindi, early Zimbabwean gospel music celebrated and praised God for the attainment of independence and having Mugabe as the first black Prime Minister.²⁶ As the founder of the independence of Zimbabwe, Mugabe was given a messianic status that became difficult to interrogate and constructively criticise.

The White Rhodesians' Perspective of Mugabology

For most of the whites in Zimbabwe, the victory of Mugabe was scandalous and sorrowful. The majority rule was meant to reverse and overthrow the past privileges of the whites. Therefore to the whites, Mugabe was far from being their 'messiah or saviour' as they could not stand

²⁵ Cf. Auret, *From Liberator to Dictator*, 170

²⁶ Cf. F Zindi, *Music Work Book: Zimbabwe vs. the World*, Harare: Zindsc Publications, 2003, 45

having a blackman as their leader. This is clearly summarized by I Mandaza that:

When ZANU-PF won 57 seats and PF-ZAPU won 20 seats in the 1980 elections, the result appeared to spell doom for whites in Zimbabwe, because as one observer noted, for years immersed in self-deception and false propaganda, most whites could not believe the outcome let alone accept that they could live under 'terrorists'; for them it was the biblical end of the world, it was a state of shock'.²⁷

For the white community in general, Mugabe was the 'devil incarnate' who had been sent to take away their privileges and cause their suffering. In Mugabe's words:

Whites had been made to believe that I had been built into a real man eating monster but not eating every man but only white men. Yet I have not been a cannibal and I don't intend to be.²⁸

It is upon this background that Mugabe called for reconciliation amongst the races. The words alone did not assure most Whites, with a record high of 100 000 Whites migrating to South Africa, Australia, Britain and elsewhere. As for those who stayed, they did not altogether trust the promises of reconciliation made by Mugabe and tried by all means to resist and sabotage any changes.²⁹

However, for some few whites in Zimbabwe and the majority of Black Zimbabweans, Mugabe had shown the traits of a true leader with spiritual motivation. According D Smith and C Simpson:

Who would have thought that Mugabe, generally assumed to be rank Marxist, would talk to Ian Smith, who has treated him like a dog? Who would have thought that Mugabe, the so-called arch-terrorist, would be bringing whites into his government?³⁰

²⁷ I Mandaza (ed), *Zimbabwe: The Political Economy of Transition, 1980-1986*, Dakah: CODESIA, 1986, 41

²⁸ *Robert Mugabe in 1981*, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8FYz7hHybaE&feature=related>, 19 November 2010

²⁹ Cf. J Moyo, *Voting for Democracy: Electoral Politics in Zimbabwe*, Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications, 1992, 18

³⁰ D Smith and C Simpson, *Mugabe*, London: Sphere Books Limited, 1981, 24

People can argue that there is no deal that is perfect but the omission of reconciliation and justice for those who were responsible for the genocide, crises against humanity before and soon after independence set a bad precedence on the peace and unity of Zimbabweans.³¹ Reconciliation and justice was left to Mugabe to define the way he saw it as the 'new messiah'. President Mugabe of the 1980s was received positively at home, in the region, continent, and abroad as symbolising modernity, rationality, vision, and commitment to the development of Zimbabwe. These interpretations provide a window in understanding Mugabology from the different vantage points of different groups.

One-Party State and the kingship Concept

The euphoria that characterised the early years of independence created a platform where those with contrary minds to be labelled as traitors. Peasants became the target of one-party state ideology at public gatherings and the feeding points. Songs were composed and people made to sing celebrating the one-party state led by Mugabe. K Bediako thinks that:

The post-independence political histories so far of many African countries can be described as the process of the elimination of political dissent, that is, organized and recognized dissent. This process was also usually influenced by the argument that indigenous African political tradition was consensual in character.³²

It looks like most of the one-party states advocated in many African nations have nothing to do with African kingship which did not suppress political dissent. Besides claims of influence from African Indigenous Institutions, the once acclaimed one-party state ideology in Zimbabwe was borrowed from countries like Russia and China that supported the nationalists in the liberation struggle and such nations had a communalistic orientation that suppress dissenting voices.

ZANU-PF's one-party state ideology also depended on a context of 'legitimacy' created by the liberation war and the lack of opposition

³¹ Cf. F Machingura, *The Reading and Interpretation of Matthew 18:21-22 in Relation to Multiple Reconciliations: The Zimbabwe Experience*, Exchange Journal, 2010, 331-354

³² Bediako, *De-Sacralization and Democratization*, 5

parties as Mugabe coerced and co-opted all groups regarded as dissident. D Oluwu posits a clearer analysis of the post-independent African state arguing that:

What has further worsened matters is the attitude of the immediate post-independence African leaders. Claiming that they fought or led the struggle for independence, they appropriated the state as their personal property. Hence many African heads of state declared themselves 'Presidents for life', legislated other political parties out of existence and proscribed or circumscribed other institutions of dissent of social criticism such as the media, legislatures or even interested groups. Whether they came to power through the ballot or the bullet made little difference. They regarded their interest and their fortunes as synonymous with state interest.³³

The rhetoric of inclusion and exclusion used by ZANU-PF close out alternative social and political space rendering projects outside the ruling party's sphere nearly unthinkable and profoundly unimplementable.³⁴ A doctrine, culture and messianic ideology on Mugabe were built with the understanding that 'he died for Zimbabwe so he was entitled to it as messiah'.³⁵ It is in the same light of one-party state ideology that the messianic claims on Mugabe as the 'son of God, messiah' can also be understood. In the early 80s and early 90s, Mugabe had long planned for a one party state but faced resistance from in and outside his party.³⁶ It was after 1980 and 1985 elections that had reduced Mugabe to a regional leader. All the seats that gave him the majority vote were from Mashonaland whereas Joshua Nkomo won all the seats from Matabeleland.³⁷ This bifurcation of parties along ethnic lines did not please Mugabe in

³³ T Biti, *Messianic complex, bane of Zanu-PF*, The Herald, 09 October 2010, See Appendix 7

³⁴ Cf. S R Dorman, *Inclusion and Exclusion: NGOs and Politics in Zimbabwe*, Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor Philosophy in the Department of Politics and International Relations in the Division of Social Studies at the University of Oxford, 2001

³⁵ Cf. T Biti, *Messianic complex, bane of Zanu-PF*, The Herald, 09 October 2010, See Appendix 7

³⁶ Cf. The New York Times, *Zimbabwe Aide Affirms Plan for One-Party State*, 19 August 1990

³⁷ Cf. E M Sibanda, *A Political History of Insurgency in Southern Rhodesia*, Asmara: Africa World Press, 2005, 241

line with his one-party state project. He wanted ultimate dominance in national politics. Mugabe's displeasure with other political parties led to the lamentable ethnic overtones and the repression of the minority Ndebele people through the dawning of the *Gukurahundi*³⁸ atrocities.³⁹ It was truly a time of madness. Surprisingly people did not see the manifestation of violence in the new government; in fact what they saw in Mugabe was a forgiving and loving messiah. And the media was suspect in harnessing the thinking of the people on Mugabe and his government.⁴⁰ People were fed with propaganda and in some remote areas there was media blackout on what was happening in Matebeleland. Critics note that, the media propaganda distorted reality and created a national messianic image of President Mugabe. The media in the 1980s had moved from being a 'civic appendage of the ruling white fraction' into an equally dominated and controlled arm of ZANU-PF.⁴¹ The massacre in Matebeleland only stopped with the signing of the 1987 unity pact between the two parties (PF-ZAPU and PF-ZANU) which set the stage for a *de facto* one-party state which lasted until the 2000 parliamentary elections that brought the MDC on the spotlight.⁴²

³⁸ The term '*Gukurahundi*' is a Shona name for 'sweeping away of rubbish' as done by 'the early rain that washes away the chaff before the spring rains'. This was the term chosen to describe a military operation against the dissidents in Matebeleland though it mostly affected the civilian population. President Mugabe accused PF-ZAPU of plotting a military coup to overthrow his government. Techniques were employed calculated to maximize terror, pain, forced hunger, grief and humiliation. There were: civilian murders, civilian rapes, civilian torture and the destruction of civilian property. 20 000-30 000 people are estimated to have died, Cf. P Bond and M Manyanya, *Zimbabwe's Plunge: Exhausted Nationalism, Neoliberalism and the Search for Social Justice*, Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 2002, 25

³⁹ Cf. P Bond and M Manyanya, *Zimbabwe's Plunge: Exhausted Nationalism, Neoliberalism and the Search for Social Justice*, 25

⁴⁰ Cf. J Zaffiro, *Media and Democracy in Zimbabwe, 1931-2002*, Colorado Springs: International Academic Publishers, 2002, 140

⁴¹ Cf. R Saunders, "*Information in the Interregnum: The Press, State and Civil Society in Struggles for Hegemony, Zimbabwe 1980-1990*", Ottawa: Carleton University, 1991, 112; See also, J Moyo, "*State Politics and Social Domination*", *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, Volume 30, Number 2, 329

⁴² Cf. M Zamponi, *From Social Justice to Neo-Liberalism, to Authoritarian Nationalism: Where is the Zimbabwe State Going? Zimbabwe-The Political Economy of Decline*, Nordiska Africainstitutet Discussion Paper 27, 2004, 27-43

The absence of a formidable political party and organizations to challenge Mugabe's rule contributed to the construction of hegemony in Zimbabwe that ignored Mugabe's abuse of power to shore up his support. Therefore, ZANU-PF praise-singers can be interpreted in relation to this one-party state ideology born out of the notion of Mugabe as a 'father' figure. As long as Mugabe is still there, there is no need to talk of replacement as there can be 'no two fathers let alone two messiahs'. The one-party mentality has continued to be addictive and toxic in the Zimbabwe religio-political public sphere where violence is meted out against dissent. The concept of power is that it cannot be divided or shared.⁴³ ZANU-PF supporters and officials take Mugabe for a messiah whose authority should not be politically challenged at whatever cost. One deputy minister described the relationship between Mugabe, citizens, party and state as being like the Holy Trinity: 'the people are God the Father, the Government is God the Son and Mugabe leading ZANU-PF is the Holy Spirit'.⁴⁴ In another incident, Mugabe is quoted saying 'We are one state, with one society and one nation, one party, and one leader'.⁴⁵ The agenda is an attempt to co-opt and convert everyone into ZANU-PF. As if to confirm Mugabe as the only life-time leader, S R Dorman noted that:

The streets of Salisbury (Harare) elevated the heroes of the pioneer column; later their new names are mostly those of dead ZANU heroes of the liberation war. No living Zimbabweans have been so honoured with the notable exception of Mugabe whose name was given to roads throughout the country.⁴⁶

It is the same in the modern Zimbabwe where President Mugabe is the only chancellor of all universities and his photograph is hung on the walls of every government office emulating the style of communist personality cults and rulers' cults of ancient Roman Emperors who had

⁴³ Cf. M Schatzberg, *The Political Economy of Zimbabwe*, New York: Praeger, 1984, 449; See also, Tekere Says 'Unite to Oust Mugabe', *Newsday*, 04 October 2010, See Appendix 1

⁴⁴ Cf. "Unity is prosperity, says Minister", *Herald*, 18 October 1982, 1

⁴⁵ Cf. "No one party state, yet, Mugabe pledges", *Herald*, 5 August 1982, 1

⁴⁶ Dorman, *Inclusion and Exclusion: NGOs and Politics in Zimbabwe*, 2001

their portraits put on coins. The immanence of Mugabe is felt in all parts of the country.

The Roots to Mugabe's 'Messiahship'

Besides the above pointers raised in relation to Mugabology, the understanding of Mugabe as 'messiah' also relates to the colonial deprivation of the majority of Zimbabweans. The post-colonial interpretation, theorisation, and the key contours that contribute to Mugabe's messiahship in relation to feeding become vital in understanding the mode of politics in Zimbabwe. A Mbembe rightly argues that, "the post colony is constituted by temporalities and the conflation of the 'before' and an 'after' colonialism into a single 'time of entanglement'".⁴⁷ The pre-independent contours are then important when related to the post-independence imageries of Mugabe as the founder of the Zimbabwe nation, fearless liberator of the oppressed masses, great leader and the darling of the Zimbabwean masses. President Mugabe is presented as having sacrificed more than any other revolutionary figures. The roles and contributions of Joshua Nkomo and Ndabaningi Sithole in the liberation of Zimbabwe are either sidelined or belittled. In fact the other revolutionary leaders were portrayed as having played the John the Baptist role of preparing for Jesus' coming.

In some cases, the colonial experience of Zimbabweans was likened to the Israelites' experience in Egypt and the independence era to the Israelites' redemptive experience from the slavery of Egypt. Mugabe emerged as the 'new Moses' in availing food to the hungry masses. After the war, there was an urgent need for reconstruction as a result mass population displacement and collapse of peasant production.⁴⁸ The first step that Mugabe realised as needing his attention was the plight of peasants who needed to be fed, educated and be assured of good healthy.⁴⁹ At independence, the new government was faced with

⁴⁷ Cf. A Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, London: University of California Press, 2001, 16

⁴⁸ Cf. T Lebert, *An Introduction to Land and Agrarian Reform in Zimbabwe*. [http://www.foodfirst.org/files/files/bookstore/pdf/promised land/2.pdf](http://www.foodfirst.org/files/files/bookstore/pdf/promised%20land/2.pdf), Accessed On 18 March 2010

⁴⁹ Cf. Moyo, *Theological Perspectives on Development in Zimbabwe*, 377

millions of the poor, hungry and landless majority. Mugabe realised the importance of feeding people considering that, the problem of ‘hunger’ was one of the contributory factors to the support that liberation fighters got and the hunger led to the downfall of the settler regime and their political economy in Zimbabwe.⁵⁰ Feeding of the masses was an important pillar of legitimacy for ancient kingship and played an important role in Mugabology. The socialist programmes that were carried out by Mugabe succeeded as a result of the many funds that were poured by NGOs into the system to help rebuilt the country. Religious, civic and political institutions had a common aim to move the nation forward through welfare funding. The welfare indicators targeted the education, healthy and agriculture sectors. People had better access to services than in the past. The unequal legal and social status of women was addressed. In the first decade of independence, the Zimbabwean government made political good on a lot of its promises. Most of the service provisions were against poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, disease, malnutrition and under-nutrition. Diet and nutrition were areas that had been deliberately neglected in Rhodesian colonial society.⁵¹ So the government driven improvements in basic services and support led to dramatic improvements in social welfare indicators.⁵² As a result of the positive developments in education, healthy, and agriculture, Mugabe became a household messiah.

Religious discourses on Mugabology made a comparison between the ‘situation then’ under the colonial era and the ‘situation now’ under Mugabe. The ‘situation then’ as characterised by darkness, evilness, disorder, suffering, oppression, hunger, diseases, injustice, ignorance and servitude. The ‘situation now’ under the leadership of Mugabe as full of light, liberty, abundance of food, good healthy, justice, knowledge, righteous leadership, sovereign ownership of resources, freedoms (mental, economical, social, civil and political), order and

⁵⁰ Cf. T D Shopo, *The Political Economy of Hunger in Zimbabwe*, Harare: Zimbabwe Institute of Development Studies, 1985, 60

⁵¹ Cf. Smith and Simpson, *Mugabe*, 59

⁵² Cf. World Bank, *Zimbabwe: Achieving Shared Growth; Country Economic Memorandum*, Volumes I and II, Washington, D.C: The World Bank, 1995, 41

prosperity by Zimbabweans. It is also in the 1980s that, average real incomes and food subsidies were introduced. The poor peasants could identify their poverty and hunger with Mugabe such that in his struggles to make education, healthy and food accessible; they saw it as their struggle thereby taking Mugabe for a real messiah who incarnated in their lives and solving problems of hunger, ignorance and disease.

It is in the light of hunger, that feeding in the early 1980s was made manifest in schools, colleges and universities where students got free ration of food. The elderly were also given monthly food rations and monetary allowances. There was earnest investment in health, education and water development.⁵³ For M Mbeki, this could have been possible because:

In those years political elites were relatively small and were still very close to the masses that had supported them in the struggle against colonialism. So the political elites tried to make a great deal of effort to grow their respective countries' economies and to distribute the benefits of growth to their peoples through investment in social and physical infrastructure.⁵⁴

M Meredith contrasts Mbeki's view by arguing that:

Despite the endless pronouncements about Mugabe's commitment to transforming Zimbabwe into a socialist society, he never made any move towards socialist ideals. The rewards of independence were predominantly to members of the elite who displayed loyalty to Mugabe and ZANU-PF's leadership and not to the generality of the people in Zimbabwe. As from independence, Mugabe developed a caste system that leaves him at the top; making him a cultic leader where loyalists shower him with (messianic) praises in order for them to get pieces of the cake.⁵⁵

Few people can dispute M Meredith's argument that, a personality cult was indeed developed around Mugabe. However, that Mugabe engaged in welfarist policies cannot be disputed as people witnessed for the first

⁵³ Cf. J Tagwireyi and T Greiner, *Nutrition in Zimbabwe Update*, World Bank: Washington D C, 1994, 43

⁵⁴ Mbeki, *Architects of Poverty*, 4

⁵⁵ M Meredith, *Our Votes, Our Guns: Robert Mugabe and the Tragedy of Zimbabwe*, New York: Public Affairs, 2002, 78

time: health centres (hospitals, clinics), schools, feeding schemes, building of dams and dipping tanks in the peripheral rural areas formerly shunned by the colonial government. People did not pay anything to use such facilities.

For M Meredith to argue that Mugabe never engaged in socialism is a display of denial or ignorance. It is a concerted effort to take everything away from Mugabe's policies and his earliest achievements amongst the poor. Meredith's perspective will make it become difficult to understand why Mugabology has managed to create faithful followers amongst the rich and poor. It is on record that, health care and food were made free to the majority of the rural populace. Mugabe and ZANU-PF use that as historical memory that testifies about what Mugabe is capable of doing for the poor and hungry. Low earners were also catered for.⁵⁶ Mugabe became the bread winner of the underprivileged and made health affordable for the poor. Mugabe's option for socialism in fact underscored the viewpoint that former Rhodesian state was a form of racial capitalism that nationally oppressed the blacks.⁵⁷ As the former era was characterised by darkness, Mugabe became the agent of life, freedom and hope in the face of poverty, hunger, bondage, ignorance and despondence. In M Auret's words, 'it seemed clear that Mugabe was committed to a brand of socialism that was meant to benefit the poor and this did not contradict the Church's Social Teaching'.⁵⁸ Mugabe was also aware about the important role that traditional Churches played in education, healthy and feeding of the hungry. He called upon Churches to join hands with his government in national development and a number of church-related NGOs like Christian Care and World Vision, helped in feeding people. It was a defining moment of Mugabology and the feeding topic considering that people were just coming from a brutal war where a lot of the people had failed to harvest anything from their fields and were hungry.

⁵⁶ Cf. A Nyanguru and M Peil, *Zimbabwe Since Independence: A People's Assessment*, Journal of African Affairs, 1991, Volume 90, 607-620

⁵⁷ Cf. M Lapsley, *Neutrality and Co-Option?, Anglican Church and State from 1964 until the Independence of Zimbabwe*, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1986, 75

⁵⁸ Cf. Auret, *From Liberator to Dictator*, 70

The new ZANU-PF government espoused the policy of Socialism which it hoped would help address the economic injustice of the yesteryears.⁵⁹ As a result of the influence from socialist teachings, Mugabe disapproved of the 'bourgeois' tendencies of the elite and drew up a 'leadership code'⁶⁰ in 1984 which was intended to apply to all senior personnel in the upper echelons of the government and the ZANU-PF party. The leadership code resonated well with Jesus' message on the Kingdom of God that 'He who has two coats let him share with him who has none, and he who has food let him do likewise' (Lk 3:11). The focus by Mugabe was on selfless leaders and this earned him a lot of respect amongst the poor. People felt some sincerity meant to combat poverty and hunger against the primitive accumulation of wealth. Unfortunately the leadership code was never pragmatically followed but remained admirably theoretical and distant.

The other factor to the positive perspective to Mugabe's early years of independence was the 1980-81 improvements in the economy with no less than 14 percent and a Gross Domestic Product of 27 percent. The improvement was possible because it was based on the strength of the lifting of sanctions, stockpiles and the 1980/81 bumper harvest.⁶¹ This enabled Mugabe to engage in socialistic programmes, increasing the access to food, land, health and education to low income groups. It was observed by one merchant bank economist that, it was the same bumper period that Mugabe tried to boost his messianic image of the feeding providence when peasant farmers were encouraged to sell all their whole grain to the GMB and bought back their milled grain requirements at a much lower price.⁶² The cheap food policy pursued by Mugabe' government made subsidies on staples such as beef, maize meal, milk and bread. Populist policies targeted the poor peasant producers of maize and proved more economical for them to sell their

⁵⁹ Cf. Meredith, *Our Votes, Our Guns*, 24

⁶⁰ The leadership code prohibited ZANU-PF officials from receiving more than one salary or income from rented properties and from owning more than fifty acres of agricultural land and restricted their ownership of business, Cf. Shopo, *The Political Economy of Hunger in Zimbabwe*, 80

⁶¹ Cf. Shopo, *The Political Economy of Hunger in Zimbabwe*, 62

⁶² Cf. Shopo, *The Political Economy of Hunger in Zimbabwe*, 75

maize to the GMB and then buy milled maize through retail and other outlets at subsidized prices, something the people had not experienced in their lives.⁶³ The Jesus episode of feeding the masses as John 6 was viewed as manifesting in Mugabe's policies. The state of poverty, disease and hunger became primary in their view of life. Most of the peasants were very excited and showered Mugabe with honorific titles but ignorant of the economical consequences of such benevolent practices in the long term. However, the first phase from 1980 to 1982 was accompanied by an economic boom and the twin phenomena of the redistributivist policies of food and land.⁶⁴ The distribution of food in times of drought and famine made Mugabe to become a darling of the majority of people who stayed in the reserves.

Peasant farmers for the first time in the 1980s were assured of a reasonable price for their crops, providing easier access to markets grain depots were created in rural areas for the first time and there was an increased access to credit and inputs. A lot of support went to small-scale black farmers through the Agricultural Extension Services or Extensive education to improve their farming methods of cash crops: cotton, coffee, tobacco that was previously the preserve of whites. The grain output from the communal farmers trebled during the 1980s.⁶⁵ The period from 1980-1990 was characterised by economic growth, unity and sizeable peace in most parts of the country. The socialist policies that Mugabe implemented were likened to the Early Church concept of communalism. This led the admirers of Mugabe to argue that Mugabology fostered equality, sisterhood and brotherhood in Zimbabwe.

The 1980s Socialist Policies of Mugabe and the Early Church's Teachings

Mugabe believed in socialism and regarded Christianity as a socialist religion and wanted Zimbabwe to be guided by religious socialism. He

⁶³ Cf. R Gaidzanwa, *Drought and Food Crisis*, in P Lawrence (eds), *World Recession and the Food Crisis in Africa*, London: James Currey Ltd, 1986, 251

⁶⁴ Cf. P Gibbon (ed), *Structural Adjustment and the working poor in Zimbabwe: Studies on Labour, Women Informal Sector Workers and Health*, Sweden: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 1995, 7

⁶⁵ Cf. Tagwireyi and Greiner, *Nutrition in Zimbabwe*, 56

took it upon his shoulders to become an apostle of socialism in Zimbabwe. When Mugabe was addressing the CCJP, he pointed out that:

If Christianity's main criticism of socialism or communism is that it is too much of materialism and very little of God, my retort is: Give it a God, the God of socialism, but please never the God of capitalism! In my view, true Christians should feel more at home in a socialist environment than in a capitalist one.⁶⁶

A lot of people found in Mugabe's socialist message a religious thread interwoven in it where religious and the socio-economic cannot be separated.⁶⁷ Socialism was viewed as the only force of good to reverse the evil level of inequality and continuation of the two nations in one Zimbabwe. It is the same context of socialist policies which his followers and apologists eulogized Mugabe as the 'other son of God' or 'messiah' send by God to serve Zimbabweans.

Mugabe's socialist ideology had four concepts: reconciliation rather than class struggle, Christian practice rather than militant atheism, limited private enterprise rather than strict anti-capitalism and the continuation of the tradition of the Chiefs' *Zunde raMambo* in the rural areas rather than their immediate abolition.⁶⁸ It was the belief by Mugabe that, his socialist policies was a continuation of the tradition of the chiefs as well as Christianity. Mugabe had this to say:

As a party we stand by the socialist ideology deriving, to an extent, from Marxism and Leninism. At the same time we are not governed by those principles alone. We also have our African tradition, and the principles that we have adopted under the influence of Christianity, while we were occupied by the West. It is these moral principles on which we would like to found our society.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ R H Randolph, *Dawn in Zimbabwe: The Catholic Church in the New Order*, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1985, 77

⁶⁷ Cf. P Gifford, *The Role of the President: The Theology of Canaan S Banana*, in C Hallencreutz and A Moyo, *Church and State*, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1988, 414

⁶⁸ Cf. Randolph, *Dawn in Zimbabwe*, 69

⁶⁹ Randolph, *Dawn in Zimbabwe*, 74

It was a fight against the environment of institutionalised poverty and hunger that benefited the elite. This was echoed by the Zimbabwe's first black president, C Banana, who said that:

The Government is committed to the total elimination of all forms of social inequalities, and to the creation of a system based on social justice and the recognition of the right of equality among all citizens. The Government is determined to create a new humanism which gives a central place to man, ensuring his welfare, happiness and independence. The early Church knew a great deal about community, their word, *koinonia*, describes the highest form of community known to us. It was fellowship of equality, (sisterhood) and brotherhood which expressed itself in the sharing of goods and in common life. This does not negate but confirms the Christian ethic. As the Acts of the Apostles clearly state: "All whose faith had drawn them together held everything in common: they would sell their property and possessions and make a general distribution as the need of each required" (Acts 4: 44-45).⁷⁰

Christianity and Socialism were regarded as sharing many concepts that were common in Mugabology, Jesus and the Early Church's teachings on helping the poor.

The kingdom of God was regarded as being realized in the socialist programmes of Mugabe, making him a messiah send by God.⁷¹ Moven Mahachi adds that:

I always wonder whether if Christ had lived up to today. We could have known him as the richest man on earth. The answer is definitely No! Christ was a commoner who preached, and was devoted to, love and sharing. He once said 'If you have two coats give thy neighbour the other'. The Government of President Mugabe is saying 'the wealth of Zimbabwe should be shared equally and the Church is called upon to transform from its old colonial capitalist institution by carrying out its mission development task in relieving the problems of mankind'.⁷²

Mugabology was taken as going to the roots of Jesus' message in order to serve both the spiritual and material needs of the people. For Moven

⁷⁰ Randolph, *Dawn in Zimbabwe*, 76

⁷¹ Cf. C S Banana, *Theology of the Promise: The Dynamics of Self-Reliance*, Harare: College Press, 1982, 116

⁷² Randolph, *Dawn in Zimbabwe*, 77

Mahachi, the policies by Mugabe went in tandem with the message of the Church on sharing. At first the government's socialist policies targeted the poor masses. However, it is clear that with time, it was not the kind of sharing that benefited the poor but the political elite.

However, Simon Muzenda (former vice president of Zimbabwe) still regarded Mugabe's policies as liberative and called the Church to help the government by saying:

To free people from slavery of sin, slavery of ignorance, slavery of hunger, slavery of ill education.....My Government sees no fundamental difference between Christian teaching and Zimbabwean socialism as long as we do not confuse Western culture with Christianity. Zimbabwe socialism's primary consideration is to raise the standard of living of the people, systematically to improve the conditions of the peasants, the proletariat. The Bible especially Christ is eloquent on behalf of the poor and the helpless of the world which is also the focus and attention of Mugabe and that of Zimbabwean socialism.⁷³

The stance by most of the ZANU-PF members in general and Mugabe in particular was that, the Zimbabwean Church had failed to stand for the cause of the majority of Zimbabweans, a thing that was now being advocated by Mugabe.

According to R H Randolph, a great deal of what Mugabe had to say in relation to helping the disempowered poor came straight out of the pages of Vatican II, especially from *Gaudium et Spes/Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the modern world* which was promulgated by Pope Paul VI in December 1965. Much of the content in Mugabe's socialism is unexceptionable though Mugabe attributes to Karl Marx what could be better be attributed to Christ.⁷⁴ The Vatican II council in its preface and introductory wordings stated that:

Never has the human race enjoyed such an abundance of wealth, resources and economic power, and yet a huge proportion of the world citizens are still tormented by hunger and poverty, while countless numbers suffer from total illiteracy. Never before has man had so keen an understanding of freedom, yet at the same time new forms of social and psy-

⁷³ Randolph, *Dawn in Zimbabwe*, 78

⁷⁴ Cf. Randolph, *Dawn in Zimbabwe*, 86

chological slavery make their appearance.....As a result many persons are aggressively demanding those benefits of which with vivid awareness they judge themselves to be deprived either through injustice or unequal distribution.⁷⁵

Randolph is free to make such allegations considering that Mugabe is a Catholic devout but Mugabe's focus on educating the illiterate, making healthy facilities and food accessible to the poor is a virtue advocated by the global Church. It was the ultimate mission of the Church:

The mission of the Church which is the mission of Christ is a redemptive mission which seeks to remove the causes of abject poverty a common sight among the majority of Zimbabwean citizens. God did not ordain that prosperity shall be a preserve of the chosen few but that all his children live by mutual sharing and that none shall be prejudiced.⁷⁶

The socialist policies were a reverse of colonial era that benefited the few at the expense of the majority. The policies were redemptive and godly in that the services now catered for the majority. The post-independence changes convinced the people that though the goals seemed utopian in nature they were going to be achieved.

The fruits of the socialist policies in the first years of independence led Makuzwa of the Methodist Church to say that:

We have a lot to thank God here in Zimbabwe. I believe the government of Mugabe is human and godly. This is clearly illustrated by the education policy that every child may learn if he/she wishes. Better health is encouraged for all even if we are short of doctors and drugs. Building of health centres and clinics is being done, resettling people who are landless, giving food to the hungry, building roads all over the country.⁷⁷

There was massive improvement in the education, healthy and agricultural sectors. Mugabe's government introduced free primary education on 1 September 1980 and primary schools tuition fees were abolished. Secondary school education was made inexpensive. The educational po-

⁷⁵ *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World Gaudium et Spes*, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vatii_cons_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html, Accessed Online, 28 October 2009

⁷⁶ Banana, *Theology of the Promise: The Dynamics of Self-Reliance*, 79

⁷⁷ C S Banana, *Theology of the Promise: The Dynamics of Self-Reliance*, 282

licing system was socialist as it emphasized on egalitarian and unitarianism hence the philosophy of ‘education with production’ where the emphasis was now on massive education of people.⁷⁸ This led to the increase of children who were now enrolled in primary schools from 42 percent in 1980 to 85 percent in 1992. For those who were able to gain access to the University of Zimbabwe, there were also full bursaries. So there was an incredible expansion of education.

The Government took the payment of the running costs of mission hospitals, clinics which included salaries, drugs, maintenance and training of medical personnel. The period 1981-1984 witnessed the government building hundreds of health centres in areas that had been neglected for decades.⁷⁹ With these practical achievements, political songs and speeches depicted Mugabe as the ‘awaited liberator’ of Zimbabwe. And the majority of the people shook their heads in agreement. P Muparutsa composed the song entitled *President Mugabe*, celebrating Mugabe as the African liberator who was the backbone of the survival of Zimbabweans from hunger. The song went as follows:

Ishe komborerai President Mugabe ndiye musimbotti wedu	Lord bless President Mugabe, our sustainer in life
Chivheneko chedu	Our light
Vadzimu komborerai	Our ancestors bless him
Rimwe zuva vachasunungura Africa yose ⁸⁰	One day he will save Africa

The public media was at the forefront in conscientising people about the gratis of Mugabology in the area of education, health and nutritional feeding. Mugabe became an uncontested leader of Zimbabwe. Let us turn to the actual feeding of the masses by Mugabe.

⁷⁸ Cf. Randolph, *Dawn in Zimbabwe*, 53

⁷⁹ Cf. Randolph, *Dawn in Zimbabwe*, 54

⁸⁰ P Muparutsa, *Album*, 12.Zim.457

Mugabology and the Structural Giving of Food

The Supplementary Feeding Scheme Programme of 1982 was focused on improved malnutrition and health. This was a practical form of feeding that mostly helped people in rural areas. According to D Werner and D Saunders, feeding programmes and chronic food problems in Zimbabwe have a background in under nutrition and poor health caused by the colonial historical inequalities in land tenure and income distribution that existed for several years.⁸¹ Mugabe had many people to feed and this created a platform for the messiahship that was proclaimed on him.

The Supplementary Feeding Programme and Free Distribution of Food

Food was freely given like the biblical manna by Moses (Ex.16) and the free distribution of bread by Jesus (Jonn.6). The Supplementary Feeding Programme was introduced as a result of the surveys that had been carried out after independence in 1980. According to the findings from OXFAM, 30 percent of children aged less than 5 years were underweight and had a high prevalence of severe under nutrition. It is always the case that, the Supplementary Feeding Scheme benefited mostly disadvantaged groups of society: young children and women of child-bearing years.⁸² However, the programme ended up including the elderly and able-bodied people in rural areas. The feeding programme managed to substantially reduce stunting in most of the areas where it was introduced.

The Supplementary Feeding Programme was evaluated and it was found out that children attending the program put on weight at twice the rate of other children. Children who had attended 30 or more meals gained weight at three times the rate of better nourished children

⁸¹ Cf. D Werner and D Saunders, *Zimbabwe's National Children's Supplementary Feeding Program*, http://www.politicsofhealth.org/main/zimbabwes_national_childrens_supplementary_feeding_program, 03 November 2009

⁸² Cf. H S Dashwood, *Zimbabwe: The Political Economy of Transformation*, London: University of Toronto Press, 2000, 45

who had not participated in the program.⁸³ The infant mortality rate was cut by half, that is, from 110 to 53 per 1000 hence an astonishing achievement in less than a decade from independence. As an achievement, the feeding programs partially helped to offset the effects of droughts, recession and stabilization policies.⁸⁴ As a result of this feeding programme, the prevalence of children under-nourished and child mortality markedly declined. Life expectancy increased from 55 percent to 59 percent.⁸⁵ The other development was that, many hospitals through the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare started providing free meals for patients, a thing which was not done before independence. The Zimbabwe national feeding points became an easy infrastructure during the severe times of hunger as the government easily revived and distributed the food. Mugabe's efforts created a hopeful society in which the weak and hungry 'had abundant life' as in John 10:10.

The free food distribution for people without access to cash and other entitlements became their only food intake.⁸⁶ It is claimed that, 50 percent of the surveyed households were receiving free maize in 1982-4 and the size of the monthly food rations was officially 20 kg of maize per head. In some cases, the feeding offered a free daily meal (sadza) based on maize, beans, round nuts and oil which provided almost half of the daily energy requirement of one-to-three-year-olds. Estimates of around 2 to 3 million people were fed in rural areas at the peak of the programme, as against a total rural population of 5, 7 million in 1982.⁸⁷ The feeding scheme targeted the poor and weakest of society in terms of access to food. It was a national policy where provincial committees of

⁸³ Cf. D Werner and D Saunders, *Zimbabwe's National Children's Supplementary Feeding Program*, http://www.politicsofhealth.org/main/zimbabwes_national_childrens_supplementary_feeding_program, Accessed Online, 03 November 2009

⁸⁴ Cf. *Mozambique: UNICEF to launch Supplementary Feeding Scheme*, http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/africa/ticad2/list98/health/1_2_53.html, Accessed Online, 23 March 2011

⁸⁵ Cf. Jamali, *Economic and Social Conditions in Independent Zimbabwe*, 6

⁸⁶ Cf. R Leys, 'Drought and Drought Relief in Southern Zimbabwe' in P Lawrence (eds), *World Recession and Food Crisis in Africa*, London: James Currey, 1986, 270

⁸⁷ Cf. Government of Zimbabwe, 'Development Policies and Programmes for Food and Nutrition in Zimbabwe', Harare: Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, 1983, 21

health workers, school teachers, community development workers were set up to address the issue of hunger and feeding of the needy. By then, the notable feature of ZANU-PF was its wide and largely rural support base which had been inherited from the independence struggle. As in most cases, the majority of people in rural areas are unemployed with virtually no cash income at all.⁸⁸ The provision of free food made peasants to relate and understand the feeding miracles of Jesus (Jn.6) according to their context of poverty and hunger. When Mugabe was religiously attributed as the 'new Moses' or the 'Son of God', it's something that the majority of peasants generously acknowledged. The titular religious attributes were tied to their liberation from not only colonialism but hunger and diseases. Government food relief was their only source of hope to survive the next day. The demons of hunger, poverty, illiteracy and disease were beginning to wear off.

Poverty is to a great extent to blame for the hunger that is found in Zimbabwean rural areas. Rural poverty leads peasants fail to buy inputs for the planting season making them become perennial seekers of food aid. P Raikes argues that, people die of starvation, or go hungry in Africa, not because there is no food in their country but because they cannot afford it and have no other means of access. This explains that, much larger numbers go hungry most of the time without any physical food shortage at all.⁸⁹ In such a context, the feeding programmes after independence paid dividends on the messianic popularity of Mugabe and it formed a clear link to his legitimacy as the bread winner who could easily be likened to ancient kings. Mugabe in the eyes of peasants was also acting in solidarity with what Jesus did in combating hunger, poverty, disease, death, oppression, injustice and ignorance. Jesus is quoted in Luke 4:18-19 saying that:

He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.

⁸⁸ Cf. Leys, *Drought and Drought relief in Southern Zimbabwe*, 259

⁸⁹ Cf. P Raikes, *Modernising Hunger: Famine, Food Surplus and Farm Policy in the EEC and Africa*, London: Colset Pte Ltd, 1988, 1

Mugabe was coming on the bedrock of a sizable population residing in neglected reserves. However, it is important to note that, the drought relief was a national programme that was also financed by the World Food Organisations, NGOs and civic organisations though all the honour was given to Mugabe as the sole donor of food. These programs helped the government to build political mobilization tactics that made Mugabe become the source of food and life. Besides the challenges of poverty, there have been perennial droughts in most parts of the country.

Mugabe as the donor of Cattle and Food

The major risk facing rural households to date is that of drought. Zimbabwe experienced four major droughts (in 1982-84, 1986-87, 1991-1992 and 1994-1995). Many school children in the hard hit provinces were unable to go to school because of hunger. In three of the four droughts, state and NGOs drought relief schemes provided substantial support to help maintain consumption levels of the vulnerable groups of society.⁹⁰ It is known in Zimbabwe that, during times of droughts, people scavenge for food to survive from hunger. People in reserves experience perennial droughts and floods thrice in every five years leading some peasants to eat treated seeds meant for the planting season. Some cannot send their children to school or buy basic food for their families and instead choose to marry off their young girls for a mere bag of maize. It is during such drought years, that Mugabe provided some affected areas with crop packs that contained: seeds, fertilizer and other agricultural items.⁹¹ However, the other part of the action and care was incurred by the non-governmental organisations and churches than the state. Much of the help was in form of food.

Besides drought challenges, it is common in Zimbabwe to find people at different religious gatherings offering prayers related to rains. However, that hope gets dampened by droughts and famine. Some of

⁹⁰ Cf. B Kinsey, *Coping with Drought in Zimbabwe: Survey Evidence on Responses on Rural Households to Risk*, World Development, Vol 26, No1, London: Elsevier Science Ltd, 1998, 89

⁹¹ Cf. J Tagwireyi and T Greiner, *Nutrition in Zimbabwe*, 98

the droughts lead to devastating effects on the national herd and killing effect on the food security of many households. After every drought, farmers have to restock their herds on a number of occasions as happened after the 1982-84 and 1991-92 droughts.⁹² The 1991-92 droughts were in many respects more catastrophic⁹³ than those that preceded and followed it (1994-1995, 1998-1999, 2001-2002). Mugabe chipped in by distributing F1 heifers to a few communal farmers particularly community leaders.⁹⁴ The rest of the people were given the impression that their turn would come when in actual fact it was a political lie. The major propagandistic aim was to convey the image of Mugabe as a multi-faceted donor who benevolently gave rare gifts like cattle to needy subjects. Hordes of people were paraded on TV singing praise songs on the providence of Mugabe. It cannot be denied that the few heifers given to the people was a clear symbol of generosity considering the role that cattle play in the Shona society. However, it appears as if 'rural bias' has long been a reflection of the politics of ZANU-PF on the predominantly rural character of its support base.⁹⁵ Unfortunately, free feeding had a negative impact on the national fiscus and was also not helpful in empowering the people as shown in the GLS.

The GLS was introduced in 1995 after the drought of 1992, 1994-1995. The 1992 drought came at a time when the government had changed its policy to the GLS instead of free food assistance.⁹⁶ The gov-

⁹² Cf. J Dréze, *Famine Prevention in Africa: Some Experiences and Lessons*, in J Dréze, The Economics of Famine, USA: Edward Edgar Publishing House, 1999, 479

⁹³ Cattle population in the communal areas was estimated at around 4, 2 million in 1990 and this constituted 60 percent of the total cattle population in the country with the other 40 percent in the commercial farming areas. This number was greatly reduced as a result of the 1991-92 droughts which caused the death of more than 55 percent of the cattle population of Zimbabwe, Cf. E Sivotwa, H Hamudikuwanda and A Makarau, *Influence of Climate and Weather on Cattle Production: Semi-Arid Communal Areas of Zimbabwe*, Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications, 2003, 1141

⁹⁴ Cf. S Moyo and N Mpfu, *Breed Utilisation Strategies for Sustainable Cattle Production in Dry Areas*, Bulawayo: Department of Research and Specialist Services, Unpublished Paper, 2001; See also, B Mavedzenge, J Mahenehene, F Murimbarimba, I Scoones and W Wolmer, *Changes in the Livestock Sector in Zimbabwe following the land reform: The Case of Masvingo Province*, Unpublished paper, 1 May 2006, 53

⁹⁵ Cf. R Leys, 'Drought and Drought Relief in Southern Zimbabwe' in P Lawrence (eds), *World Recession and Food Crisis in Africa*, London: James Currey, 1986, 270

⁹⁶ Cf. H Stokke, A Suhrke and A Tostensen (eds), *Human Rights in Developing Countries:*

ernment allowed households to gain access to the grain as drought relief, a departure from the previous drought relief approaches based on food.⁹⁷ Under this scheme, the government loaned grain to those in need. The scheme was designed for the able-bodied where the grain was paid in the form of cash or grain when the next harvest was favourable. Most of the people who benefited from this scheme did not pay back as it was abused under the pretext that it assumes that the next harvest will be normal. When peasants were asked about their preference of GLS than the Food for Work Scheme, the GLS provided them with the opportunity to have access to more grain. They did not need to work for it and it allowed them to devote their time to other activities that generated additional income to meet food and non-food expenditures.⁹⁸ The GLS was one amongst the populist policies introduced by President Mugabe in the fight against hunger. The government deliberately did not force people to pay back the loan knowing the political returns and gains that would be harvested. Most of the people deliberately defaulted for the only reason that, it was a government loan.⁹⁹ For some households, it is true that it was difficult to repay the grain loan due to misfortunes with their harvests. On the other hand, some were so reluctant to pay because they argued that, it was the responsibility of Mugabe to assist them with food as their breadwinner.¹⁰⁰ In fact the beneficiaries had correctly interpreted the generosity of Mugabology by taking Mugabe as the bread-donor responsible for filling their stomachs with food. The bread-donor understanding resonates well with the ancient concept of kingship and the feeding of the people.

Year Book 1997, Cambridge: Kluwer Law and Taxation Publishers, 1998, 411; See also, B M Kethusegile, A Kwaramba and B Lopi, *Beyond Inequalities: Women in Southern Africa*, Harare: Cannon Press, 2000, 109

⁹⁷ Cf. *Forum for Food Security in Southern Africa*, <http://www.odi.org.uk/projects/03-food-security-forum/docs/ZimbabweCIPfinal.pdf>, Accessed Online, 05 November 2009

⁹⁸ Cf. M Dekker, *Risk, Resettlement and Relations: Social Security in Rural Zimbabwe*, Amsterdam: Thela Thesis, 2004, 182

⁹⁹ Cf. C Mararike, *Survival Strategies in Rural Zimbabwe*, 127

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Dekker, *Risk, Resettlement and Relations: Social Security in Rural Zimbabwe*, 183

Mugabe and the Inceptional Selective Feeding of the Masses

Even though Mugabe was so popular and loved in the first decade of independence; critics still point to the black spots of Mugabology and feeding of the masses. In Matabeleland provinces where Mugabe's party did not have much support because of ZAPU, the drought relief was exceedingly patchy as a punishment to villagers who were alleged to have cast their votes in favour of ZAPU. Yet the propaganda portrayed the whole country as having been generously fed. Provinces known to be ZANU-PF strongholds were alleged to have received more favourable treatment on food access.¹⁰¹ This was echoed by Joshua Nkomo when he said:

People in Matabeleland rural areas were starving, not because of the drought associated with the areas but because supplies of food have been deliberately cut off and in other cases access to food supplies have been restricted or stopped for political reasons.¹⁰²

President Mugabe's government is alleged to have introduced stringent set of curfew rules in Matabeleland resulting in most stores being closed and all food deliveries banned. The CCJP noted that, the imposed curfew made life difficult for people in Matabeleland to grow and obtain food. Churches and NGOs that helped in the feeding programmes were barred in doing so except in Mashonaland where Mugabe had the support.¹⁰³ Matabeleland is known to be drought prone area and food is sometimes very scarce. It looks like, hunger was used as a weapon of war, coercion and punishment against opponents of President Mugabe.

The imposed curfew was done on the assumption that deprivation of food would whip them into submission. The late vice-president, Joshua Nkomo, claimed that:

This was clearly seen when people were controlled by soldiers to buy food. The soldiers usually demanded proof of loyalty to Mugabe by show-

¹⁰¹ Cf. R Leys, *Drought and Drought relief in Southern Zimbabwe*, 270, See also, 'Mugabe Urges Death for Aiding Dissidents', *The New York Times*, 9 April 1983

¹⁰² J Nkomo, *Nkomo: The Story of My Life*, Harare: SAPES Books Ltd, 2001, 245

¹⁰³ Cf. M Auret, *From Liberator to Dictator*, 86

ing a membership card of the ZANU-PF party card and ZANU-PF T-Shirt with the portrait of Mugabe.¹⁰⁴

The portrait of Mugabe on ZANU-PF party cards, T-Shirts and posters were meant to act as 'ritual political signifiers' to beneficiaries and dissenters who their food donor was. A signifier is a vehicle carrying a particular meaning, for example, political signifiers that act as vehicles that carry and convey a particular meaning.¹⁰⁵ Requests of ZANU-PF political party cards before getting food conveyed an important message of life and death to the hungry supporters of other political parties. The feeding of masses developed some symbolical value in the political and religious discourses about the Mugabe's messiahship. Mugabe was presented on the public sphere as a generous donor, a messiah who graciously made sure that no one died of hunger. It is the context of hunger and feeding that emotions and perspectives are created towards or against Mugabe as messiah and food donor particularly when related to Jesus.

Mugabology and the Food-for Work Programmes

Unlike the other feeding programmes, the food-for work program was designed to feed people as well as to create participation of rural dwellers in the development of the Zimbabwean economy. It was the idea of using drought relief on employment than giving free food.¹⁰⁶ Food for Work was preferred as it helped improve rural infrastructure as well as conscientise people to work for what they eat. The government had realised the perceived dependency of recipients of free food as shown under

¹⁰⁴ J Nkomo, *Nkomo: The Story of My Life*, 246; See-Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe (CCJP), *Breaking the Silence, Building True Peace: A Report on the Disturbances in Matebeleland and Midlands, 1980-1988*, Harare: 1997, 60-61; See also, C J M Zvobgo, *A History of Zimbabwe, 1890-2000 and Postscript, Zimbabwe, 2001-2008*, Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009, 265

¹⁰⁵ Political signifiers include political speeches, political songs, political dresses, portraits and gestures. They had symbolical meanings and ideas located beyond the symbol itself, Cf. S Muyebe and A Muyebe, *The Religious Factor Within the Body of Political Symbolism in Malawi*, 42

¹⁰⁶ Cf. P Webb, *Employment Programs for food security in Rural and Urban Africa: Experiences in Niger and Zimbabwe*, in J Braun, *Employment for Poverty Reduction and Food Security*, Washington D.C: International Food Policy Research Institute, 1995, 180

the GLS.¹⁰⁷ The programme in Zimbabwe has been very successful in improving food security during drought years though still dependent on donor support from Christian Care, World Vision and Care International. The food for work helped a lot in sustaining family lives. It is a trend that school pupils abscond school because of hunger and some young girls engage in prostitution so as to get food.¹⁰⁸ Besides availing food to the people, the programme resulted in schools, dams, rural clinics being built as well as repairing of roads in most of the previously neglected rural districts. In return, villagers received 50 kg of mealie-meal, beans, soya chunks, dried fish or kapenta, 5 litres of cooking oil and bars of soap every month. Instead of just feeding the people, Mugabe was praised for developing the reserves and making them habitable for the poor.

Even though people had to offer their services, the program left Mugabe as the donor of food. The propaganda did not mention international organisations involved in feeding and infrastructural development. It was probably because of the state run GMB that played a leading role in the distribution of the food and in most cases ZANU-PF personnel made the selection of beneficiaries based on partisan grounds.¹⁰⁹ In the end, during times of food shortages, the GMB acted as Mugabe's granary in feeding the people. It is important to note that, the Food-for-Work programme was not warmly received as the generality of the people in Zimbabwe had been used to the generous free food by both government and NGOs. The common complaint was that, there was no difference between the colonial forced labour or *chibharo* in Shona, of which labourers were paid little food to survive the next day and the post-independence food for work programme except for change of words.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Cf. T Takavarasha and A Rukovo, *Zimbabwe: Perspectives on food policy options*, in M Rukuni, G Mudimu and T S Jayne, Food Security Policies in the SADCC Region, Proceedings of the Fifth Annual Conference on Food Security Research in Southern Africa: October 16-18, Harare: University of Zimbabwe, 1989, 63-72

¹⁰⁸ Cf. *Food for Work alleviates hunger in Manicaland*, Newsday, 12 April 2011, See also Appendix 26

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Webb, *Employment Programs for food security in Rural and Urban Africa*, 183

¹¹⁰ Cf. C Barker and S Trussler, *New Theatre Quarterly 62: Volume 16*, Teil 2, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, 152

The complaints exposed the misgivings that people had towards feeding style of Mugabe. In fact Mugabe was taken as an exploiter who manipulated peoples' hunger and poverty to his political hold on power as well as getting conditional loyalty from the hungry masses.

Mugabology and Feeding at Public Celebrations

Besides the explicit and structural forms of feeding programmes outlined above, Mugabology and the feeding topic manifests at Heroes and independence celebrations. It is at such public events that, the ritualistic speeches of Mugabe would be read to the masses and his portrait on posters and T-Shirts are seen in most of the parts of the country.¹¹¹ The visual signifiers of President Mugabe in areas where he was not physically present is an old tradition which was practiced by Roman provincial elites to incorporate the Emperor into the regular lives of the communities through the public celebrations cultivating imperial cultism.¹¹² During the first decade of independence, people were not forced to such events as they would willingly go to celebrate and feast on the donated food. People were beamed on TVs in their thousands feasting on the free food, meat and beer provided to attendants of the celebrations. Songs, prayers, poems and theatrical dramas in praise of Mugabe as the provident leader featured a lot. Most of the poems and songs showered Mugabe with titles like: liberator, messiah, consistent leader, gracious food donor and just ruler. Such occasions when people celebrated and ate, came once a year but were memorable events associated Mugabe's benevolent feeding of the masses.

ESAP and the Problem of Corruption

The honeymoon was over with the introduction of the government's 1991 ESAP. Mugabe introduced ESAP with the help of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund hoping that it would: stimulate domestic and foreign investment, resolve government fiscal deficit and burgeoning unemployment and resolve the low export growth when implemented. The major target was the economic fruit and political sup-

¹¹¹ See Appendix 25

¹¹² Cf. Price, *Rituals and Power*, 48

port in the next elections.¹¹³ On the other note, the Eastern European socialism was dead and the Soviet Union experienced great changes which had dire impact on the Zimbabwe.¹¹⁴ On the domestic front there were constitutional changes that were under discussion to usher in a one party state as raised above but later on failed. As a result of these challenges, Mugabe had no choice except to embrace ESAP to give a leaf of hope to Zimbabweans who were beginning to show lack of interest in his leadership.

In reality ESAP failed miserably when compared to the plight that the generality of the people faced after the five years of its existence. This was divulged by the novelist C Hove on 'Deep Down' that:

There is the smell of the Structural Adjustment Programme in the wind, with its flags swamping those of political independence. It tastes sour from the beginning. Harare's industries operate under the banner of 'die today so as to live tomorrow'.¹¹⁵

ESAP ended up being satirically redubbed 'Eternal Suffering of the African People' or 'Extended Suffering for African People' because it led: to job losses, worsening the national fiscus, growing indebtedness, retrenchments, real value of exports crashed instead of growing, several sectors went to the wall, the cost of living became high as reflected by the bread riots of 1993, 1995 and 1997 which broke out in high density suburbs of Harare.¹¹⁶ Interestingly ESAP did not affect owners of capital (companies and farms) but instead it was the majority poor who were exposed to hunger and hopelessness. The free food and the goodies that people were used to had evaporated as a result of ESAP.

¹¹³ Cf. L M Sachikonye, *Industrial Restructuring and Labour Relations under ESAP in Zimbabwe*, in P Gibbon (eds), *Structural Adjustment and the Working Poor in Zimbabwe*, Sweden: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 1995, 38, See also, P Bond and M Manyanya, *Zimbabwe's Plunge*, 30; J Madeley, *Hungry for trade: How the Poor Pay for Free Trade*, London: Zed Books, 2000, 58

¹¹⁴ Cf. Auret, *From Liberator to Dictator*, 97

¹¹⁵ C Hove, *Shebeen Tales: Messages from Harare*, Harare: Baobab Books, 1994, 71

¹¹⁶ Cf. P Bond, *Uneven Zimbabwe: A Study of Finance, Development and Underdevelopment*, Trenton: Africa World Press, 1998, 380

‘Its now Our Turn to Eat’: The Lifestyle of the Zimbabwean Elite

The ESAP policy demonstrated a shift on the part of Mugabe’s previous pronounced commitment to a socialist ideology which focused a lot on populist free social services of Mugabe. ESAP resulted in the suffering of the populace and a decline in the ruling elite’s previously strong commitment to meeting the welfare needs of the poor. There was an increased growth of poverty. ESAP in fact resulted in the embourgeoisement of the ruling elite where:

Members of the ruling elite began to earnestly enrich themselves and started losing touch with their traditional basis of support. Mugabe and his ruling elite came to increasingly identify a lot with those of the economic elites, most of whom were whites.¹¹⁷

Mugabe’s popularity and that of ZANU-PF as a party started plummeting. The new black elite believed to be close to Mugabe became dirty rich whilst the majority of the people wallowed in poverty. It looked like, it was now their turn to eat at the expense of the majority.

The loyalty of ministers and MPs was no longer to the people who voted them into office but to Mugabe. ZANU-PF officials devised ways of getting the attention and preferment of Mugabe by showering him with messianic titles. For R Ngwenya,

The praises later on had nothing to do with what Mugabe was doing to the populace but just praising him as Mugabe rules by political patronage. Such praises are for selfish gains as they know Mugabe to be a benevolent dictator and it is the only way to climb up.¹¹⁸

Examples have been given of MP, Tony Gara, who likened Mugabe to the ‘second son of God’ and later to be appointed as deputy minister of National Housing. So the Mugabological praises became the only surest way of outrunning other contenders to ministerial posts. The religious attributes on Mugabe by ZANU-PF officials have to be analysed not only in the light of the benevolence of Mugabe to the needy masses but in the light of Mugabe’s diminishing political power. The elite readily adapted

¹¹⁷ Dashwood, *Zimbabwe: The Political Economy of Transformation*, 193

¹¹⁸ Obert Mpoju, *Outshines Mugabe’s Praise-singers*, *The Standard*, 21 November 2010, See also, Appendix 8

to the lifestyle once reserved for privileged whites by enrolling their children in expensive schools, moving into spacious houses, driving nice cars, feasting in classic restaurants and becoming business tycoons through the patronage of Mugabe motivating them to ‘messianise’ Mugabe. The massive primitive accumulation of wealth was symbolic of their disbelief in the socialist ideology as well the ‘leadership code’ formerly preached by Mugabe.¹¹⁹ In 1994, the president of the CFU, P McSporrان claimed that, ‘more than half of Mugabe’s cabinet had become CFU members’.¹²⁰ Some senior officials saw independence as an opportunity to catch up with the whites through the primitive accumulation of wealth.

The elite were the complete antithesis of liberation heroes as enunciated in the leadership code. Messianic and liberation statements, lyrics and songs from the liberation struggle were used to mask from the real poor their acquisitive nature as ‘fat black cats’ that revelled or took great pleasure in their conspicuous consumption of the national cake that was lined with all the goodies like: fertile land, minerals and fat accounts. M Mbeki is right to say that, African nationalism was turned to become a movement of the small, westernised black elite that emerged under colonialism whose fight was clearly that of inclusion in the colonial system so that they could now feast from the spoils of colonialism.¹²¹ Corruption became the order of the day, as evidenced by the famous ‘Willowgate’ affair¹²² and later on the 1997 War Victims Compensation Fund scandal.¹²³ The untimely and costly military intervention in

¹¹⁹ Cf. *Chiyangwa Faces Parliament Probe*, Financial Gazette, 29 April 2010; See also, *ZANU-PF-Officials’ rags-to-riches Story*, The Standard, 04 April 2010, See Appendix 9; *Chombo asked to explain How he acquired vast properties*, <http://www.thezimbabwemail.com/>, 10 October 2010, *Chombo, Wife fight over assets*, The Herald, 05 November 2010, See Appendix 10

¹²⁰ Cf. H S Dashwood, *Zimbabwe: The Political Economy of Transformation*, London: University of Toronto Press, 2000, 98

¹²¹ Cf. M Mbeki, *Architects of Poverty*, 6

¹²² This came to light in 1988 and it involved top ZANU-PF government officials who used their influence to buy trucks and cars from Willowvale (the state-owned vehicle assembly plant) and then selling them on the black market using exorbitant prices

¹²³ The fund was meant to help those who had been injured after participating in the fight for the liberation of Zimbabwe. It was discovered that \$450b had been looted from the fund. The main culprits turned out to be senior officials in the political and military

the Democratic Republic of Congo also had dire consequences on the Zimbabwean economy. It is estimated that the cost of the war for Zimbabwe was US\$3 million per month.¹²⁴ For critics, it was the political elite and the well-connected that benefited from that war. It is also the time when the middle class in Zimbabwe began to be wiped off resulting in the growth of unemployment and the number of people who needed food assistance.

By the late 1990s there were mounting strikes, demonstrations and land occupations on a scale never seen in Zimbabwe. Mugabe's rule was under threat and he needed some magic to retain power. Mugabe granted four billion dollars of unbudgeted gratuities to war veterans. All this was done without consulting the cabinet as per the constitution.¹²⁵ On the other hand, corruption was on the rise: when two housing schemes, that is, the National Housing Fund and the National Housing Guarantee Fund had millions of dollars looted by people well connected to Mugabe.¹²⁶ There were several other corruption scandals reported in the parastatal companies, notably the GMB where Kumbirai Kangai (the former ZANU-PF Minister of Lands and Agriculture) and his permanent secretary were charged of corruption to the tune of Z\$360 million. An-

wings of ZANU-PF. Mugabe set up a judicial commission of enquiry chaired by Justice Godfrey Chidyausiku. The commission revealed that 117 people had benefited from the fund wrongfully and that the crimes were supposed to be prosecuted. The report also revealed that: The then Rural Resources and Water Development Minister Joyce Mujuru (who is now the vice president) received \$389, 000, State Minister Oppah Rusesha/ Muchinguri (now Leader of the Women's League in ZANU-PF) received \$478, 000, and an incredible \$820, 000 went to the brother of Mugabe's wife, Reward Marufu. Cf. The Financial Gazette, 'Major Disorders cited in War Victims' Fund Claims', 31 July 1997. Military officials who received compensation include the commander of the Zimbabwe defence forces, General Vitalis Zvinavashe (\$224, 000), Lieutenant-General Constantine Chiwenga (\$223, 000), Police Commissioner Augustine Chihuri (\$138, 000), and Air-Force Commander Perence Shiri (\$90, 000), Cf. H S Dashwood, *Zimbabwe: The Political Economy of Transformation*, London: University of Toronto Press, 2000, 103

¹²⁴ Cf. A Meldrum, "Zimbabwe loans cut off as leak shows war costs", Mail & Guardian, 7 October 1999, See also, "Zimbabwe's Congo intervention in official figure", Mail & Guardian, 27 October 1999

¹²⁵ Cf. H S Dashwood, *Zimbabwe: The Political Economy of Transformation*, 131

¹²⁶ Cf. Ndaba Nyoni, 'Government's Insatiable Appetite for Luxury Still Sharp', The Financial Gazette, 01 April 1998

other former ZANU-PF minister of Transport, Enos Chikowore, resigned in shame after being charged of misappropriating Z\$9 billion from the National Oil Company of Zimbabwe (NOCZIM). Another parastatal declared itself insolvent after having lost Z\$10 million through internal theft.¹²⁷ Interestingly they were not prosecuted as if to convey a message that commissions are set after every scandal but as soon as the offenders are identified and found guilty, they are graciously pardoned.

By and large, corruption has become a method of wealthy redistribution to all those who fell under the Mugabological patronage and the recipients know how to reciprocate this when facing the masses. 'I am rich because I belong to ZANU-PF and if you want to be rich you must join ZANU-PF' boasted one of President Mugabe's nephews, Philip Chiyangwa, a multi-millionaire businessman.¹²⁸ For the majority of the poor, it looks like the elite are not rich as a result of hardworking but being connected to the patronage network of corruption. The level of corruption is growing unabated resulting in growing resentment towards President Mugabe's leadership. The private media for certain reasons (good or bad) expose those who shower Mugabe as 'messiah' as having corruptively acquired wealth. The participation of ZANU-PF members in wealth accumulation lead critics to argue that, ZANU-PF is not and was not in practice a representative of the interests of the poor. This is despite the public media propaganda that has been heightened on the messiahship of Mugabe and feeding of the masses.

Conclusion

The colonial conditions formed a good foundational basis for Mugabe's popularity. However, the same messianic regalia could have been given to any other leader who would have become the first black prime minister of Zimbabwe. The reign of Mugabe made positive strides in the first phase of independence in uplifting the formerly neglected majority. People were mesmerized by the messianism of their first black prime minister. He was a big man to whom Zimbabwean people had many

¹²⁷ Cf. M Meredith, *Mugabe: Power and Plunder in Zimbabwe*, Oxford: Public Affairs, 2002, 29; See also, M Auret, *From Liberator to Dictator*, 129

¹²⁸ Cf. M Meredith, *Mugabe: Power and Plunder in Zimbabwe*, 17

expectations and people did not want his hands to be tied by any institutions of accountability. Mugabe at first managed to create a paradise that included black Zimbabweans who had been separated as inferior in the broader economy. The white settlers had made themselves very comfortable (with perfect climate, natural resources and rich soil) at the expense of the black majority. Therefore, in the early years of independence (1980-1985), Mugabe was indeed for many Zimbabweans a great liberator or 'messiah' so to speak. Life was beautifully promising for many Zimbabweans. The titles that were given to Mugabe in the first decade of ruling were related to the welfarist policies that bore fruits in education, healthy and agriculture. There was a genuine empowerment of the poor. The feeding programmes that Mugabe implemented soon after independence also made him a likeable messiah to the hungry peasants. However, this is despite the fact that NGOs also provided the basic services to supplement the feeding effort by government. Feeding the hungry masses put Mugabe on the spotlight of generous breadwinners. There was real filling of stomachs with food than propaganda. However, Mugabology had its own black spots like: the *Gukurahundi*, corruptive patronage and the latent patronising feeding. The euphoria on Mugabology and the independence of Zimbabwe waned as a result of ESAP in the early 1990s and the growing corruption fuelled the resentment against him. Feeding with time became erratic, more selective and highly propagandistic in the late 1990s as shall be shown in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3: MUGABOLOGY IN THE PERIOD OF MULTIPLE CRISES

This chapter looks at the changes that took place in the late 1990s to 2008 bringing with it some fundamental changes on the peoples' perspective of Mugabology. It also looks at the messiahship of Mugabe in relation to feeding people with land. The chapter takes note of the changes that took place as a result of the worsening economic, political, social conditions and the international ostracism of Mugabe and Zimbabwe. It interrogates the ZANU-PF ideology of 'victimhood or suffering messiah' and propaganda in their presentation of Mugabe. This chapter looks at Mugabology and the feeding topic during the time of crises. It also looks at the strategies of resistance and interpretative biblical methods developed by people especially victims against the propaganda in Mugabology.

The 1998-2008 Political, Economical and Social Crises

The effects of ESAP provoked the majority of blacks to question their independence and interrogate the bourgeoisie class surrounding Mugabe. By the late 1990s, ESAP had managed to create many enemies for Mugabe.¹ The economic wheels of Zimbabwe had started coming off. The conditions of rising poverty and despair experienced by the majority of the population and increasing repression drove the ZCTU and the NCA and other Civic Organisations to campaign for a change of government. The situation was characterised by prices which were rising to unimaginable figures. Food was scarce such that the WFP estimated that 43 percent of the population were malnourished.² In the changed condi-

¹ Cf. J Moyo, *Voting for Democracy: Electoral Politics in Zimbabwe*, Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications, 1992, 42, See also, J Makumbe and D Campagnon, *Behind the Smokescreen: The Politics of Zimbabwe's 1995 Elections*, Harare: University of Zimbabwe, 2000, 54

² For instance, in 1998 the official price of loaf of bread was about 5 Zimbabwean dollars; in 2003 it went up to 1000 Zimbabwean dollars and in 2008 it was 6, 6 million Zimbabwean dollars. In the majority of cases, bread was only found on the black market costing 15 million Zimbabwean dollars. Zimbabweans experienced broader shortages in all areas of life, ranging from food, water, fuel, medicine and to some extent even a stick of matches to light the fire, Cf. *Zimbabwe's economy lies in ruins*, <http://www.reuters.com/article>, Accessed online, 02 March 2010

tions of the late 1990s and early 2000, sectors like: industry, mining, agriculture, tourism, education and healthy were deteriorating quickly and sections of the NGO community also departed from a co-operation with government to a more confrontational mode.³ The campaign culminated with the formation of the MDC.⁴ The World Health Organisation reported in 2006 that people living in Zimbabwe had one of the lowest life expectancies in the world, for example, the life expectancy of Zimbabwean women had fallen from 57 years to 37 years and for men from 54 years to 34 years.⁵ People developed coping strategies where there was a reduction in the number of meals that people would have once a day. Meat became a luxury relish for many families.

Mugabology in a Crises Environment

Education and healthy went beyond the reach of many people. Many children no longer attended school as their days were spent searching for food.⁶ Those that did make the journey to the classrooms were severely weakened by hunger. People in rural areas survived on wild plants, hunting animals but there was an increased malnourishment. In Masvingo province, thousands of starving villagers abandoned their homes in search of edible wild fruits and roots.⁷ As from 2001, there were annual food imports due to the short supply of cereals and maize. In 2004-2005, the WFP estimated that 3 million people urgently needed food.⁸ In November 2008, the United Nations WFP provided life-saving aid to around 4 million people in Zimbabwe alone.⁹ If help failed to

³ Cf. B Raftopoulos, "The State, NGOs and Democratization" in S Moyo, J Makumbe and B Raftopoulos, *NGOs, the State and Politics in Zimbabwe*, Harare: SAPES, 2000, 23; See also, P Barclay, *Zimbabwe: Years of Hope and Despair*, London: Bloomsbury, 2010, 27-28

⁴ Cf. S Moyo, J Makumbe and B Raftopoulos, *NGOs, the State and Politics in Zimbabwe*, Harare: SAPES Books, 2000, 49

⁵ Cf. D Coltart, *A Decade of Suffering in Zimbabwe: Economic Collapse and Political Repression under Robert Mugabe*, Center for Global Liberty and Prosperity: Development Policy Analysis, Number 5, Accessed online, 25 September 2010

⁶ Cf. *Mat South hit by School Dropouts*, Chronicle, 12 October 2010, See also *Hunger Stalks Matabeleland*, Dailynews, 29 March 2011, See also, Appendix 13

⁷ Cf. E Gara, 'Zimbabwe's Famished Fields', BBC News, 2 May 2002

⁸ Cf. United Nations, *Consolidated Appeal for Zimbabwe*, 2006, 1

⁹ Cf. *Zimbabwe: UN cuts back food aid to millions amid serious funding crisis*,

come, people desperately resorted to picking up grains of maize or rice from the roadside, harvesting of termites and wild fruits (See Appendix 29).

Termites were 'harvested' and wild fruits and tubers eaten in drought periods. However, picking of termites in some cases has nothing to do with hunger or desperation for food but it is a tradition that has always been practiced by the native Zimbabweans since time immemorial where termites are eaten for being nutritious. The collection of wild fruits became one of the strategies adopted against food deficits. Some desperate families in the southern provinces of Zimbabwe married off their under-age daughters to elderly men in return for food.¹⁰ It is also common that, when hunger wrecks havoc in the arid Masvingo province, some desperate starving villagers in Mwenezi (Region V) usually eat baboons.¹¹ The food security situation deteriorated further due to severe drought; hyperinflation, price controls, fuel shortages and economic collapse that was not quantifiable underlying the country's worsening food crisis.¹²

Money became virtually valueless as observed by Dongozi in the Standard paper of March 2006 that:

Citizens now carry large amounts of money as the local currency becomes increasing worthless. Women buying handbags now opt for the bigger variety to enable them to carry several Kilograms of the Zimbabwean dollar now derively referred to as 'stationery'¹³

On 28 January 2008, the reserve Bank of Zimbabwe issued \$1 million, \$5 million and \$10 million bearer cheques to relieve cash shortages but long queues continued at banks.¹⁴ The crisis had even caught up with

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28887&Cr=Zimbabwe&Cr1,> 26 December 2009, See also, USAID, *Zimbabwe-Drought and Complex Emergency*, 31 July, 2007

¹⁰ Cf. C J M Zvobgo, *A History of Zimbabwe*, 354

¹¹ Cf. *Hungry Mwenezi Villagers survive on baboons*, Daily News, 01 October, 2010; *Starving Villagers Trade Daughters for Maize*, Daily News, 11October 2010, See Appendix 1

¹² Cf. C J M Zvobgo, *A History of Zimbabwe*, 324, See also, 'Inflation surges to 11,25 million per cent', The Zimbabwe Times, 20 August 2008

¹³ C Chimhete, "90 % of Workforce Living in Poverty", The Standard, 26 March 2006

¹⁴ Cf. 'Zimbabwe: A Fistful of Millions', The New York Times, 19 January 2008, See also, G

professionals who ended up engaging in multiple part-time jobs to supplement their incomes but failed to sustain their lives. The majority of the poor people visibly lost weight as a result of the deepening hunger. The crisis of hunger and collapse of the economy drove significant numbers of economical and political refugees into neighbouring countries and further afield.¹⁵ Zimbabweans were found in almost all corners of the world in search for a better life and food; a lifestyle that Mugabe was now failing to provide. For some critics like T O Ranger, the successes that Mugabe scored in the first ten years were systematically eroded by the populist policies that Mugabe pursued from 1998 to 2008.¹⁶ The term 'Zimbabwe' became synonymous with hunger, poverty, disease and queuing for basic commodities. The Herald further noted that Zimbabweans were on average 10 times poorer in 1999 than in 1990.¹⁷ The decade-long crises resulted in most of Zimbabweans surviving on food aid. It was in this context that ZANU-PF used the rhetoric of Mugabe as the suffering messiah who was hated by white people and western countries seeking to re-colonize Zimbabwe. The state media (Herald, Chronicle, Sunday Mail and Sunday Times) occasionally carried articles on: slavery, the partition of Africa, colonial exploitation, the liberation struggle and the messianic role of Mugabe in liberating Zimbabwe.¹⁸ The state media invoked hate speech that employed terms that characterized opposition parties and their supporters, white people and Western governments as satanic forces that had already been judged.

The 2001 European and American sanctions (ZIDERA) put against Mugabe and the elite ZANU-PF loyalists further complicated the Zimbabwean politics. ZANU-PF strategists developed an ideology that

Gono, *Press Statement of the Cash Situation and Stabilization Measures*, Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe, <http://www.rbz.co.zw/pdfs/highDenom.pdf>, Accessed Online, 10 October 2010

¹⁵ Cf. M Mbeki, G Mills and F Phaswana, *Zimbabwe Before and After the Elections: A Concerned Assessment*, Johannesburg: Jan Smuts House, 2001, 5. See also, M Auret, *From Liberator to Dictator*, 172

¹⁶ Cf. M Auret, *From Liberator to Dictator*, x

¹⁷ Cf. "Ordinary workers worse off now than 10 years ago as inflation bites", The Herald, 24 May 1999, See also, Appendix 14

¹⁸ Cf. T Ranger, *The Zimbabwean Presidential Election: A Personal Experience*, <http://www.afsaap.org.au/ARAS/ARASVol24-1.pdf>, 6

paraded Mugabe as a victim of imperialism.¹⁹ A partisan and paternalistic approach centred on Mugabe was developed in relation to patriotic history, sovereignty and nationalist ideology. What is factually true is that, the 2001 sanctions contributed to the heightening of hunger and poverty. By 2008, 85 percent of the people were unemployed and people living below the poverty datum line were believed to be around 90 percent, a symbol of an economy that was in state of decomposition.²⁰ As the economy was deteriorating, public disgruntlement and labour militancy intensified in all areas of life, a sign of displeasure with Mugabe's leadership.²¹ The political scene during 2000-2008 was characterised by extreme state sponsored violence and intimidation. Mugabe at one time boasted of having 'degrees in violence'.²² He even wished to be 'tenfold more than Hitler'.²³ It is important to note that, the statement of violence by Mugabe was said against Western nations that labelled Mugabe as the new Hitler. For Mugabe, if the West want to call him Hitler because he is repossessing land from the white commercial farmers and redistributing it to his own people, then he wished to be tenfold more than Hitler. Mugabe portrayed himself as the 'messiah' serving his people through land redistribution. Mugabe was quoted saying "Hitler had one objective: justice for his people, sovereignty for his people, recognition of the independence of his people and their rights over resources. If that is Hitler, then let me be a Hitler tenfold", Even though Mugabe's statement was aimed at the Western nations who were criticizing him for his land redistribution, Mugabe's speech was interpreted in the light of the violence that manifested in the country against the opposition members. S R Dorman argues that, Mugabe's exclusionary politics and violence reflected the diminishing ideological

¹⁹ Cf. 'Khaya Moyo calls European Union ,criminal gang', The Herald, 06 March 2010, See also, Appendix 1

²⁰ Cf. E Tekere, *Tekere: A Lifetime of Struggle*, Harare: SAPES, 2006, 126

²¹ Cf. A Hammar and B Raftopoulos, '*Zimbabwe's Unfinished business: Rethinking land, State and Nation*', in A Hammar, B Raftopoulos and S Jensen (eds), *Zimbabwe's Unfinished Business: Rethinking Land, State, and Nation in the Context of Crisis*, Harare: Weaver Press, 2003, 45

²² Cf. M Meredith, *Mugabe: Power*, 233

²³ Cf. P Thornycroft, '*Hitler* Mugabe launches revenge terror attacks', 26 March 2003, See also, *Mugabe's 'black Hitler' Speech slammed*, Sunday Times, 26 March 2003

and cultural elements of power as well as the diminishing material distribution to feed his constituency.²⁴ The usual food hand outs from government were so erratic that the effects on peasants were blatantly felt during the drought years. The coercive use of violence by ZANU-PF and the rhetoric of Mugabe as the messiah in liberating the country and feeding people were no longer holding.

People were wondering whether their political leadership was concerned about their plight as in the case of Jesus and the hungry masses. Some people went for days without food as most villagers had harvested very little or nothing at all,²⁵ such that, had it not been some NGOs that went their way in feeding the people especially in rural areas, a lot of people would have died of hunger. Yet Mugabe tried to downplay the ferocity of hunger and was once quoted in an interview with The Associated Press saying that his people were ‘very, very happy’ even though aid agencies reported that five million of the population faced famine. He further said that “if hungry Zimbabweans cannot have corn, they should eat potatoes instead. We have heaps of potatoes but people are not potato eaters. They have rice, but they’re not as attracted to that”.²⁶ Even if Zimbabweans had wanted to eat potatoes, most of them could not afford potatoes. In a bid to conceal the density of the crises in the country, there was an attempt to silence the media.

Mugabology and the Strangling of the Media

As the tension against Mugabe and ZANU-PF was growing, the media was strangled and oppressive laws were implemented, for example, AIPPA and POSA, all derived from the colonial LOMA (Law and Order

²⁴ Cf. S R Dorman, *Inclusion and Exclusion: NGOs and Politics in Zimbabwe*, Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor Philosophy in the Department of Politics and International Relations in the Division of Social Studies at the University of Oxford, St Anthony’s College, 2001

²⁵ Cf. Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition, *Zimbabwe: The Humanitarian Crisis Report*, <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Crisis-in-Zimbabwe-Coalition-RegionalOfficeSA/133139420038012>, Accessed Online, 15 August 2010

²⁶ Cf. *Mugabe: Let them eat spuds*, <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/topstories/2005/09/19/mugabe-let-them-eat-spuds-115875-16146980/>, Accessed Online, 28 July 2011; See also, *Gangs pillage potato farms near Harare*, The Mail and Guardian, 17 October 2005

Maintenance Act).²⁷ AIPPA prohibited public statements or behaviour deemed as resulting in people to: hate, ridicule, be hostile to or contemptuous of the person or office of State President. Zimbabwean journalists risked spending 20 years in jail.²⁸ The laws were used by Mugabe to wantonly detain the political opponents on frivolous and dubious allegations. With POSA and AIPPA, it was much safer to abuse the name of God than the name of Mugabe. Any public statements that were regarded as demeaning the person, office and authority of Mugabe were punishable by a one year imprisonment with hard labour. For example, even though Mugabe was known to be more than 85 years old, it outlawed anybody from ever mentioning that Mugabe was an old man. A Chipinge man was sentenced to a year in jail with hard labour for calling Mugabe old.²⁹ J Ndlovu, a street vendor was arrested for saying 'the old man must resign'.³⁰ To talk about the age, health and succession to Mugabe became a taboo subject discussed only under cover of darkness or behind closed doors. The same laws were also put in place by Tiberius's law of treason, *lex maiestatis*. For the opposition politicians, generally the AIPPA and POSA put Mugabe in the category of a divine king whose reign was not to be questioned or criticized for whatever reasons. When linked with the Catholic dogma, Mugabe looked as if he had become an infallible figure like the Pope. POSA and AIPPA in the eyes of a traditionalist left Mugabe more or less like a Shona chief where it was taboo for anyone to assault a traditional leader physically or verbally. However, it is not true that Shona chiefs were not criticised as alleged shown on the role of the 'council of elders'.

²⁷ Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) oversaw the operation of the print and electronic media in Zimbabwe whereas the Public Order and Security Act gave the police the power to monitor all public gatherings, Cf. S Taylor and R Mukundu (eds), *So This is Democracy? State of Media Freedom in Southern Africa 2008*, Annual Publication of the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA), Windhoek: The Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA), 2008, 256

²⁸ Cf. *Zimbabwe: Repressive Media Law (AIPPA) under Review*, <http://www.misa.org/cgibin/viewnews.cgi?category=2&id=1137054440>, Accessed online, 20 May 2011

²⁹ Cf. *Man Jailed for Mugabe Slur*, <http://www.newzimbabwe.com/news3229Man+jail+ed+for+Mugabe+slur/news.aspx>, Accessed Online 20 October 2010, See Appendix 18

³⁰ Cf. T Karimakwenda, *Street Vendor Arrested for "Insulting" Mugabe*, <http://www.swradioafrica.com>, Accessed Online, 23 December 2010

The ZANU-PF government intensified its attacks on the private media and the independent editors were accused of being used by hostile forces in UK, South Africa and the United States plotting the downfall of President Mugabe.³¹ The independent media's crime was that, they presented Mugabe as a brutal leader who had chosen to sacrifice his people to the life of hell from hunger, poverty and wanton imprisonment of political dissidents. There was a clear control of the dissemination of information which resulted in the banning of the independent papers like: the Daily News, the Tribune and the Daily Mirror. It was symbolic of the state stranglehold on the dissemination of information.

The Co-Option of Different Groups into Mugabology

Even though the nation was crises-ridden, religion particularly Christianity continued to thrive well. It was not surprising when Christian leaders like Nobert Kunonga (former Anglican Bishop), Madzibaba Nzira (the late leader of the biggest AIC-Johane Masowe WeChishanu) and Obadiah Musindo (leader of the Destiny of Africa) were co-opted into the propaganda machinery that messianised Mugabe. Academics like Prof Claude Mararike, Dr Tafataona Mahoso, Dr Vimbai Chivaura and Prof Mupeperekwi were also co-opted as propaganda mouthpieces and legitimisers of Mugabe's rule in the face of hunger, poverty and growing unpopularity. Loyalty to the country, Mugabe and ZANU-PF became the only test of patriotism. Church leaders that were not supportive of Mugabe and ZANU-PF were labeled: as foreign sponsored British agents, MDC supporters and sell-outs.³² The labelling theory suspended Zimbabweans' entitlement to hold political opinions different from ZANU-PF. In fact ZANU-PF became a peddler of western supremacy which tends to think that no black person can come up with anything innovatively original other than an influence from some outside forces. Even though President Mugabe have been able to steer the nation and people towards independence, he failed to steer the country

³¹ Cf. "Private Press Editors dismiss government Claims", Daily News, 4 May 1999

³² Cf. F Machingura, *The Judas Iscariot Episode in the Zimbabwean Religio-Political debate of 'selling-out'*, BiAS series, Vol. 7, 2012, 203-231

in the direction that strengthens: true patriotism that is not partisan, nationhood not myopically defined, wholesome peace that encompass everybody (men and women, rich and poor, able-bodied and disabled), the all-inclusive distribution of prosperity that does not exclude citizens on political grounds invariably as the essence of independence and freedom. Therefore for President Mugabe to blame outsiders for every crisis in Zimbabwe was like blaming the blessed Pope for being polygamous let alone regarding polygamy as the only source that spreads HIV and AIDS in the world.

Traditional partners like the mainline Churches that at independence supported the government in education, health, feeding programmes and development were declared unwelcome. According to D Maxwell, African Indigenous and Pentecostal Churches that traditionally had been sidelined in the 1980s in favor of traditional Churches began to get the attention of ZANU-PF.³³ The AICs had at first been sidelined and castigated as being anti-development. The AICs known for their reluctance to immunize children and accept western medication were portrayed as sites of disorder and disease.³⁴ In the 1980s, the Anglican and Catholic hierarchies were relatively entwined with the ZANU state. The trend changed in the late 1990s, when certain Anglican leaders along with the AICs and the Pentecostal movement fervently linked themselves to Mugabe's crusade against homosexuals in Zimbabwe.³⁵ Yet the crises were not about homosexuality but economic and political. Some AICs leaders behaved as campaign managers of Mugabe. In another incident, the *Vapostori* leader, Madzibaba Nzira, encouraged all members of his flock to vote for Mugabe and ZANU-PF. Nzira claimed that 'we were told by the Holy Spirit that this country

³³ Cf. D Maxwell, "Catch the Cockerel before Dawn: Pentecostalism and Politics in Post-Colonial Zimbabwe", *Africa* 70, 2, 2000, 249-277

³⁴ Cf. D Mackay and P Motsi, "Some contemporary trends in Independent Churches in Zimbabwe: the cases of ZCC and AACJM", in Hallencreutz and Moyo, *Church and State*, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1988, 369

³⁵ Cf. "Churches, laymen from Zimbabwe and South Africa speak out", *Sunday Mail*, 20 August 1995, See also, "Demo against homos in city", *Sunday Mail*, 17 September 1995; R M Gunda, *The Bible and Homosexuality in Zimbabwe: A Socio-Historical analysis of the political, cultural and Christian arguments in the homosexual public debate with special reference to the use of the Bible*, Bamberg: University of Bamberg Press, 2010, 17

would be ruled by a black man'.³⁶ However, the association between the government and AICs appeared to be more informal and loose as compared to the association that was between the government and mission-oriented Churches.

When put in retrospect, it was easy for Mugabe to co-opt AICs like: the Johane Masowe and Johane Marange known for their colonial dislike of anything western (education and health). There was a rhetorical marriage of interest as AICs thrived without any help from foreigners and to this day, they are self-governing, self propagating and self-supporting. Most of the AICs have a following that mostly comprise people who have not been exposed to high school education let alone University education.³⁷ Some critics argue that, healing churches are especially prone to being politically acquiescent presumably because their energies are turned towards the spiritual healing of individuals rather than political action aimed at restoring the health of the society as a whole.³⁸ Further to that, the apostolic sects' leadership has an iconic status where the leader is seen as an image or reflection of Christ. Propagators of Mugabology are aware that, AICs and Pentecostal leaders' purported spiritual manifestations provide an avenue which influences the believer to be unquestionably obedient to their leaders. It is important to note that as long as these sects continue to grow in numbers, the long-range political impact of the vibrant indigenous churches will increasingly be difficult to ignore for the state.

It became a tradition that, African Indigenous Churches' like the Johane Masowe started featuring at national functions singing Mugabological praise songs. In certain occasions they were ferried to airport in their traditional white garments to welcome Mugabe from his

³⁶ Cf. "Vapostori Vote for the first time", Sunday News, 25 June 2000. See also, "Apostolic sect supports President", Herald, 3 May 2001, Appendix 15; "Militias on rampage", Daily News, 7 January 2002

³⁷ Cf. D Mackay and P Motsi, "Some contemporary trends in Independent Churches in Zimbabwe: the cases of ZCC and AACJM", 269; See also, Nobuhle Nyoni, *Apostolic sect says no to immunisation*, Sunday News, 24 August 2010; *Man kills wife over immunisation*, The Herald, 24 September 2010; Vusumuzu Sifile, *Vapostori in Climb-Down over immunisation*, The Standard, 22 May 2010

³⁸ Cf. M Schoffeleers, 'Ritual healing and political acquiescence: the case of the Zionist churches in southern Africa', *Africa*, 61, 1, 1991, 1-25

globe-trotting trips. Mugabe known to be a devout Catholic appreciated the support of white garment Churches by attending one of the annual Passover celebrations of the Johane Marange Apostolic sect. Mugabe was pictured donning white and red apostolic sect robes, clutching the apostolic stick. Mugabe started preaching against homosexuality and celebrating over polygamy.³⁹ He did not consider the implications of polygamy rhetoric on the welfare and status of women in the broader society.⁴⁰ As the breadwinner, Mugabe donated two tractors to be used in farming.⁴¹ As a result of the political dynamics in Zimbabwe, Christianity became the right religion in formulating the religio-political discourses on Mugabology especially for the urban electorate where Christianity seems to be the dominant religion though the urban voters continued to vote against Mugabe and ZANU-PF. In order to get the attention of rural dwellers, the focus was on ATR as a peasant religion. Mugabe encouraged the carrying out of rain-making *biras* or ceremonies countrywide, a duty that was done by Shona kings with the advice of spirit mediums. Mugabe made passionate calls for Africans to take pride in African culture, appreciation of the role played by spirit mediums, a call normally made by chiefs. The public transcript on Mugabe was a response to the growing unpopularity, hunger and poverty.

The Public Transcript and Personality Cultism

The Zimbabwean public space became a contested religio-political space amongst the various political parties, religious groupings and civic organizations. Biblical analogies on Mugabe as a ‘suffering messiah and redeemer’ were heightened. The state media focused on Mugabe’s years of imprisonment that led to the successful liberation of Zimbabwe. Mugabe’s imprisonment just like the former president of Malawi,

³⁹ A photo of President Mugabe wearing apostolic regalia, holding the apostolic stick (usually called in the apostolic circles ‘*Tsimbo ya Moses* or Moses’ stick) at the Passover feast, See Appendix 12

⁴⁰ Cf. F Machingura, *A Diet of Wives as the Lifestyle of the Vapostori Sects: The Polygamy debate in the face of HIV and AIDS in Zimbabwe*, *Africana*, Volume 5, Number 2, 185-210

⁴¹ Cf. T Mudiwa, *Mugabe Courts apostolic sects*, *Zimdaily.com*, 19 July 2010, See also, V Langa, ‘*Mugabe Faces ex-communication*’, *Newsday*, 23 July 2010, Appendix 12

Kamuzu Banda, was likened to the self-emptying and self-sacrifice of the redeemer as in the kenotic theological dimension of Jesus' messiahship.⁴² The notion of Mugabe's self-emptying experience was repeated in songs and speeches giving images of Mugabe who sacrificed his teaching profession to come and live the life of a convict in prison, if not lesser than of an ordinary Zimbabwean. The emphasis looks like, there was no other party than ZANU-PF and no other capable leader other than Mugabe to lead Zimbabwe. Generally the propaganda focused on the recruitment of blind support for Mugabe and ZANU-PF. Yet people should not imagine that without Mugabe and ZANU-PF, Zimbabwe would never have been liberated.⁴³ All the claims were mostly built on propaganda and personality cultism.

For critics, Zimbabwean history was reduced to a succession of Chimurengas in which the present dispensation was of Mugabe as the legitimate heir to Nehanda and Kaguvu. Therefore, Zimbabweans were always reminded that, their problems were not comparable to the 'self-sacrifice and death, determination and incorruptible character' of President Mugabe. The image of Mugabe was that of an indispensable, irreplaceable divine leader. During the run-off 2008 elections, some Churches in parts of Zimbabwe were forced to put the portrait of Mugabe next to the portrait of Jesus; an attempt sought to indicate that Mugabe in their eyes was just like Jesus.⁴⁴ Mugabe's reign was construed as permanent and it looked as if Mugabe was physically not limited. The CCJP noted the creation of a personality cultism around Mugabe and a deliberate and systematic attempt to eliminate all opposition to him.⁴⁵ In one incident, the top Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA) commander Brigadier-General Douglas Nyikayaramba claimed

⁴² Cf. Muyebe, *The Religious Factor Within the Body of Political Symbolism in Malawi, 1964-1994*, 67

⁴³ Cf. W Mhanda, *Mugabe did not play greater role for Liberation*, Newzimbabwe.com, Accessed online, 02 August 2011; See also, W Mhanda, *Charges of Armed Forces Coup Baseless*, The Standard, 31 July 2011

⁴⁴ Cf. *Churches Ordered to Display Mugabe next to Jesus*, The Zimbabwean, 21 May 2008, See Appendix 1

⁴⁵ Cf. *The Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe*, Crisis of Governance: A Report on Political Violence in Zimbabwe, Harare, 2005, 21

that, President Robert Mugabe was supposed to remain in power to ensure the stability of the country.⁴⁶ According to A Magaisa, even security chiefs mistake Mugabe for a divine king.⁴⁷ However, all the claims to the throne have no semblance in the Shona tradition as the kings' permanence in office was based on consensus from the people he led, if the king was deemed to be brutal or tyrannical, he was dethroned or killed.

President Mugabe in some cases was presented by lieutenants to the public as 'all-knowing and all-powerful'. The Vice President Joyce Mujuru admitted that, such lieutenants deliberately misrepresented facts as the truth of the matter was that Mugabe does not know.⁴⁸ The rhetoric image created is that of a nation that would die, become full of hunger, and move into abyss and chaos if Mugabe died or lost power. The state media tried to rhetorically portray Mugabe as the most loved leader, one of the world's greatest qualified/educated leaders, thinkers and pacifists in Africa who charismatically caused people to voluntarily attend in their thousands. And to some extent cause his audience in and outside Zimbabwe to cry the moment they saw him. The crowds were stage managed, for example, when people (including school children) were bused to the venue from other areas. Schools, markets, factories, shops in the vicinity were forced to close during the President Mugabe's visit. It is at such occasions that, the portraits of Mugabe featured him beaming down from T-Shirts, women embroideries, in public offices, on posters, on walls of buildings, durawalls, and school classrooms. The portraits were that of the 1980 youthful Mugabe energetically raising his right fist as a sign of power, security and invincibility. The public media exaggerated on the political situation in Zimbabwe and economic situation in Zimbabwe despite the challenges that the country was facing.

Feeding in a Context of Multiple Crises

When the crises had deepened, Mugabe's feeding of the masses included: the giving of land, farm implements, inputs and the scarce basic

⁴⁶ Cf. *Army demands elections in 2011*, The Independent, 27 May 2011

⁴⁷ Cf. *Securocrats: 'Politicians in Uniform'*, The Independent, 08 October 2010

⁴⁸ Cf. M Mugowo, *Mujuru Bares Soul*, Newsday, 08 December 2010

commodities. It is important to note that, the feeding of this type though regarded as having a social or religious background to help the poor was highly political. Allegiance and loyalty to Mugabe and ZANU-PF looked like an open measurement of eligibility for one to be fed. Feeding people with land and food is vital in interpreting Mugabology and the messiahship accorded to Mugabe.

Messiahship, Land Reform and Feeding of the Masses

The giving of land was an age-old tradition that was done by ancient kings particularly the Shona chiefs. When Mugabe chose to forcibly take land from whites in the late 1990s and give it to peasants, it was religiously and politically interpreted as a fulfilment of the prophecies that had been made by the Shona spirit mediums. The Fast Track Land Reform Programme was dubbed 'Third Chimurenga' so as to connect it to the 1896 uprising 'First Chimurenga' as well as the 'Second Chimurenga' that gave birth to the independence of Zimbabwe. The naming of it 'Third Chimurenga' was meant to give nationalist legitimacy to Mugabe despite the violence that accompanied it. It made Mugabe to be a representative of the wishes of the dead and the living. According to Chiefs Matarutse and Chivenge, the redistribution of land by Mugabe to indigenous blacks defined his one important messianic character in protecting the Zimbabwean space as done by ancient kings. Mugabe responsibly and ideologically makes the space beneficial to poor indigenous Zimbabweans but unfortunately the chiefs practically grabbed every fertile piece of land at the expense of the landless poor. A lot of people are still landless.⁴⁹ However, the two chiefs showed in the interviews that they were not prepared for political reasons or fear of the unknown to critically interrogate what truly transpired and why the landless majority failed to get fertile pieces of land even if they had taken part in the land redistribution. On the other hand, men of the cloth like Obadiah Musindo argued that, 'Our land is a God-given right and anyone who op-

⁴⁹ Cf. Chief Matarutse, *Interview*, 29 March 2011; Chief Chivenge, *Interview*, 19 April 2011

poses its redistribution is fighting against God'.⁵⁰ So Mugabe's land reform made him the agent of God.

As noted by E Chitando, 'the controversial land reform was couched in religious terms and propaganda. The state media sought to portray ZANU-PF as a sacred movement fulfilling prophetic oracles that the black majority would reclaim the lost land.'⁵¹ The land reform is important in discussing the messiahship of Mugabe and the feeding topic in the post-colonial Zimbabwe. The execution at first was a genuine attempt to alter the colonial imbalances.⁵² Mugabe had treaded where angels would dare not go in his bid to make Zimbabweans become abundantly fed with both land and food. As a result, Mugabe was greeted with approval and admiration from certain circles as well as disapproval and hatred from other circles hence the complication encountered in understanding Mugabology. Even though some argue for the messianic feeding enableness of Mugabe on the aspect of land, some dismiss the same 'messiahship' of Mugabe in relation to the land issue. The argument is that the Fast-Track land redistribution programme came on the heels of the first constitutional referendum and the 2000 electoral disaster for Mugabe and ZANU-PF. ZANU-PF in general and Mugabe in particular realised that, Zimbabweans were angry over the deteriorating economy, the rising levels of corruption, hunger, poverty and Zimbabwe's costly involvement in the civil war of the Democratic Republic of Congo.⁵³ It was after losing a number of parliamentary seats that Mugabe used the Fast Track Land Reform as a political rallying call in the communal areas where land formed peasants' identity and survival in terms of access to food.⁵⁴ It is a common trend and belief for Southern African liberation philosophies in which the 'peasant' is exalted, 'the land' is worshiped converting to natural support. Often, as noted by C Hope, comes

⁵⁰ Cf. *Christians Urged to Rally Behind President Mugabe*, The Herald, 8 March 2002

⁵¹ Cf. E Chitando, 'In the Beginning was the Land', 220-239

⁵² Cf. T Biti, *Messianic complex, bane of Zanu-PF*, The Herald, 09 October 2010, See also, Appendix 7

⁵³ Cf. S Berry, *Debating the Land Question in Africa*, Comparative Studies in Society and History, Vol.44, No.4, 2002, 638-668

⁵⁴ Cf. J Chaumba, I Scones and W Wolmer, *New Politics, Livelihoods: Agrarian Change in Zimbabwe*, Review of African Political Economy 98, 2003, 585-608

down to empty words, gestures and slogans.⁵⁵ Interestingly as in the case of Zimbabwe, when the distribution started, most of peasants were settled in the same agro-ecological regions IV and V known already to be of poor soil fertility.⁵⁶ Contrary to the first phase done soon after independence, this reform was marred by violence and loss of life. Instead of land being the source of availing food and income to the poor, it became an instrument of justifying violence against opponents of ZANU-PF in general and Mugabe in particular.⁵⁷ Religious symbols of African Indigenous Religions and Christianity were appropriated in a bid to present Mugabe's land reform plan as justified and meant to benefit all Zimbabweans. Yet even if there wasn't any appropriation of religious symbols; land has always been on the hearts of many Zimbabwean peasants. It is possible as argued by many critics that, President Mugabe used land to his political advantage in the face of legitimacy challenges.

The Giving of Land as Part of Feeding

For H Moyana, Mugabe's feeding of people with land put him as a 'Real Messiah' who championed the concerns of the poor and dismisses any debate about the violence that surrounded the 'Third Chimurenga' by arguing that:

When the Land Apportionment Acts and other twin Acts were being put in force, millions of Zimbabwean Africans were violently removed and Western countries looked the other way as a sign of being not concerned at all.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Cf. C Hope, *Brothers under the Skin: Travels in Tyranny*, London: Pan Macmillan Ltd, 2003, 25

⁵⁶ Model A1 got the majority of communal farmers as the soils were almost similar to those in communal areas although not congested. Model A2 had rich soils depending on the agro-ecological region, Cf E Waeterloos and B Rutherland, *Land Reform in Zimbabwe: Challenges and Opportunities for Poverty Reduction among Commercial Farm Workers*, World Development 32, 3, 2004, 537-553

⁵⁷ Cf. V Nmoma, *Son of the Soil: Reclaiming the Land in Zimbabwe*, Journal of Asian and African Studies 43/4, 2008, 371-397

⁵⁸ Moyana, *The Political Economy of Land*, 195

The ability by Mugabe to aim his kicks against the whites⁵⁹ when he forcefully took land is what made him a hero at national, regional, continental and international level particularly those nations that were not happy about the geo-political developments in the world, for example, the invasion of Iraq by America and Britain using fictitious allegations. For H Moyana, an orderly resettlement and the issue of first putting up the infrastructure was not important in the case of Zimbabwe's land reform as it would have taken eternity to do that.⁶⁰ However, the problem with violence in the Zimbabwean land reform is that, some of it was not land related at all as probably thought by outsiders, but the land reform in some cases was politically motivated as it targeted indigenous black people who had nothing to do with land but belonged to different political parties other than ZANU-PF. All Zimbabwean political, religious and civic groupings wanted a land reform in one way or another. It is the unplanned method of implementation that led to disagreement between the different political, religious, economical and social groups.⁶¹ Interestingly, that disagreement to land redistribution came at a cost to opposition groupings that were labelled as shameful, unpatriotic counterfeits and uncouth stooges of western agents.

The 'theology of land' was built as part of Mugabe's messiahship and feeding. Zimbabwe became religiously regarded as a sacred space for indigenous Zimbabweans that had Mugabe as its king. The propaganda claimed that, it was the duty of Mugabe as the benevolent leader to make sure that every Zimbabwean was empowered with a piece of land to till and feed themselves. Mugabe is quoted in 2002 at the Harare International Conference Centre on the National Day of Prayer saying: 'God had parcelled out the world according to racial origin. Africa is for Africans. It was God's plan that black Zimbabweans should possess their land'. For Mugabe the Genesis' creation narrative stories clearly put different racial groups in their respective spaces that should enable

⁵⁹ Cf. E Chitando and L Togarasei, 'June 2008, verse 27': *the Church and the 2008 Zimbabwean political crisis*, *African Identities*, 8:2, 2010, 151-162

⁶⁰ Cf. Moyana, *The Political Economy of Land*, 200

⁶¹ Cf. K Chirambo and H McCullum, *Zimbabwe's Land Issue More Than Mere Electioneering*, Harare: http://www.sardic.net/sd/elections2000/Zimbabwe/zim_land.html, Accessed online, 03 March 2010

them to feed themselves and he was there to make the Zimbabwean space productive and beneficial to all Zimbabweans. The same claim was raised by the governor of Masvingo, Josiah Hungwe, that 'God created Zimbabwe for Zimbabweans and the land therefore belongs to us, we should therefore defend it at all cost'.⁶² In the mind of Hungwe, imperialists through white Zimbabweans were evil and deserved to be chucked out. And Mugabe described all whites as 'evil'.⁶³ In that dualistic setting, Mugabe was presented as the true light and whites as representing darkness. So the darkness was supposed to flee from the light. The Johannine dualistic images of 'light and darkness, life and death' were invoked in Mugabology as the rightful button for political survival and suppression of any dissenting voices.

The year 2000 saw the killing of some white farm owners and black farm workers, setting fire to more than 10 million acres of crops, interrupting and preventing cultivation on some of the farms resulting in the displacement of hundreds of thousands of farm workers.⁶⁴ The western media deliberately chose to focus much on the affected white farmers than the black farm workers. Even opposition black supporters who were in some cases violently beaten up or killed did not receive much international coverage. In fact the few white commercial farmers who were killed and beaten up (when compared to the colonial land dispossession and murder of indigenous people) became an international outcry as news worthy. Interestingly most town dwellers did not support the Fast Track land reform as a form of Mugabological feeding process. They chose the MDC-led Tsvangirai party instead of ZANU-PF which was offering them land. The late ZANU-PF Minister of Justice, Eddison Zvobgo, gave a convincing analysis as shown in the Wikileaks that:

ZANU-PF has been unable to demonstrate to town voters why ZANU re-election would benefit them. The Government of Zimbabwe has nothing to offer in terms of employment, stable prices for food staples, and other urban concerns. Town-dwellers are not interested in farmland even if it

⁶² Cf. S Mpunga, W Jekemu and G Ruswa (eds), *Land: Facing the Millennium Challenges in Unity and Hope*, Harare: Konrad Adenauer Foundation, 2002, 4

⁶³ Cf. T Ranger, *The Zimbabwe Presidential Election: A Personal Experience*, 6

⁶⁴ Cf. D M Hughes, 'Working on the Margins: Black Workers, White Farmers in Post Colonial Zimbabwe', *Journal of the Anthropological Institute* 11, 3, 2005, 622

is offered gratis. Urban dislike of Mugabe has festered into hatred which would be vented at the polls.⁶⁵

What is interesting is that, the ZANU-PF propaganda gave the impression that, all Zimbabweans wanted land for their livelihood. Yet in response to the growing unpopularity, many opposition members were persecuted in the name of 'lacking patriotism' or not supporting their inalienable 'birth right' to land that would enable people to feed themselves. Land became the key mark of identity and Mugabe became the key actor in fulfilling the demands of the ancestors.⁶⁶ Colour knew no bounds during this period as opposition activists whether black or white were all put under the brand name 'white', a symbol of colonialism.⁶⁷ The bad past about colonialism and violent dispossession of locals was then associated with those who did not support Mugabe and ZANU-PF. The official narrative is that, Mugabe confiscated farms from the white capitalists so as to give to the landless peasants. He was on the other hand fighting against sanctions put in place by Britain and her allies, and the reciprocity he expected from Zimbabweans was their unconditional loyalty not people who continually told him that they were starving.⁶⁸ So the media was turned to become a channel of hate speech and violence against dissenting voices. Beneficiaries of the land were warned that if they voted for MDC, they would lose the pieces of land they had acquired and be deprived of food handouts. The fast-track land reform in Zimbabwe necessitated the rise in food aid rather than food production in Zimbabwe.⁶⁹ Mugabe became the provident king of land and the rhetoric was that, every black Zimbabwean who was in need of land was eligible as long as they wanted it.

The providential messianic status of Mugabe was dismissed by the Tsvangirai led MDC as mere propaganda in the sense that: 'No one

⁶⁵ *Zvobgo predicted Tsvangirai's victory*, The Daily News, 19 September 2011

⁶⁶ Cf. P H Gundani, 'The Land Crisis in Zimbabwe and the Role of the Churches towards its resolution', *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 28, 2, 2002, 122-169

⁶⁷ Cf. A Hammar and B Raftopoulos, 'Zimbabwe's Unfinished business: Rethinking land, State and Nation', 39

⁶⁸ Cf. C Hope, *Brothers under the Skin*, 25

⁶⁹ Cf. B I Logan, *Ideology and Urban Food Security: Zimbabwe's Third Chimurenga*, *Journal of African Studies*, 2006, 202-224

can ever distribute land to everyone. Further to that, there is no country in the world that has developed on the basis of putting all people on the land'.⁷⁰ It is clear that there is not enough land to resettle everyone and there is also no way all people can be made farmers. However, the prospect of receiving land emotionally played well with the peasantry and the expropriation of white farms put fresh memories of colonial deprivation of the majority by the minority. Many peasants were made to believe through propaganda that, 'once they got land, they would have similar lifestyles like the former elite whites, with enough food on the table',⁷¹ a post-independence symbol of Mugabological providence. Yet the opposite became a reality with most people as poverty and hunger stalked many households.

Mugabe called upon spirit mediums to unite and ancestral spirits were called upon to support Mugabe in taking back the land.⁷² The land reform was given some spiritual impetus thereby endorsing Mugabe as the living king who fulfilled the wishes of the dead and the living. Generally, this fusion of the traditional spirituality and Zimbabwean history was clear recipe for a 'Mugabology' and personality cultism. It is not surprising that, Christian leaders like Obadiah Musindo invoked biblical figures like Moses to describe Mugabe as a 'black, political, economic Moses' whose vision was 'to raise economical millionaires and billionaires through the land reform'.⁷³ Yet on the real ground, the displacement of commercial farmers led to serious food shortages and mass exodus of people. Most of the chefs who got the fertile land were not prepared to farm but possibly chose to become multiple farm owners to increase their social status. Commercial farmers on the other hand tried all tricks in the book to sabotage the land reform. As a result of many factors, food continued to be in short supply from 2000 to 2008 and for hungry majority, this turned to become open hatred against Mugabe.

⁷⁰ Cf. J Moore, *Zimbabwe's Fight to the Finish: The Catalyst of the Free Market*, New York: Kegan Paul, 2003, 265

⁷¹ Cf. W H Shaw, 'They Stole Our Land', 75-89

⁷² Cf. T Ranger, *The Zimbabwe Presidential Election: A Personal Experience*, 10

⁷³ Cf. 'Black Moses morally repulsed' by Homosexuality, Mail and Guardian, 07 March 2004

Mugabology and the Selective Distribution of Resources

Critics like L Sachikonye⁷⁴ and I Phimister and B Raptopoulos⁷⁵ argue that, the land redistribution programme was bedevilled by extensive ZANU-PF party politics and corruption which saw the best land selectively going to party elite stalwarts as part of the regime aggrandisement and patronage. This was noted by the panels which were tasked by the government in different years to carry out some land audits.⁷⁶ The first committee was headed by Charles Utete and the second by Flora Buka⁷⁷ Despite Mugabe promising several times that multiple farm owners will be heavily punished, nothing was done which for critics become clear that Mugabe uses patronage to selectively benefit the elite as well as those well connected to the elite, yet pretending as good intentions meant to feed the poor.

What is interesting is that, the black elite's appetite in primitive accumulation of wealthy cannot even be matched when compared with the former colonial white counterparts. The black crony capitalists suck blood from their own kith and kin whereas the colonial white capitalist settlers shared the stolen wealthy of the nation amongst themselves. So for critics, Mugabe knows where his political power lies and behaves wisely by genuinely feeding with arable land those with the knowledge of the gun. Critics believe that, the beneficiaries were senior police,

⁷⁴ Cf. L Sachikonye, *From Growth and Equity to 'Fast Track' Reform: Zimbabwe's Land Question*, Review of African Political Economy 96, 2003, 227-240

⁷⁵ Cf. I Phimister and B Raftopoulos, *Mugabe, Mbeki and the Politics of Anti-Imperialism*, Review of African Political Economy 31, ROAPE Publications Ltd, 2004, 385-400

⁷⁶ ZANU-PF businessmen like Philip Chiyangwa, Mutumwa Mawere and James Makamba were found guilty of multiple ownership (of the best arable land) and evicting peasants who had been resettled. Philip Chiyangwa was accused of having frustrated the resettlement of people at Gwebi/Hunyani in Nyabira area of Mashonaland West province; whereas Mutumwa Mawere is alleged to have forcibly removed people who had resettled on Maryvale farm in Mazoe area (falls within region 1) before assuming ownership, Cf. T Majoni, *Buka Accused of Politicising Land Audit*, Zimbabwe Mirror, http://www.zimbabwesituation.com/mar31_2003.html, 03 March 2010

⁷⁷ Cf. V Nmoma, *Son of the Soil: Reclaiming the Land*, Journal of Asian and African Studies 43, 4, 2008, 371-397

army, civil servants and ZANU-PF officials.⁷⁸ According to E Chigumira, University of Zimbabwe geographer, the post-independence land experiences are characterized by ‘bifurcated land ownership not by race but by class favouring elites who are politically connected to ZANU-PF and Mugabe’.⁷⁹ In the farms, there were many thousands of black farm workers who got affected⁸⁰ but did not benefit from the land reforms. Instead they were evicted and dumped in open spaces without food and shelter. The analysis by H Moyana sums it all that:

Perhaps the situation would not have been viewed so negatively if more landless people had been resettled. But as things were, the masses of landless Africans could not reconcile their condition with a situation in which African political leaders had replaced the white farmers on the land for which they had fought for so gallantly.⁸¹

One can be justified to say that, even though it looked like some peasants really benefited, the elites were the real winners whereas the landless poor were real losers. What is interesting is that, the two governments (colonial and post-colonial) though at the opposite end of the ideological and political spectrum had one thing in common: an innate neglect, disrespect for the poor black and marginalised peasants on the valuable resource allocation. For the majority poor Zimbabweans, it is always the possession of nothing, lack of everything and the stillborn promises of abundance by the post-colonial government.

⁷⁸ Cf. D Blair, *Degrees in Violence: Robert Mugabe and the Struggle for Power in Zimbabwe*, London: Continuum, 2002, 183

⁷⁹ Cf. P Bond, *Will Zimbabwe Again Regress*, [http://www.newzimbabwe.com/opinion-3805-Will+ Zimbabwe+again+regress/opinion.aspx](http://www.newzimbabwe.com/opinion-3805-Will+Zimbabwe+again+regress/opinion.aspx), Accessed Online, 16 October 2010

⁸⁰ It is estimated that around 150-200 000 were thrown out of employment implying that the lives and livelihoods of these workers and their families (an estimated 1.5 to 2 million) were disrupted. Most of the farm workers were immigrants or descendants of immigrants from neighbouring countries such as Malawi and Mozambique who had no idea where to go, when they were told to go back to their countries of origin, Cf. Press Release: International Trade Union Confederation, “*Farm Workers Are Ill-Treated And Abandoned*”, <http://www.zimbabwemetro.com/headline/farm-workers-are-ill-treated-and-abandoned>; See also, P Thornycroft, *Union Says Zimbabwe Farm Workers Worst Abused Sector in Past 10 Years*, <http://www.voanews.com>, Accessed Online 26 September 2010

⁸¹ Moyana, *The Political Economy of Land*, 189

Peasants continue to depend on charity and food aid from United Nations World Food Programme and some NGOs in order to survive, despite the land reform having been carried out. There is sufficient evidence as raised by critics to conclude that, the general claims by ZANU-PF officials that, the Fast Track Land Reform was born out of the desire to correct historical land imbalances does not tally with what really happened on the ground in terms of implementation. Real empowerment of the landless poor did not take place and there was no siding with the poor as done by Jesus in his ministry. The proportion of the landless remained largely unchanged at 20 percent after the Fast Track Land Reform Programme.⁸² This had dire impact on the same poor peasants that Mugabe claimed to protect and feed.

Interestingly, after the land redistribution, when rains were good, production in the farms declined resulting in abject poverty and severe hunger. The years of economic and food decline eroded all the gains that were associated with the first phase of resettlement. The Zimbabwean peasants' dreams remain unfulfilled as most of them remain landless even though a small percentage did acquire land which was still not the best land. It can also not be denied that, there are some poor peasants who genuinely got fertile land and are succeeding as shown by the study made by I Scoones and the Institute of Development Studies. I Scoones argues that, it was only the Western narrative and its media that sought to portray Mugabe as evil and that his feeding of people with land did not benefit the poor.⁸³ Unfortunately I Scoones does not realize that, the question is not about just giving people land but the nature of land that was given to people. Regions known to be infertile had many peasants who were allocated land whereas those regions with fertile lands were mostly accessible to the elites who were close to the corridors of powers. V Nmoma still argues that, many Zimbabwean peasants realise now after the Fast Track Land Reform that they had fought a losing bat-

⁸² Cf. S Moyo, *The Land Reform and Agrarian Question in Zimbabwe*, http://www.sarpn.org.za/documents/d0001097/P1211-Moyo_Dec2004.pdf, Accessed Online, 26 February 2010

⁸³ Cf. I Scoones, *Zimbabwe's land reform ten years on: new study dispels the myths*, <http://www.ids.ac.uk/go/news/zimbabwe-s-land-reform-ten-years-on-new-study-dispels-the-myths>, Accessed Online, 17 November 2010

tle considering the propaganda and false campaign promises.⁸⁴ With these resource distribution developments, it seems as if those in power find joy and solace when there are many people who are hungry and disempowered as it will give them the cause of being on the political throne so as to feed the hungry. If claims raised by critics against the Fast-Track land redistribution are true, the majority of the poor were not empowered with fertile arable land as well as resources to make them their farming ventures viable. This possibly explains the reason why most of the peasants still depend on food handouts to survive.

The Extensive Use of Propaganda to Conquer the Hungry Masses

As a result of the growing poverty and hunger, the Ministry of Information heightened the propaganda as an appeal to Zimbabweans to be patriotic in the jingles like, 'Our Land is Our Prosperity-Stay the Course'. There were calls for Zimbabweans to remain loyal to Mugabe and the calls were made on state radio and TV every 10 to 15 minutes. The press, national radio, TV became important tools to seduce Zimbabwean people against the severe hunger. The high level of propaganda confirmed J Göbbels's (1897-1945) belief that: 'Propaganda has only one object: To conquer the masses. Every means that furthers this aim is good; every means that hinders it is bad'.⁸⁵ Propagandistic strategies were put in place for the endorsement of Mugabe as the only capable leader chosen by God to lead Zimbabwe. The electronic media like TVs beamed President Mugabe addressing political mass rallies and bombastic speeches became a constant feature on daily basis so as create an effective 'Muga-bological' personality cult.

The then former Minister of Information and Publicity, Professor Jonathan Moyo's office flooded local television with visions of bumper harvests showing mountains of maize which were portrayed as having resulted from the merciful benevolence of Mugabe in his dishing

⁸⁴ Cf. V Nmoma, *Son of the soil*, 371-397

⁸⁵ Cf. Göbbels, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/europe/de-goebbels.htm>, Accessed Online 28 February 2011; See also, E T Eberwine, *Sound and Firing Signifying Nothing?: Jürgen Büssow's Battle against Hate Speech on the Internet*, http://www.nyls.edu/user_files/1/3/4/17/49/v_49n1p353-410.pdf, Accessed Online 28 February 2011

out of the land. In addition, ZBC played jingles that exhorted Zimbabweans to remain resolute in their support of Mugabe and the land reform, even in the face of hunger. The state media slavishly downplayed the gravity of hunger and in some cases Mugabe was in a state of denial when he declared that ‘Zimbabweans did not want to choke on international food aid, which they did not need’.⁸⁶ During that time, people slept overnight by the doors of supermarkets so as to be amongst the first people to get meal-meal the next day. In rural areas people depended on NGOs for the daily rations. It appears that basing on what was happening on the ground that, President Mugabe was grandstanding as he did not want to be seen as a weak leader who was failing to feed his people particularly after the land reform. Generally, propaganda was appropriated to build a personality cultism on Mugabe.

The TVs showed women on tractors (that had been benevolently given by Mugabe through the Farm Mechanisation Programme) harvesting maize, cotton and tobacco in the face of food scarcity. Clips of fat or heavily built women dancing and swaying their backs as a sign of being well-fed were shown on TVs. Interestingly the propaganda TV clips of abundant food and fat women did not translate into abundant food in the homes and supermarkets. In fact most homes and supermarkets were empty. This was despite the daily emotional scenes of patriotic children shown on TVs lovingly filtering the soil through their fingers and then soldiers taking position in the struggle to die for the land.⁸⁷ Despite these endeavours by the Zimbabwean government, the number of people in need of food continued to grow and support for Mugabe heavily deteriorated. Unfortunately Zimbabwean politicians seems were focused on trying to win peoples’ hearts in cases where all strategies for curbing hunger had failed. At one time, the Minister of Agriculture, Joseph Made, told parliament that the food deficit in Zimbabwe had been caused by monkeys that were sabotaging the transformer at the country’s largest fertilizer supplier. Made was quoted in parliament saying:

⁸⁶ Cf. “Interview with Robert Mugabe”, *Sky Television*, May 24, 2004, <http://www.news.sky.com/skynews/article/015410-1136554,00.html>, Accessed Online, 20 October 2010

⁸⁷ Cf. B I Logan, *Land Reform, Ideology and Food Security*, 202-224

Our investigations have shown that a monkey caused damage to a transformer thereby sabotaging our preparations for the coming season. If it was not for that monkey, the situation was not going to be as bad.⁸⁸

Various excuses were given to explain the non-availability of food. Made in fact was trying to address the anger that people had over the non-availability of farm inputs in shops, for example, there was no fertilizer. The lack of inputs in shops spelled perennial doom and hunger in the coming year.

It also became a trend that during national food crises, President Mugabe had a message for the starving people:

They were not starving. He had given orders, trucks would be arriving regularly with maize: 'Everyone will get food. No one will starve. We have a task force on food...'⁸⁹

There is nothing as painful as not knowing where your next meal will come from. In a country where the majority (especially in rural areas) have nothing worth living for except their names, frustration and anger taking place of their hopes. Wishes had been withered away by poverty. Poverty and hunger are the greatest security threat to world peace than Al Qaeda and the Taliban combined. Yet the life of the poor is a daily story of hunger, destitution and everyday struggle in the face of shrinking livelihood opportunities. It is a story that imbues desperation, dependence, hopelessness, anger and emptiness. N Mboti noted that, the systematized propaganda strategy through the constant repetition of jingles, swamping the consciousness of audience with liberation themes in order to manufacture consent or persuasion purposes did not only fail to work but hardened peoples' attitudes against the ZANU-PF party and Mugabe.⁹⁰ According to the Media Monitoring Project of Zimbabwe (MMPZ), the ZBC's propaganda campaign promoted intolerance and amounted to gross abuse of children in its propaganda offensive to pro-

⁸⁸ L Nkatazo, *Made says Monkey Sabotaged Farming Season*, <http://www.newzimbabwe.com>, Accessed online, 10 May 2011

⁸⁹ C Hope, *Brothers under the Skin*, 25

⁹⁰ Cf. *Propaganda jingles alienates Zanu PF-Study*, *The Standard*, 06 November 2010; *ZBC abuses children*, 17 April 2011, See also, Appendix 19 and 20

mote ZANU-PF.⁹¹ The state media became associated with propaganda, desperate political machinations, shame and lies. When the problem of hunger continued to stock the lives of the people, Mugabe co-opted the traditional leaders and chiefs whose powers had diminished soon after independence. Mugabe sought to revive and popularize the *Zunde RaMambo* project by supplying inputs to be used in planting. Chiefs had their power restored, their homes were electrified, and boreholes were drilled at their places.⁹² Mugabe managed to patronage chiefs and chiefs in return reciprocated by handing over the loyalty of communities they led to Mugabe, a development that critics likened to what was done by I Smith in the colonial era.

In a bid to directly and indirectly co-opt the broader Church into Mugabology, Mugabe was careful not to confront the Church by radically taking over the Church's land. The Church had benefited a lot from the colonialism, such actions would have forced Mugabe to fight several fronts. On the other hand, most of the Church leaders were careful not to be outspoken against Mugabe's land reform programme, man-made hunger and poverty.⁹³ When it comes to survival and livelihood, even religious leaders who are called by the name of God choose to ignore the plight of the poor so as to seek favours from rulers. This was confirmed by the former Catholic Archbishop Pius Ncube, when he said that:

People are dying of hunger, yet religious leaders in Zimbabwe were divided because Mugabe had 'bought out' most of them. The church in Zimbabwe could not play a meaningful role without help from

⁹¹ Cf. *Propaganda jingles alienates Zanu PF-Study*, The Standard, 06 November 2010; *ZBC abuses children*, 17 April 2011. See also, Appendix 19 and 20

⁹² They were also awarded salaries that were far above those of professional civil servants and they were given much publicity in the state media. The Standard paper reported that, Chiefs' allowances were raised from US\$200 to US\$300 on top of other perks, which includes the fines that the chiefs levy on their subjects. The new figures were double of what civil servants were getting. The sources added that the traditional leaders, currently driving the Mazda single cabs, are set to get twin cabs, most likely the Mazda BT50, Cf. *Chiefs to get top of the range cars, salary hike chiefs*, The Standard, 10 October 2010, See also, Appendix 21

⁹³ Cf. P Gundani, '*The Land Question and Its Missiological Implications for the Church in Zimbabwe*', *Missiological* 31, 3, 2003, 467-502

neighbouring countries. Mugabe gave them money and farms. He even offered me a farm as part of his evil devices but I declined the offer.⁹⁴

Basing on the claims by the former Catholic Archbishop Pius Ncube, the silence by the Church when peoples' rights were being infringed is then understandable in relation to Mugabe's patronage feeding prowess. It became much easier for President Mugabe to feed the political and religious elites than exhausting himself trying to feed the ever demanding and hungry multitude.

Christian leaders like Nobert Kunonga, Obadiah Musindo and Madzibaba Nzira alleged by critics to have sold out are credited for regarding Mugabe as 'having been sent by God or the Moses of Africa'. At one occasion Obadiah Musindo claimed that:

Our God is not in America! Our God is in Heaven! Despite the effort by the independent media to demonise you, Your Excellence, You were appointed by God.⁹⁵

Musindo argued that, "there are many similarities between the ruling ZANU-PF party and the Bible. President Mugabe was like the Biblical Moses who was sent by God to free thousands of Israelites who were suffering at the hands of Pharaoh. Mugabe did that when he led us through the struggle to become what we are today when he fed us with land and food".⁹⁶ Nobert Kunonga regarded Mugabe's policies as a sign that Mugabe was 'more merciful than God Himself'.⁹⁷ For Kunonga, Mugabe had done something that the Church had failed to do in helping the poor peasants. Yet, on the ground as noted by critics and shown in the land audits, it was clearly the opposite as the well-connected few were real beneficiaries of the benevolence of Mugabe.

⁹⁴ Christelle Terreblanche, *Ncube Asks Churches to act against Mugabe*, http://www.zimbabwesituation.com/mar8_2004.htm l#link3, Accessed Online, 04 October 2010

⁹⁵ *President Mugabe Appointed by God*, Sunday Mail, 13 January 2002

⁹⁶ Cf. R Musazulwa, *Rev O Musindo Campaigns for ZANU-PF*, The Standard, 06 February 2005, See also, Appendix 22

⁹⁷ Cf. T Ranger, *The Zimbabwe Presidential Election: A Personal Experience*, 6

Extracting the ‘Sons of the Light from the Sons of Darkness’

Besides the land, feeding through handouts became clearly selective. It targeted ZANU-PF activists and leaving out those known to engage in oppositional politics. In August 2002, Didymus Mutasa appeared to have suggested that, those who did not support Mugabe deserved to die of hunger. Mutasa said:

We would be better off with only six million people (out of twelve million) who loyally support Mugabe and the liberation struggle he led. We don't want all these extra people.⁹⁸

However, for sympathisers, Mutasa was just encouraging Zimbabweans to be vigilant and pride themselves in their history. Yet critics argue that, for ZANU-PF, feeding was matter of hell and heaven where those who were not supportive of the ‘messiah’ would be forcefully sent to hell by starving them of food. People who were supportive of Mugabe were rest assured of the heaven of food.

The light and darkness, life and death dualistic analogy of the Johannine evangelist was being witnessed in Mugabe's feeding of the masses. In John 6:35, Jesus said that:

I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.

The Johannine analogy implied that, those who did not accept Jesus would experience death or a life of hell in the present life whereas those who accepted him experienced abundant life. John's realised eschatological teaching can be interesting when analysed in the Mugabological feeding of the masses as from 1998-2008 where feeding was no longer the known general feeding. In C Hope's words:

ZANU-PF rallies, banners and slogans resembled faith-healing meetings that take place around Zimbabwe. ZANU-PF punted a simple message: Mugabe was the way, the truth and the light; a vote for the leader was a prayer to God, and a vote for the opposition was a sop to the devil. Mug-

⁹⁸ M Meredith, *Mugabe: Power*, 98

abe breathed the perfume of power over the life and death of the Zimbabwean people.⁹⁹

Food became an important tool of making a distinction between those who were supportive of Mugabe and those who were not. The condemnation to the life of realised 'hell' for enemies of Mugabe extended to the health arena where terminally ill person as claimed by Zimbabwe Peace Project were denied medication in form of drugs, Anti-retroviral drugs, anti-biotics and pain killers on the basis that there are members of the opposition or that they are relatives of persons belonging to the opposition.¹⁰⁰

In the case of Zimbabwe, food is an important weapon that was used by most political parties to garner support particularly in rural areas where people depend on food handouts to survive. The adverse weather conditions characterised by floods and droughts compounded the food crises which had already been badly damaged by the fast-track land reform program and institutionalised corruption. The selective feeding is also a clear sign of the scarcity of food for most rural peasants who cannot survive through any other means besides food handouts from the government, religious institutions and NGOs. If people had been fully empowered through the land reform so that they could fend for themselves, there is no way messiahship leadership as in the case of Mugabe could be connected to food handouts. Critics to some extent are justified to say that, Mugabe was so clever to keep the messiahship role of feeding to himself and not genuinely empower the poor. Mugabe just like most of the African leaders depend on the disempowered for loyalty, popular support, political power and legitimacy. The state of affairs particularly in rural areas forces the masses to look out to him to survive the next day. During the decade-hold crises period in most cities and towns, the little grain that was found on the black market was over-priced and difficult to get.¹⁰¹ On 28 June 2007, Mugabe introduced price controls¹⁰²

⁹⁹ C Hope, *Brothers under the Skin*, 15

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Zimbabwe Peace Project-August 2006 Report, *Politicisation of AID: The Manicaland Experience*, *Politicisation_of_food_and_other_forms_of_aid_report_2.doc*, Accessed Online, 10 October 2010

¹⁰¹ Cf. R Loewenson, *Relief and Recovery in Zimbabwe: Food Security in the Current*

of all basic goods like: mealie meal, beef, flour, bread, sugar and salt, arguing that they wanted to make food accessible to the poor. The police and in some cases alleged pro-ZANU-PF youth raided factories, shops and supermarkets to enforce price cuts as shoppers grabbed up goods in the growing price across the country. Such 'mugabologic' efforts were portrayed in the public media as signs of Mugabe as a reliable breadwinner who stood with the weak in times of crises. Unfortunately the public media did not fully expose what had caused the deepening crises except condemning foreign forces. Bread and maize meal disappeared from most shelves as stores complied with Mugabe's order to halve the prices of basic commodities in his fight against growing inflation and unpopularity.¹⁰³ In the eyes of the poor, Mugabe was a concerned breadwinner who wanted to fill their stomachs with food. The poor were not mindful of the consequences of such actions. Feeding of the masses by Mugabe was able to construct an extensive patronage system which besides benefiting the elite fed different types of people at different times and in different forms but mostly targeting the perceived traditional rural support base of ZANU-PF and Mugabe.

The Use of Political Signifiers in Feeding

The use of food for the consolidation of Mugabe's power was clearly shown in election campaigns, when food scarcity had also affected urban dwellers. The GMB and millers sympathetic to ZANU-PF distribute grain and mealie meal to loyal supporters or people who showed ZANU-PF allegiance by producing party cards. In some cases, the GMB became the face of Mugabe in the feeding agenda. In the by-elections held in

Humanitarian Crisis, http://www.sarpn.org.za/documents/d0000267/P257_Zimbabwe.pdf, Accessed Online, 06 October 2010

¹⁰² Shops that were found flouting the pricing system were forced not to do so and Mugabe got the praise for standing with poor in a hyper-inflationary environment. Yet many producers could no longer cover their costs resulting in the rapid disappearance of food on the shelves, climbing inflation and wages of the majority failing to keep pace with prices, Cf "NatFoods Feels Pinch of Price Controls", *The Zimbabwe Independent*, 14 March 2003

¹⁰³ Cf. 'Zimbabwe: Bread Disappears from Shelves', *The New York Times*, 3 July 2007, See also, 'Anti-Inflation Curbs on Prices Create Havoc for Zimbabwe', *The New York Times*, 4 July 2007

Highfields, Zengeza and Kuwadzana, 10 and 20 kg bags of meal mealie were stocked at ZANU-PF district offices. The bags were sold at a lower price to those who showed ZANU-PF cards.¹⁰⁴ ZANU-PF cards acted as political signifiers on the presence of Mugabe in filling peoples' stomachs. Millers' demand for a ZANU-PF card to sell mealie meal and food is a mechanism to create loyalists to Mugabe. R Gasela observed that:

It is a grand design or scheme of Zanu PF and its government that Zimbabweans are pliable and controllable under food shortage situation. Zanu PF knows that, people who have direct benefit from its food largesse can continue to vote for it. Zanu PF using councillors and village heads will force people starved of food in the rural areas to comply. Visit any GMB depot and see how ZANU-PF rural district councillors are there daily either coming to get mealie meal, seed or fertilisers, which products are sold to Zanu PF card holders only.¹⁰⁵

The mugabologization of feeding included food relief and inputs brought by international donors. There are times when ZANU-PF cards ran out of stock in times food crisis, a clear symbol that the possession of a ZANU-PF card was synonymous with access to food. Surprisingly ZANU-PF and the public media used the selling out of cards as propaganda to argue for the popularity of Mugabe. They argued that 'ZANU-PF cards were sold out because people appreciate what President Mugabe is doing for them in times of hunger. When he makes sure that everybody is well fed in both urban and rural areas'. The popularity of Mugabe was likened to that of Jesus who attracted big crowds wherever he went. Yet ZANU-PF cards were deliberately bought as a security measure against hunger and violence. Food politics has been traditionally and effectively used during elections in most Southern African countries because the hungry and vulnerable always do anything to survive.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. "ZANU-PF Card Passport to Maize Meal in Highfield", The Daily News, 12 June 2002, See also, "MDC Claims ZANU-PF Using Food to Woo Voters", The Daily News, 18 October 2002, G Ferrett, BBC correspondent, 'Mugabe supporters 'starving enemies'', http://www.zimbabwesituation.com/july30_2002.html#link1, Accessed Online, 10 October, 2010

¹⁰⁵ R M Gasela, *Zimbabwe: the politics of food*, <http://www.newzimbabwe.com>, Accessed Online, 23 June 2011

In most parts of Africa, politicians distribute handouts to desperately struggling communities, commonly food, only during elections and the incumbent government would do this with public funds.¹⁰⁶ The use of personalized and strategized benefit distributions like food to discredit the legitimacy and credibility of the opposition has been popular with several African regimes like that of Bakili Muluzi of Malawi, Robert Gabriel Mugabe of Zimbabwe, clientelism in Kenya and Zambia and Jacob Zuma of South Africa among others. Note worthily, most African politicians are skilled solicitors but not credible leaders interested in empowering their people. They invest their power only in feeding the disempowered. People in rural areas know that 'failure to attend Mugabe's or ZANU-PF rallies is an invitation to hunger, trouble and death'. It is at rallies that one is judged to be active and that translates to an automatic place for Mugabe's beneficiaries of food. This is the same with people who appeared on the NGOs list compiled with the help of community leaders mostly loyal to ZANU-PF. NGOs are forced in some circumstances to distribute food in the presence of chiefs or ZANU-PF officials. In most cases ZANU-PF officials and chiefs showed where their allegiance belonged by putting on ZANU-PF regalia with the portrait of Mugabe or chanting slogans or songs that celebrated Mugabe as the ultimate provider of food. Scarcity of food is a blessing in disguise for Mugabe and his functionaries, in that; in some cases it increased Mugabe's power as messiah. It has become much easier for some contemporary rulers to politicise the food, make people become fearful of being an opposition member and control the opposition to their rule than strenuously try to sell their policies. People who chose to be opposition members know the consequences of their dissentic actions in the face of hunger and poverty.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. R Tambulasi and H Kayuni, "*Ubuntu and Democratic Good Governance in Malawi: A Case Study*" in M F Murove, *African Ethics: An Anthology of Comparative and Applied Ethics*, Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, Interpak Books, 2009, 435

Feeding in the Light of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNHR)

The selective distribution of food went against the UDHR and the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* guaranteeing every human being the right to food. The 1999 UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights states that:

Any discrimination in access to food, as well as to the means and entitlements for its procurement, on the grounds of race, colour, sex, language, age, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status with the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the equal enjoyment or exercise of economic, social and cultural rights constitutes a violation of the Covenant.¹⁰⁷

The inequitable distribution of food so as to consolidate power or to further political goals by manipulating the hungry and desperate is inhuman and uncharacteristic of a 'messiah'. In fact Paragraph 37 of General Comment 12 forbids feeding that stipulates conditionalities that: 'food should never be used as an instrument of political and economical pressure.'¹⁰⁸ Jesus' feeding of the multitude was not discriminatory and did not seek to consolidate his power. Had there been no hungry people in Africa, it is difficult to ever imagine certain contemporary rulers' proclaimed messiahship sticking.

Projects that used to help villagers with food after working were turned into open political recruitment for allegiance to a certain political party, for example, ZANU-PF. This was confirmed by E Moyo, the MDC Mberengwa district chairman, who argued that ZANU-PF Mberengwa secretary, Tariro Shoko, was forcing hungry MDC supporters to join ZANU-PF before they get any food. During Food for Work programmes, those with ZANU-PF cards are included in the programme.¹⁰⁹ In order

¹⁰⁷ International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), Art.11 (1), Resolution 2200 A (XXI), 16 December, 1966 (Acceded to by Zimbabwe on May 1991)

¹⁰⁸ Cf. 'The Right to adequate food' (Art 11), My 12, 1999.E/C.12/1999/5, CESCR General Comment 37, <http://www.w.hrw.org/en/node/12249/section/6>, Accessed Online, 10 October 2010; See also, B Gauthier, *Human Rights Indicators for Assessing State Compliance with International Human Rights*, *Nordic Journal of International Law*, Volume 77, Numbers 1-2, 2008, 23-49

¹⁰⁹ Cf. *MDC man was threatened with Death to join ZANU-PF*, <http://news.radiovop.com>,

to get aid or agricultural inputs like: maize seed, fertiliser, potato seed, vegetable seed and groundnuts, loyalty to Mugabe was shown by possessing a ZANU-PF card with Mugabe's portrait. Failure to have the card implied no food. In recent cases, there have been reports of where bags of grain with the portrait of Mugabe are distributed to the hungry people. According to the MP for Magwegwe, Felix Magalela Sibanda who travelled and monitored the distribution of the maize seed:

The maize is being given to bonafide ZANU-PF members on the pretext that, it has been donated by the President Robert Mugabe. I discovered that even the packaging has an emblem of a very decorated picture of Mugabe. As the national leader, he should be distributing free maize seeds to everyone and not party members.¹¹⁰

So it became clear that whether Mugabe was there or not, the portrait of Mugabe on T-Shirts, ZANU-PF party cards, food packaging and posters at feeding points declared his immanence in the stomachs of the favoured people.

Farm Mechanisation, BACCOSSI and the feeding agenda

There was a heightened selective attention given to rural peasants on: farm implements, inputs and loans as part of the feeding topic. The farm implements included: ploughs, harvesters, tractors, scorch carts and hoes. These implements were freely given to selected peasants so as to enhance their farming and food production. However, opposition officials and civic organisations allege that, the farm implements were given particularly to known ZANU-PF supporters.¹¹¹ When beneficiaries got the implements but later on suspected of being sympathetic to other political parties other than ZANU-PF, their implements were taken back.¹¹² Beneficiaries were paraded on TVs being given the implements. The people who did not get the implements were obviously made to be-

Accessed Online, 06 October 2010, See also Appendix 23

¹¹⁰ T Karimakwenda, *Maize bags with Mugabe picture given to ZPF members only*, <http://www.swradioafrica.com>, Accessed 30 November 2011

¹¹¹ Cf. *Mugabe no longer in Control: Roy Bennett*, <http://www.swradioafrica.com>, Accessed Online, 26 October 2010

¹¹² Cf. Zimbabwe Electoral Support Network, *Pre-Election Update*, No.1, 24 November to 14 December, 2007, 1-6

lieve that their time to be fed would come. And the few poor villagers who managed to get the farm implements chanted ZANU-PF slogans that praised Mugabe as the bread-donor.¹¹³ This was common after the March 2008 elections which Mugabe lost to Tsvangirai. In the June 2008 run-off battle, Mugabe introduced the giving groceries (BACCOSSI) to hungry people. When Mugabe gave groceries to selected beneficiaries, the image created was of Mugabe as the provident bread-winner. The people who got the groceries appreciated the gesture considering that most of the supermarkets had empty shelves. Yet as usual and normal, it was a strategy by ZANU-PF and Mugabe to buy the vote of the poor. It was also a strategy meant to placate the poor not to rebel by keeping them hopeful that after all their turn would come as Mugabe was so grieved by their hunger and poverty.

The peasants' poverty, hunger and appetite for food expose them to manipulation by the powerful. All year through Mugabe is constantly in the public sphere not in person but through various images and channels in relation to feeding. As a result of Mugabe's control of the press, radio and television, propaganda is fed to the effect that Mugabe is the only provident messiah. This is shown on the celebrations like the: Unity Accord, Heroes, Independence, ZANU-PF annual conferences, 21st February Movement and annual galas that depicts Mugabe as the bread-winner. It is only those with gullible minds who are able to dismiss and challenge the bread-winner image of Mugabe in the face of unprecedented poverty and hunger that is not subsiding.

Mugabology vs NGOs in Feeding the Masses

As a result of the growing number of people needing help, this saw the number of NGOs growing in number. The greatest number of these NGOs is only there to give emergency relief food aid. The 'civil society' sector today boasts of more than 2 500 NGOs that are working inside Zimbabwe and the majority of them are there to feed the hungry.¹¹⁴ If one considers this great number of NGOs, one will not be forgiven not to think about the possible number of people that are served by these

¹¹³ Cf. Zvobgo, *A History of Zimbabwe*, 316

¹¹⁴ Cf. *We Cannot Rebuild Zimbabwe on Lies*, The Sunday Mail, May 2009

NGOs. However, the involvement of NGOs in feeding people in most cases has not always been politically appreciated. The confrontational attitude towards NGOs is evident in Zimbabwe where the belligerent attitude of the government is due to links between NGOs and the international agencies with Western ties which makes the government suspicious of NGO activities in sensitive areas like feeding.¹¹⁵ The government of Zimbabwe become suspicious of the activities of NGOs in relation to the feeding topic especially the alleged appetite to influence internal politics.

However, critics argue that, the Zimbabwean case is a cautionary tale of how a political regime primarily concerned with preserving power and legitimacy can undermine the capacity of NGOs to respond to a public hunger, health, social and economic crisis by overtly intimidating the NGOs sector. The clash of interests in feeding the hungry between the government and non-governmental organisations resulting in the banning of the operations of leading NGOs, for example, WFP, Oxfam and Save the Children in 2002 which were accused of being sympathetic to the opposition parties like the MDC. NGOs have always been accused of helping to create artificial food shortages and distributing MDC propaganda, party cards and food in a bid to dethrone Mugabe.¹¹⁶ ZANU-PF had accused NGOs of using vulnerability, famine forecasting and drought forecasting studies to project black Zimbabweans as inefficient farmers. The food forecasts by NGOs are taken as meant to disenfranchise Zimbabweans by eroding their self-esteem and creating a psychology of 'food beggars'.¹¹⁷ Further to that, the ban by NGOs against the wearing of political party T-shirts or 'party regalia' at the food distribution site displeased the ZANU-PF led government. NGOs wanted to avoid sloganeering or beneficiaries putting on emblems that conveyed their party affiliations. In some cases, it resulted in violence between political party supporters.

¹¹⁵ Cf. J G Copestake and K Wellard, *Non-Governmental Organisations and the State in Africa: Rethinking Roles in Sustainable Agricultural Development (NGOs)*, Witwell Limited, 1993, 20

¹¹⁶ Cf. "NGO implicated in food scam", Sunday Mail, 8 July 2001

¹¹⁷ Cf. B I Logan, *Land Reform, Ideology and Food Security*, 202-224

The sloganeering mostly by ZANU-PF functionaries at food distribution centres gave the impression that in most communal areas where NGOs were involved in feeding, Mugabe had in fact given them food aid to distribute to obedient and loyal followers. It helped Mugabe and his party to easily coerce desperate and hungry people especially in rural areas and making them realize who their messiah was when it came to feeding. This was the same context that Masvingo governor, Josiah Hungwe, said 'wherever the Son of Man goes, the hungry are fed'. In this case, the role played by NGOs in feeding the people was in fact Mugabe feeding his people. NGOs and parastatals like the GMB that gave people food were put in one basket as the feet, eyes, hands and ears of Mugabe on the duty of feeding. Even if the food handouts were coming from the government; the statement by Hungwe is testimony to the degree of poverty, hunger and the number of people in need of free food. Mugabe was put in the mould of Moses, Jesus or any of the ancient kings that fed their subjects. ZANU-PF and Mugabe realise the important role that feeding played in the messiahship leadership image of Mugabe.

NGOs accused Mugabe and ZANU-PF officials of using food as a weapon in elections, for example, there were many reports of families being denied the right to buy food from the government's GMB warehouses because of their support of the opposition.¹¹⁸ In return people voted with their stomachs in March 2008 against Mugabe as a failing bread-winner. On the other hand, ZANU-PF loyalists postulates that, had it not been the food shortages experienced by Zimbabweans in urban areas, Mugabe's reign would have been extremely difficult to lose popularity amongst the poor or be dislodged by any other political party let alone a non-revolutionary party. MDC got much popularity and support particularly in urban areas and later rural areas as a result of the day to day hardships that were faced by the people faced like: inflation, shortages of food, high cost of living, transport blues, power cuts, water crisis, cash crisis, poor sanitation and corruption that benefited the elite

¹¹⁸ Cf. F Watson, *Understanding the Food Crisis in Zimbabwe*, <http://fex.enonline.net/18/understanding.aspx>, Accessed online, 28 February 2010; See also, *ZANU-PF manipulates food aid*, Daily News, 26 April 2011, See also, Appendix 23

mostly connected to ZANU-PF. These challenges were coupled by the hunger that people experienced and the biggest opposition parties like the MDC made some people to believe that Tsvangirai was going to be a better messiah-and bread winner than Mugabe. In a bid to punish dissenting voices, Mugabe banned NGOs in areas believed to be opposition strongholds. The ZANU-PF government only formally appealed for urgent food aid just after elections when there was no political threat and when people had become desperate for food. The deliberate ban of NGOs militated against Mugabe's rule fuelling the popularity of Morgan Tsvangirai as possibly a good replacement in shepherding Zimbabweans. The NGOs ban made in 2008 had much to do with Mugabe's first round electoral loss to Morgan Tsvangirai. The ban was lifted after the second round of elections when Mugabe had a one-man race which he obviously emerged as the winner.¹¹⁹

It has become a trend in Zimbabwe that whenever elections are pending, NGOs are labelled as agents used by foreign governments bend on dislodging Mugabe as the legitimate leader of Zimbabwe under the pretext that he was failing to feed his people. The Herald reporter noted that:

A number of NGOs were being used to campaign for MDC in rural areas where President Mugabe has always fed the hungry. The Government has warned that it would not hesitate to cancel licences for those found undertaking political activities instead of focusing on developmental work. Some of these organizations come to you with a packaging which looks good but the contents would be satanic. Do not accept such type of assistance.¹²⁰

In an environment of abject poverty and hunger, who in their right mind would ever turn down food that is freely given? Empty stomachs became the deciding equation to survive hunger than listening to officials who had never slept on an empty stomach. However, the ZANU-PF accusation was confirmed by the fact that, some international food donors were truly opposed to funding feeding programmes to beneficiaries or reset-

¹¹⁹ Cf. *Zimbabwe: NGO Ban starting to bite*, <http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?ReportID=79127>, Accessed online, 28 February 2010

¹²⁰ "State to hand over running of growth points to rural council", The Herald, 16 July 2001

tled farmers who had participated in Zimbabwe's land reform. Several donors had developed a policy not to give aid to resettled farmers, for example, Farm Community Trust Zimbabwe, which was funded by the British government restricted themselves to ex-farm workers.¹²¹ Their deliberate differentiation in feeding ex-farm workers against settled farmers increased tensions between the ZANU-PF led government and the NGOs.

NGOs were condemned as bad agents that are interested in seeing blacks being lowly paid as farm workers. This is despite the role of some NGOs in Zimbabwe, for example, the Christian Care which has been operating in Zimbabwe since 1986 helping in school feeding and garden projects in some districts like Binga. The only image that was created was that the hungry were supposed to appreciate the benevolence and merciful providence of Mugabe, as he had authority over their souls by choosing to allow or withdraw the operations of NGOs. Mugabe was still the messiah in relation to feeding of masses even when he or his government could not provide the food. That which is provided by the NGOs 'symbolically' come from him by virtue of having the power to let them feed or not feed his subjects. In some cases they are reports of food being confiscated by ZANU-PF youths and distributed to ZANU-PF supporters.¹²² Many NGOs are still active members in the inter-sectoral food and nutrition committees and play a leading role in supporting the work of government, for example, besides feeding programmes, they engage in income generating projects that help the poor in rural areas.

The Deconstruction of the Messiahship of Mugabe

As the ZANU-PF officials built an ideology that used religious discourses to portray Mugabe as the messiah, Christian groups and individuals developed strategies to demessianise Mugabe. Some Christian organisations that come to mind are: the Catholic Bishops of Zimbabwe, ZCC, EFZ and the ZCA¹²³ who used the Bible to dismiss the messi-

¹²¹ Cf. Human Rights Watch, *Not Eligible Of Food: The Politicization of food in Zimbabwe*, October Volume 15, 7, 2003, 1

¹²² Cf *Vote Mugabe or Starve to Death*, The Daily News, 20 November 2002

¹²³ ZCA is an association of like-minded Christians who felt that they had been called by

ahship of Mugabe in feeding the hungry. The demessianization approach becomes interesting when related to the great mediaeval period, the Christendom and their struggles to eliminate the 'divine right of kings' and all sacral monarchies so as to secure religio-political toleration and pluralism. The struggle was meant to deal with the new mystiques and mythologies of the totalitarian states of their time.¹²⁴ We find the same attempt being made by Churches to demessianise Mugabe. The ZCA regarded Zimbabwe as operating under a dictatorship where one person declares himself the ruler and his word as the law. Mugabe's rule was the opposite of what Jesus stood for in protecting the poor and the weak.¹²⁵ The Jesus' kingship of humility, justice and power of the cross were used to criticise Mugabe's power.

There were other civic organisations like the NCA that fought from the same corner with the above mentioned Christian groups criticising Mugabe's reign. They pointed to the suffering that people encountered under Mugabe. It was an environment where people became victims of hunger, cholera, and poverty. As a result, Christian leaders facilitated meetings and marches condemning Mugabe. The ZCA facilitated the Save Zimbabwe Campaign which was a forum for civil society, churches and political formations to collaborate on solutions for the multitude of challenges faced by Zimbabwe. They held prayer rallies to pray for the situation and to raise awareness of the issues. Prayer meetings became tools of dethroning Mugabology as breadwinner who had failed his people. Calls were made for the international community to

God to be instrumental in resolving the Zimbabwean crisis. It was founded by church leaders who met in Bulawayo in October 2005 to discuss the worsening situation in the country. The organisation was officially launched on the 3rd of February 2006. The meeting resolved that in order to address the socio-political and humanitarian crisis faced by the nation, a faith-based organization, advocating for national transformation through non-violent means, should be formed. ZCA's prophetic voice was on issues of justice, social transformation and peace that will catalyze social transformation, prophetic proclamation, advocacy and action. Cf. *What is Democracy*, <http://www.zimca.org/news/46-what-is-democracy.html>, Accessed Online, 01 October 2010

¹²⁴ Cf. H W Turner, *The Place of Independent Religious Movements in the Modernization of Africa*, *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Volume 2, 1969, 43-63

¹²⁵ Cf. *What is democracy?*, <http://www.zimca.org/news/46-what-is-democracy.html>, Accessed Online, 01 October 2010

send more food through NGOs to feed the hungry masses.¹²⁶ The call was an admission that the claim of abundance under Mugabology was just shameful rhetoric. The ZCA worked with church leaders in the Southern Africa region to mobilise support and solidarity for the people of Zimbabwe with the message that Mugabe had turned dictatorial and brutal. They disseminated information to people in rural areas which was vital to counteract the government's control of media and dismissed the messianic status that was given to Mugabe.¹²⁷ Critics argue that, President Mugabe was presented as a naked emperor who had lost dignity in the eyes of the Zimbabwean people, a revolutionary hero who had become a villain.

Even if the government managed to have a hold on the state media in disseminating the messiahship of Mugabe, it was clear that people were not impressed by the public transcript of Mugabe. People resorted to the use of private transcript to show their disapproval with Mugabe's rule. The private transcript was in form of graffiti on public buildings, durawalls which were littered with obscene words against Mugabe. There was also a clear public apathy to National events like the: independence celebrations done annually on the 18th of April, heroes celebrations annually done on the 11 and 12th of August; and the Unity Accord celebrations annually done on the 21st of December. The number of Zimbabweans who switched from the electronic media to foreign media channels grew as shown by the number of satellite dishes that were installed on many houses.

Music in Demessianising Mugabology and the Feeding Topic

The majority of the people became increasingly disillusioned by the failure of the government to deliver. Secular and gospel music took the centre stage in mirroring the disillusionment by the populace and their expectations to the Zimbabwean crises. E Chitando observes that, it is dur-

¹²⁶ Cf. *Background to the Zimbabwe Christian Alliance*, <http://www.tearfund.org/News/Zimbabwe/Background+the+Zimbabwean+Christian+Alliance.htm>, Accessed Online, 02 October 2010

¹²⁷ Cf. *Background to the Zimbabwe Christian Alliance*, <http://www.tearfund.org/News/Zimbabwe/Background+the+Zimbabwean+Christian+Alliance.htm>

ing this period that politicians and preachers employed an array of images, songs, pithy sayings and clichés in their repertoires, slogans and myths to capture the prevailing reality.¹²⁸ Realising the popularity that Christianity as a religion holds in Zimbabwe, Christian songs known to praise God and Jesus Christ for the divine providence shown to humanity were changed into praises for Mugabe. The changes to Christian songs were mostly done by the ZANU-PF Youth and Women Leagues mostly at public gatherings, for example, conferences and places where people would be receiving food and farm inputs giving the impression that with President Mugabe at the helm, no one was going to die of hunger. E Chitando made the same observation that:

One song was transformed from 'Handimbochemi kana Jesu aripo' (I will not cry if Jesus is there) to 'Handimbochemi kana VaMugabe varipo' (I will never cry if Mr Mugabe is there).¹²⁹

As long as Mugabe was there, there was no need to cry of hunger. The irony of it was that, this was done despite the fact that Zimbabweans were crying as a result of the deterioration of the economy and scarcity of food. Further to that, the distribution of food was done on partisan grounds making the majority of the deprived to cry. People felt betrayed by Mugabe and the entire government when they compared the first years of independence and the later years of tribulations characterized by: increased poverty and hunger, increased state repression, hate speech; physical, economical, religious, social, institutional and psychological trauma of violence much of it engineered by the state media. There was mounting poverty mainly caused by inflation and sanctions, ill-conceived government policies, shortage of basic commodities, power cuts and fuel shortages. The education and healthy achievements celebrated over soon after independence were now a luxury for the majority of Zimbabweans. Artists like Thomas Mapfumo known in the early years of Zimbabwe's independence for composing songs that depicted

¹²⁸ Cf. E Chitando, 'Down with the Devil, Forward with Christ!', <http://www.codesria.org/IMG/pdf/02Chitando.pdf>, Accessed Online, 28 September 2010

¹²⁹ E Chitando, 'In the Beginning was the Land': the appropriation of religious themes in political discourses in Zimbabwe, *Journal of the International African Institute*, Volume 75, 2, July 2005

Mugabe as the divinely elected messiah who deserved unconditional loyalty from all Zimbabweans changed their perception. For example, in one of Thomas Mapfumo's 1999 albums entitled *Mamvemve* translated 'rags or tatters', Mapfumo puts Zimbabwean people on a memory path of the liberation struggle, Zimbabwe's independence and the euphoria that characterize most Zimbabweans after gaining their independence, yet now the economy was in tatters. As a result of the economical rot, the artist encouraged Zimbabweans to migrate so as to run away from the dictatorship, grinding poverty and hunger. It was dawning to most Zimbabweans that nationalism or the patriotic ideology had failed them and was not the best instrument for Zimbabwe's post-independent challenges.

Christian bodies like the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops of Zimbabwe, CCJP and the ZCA engaged in an unprecedented public critique of Mugabology against deplorable break-down of the rule of law, the growing poverty, economical mismanagement and the reduction of indigenous black Zimbabweans to a life of misery. Such nuanced 'strategic' discourse by Christians and musicians seen in the Zimbabwe public sphere can be likened in Philo, whose *Embassy to Gaius* hails the benefits at first felt by the whole world after the emperor's accession then goes on to detail the depredations of the 'iron-hearted and utterly ruthless' tyrant.¹³⁰ Philo's work used evidence of 'hidden transcripts that previously imagined' to satirically portray those in power, a thing done by Zimbabwean musicians.

Hosiah Chipanga used biblical themes and texts to satirically call for the change of government. In the song 'Daniel', he encouraged Zimbabweans to vote for the opposition so as to save the situation that was current in Zimbabwe.¹³¹ In another album entitled 'Pharaoh', Chipanga (for most critics) likened Mugabe to the biblical Pharaoh who was hard-hearted and caused the suffering of Israelites. As an indication to the economical crises and desperation that people faced, Chipanga la-

¹³⁰ Cf. N Elliott, *Paul and Politics of Empire*, in R A Horsley (eds), *Paul and Politics: Ekklesia, Israel, Imperium, Interpretation; Essays in honor of Krister Stendahl*, Harrisburg: Trinity International Press International, 2000, 33

¹³¹ Cf. H Chipanga 2007, *In the Song called 'Daniel'*.

ments the rich resources that Zimbabwe has but the problem was Pharaoh who took all riches to himself and not empowering the poor and the hungry.¹³² He engages in a religious discourse that incorporates ATR and Christianity by singing:

Tinoda Nehanda akatipa zvingoda	We thank Nehanda for the diamonds
Tinotenda Chaminuka akatipa zvimukute	We thank Chaminuka for giv- ing us gold
Dambudzo rasara ndiPhar- aoh	The stumbling block is Phar- aoh
Kuti tinonge zvatapiwa ne- vadzimu	If we pick what our ancestors have given us
Pharaoh otisunga toenda ku- jeri	Pharaoh arrests us and sends us to jail

Artists questioned the official propagandistic claims of ZANU-PF that Mugabe had been sent by God to enrich every Zimbabwean. Music became the other channel that was used by artists to ‘demessianise’ Mugabe using gospel themes. Instead of taking Mugabe as the ‘new Moses, second son of God’ as claimed by Tony Gara, Simon Muzenda, Oppah Muchinguri and Josiah Hungwe; they disputed that messianic image by refilling the liberation memory with a new narrative that said ‘The Exodus that people thought had happened had in fact not happened’. Rhetorically it implied that Zimbabweans were still in Egypt where food was used in exchange for their loyalty and services.

MDC politicians also appropriated religion to counter the image that was given to Mugabe. The MDC moved around parading a utopian image of Morgan Tsvangirai as a reliable breadwinner and good replacement to turn peoples’ hunger to abundance. The MDC Member of Parliament Paul Madzore lamented the violence and hunger that Zimbabweans were undergoing. In one of the songs ‘*Saddam Hussein*

¹³² Cf. H Chipanga, *Pharaoh*, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zcZP8F6ItBY>, Accessed online, 21 April 2011

Waenda Sare Bob-Saddam Hussein is Gone, We are left with Bob (pseudo-name for Mugabe)'. Madzore likened Mugabe to Saddam Hussein who had been toppled by the American forces.¹³³ In the song as claimed by Madzore, Zimbabweans wanted to be rescued from Mugabe's violence and hunger that had killed many people. In the song, there is exhortation to the American forces to remove Mugabe as people were suffering from his rule. However, such wishes have disastrous results as it gives birth to puppet regimes. Such songs played into the ZANU-PF narrative that regarded Tsvangirai and MDC as fronts of the Western governments. On the other hand, the wishes portray the degree of suffering and frustration that some people had against Mugabe's rule. In another song by Madzore entitled '*Tombana-Little Child or Childish*', there is a reference to Bona, Mugabe's mother, who is regarded as having given birth to the enemy of the country who behaves like a small child and trains the youth to kill their parents.¹³⁴ The song seems to counter the narrative that likened Mugabe to Jesus hence Bona to Mary, by virtue of giving birth to Mugabe. MDC and protest musicians also adopted popular Christian Hymns sung in the majority of Churches and changed the lyrics lambasting Mugabe as a bad agent that wanted to exterminate the Zimbabwean population through hunger. Tsvangirai replaced Jesus and Mugabe in the MDC protest music. Much of the Zimbabwe gospel music that emerged as from 2000 lamented about the hunger under Mugabe's rule. The lyrics of the songs showed a nation that was in difficulties awaiting God's redemption for people to escape from the trap of hunger and death.

According to G Gwekwerere, much of the gospel music during this period became an important political resource which conscientised and mobilized people against Mugabe's rule.¹³⁵ Christian artists were also reflecting on the dominant thinking of the Zimbabwean populace

¹³³ Cf. P Madzore, *Saddam Waenda kwasara Bob*, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oNCWWxkSZ5k>, Accessed Online, 04 October 2010

¹³⁴ Cf. P Madzore, *Tombana*, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uHbGpFU1KA8&feature=related>, Accessed Online 04 October 2010

¹³⁵ Cf. G Gwekwerere, *The Evolution of Zimbabwean Gospel Music*, <http://upetd.up.ac.za/thesis/available/etd05092010211059/unrestricted/02chapters4-5.pdf>, Accessed Online, 04 October 2010

and the international community about the leadership of Mugabe, that he was no longer the messiah and breadwinner that ZANU-PF protagonists wanted to portray. Gospel artists like Fungisai Zvakavapano also expressed the economical hardships that were faced by the people in her song entitled '*Kurarama Inyasha*-To Live is by God's Grace'. She lamented the ever-rising cost of bread and encouraged Christians to wait upon the Lord. Mercy Mutsvene, another gospel artist also lamented the hardships and hunger of the time in Zimbabwe. For some gospel artists like Ivy Kombo, Pastor Gwanzura, and Charles Charamba, the food crises that Zimbabweans experienced needed the nation to prayerfully repent so as to overcome against the spiritual forces that were hindering the economical progress; possibly a sign of despondence and defeat in the face of mounting crises.

Prayer as a Tool of Protest against Mugabology, Hunger and Poverty

It was common amongst the ordinary Christians to resort to the use of prayer for God to intervene than openly confronting or fighting against Mugabe. Prayer just like music became their important tool to politically ask God for providence since Mugabe had failed to provide for them. In other cases, Christian believers prayed for the electoral loss of ZANU-PF and Mugabe in any public elections. On the other hand, ZANU-PF followers and sympathisers were praying for Mugabe's long life as well as the electoral victory of ZANU-PF. The Zimbabwean space is always a battle ground for political parties where prayer is used to fight prayer depending on one's political orientation. In certain ZANU-PF gatherings, slogans were declared prayerfully pleading with God to take Tsvangirai and as well bury the MDC. Slogans like 'Pasi naTsvangirai or Down with Tsvangirai'. And the audience would respond by saying 'Dai Mwari amutura-We wish God could take him'. Tsvangirai and MDC to ZANU-PF and its followers were the sources of the chaos, problems, hunger and poverty in Zimbabwe. Critics of ZANU-PF and Mugabe had their own prayer. Some Christian leaders went to the extent of praying for the death of Mugabe as publicly declared by the former Catholic Archbishop Pius Ncube. Archbishop Pius Ncube argued that, he was

praying for the death of Mugabe because he had caused the suffering and hunger of many Zimbabweans.¹³⁶ There are areas like Matebeleland where the Daily News reported that ‘prayers became full-blooded politics and congregations became anti-ZANU-PF political communities’.¹³⁷ It appears prayers became a tool for the weak to use in privacy against the strong and those in power. Prayer was a private transcript that believers could evoke in their private bedrooms, rooms and possibly say quietly so as not to be detected and get arrested.

Future Messiah and the Feeding Topic in Zimbabwe

Due to insurmountable problems, Zimbabweans were encouraged to look forward to another messiah who was going to come and liberate them from the post-colonial imprisonment. For some people, Tsvangirai became the future reliable bread-winner who was going to faithfully liberate them and at the same time feed them as done by the biblical Moses and Jesus. This was shown by Bikita villagers in Masvingo, who heckled Titus Maluleke, ZANU-PF Provincial Governor, when he indicated that Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai’s national food assessment tour had been ordered by President Robert Mugabe. Titus Maluleke said:

Yes the Prime Minister was here to assess the food situation but the Prime Minister was just an emissary send by the President who will look for the food.¹³⁸

The Bikita villagers feeling betrayed for a long time claimed their faith in Morgan Tsvangirai and retorted by saying that:

Sit down you are lying to us, Mugabe is a liar who has been lying to us that he can feed us for the past 30 years. We know Save (Tsvangirai’s totem) will deliver food to us, he is the people’s leader not you, sit down. We do not need your food, we only know Tsvangirai as our messiah who

¹³⁶ Cf. *Zimbabweans Slam Ncube’s Attitude*, The Herald, 13 September 2007

¹³⁷ Cf. “*Mugabe threatens Archbishop*”, Daily News, 3 July 2000

¹³⁸ *Bikita Irate Villagers Brand Mugabe a Liar*, <http://www.news.radiovop.com>, Accessed Online, 19 March 2010

will give us food as he promised. What is something new can you tell us now when you have been lying to us for the past 30 years?¹³⁹

The villagers overlooked the biblical implication of regarding Mugabe as a liar (John 8:44). Feeding for the villagers was the quality that measured one as messiah or not. As a result of the hunger they underwent, Mugabe had ceased to be one. However, some people still saw a messiah in Mugabe whereas others looked beyond Mugabe and Tsvangirai for a messiah who was going to genuinely serve and empower people as Tsvangirai for them had proved to be incapable of replacing Mugabe. The corruption charges and allegations against MDC officials ever since they became partners in the unity government led some people to realize how politicians behave when they get power and access to resources. It is their political slogans, promises and lifestyles that keep on changing whereas the welfare of the poor does not change.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented the rhetoric that was built on Mugabe as the 'suffering messiah'. The selective feeding became the norm in rewarding faithful followers and punishing those who were perceived as enemies of the 'messiah'. The period was characterized by an attempt to sacralise the authority, office and person of Mugabe in the face of legitimacy challenges to his presidency. The nationalist, patriotic ideology and Mugabology built after independence was no longer sticking as a result of rampant corruption, economic mismanagement and populist policies that stocked hunger and poverty amongst Zimbabweans. The empowerment of the poor with land did not achieve much. The empowerment lacked enough emotional stability to lessen the poverty and hunger of the poor. Formerly underprivileged groups like women, farm workers and the disabled did not benefit much from the land reform as one would have expected, if it was in the case of Jesus. In fact, what President Mugabe did was just opening the Pandora box and losing control of it in the tragic attempt to maintain power and the loyalty of peo-

¹³⁹ *Bikita Irate Villagers Brand Mugabe a Liar*, <http://www.news.radiovop.com>, Accessed Online, 19 March 2010

ple. The hungry poor ended up being the worst losers as they were awarded with more hunger and poverty whereas the elite were the empowered winners and looters, making Mugabology and the feeding topic remain complex to tackle. The grinding and humiliating poverty was daily seen on the faces of people. The voices of the crying poor were drowned only to be heard in their prayers at Church and in their private bedrooms.

What people heard in response to their plight were the voices of the powerful dominating the media with Mugabological messianic declarations. ZANU-PF officials turned to the messianic propaganda to save Mugabe's dwindling popularity. Feeding became an important tool for the consolidation and retention of political power. In addition, feeding became an open reward to loyal ZANU-PF supporters. The feeding done by NGOs in the ten years of multiple crises was manipulated in Mugabe's favour as the state had nothing to offer to the hungry masses. On the other hand, NGOs and opposition groupings like the MDC used food to demessianise Mugabology by rewarding opposition followers and denying food to known ZANU-PF supporters. It was really painful for the communal peasants who have no other means of income. In such circumstances, it looks like rulers are happy when there are many disempowered people who are poor and hungry as this translates to their hold on power. The feeding of the masses besides having a moral basis has much to do with control and consolidation of power. It has become a trend with Zimbabwean politicians across the political divide to take hunger and the poverty of people as ammunition for political manipulation in their quest for the political throne. With such political dynamics in feeding, how can Jesus' messiahship and his feeding of the multitude help to sanitise the secular concept of political power and the feeding topic? This leads us to the next chapter that conclusively looks at Mugabology, ancient kingship and Christology.

PART IV: CONCLUSIONS: CHRISTOLOGY VS. MUGABOLOGY

CHAPTER 1: JESUS' MESSIAHSHIP AS UNIQUE

This chapter is the first part of the conclusion. It uses the comparison to relate the messiahship of Jesus to ancient forms of kingship and Mugabology. Jesus' kingship and feeding is a desacralizing, de-post-colonising and demessianising force when put against any other form of authority. Any discussion on the kingship of Jesus is not complete if emphasis is only put on the duty of feeding without looking at the messiahship of Jesus from a soteriological perspective. It is possible to liken Jesus' messiahship to other forms of kingship as long as one starts and ends that debate on the duties and virtues of kingship. Yet such an undertaking would not help much as it misses the other side of the coin when it comes to Jesus' messiahship in the light of kingship in general. To ignore the soteriological role of Jesus in spiritually redeeming humanity is a noticeable trend with most politicians, political activists and political apologists who find Jesus' messiahship a willing pony in their comparison of certain political leaders as messianic like Jesus. It is our informed belief that, any debate on the messiahship of Jesus must include his suffering, death and resurrection. The suffering and death of Jesus let alone his resurrection seals any debate on Jesus' kingship and the feeding topic.

Understanding the Messiahship of Jesus and Its Desacralization Power

The kingship of Jesus might have had certain general virtues to do with kingship as in the case of: ANE, Jewish, Hellenistic, Roman, Shona and Mugabology. This includes Jesus' desire for justice, peace, prosperity, abundance of life and his act of feeding the hungry. The misconception of Jesus as a full-time politician has been clearly exposed in this study by the gospel evangelists particularly in the gospel of John (John 6:15). The same label of Jesus as a political messiah is generally popular with Zimbabwean politicians in particular ZANU-PF strategists. This is despite the fact that, during the fight for the liberation struggle of Zimbabwe, guerrilla fighters and the political leadership of the time nursed suspi-

cion of Christianity as: alien, alienating and unhelpful in bringing democracy to Zimbabwe. It is important to note that, any comparison between Jesus and Mugabe may sound the craziest thing to do considering that African concepts of messiahship in broad do not exist.¹ Generally Zimbabwean Christians feel uncomfortable with such a comparison as their understanding of Jesus kingship is spiritually the other and not political. Even though Jesus is put in the rank of kings as attempted in this study, his kingship presents a paradox as compared to ancient kings and contemporary rulers in the sense that, Jesus was a victim of the political and religious systems of his time throughout his ministry. What is additionally controversial is that, Jesus remains the victim today and in future when he stands on the side of believers in tribulations (Eph.2:14-22). Jesus was a weak and abused king who was easily abused by other kings and did not fight for the stool of authority. Even though Jesus performed some duties that were deemed kingly related; the nature and character of Jesus' kingship was different.² Jesus suffered on behalf of the sins of humanity by carrying the cross as well as being crucified.

In fact, as a rival to the Roman emperor, Jesus promises real peace and life, the signs that he performed clearly showed that he really delivered and kept his promise. The Roman emperor represented all secular authority (paganic, ANE, Hellenistic and Shona traditions) in the judgement of Jesus. The two basic fundamental characteristics of Jesus' messiahship that politicians need to be reminded about is that, Jesus incarnated a loving and just God. Christ took the full penalty of peoples' sins at the cross though he had not committed any sin. Any attempt to associate Jesus' kingship let alone Christianity with the powerful and the rich as attempted by some politicians is a clear failure to understand what Jesus' messiahship entailed. Jesus' life and ministry epitomised a life of poverty as he identified with the oppressed and the hungry. There are cases when Mugabe was rhetorically portrayed in the Zimbabwean media as having suffered, persecuted and 'died' for Zimbabweans and Zimbabweans were called upon to reciprocate by giving unconditional

¹ Cf. J S Mbiti, "Some African Concepts of Christology" in G F Vicedom (eds), *Christ and the Younger Churches*, London: SPCK, 1972, 51

² Cf. Manus, *Christ, the African King*, 233

loyalty to him.³ It is true that Mugabe suffered and contributed a lot to the liberation of Zimbabwe as well as to feeding programmes in Zimbabwe. However, Mugabe's liberation of Zimbabwe is highly political despite attempts to literally convert messiahship of Jesus to the permanent rule of Mugabe. On the other hand, Mugabology and the feeding of the masses though in some cases linked to filling the stomachs of the hungry and poor people is in most cases linked to the parochial retention of political power. The giving of food in most cases is all about buying the loyalty of the hungry people and to some extent not improving their welfare. Yet Jesus' messiahship and feeding of the masses have both physical and spiritual dimension to do with the liberation of the poor and never the legitimation of the powerful.

Jesus' messiahship and feeding was more than royal charity feeding as manifested in his suffering, death and resurrection. If Jesus' death is put at the political realm, it exposed the kind of kingship that Jesus represented (a king who does not have political power as understood by the secular world) and the kind of kingdom that God envisaged to see on earth. Jesus' kingship was of a higher realm. The evangelist John argues that through Jesus (the logos) all things were made and without him nothing was made that has been made (John 1:3). It is only through Jesus that the gift of food as well as the eternal life from God can be realised (Rom. 6:23). Jesus' earthly ancestry showed to the worldly kingdoms that there was an alternative rule of God (kingdom of God) which was better than the worldly one and to which the kingdom of the world must submit and bow. Jesus' messiahship is the kind of kingship where God desires fellowship with His creatures hence what the cross is all about. The aspect of fellowship with servants is foreign to ancient kings and contemporary political leadership. The distance between the political leadership as known of kings and their people is wiped away when it comes to Jesus' kingship. People have direct fellow-

³ Cf. *Chiefs want President Mugabe for Life*, The Sunday Mail, 31 October 2010; See also, *ZANU-PF endorses Mugabe for Life-Presidency*, The Standard, 24 October 2010; *Be Your Own Bosses, President tells nation*, The Herald, 29 October 2010; *ZANU-PF Women's League for President Mugabe*, The Sunday Mail, 17 October 2010; See Appendix 27, 28 and 29

ship with God and humanity through the kingship of Jesus; issues of class, gender, identity, tribe and proximity to corridors of power are destroyed (1 John 1:7). Jesus' role is a reversal of what was commonly understood in relation to the person, office and duties of the king as people of power in the above traditions understudy. Jesus' desacralizing role tallied with the mentality of Israelite prophets, that even though rulers had their authority sacralized or put at the spiritual plane; they were mere mortals among fellow mortals and could be summoned by prophets and reminded of the accountability they were expected of by God.⁴ The kingship of Jesus de-sacralizes anything to do with the secular understanding of authority. Jesus' kingship did not originate from the world of people as shown by his lack of an army to protect him as done to ancient kings let alone contemporary political leaders like Mugabe. Jesus chose a low profile life that identified with the poor, a contradiction to secular political leaders who rhetorically claim to identify and fight for the poor when in actual fact their actions identify and serve the powerful elite.

Corruption and immunity of the elite is testimony to where the allegiance of ancient kings and contemporary leaders belong. The low profile life of Jesus is abundantly clear in his ministry that was tendentious in targeting the materially poor, the sick (John 5-Healing pool; John 9-Healing of the Blind man), raising their dead (John 11:38-Lazarus), pardoning the sinners (Mt 18:21; Lk 23:34) and feeding the hungry (John 6). Jesus' kingship and ministry served the whole society particularly the powerless and hungry. The powerful were not comfortable in the presence of Jesus, something that could have been the same with contemporary political leaders. Jesus exposed the charlatanistic tendencies of the religious and political leaders in relation to the poor. Jesus ushered in the reign of God that confirmed the kind of kingship bestowed upon him. By so doing, Jesus was presenting a paradox kingship that depicted a king and at the same time a servant, hence making it become a distinct servant-King-Christology. Further to that, Jesus fed the hungry and healed the sick for no cost, but did not engage in welfa-

⁴ Cf. Frankfurt, *Kingship and the Gods*, 36

rist or charity services as a campaign tool for any political office. His kingship did not need him to be voted into office. In the ancient and modern world of politics, welfarist help to the poor is a political investment that political investors expect to reap political goods such as loyalty, legitimacy and votes. It is a trap that the poor and hungry cannot escape if they want to survive the brutality of hunger.

It is then not surprising that, Jesus' Kingdom of God message was misunderstood and his kingship got perceived as politically ambitious, considering that welfarist undertakings by rulers have never been politically neutral. Jesus tried to correct the wrong perception of taking his kingship as political in John 18: 36 when he responded to Pilate by saying that 'My kingship is not of this world; if my kingship were of this world, my servants would fight, that I might not be handed over to the Jews; but my kingship is not of this world'. Jesus' statement led L H Marshall, W Lillie and A H M'Neile to argue that:

Jesus never dabbed himself in politics but remained aloof despite the attractions of the Zealot policy. Jesus' focus was affirmed as having been that of bestowing religious and moral principles, hence had no time for 'crass politics' of his time.⁵

It is important to note, Jesus' statement did not imply that he had nothing to do with the world affairs but implied that, Jesus' conception of power was not in the political sense as held by Pilate and others. Jesus never sought a seat in the Sanhedrin or served in the civil service or become involved in palace intrigues or guerrilla warfare.⁶ Besides all the above dynamics, Jesus was still viewed as a threat to the political rulers of his time as a result of the biggest constituency that had become sympathetic to his teachings.

Pilate claimed in John 19:10 that he had the 'power either to free or to crucify' Jesus, a pointer to the sacralization of the political au-

⁵ L H Marshall, *The Challenge of New Testament Ethics*, London: SCM Press Ltd, 1946, 149; See also, W Lillie, *Studies in the New Testament Ethics*, London: SCM Press Ltd, 1961, 90; A M'Neile, *The Gospel According to St Matthew*, London: SCM Press Ltd, 1957, 12

⁶ Cf. M J Borg, *Conflict, Holiness and Politics in the Teachings of Jesus*, New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1984, 6

thority of the empire. It was also a common characteristic of secular authority. Pilate was indicating the authority that he represented, that is, the supreme rule of the Roman emperor in administering the imperial rule. He had power to give or terminate one's life. In the eyes of Pilate, Jesus fell under his jurisdictional power and control. On the other hand, Jesus' response to Pilate disclaims that as authority does not reside with mortal beings but resides and belongs only to God (John 19:11). L Barnabas adds that:

Pilate's uneasiness in the presence of Jesus can be accounted for as indicating that Pilate, in his attempt to exert his authority by ascribing 'to himself almost the divine prerogative which is actually true of Jesus', only discovers that 'he is confronted with one who is himself the source of all authority. The tables are turned and Pilate is judged by the one whom he judges'.⁷

Jesus' response to Pilate is an encouragement to the weak or powerless today that, people need not be seduced into whatever rulers' ideology or personality cultism. Jesus' response de-sacralized the sacredness associated with the Empire and the Emperor's power vested and represented by Pilate. The de-sacralization included every worldly authority. This must be good news to human rights activists that, if the political system is oppressive and dehumanising, Jesus becomes the model in confronting such systems.

Jesus knew where actual authority emanated from and he was contrasting the visible signs of the 'lordship' and 'divine sonship' known by Pilate in view of the Emperor. Yet it was Cicero's favourite themes that Roman hegemony 'was ordained by the gods, whose favour Rome had deserved by piety and justice', the gods had implanted in the Roman people 'a love of peace and tranquillity which enable justice and good faith most easily to flourish in the whole world'.⁸ Jesus showed that, his condition of unfair trial pointed to the authority that was abusive, manipulative and not saving the people. This was despite the power of the Empire and the long-standing claim in imperial theology, ideology and propaganda that the emperor was the saviour who established salvation

⁷ B Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, London: Oliphants, 1972, 568

⁸ Cf. Elliott, *Paul and Politics of the Empire*, 30

for everybody.⁹ Jesus' ill-treatment also represents the conditions that the present victims of dictatorship come across in different parts of the world.

Jesus might have had no tangible political power, but he represented the power of God. He was not to be intimidated by Pilate. According to K Bediako,

Pilate's authority, as that of the earthly Empire, like all human authority, is delegated; its source is not divine and therefore it is arbitrary power, which can be exercised capriciously without moral blame.¹⁰

In the presence of Jesus' kingship, all secular authority gets dethroned. Representation of Pilate is also a reminder to apologists who take Jesus as having advocated for an unconditional surrender of loyalty to those in power as in the case of Zimbabwe (Romans 13:16). Jesus' authority is not there to confirm any worldly authority. In Jesus' perspective, if it was not the imperial support that Pilate got, he would not be in a position to try Jesus. The crowd even reminded Pilate against changing his mind in favour of Jesus by charging that 'If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar' (John 19:12). Pilate had to take that charge quite seriously to preserve his job and authority. In the end portraying the typical quest and hunger for power by secular political leaders. The evangelist John displays an interesting picture about Jesus that, even though Jesus was literally on trial before the Jewish and Roman authorities, it repeatedly becomes clear in reverse that at the spiritual and moral level, they were the ones on trial before him. Jesus' kingship presents a paradox that people fail to acknowledge when they dare compare him with their secular leaders.

The Paradox in Jesus' Messiahship: Suffering, Death and Resurrection

The paradoxical question of Jesus' kingship in relation to his conception of political power and authority is further best conveyed by his carrying of the cross, his open acceptance of death at the hands of Pilate (John

⁹ Cf. Smith, "Unmasking the Powers", 61

¹⁰ Bediako, *De-Sacralization and Democratization*, 5-11

19:1-24). Jesus' willingness to suffer, though guiltless and innocent becomes the ultimate clue to his perception of power and political authority. Pilate and Herod Antipas, the tetrarch of Judea found no official charges against Jesus. Pilate is reported in the gospels as having given in to the public demands by finally handing over Jesus to be harshly flogged and crucified (Mt 27:11-55, Mk 15:1ff, Lk 23:1ff, John 19:1ff and 1Peter 2:24). Herod Antipas in the Synoptic Gospels represented a type of rule with a 'domination and control of space' against which Jesus possibly was regarded as protesting against when he preached about the Kingdom of God and also helping the weak. The economic policies that were represented by Herod had resulted in the socio-economic pressures and consequences on the peasant population.¹¹ As the peasant population painstakingly suffered, Herod and the political elite enjoyed life from their sweat.

Herod Antipas was very unpopular with the suffering masses making Jesus become an automatic irritant to the systems of power in Galilee, based on Antipas' administration, on the temple and Torah, as well as traditions and structures of authority in village and household.¹² It is therefore quite likely that Antipas and his group watched Jesus with some appreciation when he became well-known in Galilee.¹³ Jesus had the sort of power that was difficult to define for Pilate and Herod Antipas, though it is obvious that Jesus could hardly be regarded as a competitor to Antipas. On most occasions, Jesus speeches were construed as imaginations about the kingdom and ways to organize the world under God that were critical of the present order, for example, when he contrasted the present 'kingdom' against the 'kingdom of God' (John 19:11).¹⁴ For Jesus, the present world and its leadership had failed to create a home for all the people. The poor had been made to become servants to the rich (yet Jesus' kingship is not) and further to that, the political leaders had become friends of the elite (political, economical

¹¹ Cf. H Moxnes, *Putting Jesus in Context: A Radical Vision of the Household and Kingdom*, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003, 138

¹² Cf. Moxnes, *Putting Jesus in Context*, 139

¹³ Cf. J Murphy-O'Connor, "John the Baptist and Jesus: History and Hypothesis", *NTS* 36, 1990, 371-72

¹⁴ Cf. Moxnes, *Putting Jesus in Context*, 154

and religious). It is in this light that, John is fond of presenting facts in a dualistic manner, for example, 'the world above and the world below, light and darkness, life and death' a pointer to how bad the world was. Jesus showed further that, the world hated him because it was subsumed by another spiritual force (John 11:18-19). Jesus presence represented light, life and the dominion of God, the opposite of what was offered by the world. The punishment and suffering of Jesus naturally exposed the harshness and cruelty of worldly authority when feeling threatened.

The Suffering and Death of Jesus Desacralizes all Secular Authority

The way of suffering was part and parcel of Jesus' messiahship and the suffering motif consolidated his messiahship. The followers of Jesus are also expected to suffer the same treatment as worldly kingship mostly did not serve the interests of all the people particularly the poor and weak (John 16: 1-4). In all cases, Jesus stands with those who are suffering. The suffering of Jesus characterizes the paradox of his kingship as it was not in tune with the common understanding of kingship. The contrast between Jesus' death and those who tried him was a contrast between the justice of God and the utter injustice and impiety of human society with its secular leadership. The injustices that characterises the world also demean the messiahship that is generally accorded to Mugabe, where besides conditionally helping the poor; political opponents are also denied justice, being imprisoned for months and even years without trial where opposition supporters get beaten up, deprived of food and exposed to hunger.

John 19:1-42 dramatically presents Jesus being mocked, denied food, flogged, arrested, judged, and executed. Jesus in fact was a victim of a brutal regime. The Roman soldiers metaphorically mocked Jesus by placing a robe on his shoulders, a crown of thorns on his head, and a wooden staff as a sceptre in his right hand but reversed it by striking him on the head with a wooden staff and tearing his robe. Jesus suffered physical and mental abuse from both the Jews and the Romans, gener-

ally contributing to his weakened status as king.¹⁵ All these actions were too humiliating for a king and even imagining it happening to a secular president. The paradoxical nature of Jesus' messiahship is that he acquired it through his suffering and death on the cross and remains the perplexion when related to any concept of kingship.¹⁶ The nature of Jesus' kingship would not make sense at all if the aspect of suffering for the cause of other people is not emphasized. The irony of it is that, when suffering is emphasized on Jesus' kingship, it does not fit in the vocabulary and world view known by kings. His suffering made him a servant to the burden of other people.

Death by crucifixion was one of the brutal forms of execution humanity ever devised and was one of the most shame-filled punishments of antiquity only exemptible for Roman citizens but could be applied to soldiers who would have deserted the army. It was a form of punishment generally reserved for the worst of slaves, insurrectionists or foreigners' revolutionaries and the vilest of criminals.¹⁷ Yet Jesus was exposed to crucifixion. Jesus' carrying of the cross and death prudently exposes the otherness of his messiahship and puts to test how worldly authorities can run to excesses when falsely threatened by innocent civilians. On the Roman political and religious front, the death on the cross of potential rivals proclaimed the triumph of Rome and her gods. It also heralded the powerful control that the Emperor had over life and death.¹⁸ For the Jews, death by crucifixion was equivalent to 'hanging on a tree' hence the victim of hanging was condemned as accursed by God (Deut.21:22-23). From all the angles: ANE, Hellenistic, Roman, Jewish and the Shona perspectives, the death of Jesus cannot be associated with kings or those in the corridors of power. Kings are there to punish, crucify, flog, and pass judgements not the reverse as in the case of Jesus. In the Roman scenario, someone condemned to suffer this kind of death

¹⁵ Cf. W D Edwards, M D Wesley and J Gabel, *On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ*, <http://www.theapologiaproject.org/ON%20THE%20PHYSICAL%20DEATH%20OF%20JESUS%20CHRIST.pdf>, Accessed Online, 01 November 2010

¹⁶ Cf. Manus, *Christ, the African King*, 237

¹⁷ Cf. M Hengel, *Crucifixion in the Ancient World and the Folly of the Message of the Cross*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977, 22-45

¹⁸ Cf. B Salier, *Jesus, the Emperor, and the Gospel According to John*, 301

had to carry his crossbar where his arms were later to be affixed either with nails through his wrists or by tying them with ropes.¹⁹ As a result of the crucifixion, Jesus died on the cross as a weak and helpless criminal, something not befitting a ruler. It would have been ironic to find the king's body being exposed to birds and predatory animals. The irony of it is that, the titulus which were affixed above the cross in three languages for all people to read referred to the kingship that Jesus' death so ingloriously appears to discredit (John 19:20).

The cross reversed all kingship ideals, virtues and clearly demonstrated that the kingship of Jesus was truly the other. In this sense, Jesus' carrying of the cross de-sacralized all worldly powers, institutions and structures that rule human existence and history: family, nation, social class, race, law, politics, economy, religion, culture, tradition, custom, ancestral spirits by stripping them of any pretensions to ultimacy.²⁰ The social meaning of the cross illuminates the rather unfamiliar terminology of 'principalities and powers' and their related expressions in the NT. Behind the principalities terminology lies all the institutions and structures responsible for shaping history, human social relations and way of life. Hopefully it is possible to see how the social meaning of the religious terminology of the NT can have relevance to the problems of the modern world'.²¹ What motivates us is that, on the crucifixion of Jesus there were three crosses: the genuine cross of Jesus and the false crosses of the two crooks possibly represented by the modern political elites. They are the notorious Barabbas of today (Mt 27:16) who claim to represent the poor but in real life it appears otherwise. By and large most Zimbabwean political, economical and religious elites get rich by taking what is meant for the majority poor. They 'root out the teeth of

¹⁹ Cf. C L Blomberg, *Jesus and the Gospels: An Introduction and Survey*, Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1997, 346

²⁰ Cf. J H Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, Grand Rapids: W M B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972, 134

²¹ Cf. H Berkhof, *Christ and the Powers*, Scottdale: Herald Press, 1962, 87; See also, W Wink, *Naming the Powers: The Invisible Forces that Determine Human Existence*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1986; J H Busia, *African in Search of Democracy*; K Bediako, *Africa and Christianity on the Threshold of the Third Millennium: The Religious Dimension*, *Journal of African Affairs*, 2000, Volume 99, 303-323

the poor and eat on their behalf. It appears most political elites survive on the plight of the poor and hungry, a phenomenon which Jesus begrudged.

Jesus identified his actions with the kingdom of God and his justice in a world dominated by evil and greed powers. His claim that the kingdom was present must be understood as a claim that the power of God was present in Galilee, the realm of Satan and the realm of God were presented as fighting over that territory.²² Jesus' kingship was there to bring light to a world infested with darkness. Jesus confirms it in John 16:33 'I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble'. It is from this perspective that, Mugabology cannot be taken as able to offer any better light, peace and security than that of Jesus considering the egoistic nature of humanity to expect to be served by the weak, hungry and poor. Yet in reverse, Jesus was an agent and representative of the weak and poor people without political power to make other people his servants.

Jesus' messiahship offers a paradigm shift to the world order where the one supposed to be served was the one serving. In John 13:1-20, Jesus is presented washing the feet of his disciples as a sign of humility. Washing the grime from sandal-clad feet that had walked dusty roads was a common courtesy by a host for his meal guests, but it was normally assigned to the most menial of slaves.²³ Jesus in this case made the initiative though disciples were the ones who were expected to do so to their leader. Jesus' washing of the disciples' feet displayed his servant ministry. The feet washing also displayed and taught his audience about spiritual cleansing.²⁴ The lowliness of Jesus' kingship is also shown in his triumphant entry into Jerusalem (John 12:12-17) riding on a young donkey. A donkey is known as a humble and peaceful animal; a mark associated with Jesus as a humble and powerless king thereby demeaning the status known of rulers. A donkey was a peasant mode of transportation not popular with kings who used horses. The humility of

²² Cf. Moxnes, *Putting Jesus in His Place*, 140

²³ Cf. Blomberg, *Jesus and the Gospels*, 332

²⁴ Cf. C H Talbert, *Reading John*, New York: Crossroad, 1990, 196

Jesus is important in understanding his kingship in the face of secular power.

The humility of Jesus can also be noticed through the dove on his baptismal enthronement. M Peppard regards the dove reported on Jesus' baptism as an omen and counter-symbol to the Roman eagle.²⁵ The eagle was a public potent of divine favour, election, and ascension to imperial power. Suetonius, Roman historian, describes how an eagle was an omen of Domitian's victory over Lucius Antonius.²⁶ Eagles were common omens in the Roman world view and indicated providential favour on the person of the emperor and his accession to power. An eagle and a dove are contrasting pair of birds; doves always flee fearfully from eagles hence a juxtaposition of the usual natural enemies where on the one hand there is the mighty predator against the timeous victim. The eagle represented warlike, omen of victory, and divine power, military mightiness and Roman imperial ideology as the super-power whereas the dove represented by Jesus was a counter-symbol of fear, powerlessness, weakness and non-violence. Nations that violently and militarily invade other nations are represented by the eagle, a symbol of injustice and unrighteousness.²⁷ So the usual militaristic and welfarist perspective given by modern politicians to Jesus' messiahship is misplaced as Jesus disavowed militarism and his welfarist ventures were not meant for the retention of power as in the case of world politics. The dove as a desacralizing omen make Jesus a counter-emperor or king who does not seek to rule in the spirit of a bellicose eagle but in the spirit of the pure, gentle, peaceful, weak and sacrificial dove.²⁸ The dove omen effected the accession of a different son of God whose socialization with the people and political leaders of his time was to bestow lasting peace that was against exploitation, abuse and ill-treatment of weak, poor and hungry people.

Jesus differed from the other Jewish groups of his time in terms of how he related to his context that was characterized by foreign subju-

²⁵ Cf. Peppard, *The Eagle and the Dove*, 431-451

²⁶ Cf. Peppard, *The Eagle and the Dove*, 431-451

²⁷ Cf. H Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, London: Routledge, 1994, 86

²⁸ Cf. Peppard, *The Eagle and Dove*, 431-451

gation, poverty, hunger and disease. Jesus differed from the Essenes who chose to be aloof to the day to day issues by withdrawing themselves into the desert to preserve their religious purity and a highly disciplined monastic style of life. Jesus also differed from the Sadducees as well the Herodians who collaborated with the Roman occupying forces. Jesus' way was neither like the Pharisees who thought of politically segregating themselves by being pre-occupied with intense religious observances that required a separation within society or the Zealots who sought to overturn the Roman rule as revolutionaries by installing a new political order.²⁹ In fact, the Herodians, the Pharisees and local scribes enjoyed a standard of living above that of the lower levels of society as a result of identifying with the governing class and its interests.³⁰ Yet Jesus shamed all those niceties of life by deliberately choosing to side with victims of poverty and hunger. The context of Jesus' ministry and the kingship associated with him in the gospels' writings can be understood in the context of conflict in the first-century Palestine.³¹ It is in that context of the violent death of Jesus as a political criminal that the mode of the cross can then be understood along the lines of conflict yet with Jesus showing the important features of the type of leader he was in the face of violence from the powerful authorities. Therefore struggle for the democracy of the stomach in Africa let alone in Zimbabwe can be interesting when it gives room for the 'way of Jesus' which was some kind of 'non-dominating power' in the political arrangements under which members of society and nation related to each other.

The mind and actions of Jesus when related to the politics and power issues as shown in his carrying of the cross is neither a dominating mind nor a self-pleasing nor self-asserting mind but rather a saving mind, a redemptive mind and a servant mind. Jesus was not interested in pleasing himself as in Romans 15:3 'For Christ did not please himself'.³² Jesus was a revolutionary whose mandate was to fully liberate the

²⁹ Cf. Borg, *Conflict, Holiness and Politics in the Teachings of Jesus*, 57

³⁰ Cf. G Lenski, *Power and privilege: A Theory of Social Stratification*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966, 245

³¹ Cf. Borg, *Conflict, Holiness and Politics in the Teachings of Jesus*, 2

³² Cf. Bediako, *De-Sacralization and Democratization*, 5-11

people and bestow them with power. Yet our contemporary African leaders can be revolutionaries but once they get power they keep it to themselves as done by ancient kings. Jesus' servant ministry moved away from the old mode of entrenchment of power as shown by his refusal to be made a political king after the feeding duty (John 6:15). The age old world politics is known for using resources like food and land to ambush the poor and the hungry but this was not the case with Jesus. Further to that, Jesus accepted suffering as a way to receiving his crown. His humiliation in the passion narratives did not rob him of his messiahship status but led to exaltation hence an anti-thesis of what is expected of respected kings. When rulers get humiliated, they lose status and respect. Malina and Neyrey argue that:

The fact that Jesus' kingship is rejected through the carrying of the cross does not imply that his kingship is not real and true. The important thing is that, in this way Jesus embodies the pattern of a king who is rejected by his own people, a ruler who is truly a servant, and the first who becomes the last.³³

U Manus rightly states that, inspite of sacral statuses associated with earthly kingship, they still pass away and create vacancies on the throne which, many a time are hotly contested by rivals.³⁴ Rather than just focusing on the duty of feeding as defining kingship, there is need to look at other factors of kingship and messiahship. Rulers feed their people for political reasons and not out of love.

Jesus kingship' helps in the search for the true humanity where rulers respect their subjects. Further to that, even though Jesus died and was buried, he rose from the dead and appeared to his disciples (John 21 and 1 Cor.15:1-11) confirming the irreplaceable perpetuity of his kingship with no successors to it. Yet ancient kings died but did not physically resurrect even though they were mummified in case of Egypt and some Shona kings. Mugabe's death will not be interpreted as redemptive, glorifying and sacrificial to Zimbabweans and the world at large. Jesus' death is the ultimate act of self-revelation, self-emptying, mutual

³³ B Combrink and B Müller, "*The Gospel of Matthew in the African Context-in Dialogue with Chris Manus*", *Scriptura*, Volume 39, 2006, 43-51

³⁴ Cf. Manus, *Christ, the Africa King*, 235

glorification of the Father and the Son, and love for others (John 13-17) hence the shepherd's self-sacrifice to his flock. So the messiahship features of Jesus desacralize secular kingship and Mugabology. The redemptive role of Jesus' kingship is important in understanding the ministry of Jesus in broad when compared with ancient kingship and Mugabe as the 'proclaimed messiah'.

If Mugabology is linked to the liberation role of Moses, Moses' saviourship role did not make Israelites slaves to his rule but made Israelites become followers of Yahwism. Further to that, the 'saviourship' of Jesus is not limited to one race, group, nation and situation but the glorified Jesus is available to serve in all situations at all times, to protect against all enemies, and is available to all Christian believers. The Christology of Jesus is not divorced from soteriology, something missed by politicians. Jesus' death on the cross is a triumph over the cosmic powers of darkness and earthly rule that manifest in the world.³⁵ Jesus' suffering was a direct and sharp opposition to the oppression of the ruling groups in Judea and was a revolt against the powers that controlled the imperial situation in Palestine.³⁶ Every messiahship claims in Mugabology gets desacralized by virtue of being earthly. Therefore, the suffering humanity of Jesus and his atoning work on the cross become connected essentially to the powerful role of Spirit-power opposed to the rule represented by political rulers.

The Suffering Messiah in Mugabology Gets Demessianised and De-Post-Colonised

During Zimbabwe's 2000-2008 economical crises as mentioned before, President Mugabe was presented as a suffering messiah who was calling his subjects to suffer for Zimbabwe. The 'suffering messiahship' of Mugabe included his 11 years of imprisonment and later the ostracization of Zimbabwe through targeted sanctions of ZANU-PF elites who Western governments regarded responsible for human rights abuses in the country. The sanctions as already raised to some extent greatly af-

³⁵ Cf. Blomberg, *Jesus and the Gospels*, 351

³⁶ Cf. R Horsley, *Jesus and the Spiral Violence: Popular Jewish Resistance in Roman Palestine*, San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987, 156

fects the ordinary people. It is true that, President Mugabe suffered for the liberation of Zimbabwe. However, it looks like Mugabe's pre-independence imprisonment is mentioned for propagandistic reasons sometimes ignoring other political revolutionaries like Joshua Nkomo, Ndabaningi Sithole, Edgar Tekere, Leopold Takawira and others who also suffered for the liberation of Zimbabwe. Further to that, Ndabaningi Sithole and Joshua Nkomo started the fight for the liberation of Zimbabwe well before Mugabe and they further suffered persecution in the post-colonial Zimbabwe. C Hope noted that:

Robert Mugabe has amplified his role in the liberation for Zimbabwe until he has grown so large in the propaganda that passes for Zimbabwean history that it looks sometimes as if it was a battle waged single-handedly by Robert Mugabe and his ZANU guerrillas. Everyone else, and particularly Joshua Nkomo, who led the other war party, and the other guerrilla army, ZIPRA, have been airbrushed out of the picture.³⁷

As much as we salute the selfless role of President Mugabe; it appears that the messiahship of Mugabe as a 'suffering one' is done for propagandistic reasons so as to portray Mugabe as the only gracious, selfless and loving leader. Yet the Zimbabwean populace particularly rural dwellers immensely contributed to the independence of Zimbabwe despite the hunger and poverty they faced on daily basis. The contributions of many players in the liberation of Zimbabwe are then air-brushed and wished away.

It also looks like, the 'suffering messiah' and liberation rhetoric is meant to give Mugabe entitlement to the political stool of authority. The declarations have most to do with political power and little to do with serving the weak. In another incident, Webster Shamu (Media, Information and Publicity minister) confirms that, when he declared that no other person other than Mugabe should be allowed to rule Zimbabwe.³⁸ The ostracization of Mugabe by western governments cannot be metaphorically used as a measurement of comparison for the 'suffering messiahship' of Mugabe with that of Jesus. In the case of Zimbabwe,

³⁷ C Hope, *Brothers under the skin*, 24

³⁸ Cf. *Only Mugabe can rule Zimbabwe-Shame*, Newsday, 19 April 2011, See also, Appendix 30

it was the masses that bore the pain during the economical, political and social crises and not Mugabe himself. Mugabe claims that, he is being punished for wanting to make better the lives of 'landless' and poor Zimbabweans, and it is not him causing the suffering of the masses but the West's sanctions which have inhibited Zimbabwe's economic progress which to some extent might be true. However, the political violence and corruption that unfolded before the targeted sanctions spoke loudly about the madness that was taking place in the country.

Food riots that took place in 1997-98 testify about challenges and suffering that the people already faced. Even when sanctions were put in 2001 against the political elites, there was not a time when the political leadership were reported to have run out of basic commodities, food, fuel and cash. It was the poor who experienced the pain of the economic crises as testified by the Vice President, Joyce Mujuru, during her 2009 private meeting (Wikileaks) with the US Ambassador, Charles Ray, when she claimed that:

While she and others were targets of the sanctions, they were not hurt. Rather, ordinary Zimbabweans were suffering as a result of sanctions on institutions such as ZB Bank and Agribank, which had historically provided loans to small businessmen and farmers. Now, because of sanctions, they were illiquid and could not end.³⁹

The statement by Joyce Mujuru clearly shows us that, during times of troubles the elite usually don't carry the cross themselves but it is the poor who bear the pain of carrying their crosses of poverty. Yet Jesus tasted the pain of carrying the cross, the flogging and spitting on his face. Therefore, Jesus' kingship authority was physically and spiritually the 'other'; an anti-thesis of sacralization of secular kingship. Jesus' messiahship is pro-poor such that when people suffered during the Zimbabwean crises, Jesus was on the side of the weak.

It is important to note that, the suffering of Jesus did not end on the cross but moves on to contemporary situations of people in hunger,

³⁹ J Wepakati, *Wikileaks: Mujuru clandestinely met with U.S. Ambassador and pleaded for U.S. help*, <http://www.thezimbabwemail.com>, 03 September 2011

diseases and wars fanned by selfish war-mongers. Matthew sums it in 25: 35-46, when Jesus is quoted saying:

³⁵For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶ I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.³⁷ Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed thee, or thirsty and give you drink?'³⁸And when did we see thee a stranger and welcome thee, or naked and clothe thee?³⁹ And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit thee?⁴⁰And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.'⁴¹ Then he will say to those at his left hand, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels;⁴² for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink,⁴³I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.'⁴⁴Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to thee?' ⁴⁵Then he will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me.'⁴⁶And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.

Therefore as long as our political leaders and the elite do not suffer with the weak and hungry or let the poor to suffer, there must never be any empty association of their rule with Jesus. When God sees people suffering, it grieves Him (Gen.6:6) especially when His people are made to suffer by those who are supposed to be shepherds of both the weak and powerful. Is God happy to see people being denied food because they do not give back their vote to certain bread donors? Jesus' messiahship affirms an important dimension that can be used to critique ancient kingship traditions and contemporary rulers' leadership when it comes to: political power, authority and duties. Jesus' suffering and his reaction to political power represents a clear desacralization of all worldly power. The messiahship of Jesus typifies politicians and rulers as mere humans amongst fellow-humans. Secular authority as domineering authority usually serves those in power not the weak and hungry. The generosity of rulers need to find incarnation in the personal lives of people and this would go a long way in curbing dictatorships that result in civil wars, poverty and hunger as recently witnessed in the Middle East and North

Africa. If this servanthood perspective of messiahship is followed, it would go a long way in sustaining a culture of freedom, peace, proper justice, equality, fair distribution of resources, respect of human rights and genuine democracy. K Bediako argues that “without such a conception of power as held and taught by Jesus in his carrying of the cross, the hope of achieving a real sharing of political power in any society will remain elusive”.⁴⁰ The attempt by Christians to de-messianize Mugabe is a sign that Mugabe’s messiahship is to some extent domineering and autocratical, something which Jesus did not symbolize but fought against.

The Suffering-Messiah ideology on Jesus cannot be comparable as long as the ‘suffering messiahship’ of Mugabe seeks to enslave and patronise people towards personality rulers’ cultism as in pagan ancient traditions. People need to be liberated from the bondage that has turned ‘suffering messiahs’ into ‘domineering messiahs’. Critics have argued that, domineering messiahs use violence to gain legitimacy and loyalty whereas Jesus’ was a victim of violence. One analyst had this to say,

Zanu PF depends on the army, police, intelligence service, war veterans and its militia who unleash violence and intimidate Zimbabweans to vote for President Robert Mugabe and his allies. A new wave of partisan songs (Mbare Chimurenga choir) that propagandistically glorify Mugabe enjoys prime-time airplay (and those songs that demean him are censored). Youths appear to be the target of such songs as the theme, singers and dancing style appeal to the younger generation. The setting of the songs, though cross-cutting the rural and urban divide, leans heavily towards violence, suggesting that the party which traditionally enjoys support from rural areas may be taking the war of violence to the suburbs.⁴¹

So it is in fact the victims of violence that suffer in Zimbabwe and not the reverse. In such a scenario, Jesus stands with the victims of violence as indicated in Acts 9: 4-5:

⁴⁰ Cf. K Bediako, *Jesus in African Culture: A Ghanaian Perspective*, Accra: Asemba Press, 1990, 29

⁴¹ *Can ZANU-PF survive without Using Violence?*, The Independent, 04 November 2010

⁴And he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?' ⁵And he said, Who are you, Lord? And he said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting'.

Paul thought he was persecuting Christians but in Jesus' words, Paul was persecuting Jesus. If violence as raised by critics is part of Mugabe's rule, it is mere rhetoric to put him in the mould of Jesus, as Jesus was a victim of violence (not the victimiser) and had a peaceful agenda in his ministry. The violence against the colonial regime was liberative and justified as it sought to give freedom to all people. In the process, some revolutionaries like Mugabe suffered in the fight for the liberation of Zimbabwe but his rule with time unfortunately became violent and patronising. Yet when people suffer, Jesus also suffers with them. It does not matter the liberation credentials that Mugabe might be having, the alleged non-liberative violence against his subjects explodes his messianic status. Jesus' meekness de-sacralized any authority of ancient kings who use violence to get loyalty from their subjects. In this sense, Jesus' suffering and meekness was a reminder to contemporary rulers that, they too are called to the same obedience of humility like all the other human beings.

The rule of God and kingdom of God as preached by Jesus was the only one which was everlasting. The oppressive use of violence to retain power, loyalty and legitimacy is shunned in the suffering and death of Jesus as messiah. It is a critique of the 'suffering messiah' and liberation motif associated with President Mugabe (or other contemporary rulers) who is at the same time accused of using violence against opponents to retain power and legitimacy. G Machel (the respected international advocate for women's and children's rights and wife of former President of Mozambique, Samora Machel and later wife of the South African President Nelson Mandela) at another occasion declared that, Mugabe had lost legitimacy by turning against his people. She said this statement whilst launching the 2008 'Save Zimbabwe Now' campaign organised by South African church leaders, headed by the Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu. She is quoted saying:

I stand here today with a very heavy heart. My heart is bleeding because of what is happening in Zimbabwe, people are being brutal-

ized because they voted against the regime. We are together and will not accept this anymore; we can no longer stand and wait. I want to add my voice to the women of Zimbabwe, those who have been abducted, raped and brutalized. Your heart stings when you remember the thousands and thousands of women, children, men, young and old, who, in the meantime, passed on and whose lives could have been saved.⁴²

Machel compared the suffering in Zimbabwe to the war-torn Sudanese region of Darfur, and called on Mugabe's government to stop blaming western powers for the suffering of Zimbabweans. She is quoted saying,

I want to say to the leadership who are in government in Zimbabwe that a government must protect its citizens. Those citizens who are being abducted, innocently denied food, and to some extent murdered have nothing to do with its contradictions with the USA, Britain and the west. It is their duty to protect their citizens. It's how you treat your own citizens; that's where your legitimacy comes from. Any government (the Zimbabwean case) which goes out and assaults its own people, its own citizens has lost completely any kind of legitimacy.⁴³

The statement by G Machel desacralized the broader liberation messiahship associated with Mugabe, when she further said that, 'We came together to liberate ourselves but now we show that power and the way you exercise power can pervert you to become precisely the opposite of what led you to become a freedom fighter'.⁴⁴ As a follow up to Jesus desacralization of the political rulers, the Church leaders in support of G Machel planned a hunger strike fasting by depriving themselves of food once a week and some pastors engaged in 21 days of fasting⁴⁵ so as to symbolically convey the message to the world that Zimbabweans were facing food shortages under Mugabe's rule and that Mugabe was not after all the messiah as preached by the state media. With these violent experiences characterizing the history of Zimbabwe, it makes sense to

⁴² *Graca Machel Speaks Out*, <http://allafrica.com/stories/200901220712.html>, Accessed Online, 06 November 2010

⁴³ *Graca Machel Talks tough on Zimbabwe*, <http://www.thezimbabwetimes.com/?p=10245>, Accessed online, 30 January 2010

⁴⁴ Cf. *Graca Machel Speaks Out*, <http://allafrica.com/stories/200901220712.html>, Accessed Online, 06 November 2010

⁴⁵ Cf. *Graca Machel Speaks Out*, <http://allafrica.com/stories/200901220712.html>, Accessed Online, 06 November 2010

argue that, Jesus Christ's victory of the cross is a reminder to rulers that, Jesus' messiahship advocated the message of righteousness, true forgiveness, true reconciliation, equality, freedom of conscience, servanthood leadership, love and justice as a quest for cosmic order.

Jesus' messiahship is not narrow and exclusivistic. Mugabe's messiahship' status is desacralized further even if strategists relate Mugabe's messiahship to the liberation of Zimbabwe and the welfarist policies undertaken from independence. The major problem features when Jesus and Mugabe are taken as welfare officers as well as agents of God by virtue of feeding people. Jesus' messiahship was not only limited to the giving of food. The giving of food, even though an important duty associated with kings cannot be taken as the only measurement associated with Jesus' messiahship. Jesus' Christology radically alters the nature and all sources of power associated with secular power. This has inevitable implications on the politics of societies and the wider secular states as noted by K Bediako.⁴⁶ According to A Leeuwen, biblical faith has always remained a de-sacralizing force in the world of politics.⁴⁷ The sacralized authority which ZANU-PF strategists would like to build on Mugabe using messianic ideas would not therefore make any sense when related to the paradox surrounding the messiahship of Jesus. It is commonly known and much interesting that Mugabe just like Kwame Nkrumah, Kamuzu Banda, Kenneth Kaunda, Julius Nyerere and others, who achieved the political independence of their countries insisted on the sacrality wielded in their political power even when they became very unpopular with their people. Critics as shown in this study observe that, over the years the worshipping of the revolutionary credentials wielded by Mugabe lost the magic with time as people witnessed the turning of the symbolical land of Canaan becoming a land full of food shortages; turning the revolutionary Moses who liberated his people from Pharaoh becoming the new Pharaoh who enslaves his people. It dawned to people that in fact the Exodus they used to think to have happened had not

⁴⁶ Cf. K Bediako, *Biblical Christologies in the Context of African Traditional Religions*, in V Samuel and C Sugden, *Sharing Jesus in the Two Third Worlds*, India: Mission-Asia, 1983, 155

⁴⁷ Cf. Leeuwen, *Christianity in World History*, 46

after all taken place. A real Exodus to justice, peace, righteousness and empowerment was still utopian. For some critics, the Zimbabwean spring was still to come.

Therefore, to some extent it is possible that, the evoking of Christological titles is targeted at the larger audience that Christianity serves in Zimbabwe and the public space that Christianity occupies when compared to other religions. It is then not surprising that the status, office and duties of Mugabe have been clothed in Christian forms, sometimes using hymns, prayers and the extensive use of Biblical quotations. Further to that, for anti-colonial African political leaders like Mugabe who at a tender age received educational training and religious instructions from Christianity, Christian titles create a familiar platform that put them into the public sphere. When Mugabe is proclaimed as a messiah like Jesus, the strategists know what they are doing in the light of political contestation where they obviously seek to cultivate blind allegiance to Mugabe as a legitimate ruler even in the face of gross unpopularity and a whole gamut of attitudes to his more than three decades rule.

The messianic titles in some cases do not seem to depend much on what President Mugabe did or failed to do but are sometimes just employed for propagandism. Yet as from the late 1990s up to 2008: the lack of medical care, compromise in the quality of education, the growing extent of corruption, repression, political violence, forced migration and social diseases such as rising unemployment, rising prostitution and the number of people dying from HIV and AIDS, the increasing crime and the rise in number of people who were in need of food aid caused people to interrogate Mugabology. Whether the disillusionment produced in fact failed to lead to the revolts akin to those prompted by the miseries of colonialism or Arab spring cannot be established but the underlying factor is that, there is more extreme use of spiritual religion especially Christianity to qualify Mugabe as a messiah like Jesus. It is not surprising to see the power of empty rhetoric being publicly displayed, when for example, the women' league at one time postulated

Mugabe as 'never dying'.⁴⁸ Propaganda has its limit particularly when related to the messiahship of Jesus.

The Desacralization of Authority of Ancestral Spirits in the Light of Jesus

The authority of Mugabe, even if understood as linked to ATR gets desacralized as long as his authority is comparably related to Jesus. Sacral kingship has long been widespread such that the sharp separation between religious and political institutions and activities has been rare. Ontocratic societies have long been witnessed in ancient traditional societies. The sacrality associated with President Mugabe's reign is appropriated from the role of the royal ancestor who never ceases to rule through chiefs from the realm of spiritual power. The attempt has been to sacralise the authority of President Mugabe using the image of Shona kings who are regarded as embodiments of ancestral spirits and the erroneous assumption that Shona kings were not challenged by subjects.

In the Shona traditional world view, royal ancestors are not 'dead', they have simply joined their grandsires in the realm of the spirit-fathers, from where they continue to manifest interest and to participate in the affairs of the society through the channels of mystical intervention by doing appropriate rituals. The authority of the Shona chief at the mystical level makes a lot of sense for Mugabe's strategists who invoke that authority as part of Mugabology so as to insulate Mugabe's reign in Zimbabwe. Although, they failed to realise that, the Shona kingship advocated for a leadership that respected the rights of the subjects, peace and better well-being of the society as a sign of blessing from the ancestral spirits. The incorporation of Jesus in Mugabology seems in various degrees syncretistic and only concerned with putting the authority of President Mugabe at the spiritual realm where it appeals to different people but not be challenged. In reality, Mugabology loses shape and flavour due to the gaping shortfalls when related to the messiahship of Jesus. However, if President Mugabe's status, duties were regarded and described using African Traditional Religious vocabulary and world view

⁴⁸ Cf. ZANU-PF Women's League for President Mugabe, The Sunday Mail, 17 October 2010

of kingship without incorporating messianic concepts from Christianity, there might have been minor problems. But Christianity takes the argument further and in Bediako's words:

For if authority does not reside with the mere human being, then, why should it be located in the realm of the essentially human spirits of the ancestors? In the perspective of Christian ideas, ancestors too become desacralized though not de-spiritualized. All authority truly and only belongs to God.⁴⁹

ZANU-PF apologists are not aware that, Jesus' kingship still desacralizes any authority even that one which comes from ancestral spirits.

The desacralization notion is clearly raised in Revelation 11:15 that 'the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever' which shows that, it is the kingdom of God that reigns and is established forever. What would then happen to Mugabe's authority if taken as deriving from ancestral spirits and then related to Jesus' kingship? It is then becomes clear that, when the Christology of Jesus is related to Mugabology, it becomes the heart of the missiological struggle as Jesus' kingship pulls down all political and religious powers bestowed upon rulers. The Shona religious world views bestow different forms of authority upon rulers, but any comparison with Jesus changes the whole landscape. Jesus in the book of John is presented as the source of all authority such that in his presence, all other forms of authority give in. The irony of it is that Jesus' kingship or lordship is freely transferred and bestowed on all believers. Even if ZANU-PF strategists and sympathisers metaphorically take their comparison of Mugabe's messiahship with Jesus, the lordship of Jesus as Christians understand it carries far-reaching implications on how they regard political power in the world. World powers are usually viewed negatively and it is only through the lordship of Jesus that Christians think, would produce a better society that accommodates everybody peacefully as equals and brings the best righteousness (Romans 1:16). The righteousness is not comparable to that one found in the world

⁴⁹ Bediako, *De-sacralization and Democratization*, 5-11

making the likening of Mugabe's messiahship to that of Jesus void from the beginning hence 'void ab initio'.

Humility, Forgiveness and Reconciliation: Mugabology and Jesus

The death of Jesus brought reconciliation with God, once and for all. Jesus' reconciliation was broad and not self-serving political power. Yet the post-independence reconciliation by President Mugabe was short-lived and possibly done for political gain and entrenchment of political power by merging different political groupings and races particularly whites. It is important to further highlight that whites' response to Mugabe's reconciliation call on the other hand was disheartening making it difficult to critically analyse whether Mugabe's call was genuine or not; particularly why would Mugabe quickly extend the hand of reconciliation without first establishing a truth commission first. The reconciliation call must have involved various stakeholders and the common people, not one interested party showing magnanimity to everybody.⁵⁰ Were the political leaders not hiding something especially the brutality, violence, torture committed by the freedom fighters, and the mysterious death of prominent liberation fighters? The demons of violence in the post-independence Zimbabwe have a long history dating back to the time of colonialism and the fight for independence. The violence which was committed from contending political forces have not been exposed or discussed for political reasons. Yet with Jesus, the truth is told so as to set people free (John 8:32). Had the truth about the atrocities committed in the liberation struggle been exposed and established, it would have positively impacted in bringing healing and unity in Zimbabwe.

Mugabe's salvific action and reconciliation stayed as long as people remained loyal to him and ZANU-PF. Any allegiance to other political groupings leads to the withdrawal of that protection and forgiveness, the old wounds are opened and violence unleashed against political dissenting voices. The events surrounding the violence that characterises all elections in Zimbabwe point to a society that falls into pieces

⁵⁰ Cf. F Machingura, *The Reading and Interpretation of Matthew 18:21-22 in Relation to Multiple Reconciliations: The Zimbabwean Experience*, Exchange, 2010, Volume 39, 331-354

whenever President Mugabe's power is under threat. All the reconciliations that were previously agreed upon are suspended and people are psychologically, economically, racially, politically, geographically (urban vs. rural dwellers) and religiously made to be at war against each other. The hungry are made to feel the pain of hunger for the only reason that they have changed political allegiance. Jesus' forgiveness wipes away all past offenses and a new lease of life is put in place. In fact Jesus' way of messiahship arose from a unique concept of power characterised by the power of forgiveness over retaliation, of suffering over violence, of love over hostility, of fending for the needs of poor and hungry over loyalty, of humble service over domination. Philippians 2:6-8 illustrates the humility of Jesus that:

⁶who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped; ⁷but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.⁸And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.

Jesus as opposed to earthly kingship won his way to pre-eminence and glory by not rushing to exalt himself as desired by most earthly rulers. His messiahship was as a result of humbling himself to the point of dying a shameful death something that can never be dreamt of from contemporary rulers who let other people die or fight wars on their behalf. The shameful death made Jesus to be of no account and an agent of non-dominating power.

The humility found in Jesus' kingship helps in moulding contemporary African institutions of democracy and governance issues that build political leaders and rulers who are servants to the people they lead. Jesus' kingship should help usher a leadership that typifies the reign of God in terms of peace, order, justice and genuine access to food for all the people despite any political affiliation, colour, race, gender and religion. The suffering experience of Jesus should enable the contemporary African institutions to have the capacity to function as a positive social and political force for the enhancement and consolidation of those

values and attitudes that can bring peace amongst the people.⁵¹ By this, I imply a society that is characterised by social cohesion and promotion of a harmonious and integral human development, where people feel for each other and where those in power behave like real shepherds who nurse their sheep for the good of the whole nation. Not selfish shepherds who see shadows of threat from their sheep and deliberately manufacture violence and phobias in order to consolidate their political power.

Jesus' Feeding of the Masses as Desacralization of Rulers' Authority

Kingship in broad as already shown had a certain perception that was derived from it on the king as a benevolent ruler. Though feeding stabilized the authority of kings, Jesus' feeding was not for him to retain or deploy power or to get the attention of the people as the capable breadwinner. In fact it was his audience and the authorities of his time who mistook his feeding of the multitude as a pointer to his quest for the royal throne. It is clear that, even though ancient kings used food to buy loyalty, one feature associated with feeding of the masses by Mugabe; Jesus' feeding was out of the passion to help the neglected masses and not to seek for any political office. It is as argued by J D Crossan that, Jesus' practice of free healing and common eating expressed a religious and economic egalitarianism that negated alike and at once the hierarchical and patronal normalcies of Jewish religion and power of Roman rulers.⁵² Jesus' feeding of the masses desacralized the concept of feeding as realized and understood in ancient kingship and modern day rulers' feeding that is centred on patronage.

Jesus' feeding can be taken as: anti-emperor, anti-patronaging, anti-secular kingship, anti-consolidation of any forms of power and desacralizes secular forms of feeding. His feeding of the masses had noth-

⁵¹ Cf. K Bediako, "Unmasking the powers-Christianity, authority and desacralization in modern African politics" in J Witte (eds), *Christianity and Democracy in Global Context*, Boulder: Westminster Press, 1993, 207-230

⁵² Cf. J D Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant*, San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1991, 422

ing whatsoever to do with using food to build any legitimacy and patronage system. This makes Jesus' feeding virtually anti-Mugabology. S Price observed that, patronage relations fuelled the creation and functioning of imperial cults in Rome and Jesus was aware of it. Imperial cults became an important vehicle for the religious-political, economical and social expression of support and solidarity with those in power particularly the emperor.⁵³ Patronage was in fact a fundamental form of social relations in the Roman society particularly among the elite. The exchange of social and political power depended much on patron-client relations.⁵⁴ R A Horsley adds that, 'patron-client relations supply part of the answer to how such a large empire was governed by so small an administration'⁵⁵ Political patronage was linked to the political authority concentrated into the hands of the Emperor whose feeding patronised those fed and controlled all the resources. All these come to nothing in Jesus' feeding topic.

The power of patronaging and concentration of political power into Mugabology were put in place ever since he became the executive President of Zimbabwe from 1987 when the Unity Accord was signed between ZANU-PF and ZAPU. But this does not mean that, all the people who were fed were only ZANU-PF supporters. What is clear is that, patronage in the feeding of the masses became pronounced from the year 2000 (though some critics as already shown put it as from 1980 when supporters of other political parties were denied food) to the extent that if one was not a ZANU-PF supporter, in most cases chances of getting food aid from the government were next to zero. In rural areas, the manipulation of food aid included that from NGOS and in most cases chiefs and headmen were involved in the compilation of lists where known opposition supporters had their names struck off the food aid register. The Human Rights Forum and the Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) recorded allegations of the politicisation of food aid and

⁵³ Cf. Price, *Rituals and Power*, 49

⁵⁴ Cf. E Agosto, *Patronage and Commendation, Imperial and Anti-Imperial*, in R A Horsley (eds), *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society*, Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1997, 103

⁵⁵ Cf. R A Horsley, "Patronage, Priesthood and Powers: Introduction", 88-89

access in the run-up to all Zimbabwean elections particularly as from 2000. In its report on the Rural District and Urban Council Elections of September 2002, ZESN pointed out in its findings that 'in the minds of some voters the relation between voting for Zanu-PF and receiving food aid was clearly established'. The WFP and other NGOs have several times temporarily suspended food aid following reports of the abuse of food aid by ZANU PF members, e.g., in Insiza Ward 9, when ZANU-PF youths seized 3 tons of maize from their WFP storage facility at Senale Centre.⁵⁶ Jesus' kingship and feeding saved life yet secular rulers sacrifice the lives of disloyal people. Those suspected of disloyalty are deprived of food and made to meet God earlier as a result of food deprivation.

The criticism of the old colonial order that favoured the few privileged class was no longer convincing to justify the failure to feed the growing number of people who were falling hungry. The old colonial order served the white minority was replaced with the minority black. Zimbabwean elite is growing very rich whilst the majority are walloping in poverty. Some ZANU-PF ministers recently were put to task for the vast properties they owned, for example, Ignatius Chombo, the minister of Local Government and Housing, formerly a lecturer whose estranged wife argued in her divorce papers that when they got married, her husband was a poor man who only started amassing wealth⁵⁷ when he joined the benevolent government of Mugabe in the mid-1990s.⁵⁸ The other ZANU-PF loyalists put under investigation were: Philip Chiyangwa and Oppah Muchinguri alleged to have illegally and irregularly acquired wealth and properties by abusing their offices.⁵⁹ Surprisingly,

⁵⁶ Cf. Human Rights Monthly, *The Food Crisis*, Harare: The Human Rights Forum, 2003; See also, Zimbabwe Peace Project-August 2006 Report, *Politicisation of AID: The Manicaland Experience*, *Politicisation_of_food_and_other_forms_of_aid_aidreport_2.doc*, Accessed Online, 12 November 2010

⁵⁷ Cf. *ZANU-PF Officials' rags-to riches story*, The Standard, 04 April 2010, See also, Appendix 1

⁵⁸ Cf. *Chombo Asked to Explain how he acquired vast properties*, <http://www.thezimbabwemail.com>, 10 October 2010; *Chombo wife fight over assets*, The Herald, 05 November 2010, See also Appendix 1

⁵⁹ Cf. *Chiyangwa faces Parliament Probe*, The Financial Gazette, 29 April 2010; *Probe Orders arrest of Philip Chiyangwa*, The Standard, 28 March 2010; *ZANU-PF Officials'*

most of these ZANU-PF officials alleged to be involved in corruption are always at the fore-front in proclaiming President Mugabe as the benevolent saintly leader of the poor. It is such political and religious officials who are responsible for maintaining the relationship between the centre, ruling royal elite and the peripheries of society so as to overcome opposition to the president.⁶⁰ The use of force alone to get loyalty from the people is too costly and on the whole inefficient in maintaining royal power. Feeding of the masses alone without the manipulation of religious symbols does not always give the legitimacy needed by rulers. It is in such context of Mugabology that religious discourses are employed to divert the attention of the people from the hunger and selective feeding they sometimes witness on daily basis. Jesus' feeding as reported in the gospels was not selective and patronising but broad-based which again explodes any comparison of Mugabology and Jesus' messiahship in the area of feeding the poor.

Jesus in the Context of Zimbabwe: The Way Forward

The image of Jesus' leadership model can become the best model in Africa if real peace, stability and democracy are going to be realised. The 'Jesus Way' has been regarded as important when related to the concerns raised under Post-colonial criticism like the historical and discursive ways in which the colonial or imperial powers sought to subdue other peoples; the historical and discursive means available to subjected peoples to resist such domination. Jesus and Paul are then used as important figures in critiquing the oppressive systems of their time.⁶¹ A closer look at Jesus' teachings, statements (John 16:11,33; 19:11) and Paul's writings may be taken as exposing the historical and discursive means that were available to them in their resistance to oppressive political system of their times. This also helps to move from the rhetorical statements that are showered on President Mugabe as the messiah like Jesus, the new Moses in liberating Zimbabwe from colonialism to the

rags-to riches story, The Standard, 04 April 2010; *Oppah Muchinguri embroiled in Harare land saga*, The Daily News, 14 April 2010

⁶⁰ Cf. Whiteham, *Israelite Kingship*, 120

⁶¹ Cf. A Smith, "Unmasking the Powers", 48

real situation in Zimbabwe where Zimbabwe has been put under agendas at Regional, Continental and World summits in relation to human rights abuses. Human rights abuses included people being denied food as well as alleged rapes, abductions, beatings and verbal insults as a strategy of politically correcting or whipping opponents into line. This is despite the fact that, the state has justified their actions as meant to resist and defend the country from neo-colonialism. The tradition about resistance to foreign domination is an old phenomenon as shown by 'god's liberation of the Israelites from bondage to the Pharaoh in Egypt'. Even though President Mugabe has shown traits of consistent resistance to foreign domination, but doesn't his resistance lose face if one considers the use of violence against innocent citizens or how he treats his own countrymen opposing his style of leadership?

The post-colonial engagement of the Bible from a Third-World perspective helps us to move from this colonial obsession as argued by G Machel and look at the messiahship of Jesus in relation to our contemporary leadership. The kingship of Jesus is an important resource for any discussion about genuine liberation, good human leadership, democracy, and freedoms of citizens in challenging leaders to become responsible and accountable. The figure of Moses and Jesus makes the Church; academic disciplines like Biblical, Religious and Theological studies particularly in Africa interrogate critically the use of the Bible in the public sphere by politicians. The flimsy use of the Bible on the public sphere by politicians, call for academics and theologians to engage politicians on what Moses and Jesus actually represented in relation to the servant leadership and respect of peoples' rights. Ignoring the political context under which Jesus suffered and emphasize only on his liberation of humanity and the duty of feeding will not help in building contemporary societies suffering post-colonial or post-independent oppression, corruption, civil wars, deprivation and absolute poverty. The anti-colonial struggles are over and it is possible that they could be some neo-colonial manoeuvres but the thrust of African biblical scholars is to use the Moses and Jesus figures to also call contemporary African political leaders for an introspection of their rule.

If politicians take the Bible as a book for metaphorically sifting out certain figures and ideologies for political comparisons with contemporary leaders, this should also call for debate about whether their rule really is of benefit to the general poor or that it is mere empty propaganda by those who are politically positioned to enjoy the national cake. It then puts to task whether President Mugabe as the former liberator is still a liberating leader in the Zimbabwean perspective. We are not surprised that, the emphasis on the Jesus and Moses' characters on Mugabology is rhetorically meant to create a hybrid and complex Zimbabwean public sphere that results in a dominant political social order and hegemonic culture built on President Mugabe as the 'only legitimate leader of Zimbabwe'. As much as we love being liberated and appreciate and revere our independence as sacral, as critics argue, can we not talk of the liberated seeking further liberation or looking for another Moses or Jesus character? Is not Jesus' condition of oppression, suffering be used as a hidden transcript in unmasking the 'messiah-proclaimed figures' as 'messiah-less' rulers? Jesus' statement that 'in this world you will have trouble', is a call to look back, behind and underneath the public statements evoked in the public sphere about the messiahship of Mugabe and feeding topic in Zimbabwe.

The kingship of Jesus generally calls upon future leaders that, the throne they occupy is not for their selfish aggrandisement or buying loyalty but to serve all the people irrespective of whatever status, belief and ideology in society. The essential thrust of Jesus' kingship was not to be served (Matthew 25:31-45) as thought by some contemporary politicians. Jesus' miraculous healings of the sick, feeding of the hungry masses and casting out of demons was not meant to buy loyalty from the weak people of society. Jesus exhibited the servant kingship virtues that would make the world become healed and united. The teaching and attitude of Jesus as shown in the broader NT books was the de-sacralization and de-mystification of situations and persons who seek to integrate the altar and throne, in what A V Leeuwen termed 'ontocracy'.⁶² Jesus' king-

⁶² Cf. A V Leeuwen, *Christianity in World History: The Meeting of the Faiths of East and West*, London: Edinburgh House Press, 1964, 167

ship was against the social stratification, pyramid of power and patronage that favours the elite and makes the majority to suffer deprivation.

The Zimbabwean situation displays the growth of the gap between the rich and the poor but with the poor continuing to sink in poverty by each coming day whilst the elite connected to corridors of power have grown dirty and fat rich. The beneficent elite officials then display their wealth and proclaim it is 'as a result of the benevolence of President Mugabe'. Critics argue that, those who rush to formulate flowery Mugabological claims are the ones who are the real beneficiaries by virtue of being elites. Mugabological declarations come from the top going downwards (top-down Mugabology) and not from the bottom going upwards (bottom-up Mugabology). It is an ideology composed by the elite and the poor hungry masses are made to sing over the left-over food they would have received but actual resources and real empowerment are in the hands of the few. The kingship of Jesus should help Christians and biblical scholars the world-over to call for real empowerment of the poor.

In such a context where kingship is an age-old institution and where the feeding duty is an old practice; the Church must act as the agent of the kind of kingship that Jesus showed by conscientising people about national pressing issues since the Church is mostly comprised of the grassroots people of society. If a ruler is declared a messiah like Jesus, that declaration must qualify and resonate with the general freedoms and peace of the common people. The first fruits of reconciliation shown by Jesus' carrying of the cross and the forgiveness that Jesus showed towards those who had ill-treated him should help liberate people from the 'bondage' of abusive powers. The humility of Jesus should be a challenge to the broader Church to raise and bring consciousness to the wider society and the political leadership in relation to the Church's message of righteousness, genuine love and justice and sustainable democratic governance in the process of nation building. The governance that would enable all people to realise their goals irrespective of political persuasions, a society where people are not afraid of meeting God earlier as a result of violence, abductions, hunger or the deliberate deprivation of food by the state. The thrust and message from Jesus' humility is for the Church to search for democracy, though not an end in itself and

cannot be equated with the coming of God's kingdom. The thrust is for the Church to help in building 'servant' leadership and not 'rulers' who overally lord it over their people.

It is true that, there were many factors both within and without Zimbabwe, internal and external that fuelled the crisis in Zimbabwe but the Church broadly betrayed the generality of Zimbabweans by its silence in the face of multiple crises. The Zimbabwean Church must therefore wake up and take its evangelistic role of reminding those in power like what was done by OT prophets who reminded and held the powerful and political rulers that rulers too are called to the same obedience of faith and humility as all the rest of humanity.⁶³ The theological mandate of the Church is fulfilled when political rulers and religious leaders seek the common good that results in the proper nation-building as a service to God in the service to others. It makes African Christianity and African political leadership play a worthy responsibility.

Conclusion

The focus on the suffering and death of Jesus as part of the conclusion to this long debate helped a lot in this chapter to expose how the kingship of Jesus desacralizes ancient forms of kingship and the present Mugabological debate in Zimbabwe. There is nothing bad in Mugabe being metaphorically viewed as the messiah in Zimbabwe, particularly in relation to helping the poor as done by Jesus. In fact it becomes a positive response to the hermeneutical analysis of the biblical writings by making sense out of the messiahship of Jesus. It confirms that the concept of messiahship did not end with Jesus in terms of serving the poor masses. However, the problem only features when Jesus' kingship is taken politically thereby making him a seductive and crafty politician who intentionally used food to get the support of the hungry people. A trend has developed in African politics where Jesus' messiahship and his pro-poor ministry are used as a pony for political propaganda. Jesus' kingship, first and foremost emphasize his suffering and death hence the spiritual aspect of his messiahship. Jesus' messiahship and feeding

⁶³ Cf Bediako, *De-sacralization and Democratization*, 5-11

desacralizes false messiahs, when Jesus deliberately chose to associate himself with the poor and hungry (Lk.12:16-21; 16:19-31). If the messiahship of President Mugabe is likened to Jesus, then his rule must present a servant leadership that broadly respect the sanctity of peoples' lives. That is the same with Jesus' feeding of the masses which was not patronising and did not end with filling peoples' stomachs but eschatologically fed the souls as well. And in that case, feeding of the poor alone cannot be taken as the only measurement of messiahship but this must include other faceties of life.

CHAPTER 2: GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

The various concepts of kingship are an eye-opener when related to Mugabology. The foregoing discussion makes us postulate that, Mugabology would fit quite well in a pagan tradition when related to the sacralization of political authority especially that of the king. Interestingly, though the figure of Jesus in this study suits in that context of kingship and feeding of the masses, his suffering, death and resurrection usually not talked about in the political public debates desacralizes the secular modes of kingship or messiahship and the feeding topic. The royal ideology built on kings as 'sons of God' insulated the king from criticism and their feeding patronized people, something that finds no support in the messiahship of Jesus. This last chapter offers a conclusion of a conclusion on kingship and the feeding topic.

Political Rulers, Intermediaryship and Political Domination in the Light of Kingship

In all traditions, the understanding of the king is that of a mediator between the divine and people. Lines of continuity and discontinuity can be established between the traditional concepts of 'divine kingship' with contemporary African presidents. As much as the king was regarded as a representative of the divine, such understanding seems to be evoked on the Zimbabwean public sphere in relation to the status of President Mugabe. Mugabe might not have played the roles played by ancient kings like: building temples, having his portrait on the coins and possibly offering sacrifices to the gods but the way Mugabe is portrayed in the public sphere depict somebody sought to be understood as a divine being.¹ The messianic proclaimers of Mugabe possibly want people to view him that way and are calling people to the ancient understanding of kingship and the feeding duty. The Zimbabwean people might be the property of God, but Mugabology gives the perception that it is the solely duty of Mugabe to play the shepherd role as long as he is still alive. However, Jesus' kingship must be the best teacher in relation to feeding. The study advocates that if leaders act as intermediaries and shepherds

¹ Cf. *Analysis: Wikileaks, a Godsend for Mugabe*, <http://www.Zimonline.co.za>, Accessed Online, 30 November 2010

of people, they must be real servants that are not a thorn in the flesh of the poor. Royal ideologies are not helpful if the welfare of the people is taken for granted.

Ideological State Apparatuses, Ruling Class Ideology and Mugabology

This study has shown that, religion and images can be used to build ruling class ideologies as in the case of Mugabology. Submission is produced by a number of 'Ideological State Apparatuses' or channels of communication which include the mass media, the law, images, religion and education.² In this case, media and religion become suspect in the hands of the rulers. In most cases, religion particularly Christianity and the Bible has been used in the public sphere for the benefit of rulers. Religious titles, symbols and images have to be understood in the realm of political machinations and show of power. Whether the proclamations are taken metaphorically or not, they have had implications on the Zimbabwean religious and political platform. Myths and honorific titles about rulers' sacredness as shown in the various traditions serve as a major source of legitimacy and the possession of legitimacy produced other resources at less cost to ruling regimes.³ These myths besides ideologically focusing on the duties performed by the king and presidents also focused on their births so as to glorify their rule as legitimate. Royal myths ideologically helped to increase the incumbent' control over resources and so does his ability to attract and retain a body of loyal retainers.⁴ The ideological portrayal of the divine electiveness of rulers and their ability of controlling resources gave kings and present African leaders like Mugabe the ability to feed or reward those who were regarded as loyal and at the same time banishing the disobedient. Yet the kingship of Jesus unites all the people and his distribution of resources as shown by his feeding does not segregate or patronise people as ser-

² Cf. Thomason, *Luxury and Legitimation*, 180

³ Cf. R Lemarchand, *African Kingships in Perspective: Political Change and Modernization in Monarchical Settings*, Frank Cass and Company Ltd, 1977, 13

⁴ Cf. B Davidson, *The Africa Genius: An Introduction to African Cultural and Social History*, Oxford: James Currey Ltd, 1969, 207

vants but identifies with those in need as co-heirs in the Kingdom of God.

The spiritual world view played an important role in building royal ideologies in most ancient traditions, an important aspect on Mugabology. The various traditions have shown that, kingship owed its existence to the divine world. Most contemporary African heads of state tend to believe in the power of the invisible world just as their subjects do. However, seeking forms of power commensurate with the importance of the positions they seek to defend and of the burdens of feeding people.⁵ It is therefore not surprising to find Mugabe being put in that perspective of a divinely elected leader even in relation to the feeding duty. The concept of spirituality is not an abstraction of important interest only to theologians and philosophers but has become also of interest to politicians. Politicians realize the power that religion has in stabilizing their power, bringing order, peace, obedience and loyalty. By connecting Mugabe's reign to the spirit world, it is an attempt to absolve him from criticism and the crises of hunger, poverty, high inflation, high unemployment and instability that people experience. And the statements on Mugabe as 'messiah, son of God, new Moses and son of Man' acted as political stratagem in the face of political contestation. Therefore in most cases, we find religion being used to serve those in power and make the ruled become willing and unconditionally loyal to authority.

S Ellis and G T Haar offer an interesting observation in relation to politics and spirituality that, the resorting by political rulers to spirituality is a means either to consolidate power via the relationships through which it is articulated, or trying to alter these relations.⁶ The end result is that, the religious discourses and the royal ideology on Mugabe have built a personal mystique around him but connected to political power and the nationalist myth. Such religious discourses have implications on the contemporary governance issues, even in such states that are characterized as either weak or strong. The target of royal ideology is both the lower and higher people in disseminating messages of royal power.

⁵ Cf. S Ellis and G T Haar, *Worlds of Power: Religious Thought and Political Practice in Africa*, London: Hurst and Company, 2004, 87

⁶ Cf. S Ellis and G T Haar, *Worlds of Power*, 60

Royal ideology is part of political mobilization strategy and also manifests itself through feeding of the masses as shown in this study.

Ancient kingships' concept of divine electiveness and the aspect of authority have taught contemporary African rulers like Mugabe about how authority and power can be undergirded by religion. The use of religious discourses and co-option of religious leaders on Mugabology is to a greater extent meant to derive advantage from the religious authority that translates to political authority. This was the case with David whose authority and status found clarity on the religious royal ideology built on him in the face of opposition from the other tribes that fought for power in Israel. The manipulation of religious symbols through a royal ideology is meant to proclaim the king's right to rule as guaranteed by the deities of the state.⁷ Marx and Engels recognized that religious symbols and royal ideologies in most traditions do not exist independently from class relations. They expressed that:

The religious symbols and royal ideologies produce ruling class ideas that are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas. It is the relationships which make one class the ruling one, therefore, the ideas of its dominance. The production of ideas, of conceptions, of political consciousness, is at first directly interwoven with religious ideas so as create an unfettered loyalty to those in power.⁸

The material goodies are only distributed under the prerogative generosity of the king as representative of the divine.

The insistence and ready use of religious discourses by the political leadership in Zimbabwe show the influence that religions play in the lives of different communities thereby contributing to the formidable tradition of political messianism with no signs of exhaustion. The only challenge is that, royal ideologies do not bring peace in the modern day multiparty democracy. The concept of divine electiveness may operate in a political system that is monarchical and not a republican state where parliamentarians and the head of state are voted into office. Po-

⁷ Cf. Whiteham, *Israelite Kingship*, 120

⁸ R Farahmandpur, *Class, Ideology and Hegemony: Rethinking Marxist Educationary Theory*, Dr Müller Aktiengesellschaft & Co, 2008, 37

litical elites all over the African continent use religious communities for the purposes of mobilizing voters, creating clienteles or organizing constituencies.⁹ But the sad outcome is that, it can lead to brutal violence against opponents as in the case of Zimbabwe. The belief in the power of the invisible power by Zimbabweans, both Christians and non-Christians, is made to become part of political capital by those in power. This is the same with the political approach to the Bible as observed by P Gifford on the seven paradigms: theocratic, neutral, prophetic, migrating nation, millennial, covenant and liberation.¹⁰ Mugabology best fall under the Freedom and Agreement model where the Bible particularly Jesus and Moses figures are sought to qualify the role that Mugabe played in the liberation of Zimbabwe. The liberation motif is then used as an important seal of covenant between Mugabe and Zimbabweans. Feeding of the masses then becomes an important aspect that connects rulers to the divine electiveness and the political emphasis on the liberation of Jesus does not take into consideration his suffering and death of Jesus. Yet, the suffering and death of Jesus as shown in this study is important in understanding the Jesus' kingship in relation to messiahship in general and the feeding topic.

⁹ Cf. S Ellis and G T Haar, *Worlds of Power*, 68

¹⁰ 1) *Theocratic*, upon which the basic norms and structures of political society are taken as having been laid down by God as in the Old Testament; 2) *Neutral or Dualistic*, where not everything seen is regulated by the command of God, at least not directly; 3) *Prophetic*, has been important in the recent progressive, reformist, politically active Christianity where one can go over the head of legitimate authority in establishing the mind of God himself; 4) *Migrating Nation*, as indicated in Hebrews 13:14 where reformed theology can be influential in determining and changing governments; 5) *millennial or eschatological*, to which the political system is seen as corrupt and oppressive doomed to be replaced by a totally new order where peace and God's justice will reign (Is2-4-11; Is 2-9; Rev 21,1-5); 6) *Freedom and Liberation* which is quite influential today in Africa. The key text is the book of Exodus as it links to the liberationist theology; 7) *Covenant or Agreement*, which entered between God and his people. This forms the political self understanding of a particular nation, Cf. P Gifford, *The Bible as a Political Document in Africa*, in N Kasfelt (eds), Scriptural Politics: The Bible and the Koran as Political Models in the Middle East and Africa, London: C Hurst and Co Publishers Ltd, 2003, 16-28

Royal Ideology and the Feeding of the Masses

The use of force alone to get loyalty from the people is too costly and inefficient in maintaining royal power, for example, in the Zimbabwean case. Sometimes feeding of the masses alone without the manipulation of religious symbols will not give the divine electiveness legitimacy needed by the king or president. The royal ideologies of ruling classes in most cases as shown in this study have a lot to do with 'concealment', 'distortion' and 'masking' of certain social practices. In other words, royal ideology acts as a 'mediating force' that can either reveal or conceal how reality is socially produced and reproduced.¹¹ One of the characteristics of royal ideology as shown in the preceding debate is that, it is sometimes responsible for producing false consciousness where propagandistic ideas do not necessarily correspond to the social, economical, and political world view that they claim to represent.¹² The Davidic royal ideology gave a distorted picture that deliberately left out the brutality and selfishness of David. The same distortion was common with ANE kings and Roman emperors, for example, when royal inscriptions presented an utopian picture of life different from what really took place on the ground. Oppressors are presented as 'messiahs or saviours' and agents of the divine. Lawlessness and food scarcity is portrayed as a time of peace, tranquillity and abundance. Dictatorial rule was likened as that which has never been found anywhere, a common phenomena in Zimbabwean public sphere where the position of the dominant class is always supported by certain claims, beliefs and values which are systematically generated by the infrastructure (religion, media and the duty of feeding).¹³ The ideas are generated as a 'make-belief' attempts to create loyalty to those in power.

The ruler is considered liberal as opposed to one who is really heartless, brutal and dictatorial; generous as opposed to rapacious; trustworthy as opposed to a liar; courageous as opposed to a coward;

¹¹ Cf. Giroux, *Theory and Resistance in education*, 209

¹² Cf. J Storey, *An introductory guide to cultural theory and popular culture*, The University of Georgia Press, 1993, 3

¹³ Cf. M Haralambos and R Heald, *Sociology Themes and*, 41

serious as opposed to frivolous and humane as opposed to haughty.¹⁴ Even though it is clear that, no king, prince or president can embrace all the above good qualities, an ideology is mostly created to leave the king or president with every quality. This is meant so to preserve his power, proper appearances and legitimacy.¹⁵ Mugabology in some cases is falsely associated with the impression of an enabling bread-winner, messiah and the consistent liberator who is emotionally concerned about the welfare of his people. This is despite the fact that, there are sometimes complaints about the political manipulation of food in favour of loyalists. Yet most people during the crises survived on food handouts coming from NGOs which were labelled as hostile to Zimbabwe. And Zimbabwe was at its lowest ebb of moral as a result of the multiple crises. The study has shown that, feeding of the hungry and poor is not neutral even if done innocently. It has its political inclinations. The feeding stories in fact said something critical about the real world behind the Bible and why the multitude wanted to forcefully make Jesus their king. The biblical feeding stories particularly by Moses, Joseph and Jesus expose the social, religious-political context of poverty and hunger that characterized ancient societies. Feeding to a greater extent portrays the social injustices that characterise societies to the extent where certain people survive on handouts or free food. They respond to a socio-political ideology that causes hunger and inflict poverty on the agrarian poor majority.

The problem of hunger can destabilize any society, group such that when Moses faced rebellion, it was as a result of failure to feed the Israelites. Loyalty and allegiance were given to Moses when he had shown through his mediation that he was able to feed. This was the same with Jesus' feeding prowess which became a rallying point for the poor people who were following him (John 6:25-26). Jesus' feeding was liberative and not enslaving as known of ancient kings and contemporary leaders. Filling peoples' stomachs was a long historical practice by kings and shows how kings used food in a political crisis to buy the loy-

¹⁴ Cf. N Machiavelli, *The Prince and the Discourses*, New York: Modern Library, 1950, 30

¹⁵ Cf. S M Deleu and T M Dale, *Political Thinking, Political Theory and Civil Society*, New York: R R Donnelly and Sons, 2009, 111

alty of the people. Zimbabwean peasants understand better that messianic symbolism in the daily challenges of food shortages. Mugabe to a certain extent became their new pragmatic messiah like Moses and Jesus, whereas Jesus fed thousands; rhetorically Mugabe is portrayed as feeding millions with food as well as land. Mugabe to some Zimbabwean peasants becomes a savior by virtue of saving their souls from the hell of hunger.

However, the characterization of Mugabe as messiah lost its relevance as from 2000 when compared to the early years of independence as people faced an unprecedented hunger and poverty. The messianic declarations were rhetorically put to manipulate the Bible and the people on the feeding enableness of Mugabe, even in cases where President Mugabe was failing to feed his people. There is a deliberative evangelical reading of the Bible, seeking to convert people to ZANU-PF and also try to bring loyalty and legitimacy to Mugabe. The approach to the Bible is always manipulative and propagandistic. Webster Shamu (Minister of Information and Publicity; ZANU-PF Political Commissar) hinted along those lines when he was addressing a political rally that:

As a commissariat, we have resolved to carry Bibles in our meetings because we draw many lessons from the Holy Book. The Bible and Christianity should guide our party members and should play a leading role in sprucing up the image of the party.¹⁶

What matters most is acceptance of ZANU-PF and Mugabe. This was done against the context of hunger and poverty that was experienced by the people making it a display of power over the life and death of those who are fed.

Feeding instead of being just a moral duty of serving God gives assurance to the political life of the political rulers. Rulers are happy when there are people to feed and it assures them of their political life and power. The Zimbabwean feeding through the giving of land did not actually help to minimize the level of hunger as expected when the majority of the landless peasants were resettled in the same infertile regions whilst the elite were given land in fertile regions. It is in such a context

¹⁶ The Herald, *Be Persuasive to win support: Shamu*, 10 April 2010, See also, Appendix 24

of feeding that, feeding in Africa (by NGOs and the state) becomes so patronising. Feeding of the masses becomes a framework for constructing meaning from social experiences of poverty and hunger for the benefit of bread-winner's authority and legitimacy. The religious concept of divine electiveness and feeding of the masses is confiscated by contemporary political ruling cliques to gain legitimacy against all formal checks and balances. The feeding is an important part of the royal ideology and can also be used for purposes of propaganda, libel and blackmailing as well as to some extent soliciting as shown on the various traditions; a phenomenon that has been adopted in Mugabology. Feeding must be a moral duty to help the hungry as well as saving lives. In such cases, it becomes a challenge when Mugabe is referred to as the messiah-bread-winner like Jesus as if Jesus' messiahship legitimacy was built on charity feeding. Jesus' messiahship desacralized such thoughts that solely link his ministry to material satiation as his feeding broadly included eating of his flesh and drinking of his blood to gain life in abundance in the here and now and the life-after which entirely blows off rulers' cultism. In conclusion, it must dawn to theologians, biblical scholars, sociologists and politicians that, Jesus messiahship and feeding of the masses was so unique to be compared with Mugabology or any forms of kingship. Jesus is the source of life for all rulers and his messiahship desacralizes any claims of authority and feeding prowess.

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QUESTIONNAIRE USED

1. What is the Zunde RaMambo?
2. How did it begin?
3. Who owns and organises the Zunde RaMambo?
4. Who provides the inputs to sustain its existence in rural areas?
5. Who benefits from the Zunde RaMambo?
6. Do you see any changes in the functioning of the Zunde RaMambo in Zimbabwe?
7. How do you see the relevance of the Zunde RaMambo in curbing hunger in the light of NGOs feeding programmes?
8. What is your working relationship as chiefs with the state and government on the Zunde RaMambo?
9. What is your comment on the Zunde RaMambo, Feeding programmes and the recent Land Redistribution in Zimbabwe by President Mugabe?

N.B I had to introduce the Unstructured Interview approach for political reasons. Structured questions would have made my work very difficult to get responses especially from chiefs as shown in the study. I also avoided including the names of the interviewed chiefs so as to protect them.



This volume was passed as doctoral thesis by the University of Bayreuth (Germany) in February 2012. Its topic springs from the reality of poverty, suffering and the rest of the calamities that continue to ravage most third world countries particularly Zimbabwe. The author presents a unique way of looking at leadership, history, culture and the reading of scripture in light of theme of The Messianic Feeding of the Masses. The author examines how the Zimbabwean president, Robert Gabriel Mugabe, has embraced some messianic titles and statements ascribed to him for liberating Zimbabwe from her colonial masters and the feeding of the people. The book makes a comparative and sociological analysis of kingship in ancient traditions so as to demonstrate how the 'sacredness' associated and ascribed to the reign of Mugabe was not uncommon. As the bearer of the charisma, Mugabe takes some radical measures to assume the task of a saviour. He embraces the praises accorded to him by his admirers and commands obedience and a following in virtue of his mission. Some aspects examined in this study may be highly controversial but eye-opening. Thumps high to the author for daring to explore issues related to Mugabe who is a sensitive subject especially to most Zimbabweans. Those who hero-worship his philosophy and ideology are generally protective towards everything regarding him, yet most critiques of Mugabe's ways and leadership style also try to undermine everything regarding him. The author does not attempt to convert anyone to a particular side but through the way he articulates issues and supports arguments with Historical, Biblical and current material, he invites people to debate even in a larger arena. Without any doubt this study successfully offers the readers some new insight into the society they are constructing.

-Rev. Dr. Muchumayeli Ishmael Bhebhe



The Author

Francis Machingura was born in Chivi District, Masvingo. He is married to Jesca Mushoperi and has two daughters, Tinotenda and Makanaka. Machingura holds a M.A, B.A (hons) in Religious Studies and Post-Graduate Diploma in Education awarded by the University of Zimbabwe. He also holds a Diploma in Project Planning and Management, awarded by the Christian College of Southern Africa (CCOSA) and a Diploma in Pastoral Studies, awarded by Domboshawa Theological College (DTC). Machingura did his doctoral studies as a scholar of German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and received his PhD in Intercultural Biblical Studies from Universität Bayreuth, Germany (2012). His research interests are on the Bible and its relevance in the contemporary society.

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